

CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

EXCLUSION DESPITE INCLUSION

LEAH R. KIMBER



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To Iris Fillinger,
who makes the world go round

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List of Abbreviations

CBDR	common but differentiated responsibility
CSO	civil society organizations
DPI	Department of Public Information
DRR	disaster risk reduction
ECOSOC	The Economic and Social Council
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HIPPO	High-level Panel on Peace Operations
IO	international organization
IR	international relations
LGBTQIA+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OP	organizing partner
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction
UNISDR	The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
WCDDR	World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
WMG	Women's Major Group

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Preface

By the time this book is published, it will be just over ten years since I first set foot at the Palais des Nations, at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva, after walking along a barbed wire fence, standing in line after passing a turnstile, producing an identity document for scrutiny and stating the purpose of my visit. The journey leading to this book began in July 2014. At the time I was one year into my teaching assistant's contract at the University of Geneva and I was grappling with ideas as to how to follow the upcoming United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) negotiations. Initially interested in analysing the concept of resilience commonly known as 'the ability to bounce back', I was eager to understand the way an international programme conceptualized and brought the debate to an international level, especially since it claimed to be the first to adopt the concept, notably for its world programme – the Hyogo Framework for Action – ratified in 2005. Moreover, it seemed a natural step in linking the research about disasters I had pursued at Geneva and Tel Aviv universities as a Bachelor and then Master student. With resilience in mind, I chose intergovernmental negotiations tied to the Sendai Framework to focus on resilience, or so I thought ... The journey continued as the focus evolved.

UNISDR's first meeting, the preparatory committee, was to be held on 14–15 July 2014 at the Palais de Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The event taking place near the University of Geneva where I was working encouraged me to integrate the process. However, aware of the challenges posed in gaining access to the UN building if one's presence cannot be justified with a recommendation, a badge or invitation, I sent a letter by email to UNISDR's two email addresses downloaded from their website on 15 May 2014, informing that as a PhD student I was hoping to integrate the process. A few hours later I received a negative reply. It stated that I would have to be affiliated with an organization recognized and accredited by the UN. An alternative was to sign up via an organization through the 'Major Group' system. At that point, I had no idea what that meant and how I would find a solution. I knew I would have to be artful as I was up against the UN brick wall.

I immediately started investigating alternatives. The clock was ticking and I was not going to let a negative response affect my determination. I turned to formal and informal channels. I contacted acquaintances and friends working at the UN who were able to direct me to persons they thought could help. Using an informal channel, a UN retiree helped me contact two former colleagues. The first answered on 10 June 2014 copying UNISDR staff and confirming that I needed accreditation through a recognized organization. This person suggested that UNISDR would guide me in the procedure, but that remained fallow. The second person was a negotiator at UNICEF who via an email on 18 June 2014 apologized and informed me that they had only two seats which had already been assigned internally. By way of the formal channel, the University of Geneva's section dealing with UN's relations emailed me back on 10 June 2014 informing me that the university does not have consultative status and thus cannot support me. I was left with what felt like an impossible mission: getting through the Pregny Gate on Avenue de la Paix to access the UN building in Geneva. My last option was to follow UNISDR's advice and contact Major Groups. I wrote a standard letter addressed to the person at the head of all the Major Groups listed on UNISDR's website and I waited for answers. I was hopeful some groups might accredit me.

By 11 June 2014, the head of the Women's Major Group wrote back to me. She was willing to provide me with accreditation through her New York-based non-governmental organization if I would cover all my costs. After sending in my details, I received an email on 26 June 2014 confirming my registration. I had made it and was finally in! That implied I could now attend the conference with a badge.

However, as time went by and I was attending meetings and participating as a Women's Major Group member, I lost interest in *resilience*. While it was barely brought up during meetings, it never appeared to be a controversial topic. I was puzzled and wondering what I was doing *there*, among 'civil society'. That is how my research topic began to emerge. In a double mirror effect, my gaze shifted towards my inclusion as a member of civil society in the negotiation process leading to the Sendai Framework. In turn I gained insight in tackling broadly the inclusion of civil society in intergovernmental negotiations. This is the purpose of the book.

Meanwhile, inclusion remains a relevant research topic in 2024, for it speaks to democratic values and the legitimacy of international institutions in a world increasingly subjected to artificial intelligence and nationalist principles. UNISDR – since 2018 the United Nations for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) – continues to work towards the inclusion of civil society. It seeks feedback and best practices for the implementation of the Sendai Framework, especially given the Midterm Review realized in 2022 and 2023. At the same time, individuals I met during the process

have pursued their paths; some have left the UN, others moved countries, a few have had children, and some have retired. Yet the decade spanning the beginning of the journey to now tells the story of individuals striving for a better world.

Leah R. Kimber
Geneva, May 2024

Introduction

*‘When diversity is rich, inclusion cannot afford to be poor’
(Unknown)*

The inclusion of civil society and its puzzle

At 11:01 pm on Wednesday 18 March 2015, a roar of applause and a huge sense of relief filled the Tachibana Hall. The Sendai Framework had finally been adopted. That moment marked the end of what had been five consecutive days of intergovernmental negotiations at the Sendai International Center in Sendai, Japan. The Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was officially over. It had gathered 6,500 delegates: over 25 heads of state, vice-presidents and heads of government; 42 intergovernmental organizations; 236 non-governmental organizations (NGOs); 38 United Nations (UN) organizations; and over 300 private sector representatives. The document contained guidelines about risk reduction of natural disasters, though non-binding, and had been ratified by 187 states.

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) was the core organizer of the conference, the outcome of an eight-month-long process consisted of setting the agenda and adopting a text with indications to follow in the next 15 years. The Sendai Framework aimed at filling evidence gaps for the upcoming 15 years in line with the programme on Sustainable Development Goals spanning until 2030.

With a ‘Women’s Major Group’ badge around my neck, I was sitting there, confined to the last row of the hall to which the Major Groups were assigned. I was witnessing first-hand the official debates taking place around the stickiest points. However, I allowed myself to meander, making my way to various national delegates I had befriended in the process as well as other civil society members I referred to as my colleagues. Not only did I want to move around to stretch my legs and release my back from the long hours sitting in a warm and stuffy room, but I also wanted to understand what the discussions revolved around when country delegates were leaving Tachibana

Hall. In these past hours on 17 and 18 March, there were times when the chair would convene negotiations and invite government representatives to take the floor and times when the chair would suspend them. Groups of four, five or six state delegates would get up and gather in informal groups either within the room or behind closed doors. I understood that these discussions were the decisive ones because when negotiations resumed after the delegates returned, the pace of decision making was swift. The informal gatherings hence made a difference and would determine whether or not a text would be ratified and delivered to the international community.

Yet how is it that I – a PhD student enrolled at the University of Geneva – was sitting in the Tachibana Hall on that Wednesday night? In the lead-up to the Sendai Framework, UNISDR sought ways to engage with civil society actors. It opted for the Major Group structure developed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, better known as the ‘Earth Summit’, in 1992. In that context, governments adopted Agenda 21, an action plan to achieve sustainable development. Chapter 23 of Agenda 21 recognized the important role of civil society and the need to strengthen it. This relationship was formalized under the heading ‘Major Groups’ which identified nine sectors of non-state participants as critical to the achievement of sustainable development. The nine Major Groups aimed to showcase the diverse range of definitions and categorizations associated with organizations, including Indigenous Peoples, Women, Children and Youth, Forest Workers and Trade Unions, Farmers and Small Forest Landowners, Local Authorities, Scientific and Technological Community, Business and Industry, and Non-Governmental Organizations. UNISDR pursued a certain ‘inclusiveness’ to encompass these groups. Additionally, the organization emphasized on its website that it maintains strong connections with civil society members globally. According to the description given on UNISDR’s website in ‘who we are’, these partnerships serve to heighten awareness of disaster risk reduction, facilitate the exchange of experiences, draw lessons from successful practices, pinpoint existing gaps, and identify actions to accelerate national and local implementation.

While I am not disputing the relevance of an international effort to decrease disaster risks, I raise the issue of inclusion especially the so-called inclusion of civil society the UNISDR refers to. While embedded in the Women’s Major Group, I question whether my physical presence at the most salient times of the conference may count as inclusion. If I allowed myself to interact with members, and Member State delegates, yet was unable to take the floor in the same way they did, can I still claim I was included? In other words, when can we talk about inclusion? Does receiving a badge account for inclusion? Does an allocated slot in meetings imply inclusion?

The aim here is not to centre on my presence in the last hours of the Sendai Framework negotiations, but rather to analyse civil society's inclusion from the start of the process, which debuted on 14 and 15 July 2014, to the ratification of the Framework eight months later. While UNISDR convened Major Groups to the process, civil society shared its priorities and concerns whenever possible. After the first preparatory committee of 14–15 July 2014 followed four meetings between the end of September and the end of October 2014 which led to the second preparatory committee held in Geneva on 17–18 November 2014. In December 2014 and January 2015, Member States dedicated many days to negotiating the text. Finally, in March 2015, the city of Sendai hosted the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction consisting of the third preparatory committee, public forums and, most importantly, the final negotiations leading to the ratification of the Sendai Framework. Despite civil society's presence during the entire process, UNISDR's outreach to Major Groups to hear their concerns, and NGO representatives' interactions with Member States, is it safe to affirm that civil society was included in intergovernmental negotiations at the UN?

In the literature, the observed growth and scholarly understanding thereof have seldom been accompanied by a reflection on what inclusion entails. For some scholars, inclusion speaks to access (Tallberg et al, 2013), for others it speaks to participation (Willettts, 2006), whereby civil society presents itself with written statements, speeches and lobbies for specific text fragments to be adopted. Hence, talking vaguely about civil society inclusion, as it has often been done, is not satisfactory, as it fails to consider advocacy efforts and lobbying activities in the interstices of the organization. Shouldn't inclusion, therefore, account for both access and participation (Mace, 2023), but also offer an analysis of the extent to which civil society's values and priorities have been included – inscribed with their specific words or sentences – in the ultimate text?

Revisiting inclusion: theory, methodology, epiphany

The overarching question essentially boils down to *how* – rather than *if* – the UN includes civil society. If the UN wished to see civil society members present in its perimeters, it would have to accredit them because entering the UN in Geneva, or New York for that matter, is not as simple as going to the supermarket. The experience is akin to security checks at airports. In the same way that a flight requires a ticket and official ID, entering the UN perimeter necessitates a badge and in some cases even an ID. That obviously points to the accreditation requirements and eligibility to pass security. Assuming my colleagues from the Women's Major Group and I all received funding and a badge to access the UN perimeter, one still must learn to navigate its 600-metre length, 34 conference rooms and approximately 2,800 offices.¹ I remember making my way to building A looking for room

XVIII and finding myself walking in circles until I went back to the main entrance to seek directions to where I was to go. It is not a given that building A contains room XVI, but that XV and lower digits as well as XVI and upper digits are in building E.

What do these observations tell us about inclusion? If the UN wanted its members to participate in discussions alongside Member State representatives it would have to convene them to various, if not all, meetings. If it claimed inclusion in a final ratified text, it would have to insert specific ideas and words advocated by civil society members. However, if it wanted to claim *civil society inclusion* in intergovernmental negotiations, in an all-encompassing sense, it would have to analyse each of the three conditions: accreditation, participation and insertion of specific words. Talking about inclusion in a segmented way is hence not sufficient.

To date, rare is the research that specifically tackles the issues of civil society inclusion in practice and its relationship with other working bodies within the system (Defrain–Meunier, 2019; Guilbaud, 2023; Kimber, 2023a). So far, empirical work led by anthropologists points towards institutional inclusion as access with accreditation procedures (Müller, 2013; Niezen and Sapignoli, 2017) and social inclusion for participation (Willets, 2006). From a macro perspective, political scientists have also investigated how international organizations have opened up to civil society by analysing both access and participation (Tallberg et al, 2013, 2018). However, scholars also note that having access to decision-making processes does not necessarily equate to influence (Dür and De Bièvre, 2007; Sénit, 2020) and participation does not automatically entail influence and may never do so (Dany, 2014; Mace, 2023). Moreover, rare are the accounts of substantive inclusion, namely the words and ideas inscribed in ratified documents civil society advocated for (Bellier, 2012).

As a consequence, using a sharper lens to analyse actors within and outside international organizations, the UN, in particular, suggests adopting a different and, probably, more complete view of global governance. Following UNISDR's intergovernmental negotiations from the first preparatory committee to the ratification of the outcome document, the Sendai Framework, is emblematic of the UN's decision-making processes, hence making it a relevant case study to analyse the nitty-gritty dynamics around inclusion in intergovernmental negotiation processes.

Theoretically, I renew the definition of inclusion with a pragmatic approach that allows to nuance and rethink the mechanisms of inclusion – but also of exclusion – providing insight for future policy and engagement of civil society organizations. To this effect, intertwining interest group theory with the interactionist theory of organizational sociology appears to be a relevant combination to help identify civil society's inclusion in the UN and understand the dynamics and processes at play. Indeed, it shows civil

society's inclusion in light of access, participation and advocacy efforts and allows us to witness how civil society is granted access, when and where it is invited to participate, and what is retained in texts.

From the perspective of interest groups, political scientists have come to a consensus about the challenges of measuring inclusion, referred to as interest group influence, at any level of governance (Binderkrantz et al, 2017). To identify the dynamics and therefore processes contingent on influence, they discern four crucial stages in the process of producing influence:

1. the formation of groups and the mobilization of individuals organized according to their interests for political action;
2. the interactions within the system that support influence strategies, such as collaboration and coordination of groups focused on policy outcomes;
3. the actual influence strategies (lobbying) they originally mobilized for; and
4. the consequences for policy outcomes in which the efforts of the groups are reflected.

In other words, with hindsight, the final stage depicts the elements the groups advocated for and what was obtained in the agreed document. The retrospective approach allows us to talk about 'preference attainment' (Bunea, 2013), bypassing the hurdles of measuring whose influence counted more, that of governments versus that of the interest groups.

From the perspective of organizational sociology, identifying who has the power to 'include' and/or to 'exclude' from organizations is key to analysing social processes (Pfeffer, 1992). Building on the idea of power within organizations – a relational and productive feature that exists in action (see Foucault, 1984; Merlin, 2009) – Foucault's concept of apparatus (*dispositif* in its original language, French) is helpful because power is ingrained in a *dispositif* (Deleuze, 1992). The concept allows the study of underlying procedures in which action takes place (Peeters and Charlier, 1999) as 'a thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid' (Foucault, 1984, p 299). At a given time in history it responds to an urgency which gives it a dominant strategic function in a power relation (Agamben, 2009). If Foucault were to analyse the UN as an institution, he would look at the power relations as well as the architecture of the building in which sessions are held, the UN rules that govern life within the organization, the various activities that take place, and the different navigating actors and their functions. Together they constitute a 'block' to ensure the ratification of a text (Merlin, 2009). The types of behaviour that develop within the UN, among them the signs that show the willingness to take the floor, negotiation techniques, taking

the floor to make a statement and text modifications, all fit in the power procedures observed throughout sessions. In analysing the UN's apparatus, the organization is viewed as an institution that is characterized by its power, by how it influences action and shapes actors' beliefs through action. In this vein, actors enact the UN as an institution in everyday life (Munir, 2015).

Combining interest group theory and the sociology of organizations hence complement each other in that they do not fulfil both prerogatives, the former insists on the process, and the latter emphasizes the power dynamics within the apparatus.

With an innovative theoretical framework, I redefine inclusion as an individual's capabilities to meander within various forms of apparatus, all of which together form a process that accounts for an institutional inclusion, whereby civil society gains access to the perimeters of the UN, a social inclusion that points towards its participation and a substantive inclusion insofar as the claims made by civil society appear in the text. That is to say that I understand inclusion as the intersection between the actor and the system. I hence look at various forms of apparatus within the UN which include individuals and then furthermore analyse the various forms of apparatus in a dynamic way to reflect on their interdependence. The three fundamental types of apparatus (institutional, social and substantive) depict activities, actions, relations and networks, and hence allow a comprehensive understanding of civil society's inclusion at the UN. The institutional apparatus covers the accreditation process and identifies who engages (the individual, group or organization) and answers the question, in retrospect, as to 'who gets access' to global decision-making arenas. The social apparatus, the advocacy relations and strategies, sheds light on the how, by identifying the actors' lobbying activities, such as integrating into intergovernmental meetings, providing written statements and giving speeches. The substantive apparatus (what is being discussed), the finally attained preference, is the most central of all and the UN's *raison d'être* as it shows why civil society wants to influence a diplomatic text.

The findings stem from extensive fieldwork carried out as a researcher embedded as member of the Women's Major Group in the process leading to the ratification of the Sendai Framework. In this capacity, I followed the actors, conducting participant observations and interviews complemented with document analyses. Over the course of eight months, from Geneva, Switzerland to Sendai, Japan, I generated data from: 42 recorded interviews, with 39 individuals, mostly members of Major Groups; participant observations attending meetings and online discussions; and documents retrieved from email correspondence, and online working drafts. Throughout the manuscript I quote interviewees with fictional first names, both to respect anonymity which I had promised, and to reveal the rather informal culture that lies among members of civil society. In addition,

I refer to their institutional affiliation in generic terms in the same effort to maintain anonymity. The exception, however, is Margareta Wahlström. As the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction it was agreed during online interviews that she would be identifiable given the public role she fulfilled. Appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General under Ban Ki-moon, she held a significant role within the UN programme, that of coordinating disaster risk reduction efforts across the UN system. A full description and reflexive analysis of the methodology can be found in [Appendix II](#) and [III](#).

This book provides a renewed understanding of inclusion defined as a process – that accounts for *institutional* inclusion, whereby civil society gains access to the perimeters of the UN, *social* inclusion which points towards its participation and *substantive* inclusion insofar that the claims of civil society appear in the text – yet it does not give a strict answer regarding the inclusion of civil society. Rather it offers insight into seizing *inclusion* as a continuum where inclusion is perpetually renegotiated among civil society and its counterparts, namely UN staff and Member State representatives. Furthermore, it unveils the mechanisms of inclusion that carry within themselves the logic of exclusion. The institutional apparatus appears inclusive, however, with hindsight, it limits accreditation to individuals with particular resources (experiences and convictions, command of English, funds and knowledge of the organization), who are willing to comply with a particular siloed organization (for example, Major Group for UNISDR), with a pre-established identity (for example, Women’s Major Group). It thus a priori excludes other ‘careers’. The social apparatus provides a space for civil society to talk and exchange both with UN staff as well as Member State representatives. However, we observe that while Major Groups can take the floor in policy arenas, they only get access to one of the three decision venues de facto excluded from international decision-making processes. In the substantive apparatus, while ‘women’s leadership’ and ‘women’s empowerment’ were included, civil society’s exclusion can be accounted for the rejection of ‘gender equality’.

Eventually, the findings discuss inclusion in light of exclusion at all levels: at the macro level, the focus is on the UN’s engagement with civil society; at the meso level, on civil society’s activities within negotiations; and at the micro level, on the individuals’ background and careers, all of which enable to qualify and quantify the claim of civil society’s inclusion.

Why this book

If international organizations aim to have an impact on the world, we ought to study how these institutions include civil society in intergovernmental

negotiations, that is, who they include, how they include and what they include. Moreover, studying the inclusion of civil society reminds us of the UN's initial pledge, speaks to democratic values and invites academics to rethink civil society's role and position in global governance not only theoretically, but empirically as well. I hereafter present the three incentives for which studying the inclusion of civil society in intergovernmental negotiations is relevant before presenting the added value of this book for an eclectic audience.

From a historical perspective, looking back at how the UN included civil society and more specifically taking stock of how it refers to non-state actors provides an outlook on how their relationship has evolved and gives an idea of where it is heading. In quick summary, 'civil society' has been referred to as NGOs since the establishment of the UN. Yet a shift in words dates back to the 1990s when the term NGO was slowly replaced by 'civil society' or 'civil society organizations' at a time when the world experienced the 'Big Bang' of civil society organizations. Consistency in the use of terms across resolutions, conference declarations and reports is notably lacking. To this day, there continues to be a lack of clarity on the appropriate terminology for describing non-state actors within the UN, hinting to the various needs and aspirations, constraints and setbacks among the actors in the system. Terms such as 'civil society', 'NGOs' and 'partners' are currently employed interchangeably (Willetts, 2006). However, the increasing presence of civil society within the UN, the institutionalization of Major Groups – supposedly easing civil society engagement – and the shift from a focus on NGOs to a more comprehensive notion of civil society raises the question of the evolution of the role, presence and nature of civil society's integration within the UN.

From a normative perspective, delving into the inclusion of civil society at the UN allows us to better seize the norms and values that circulate in and among intergovernmental decision makers and actors in the system more broadly stemming from staff to Member States. Many view the participation of non-state organizations in global governance as a significant stride towards achieving global democracy. Advocates of 'stakeholder democracy' contend that organizations representing stakeholders, including civil society groups and other non-state actors, have the potential to more effectively represent individuals who are heavily impacted by global decisions compared to elected governments (Agné et al, 2015). With this in mind, over the past 50 years of participation in UN issue conferences, civil society shares one core presumption, namely that of being essential to UN processes to enhance its democratic aspiration. It sees itself and its role as irreplaceable – contributing with expertise in many areas – since its members have taken it upon themselves to monitor governments that they perceive as unlikely or unable to resolve global problems (Clark et al,

1998). With the material means the UN provides, such as seats in plenary sessions and access to parallel forums, they participate, as far as their inclusion allows, in finding solutions.

From a knowledge production perspective, addressing the presence, role and activities of civil society offers scholars an opportunity to reevaluate with more nuance the inclusion process that civil society undergoes both empirically and theoretically. Theoretically, while international relations theory provided a macro analysis of the role and importance of civil society in international organizations, organizational ethnographers have looked at how members of civil society interact in and with international organizations. Tackling inclusion in an international organization offers an opportunity to bridge the assumed gap between two disciplines, namely international relations and organizational sociology. While theories on international relations were useful to understanding the world during the Cold War, they needed fresh input such as constructivist theories and later a focus on practices. At the same time, anthropologists came to places geographically ‘closer’ to home (Niezen and Sapignoli, 2017, p 33) to the extent that international organizations became a field of study in itself which allowed us to look into the machinery of international organizations. Empirically, it contributes to filling the lacunae identified by Weiss et al (2009). ‘Too little is known about the precise roles and impact of the Third UN. In particular, future research should aim to fill three lacunae: mapping networks, tracing movements of individuals, and measuring relative influence in specific settings’ (Weiss et al, 2009, p 136). In this way, we answer: Who is ‘UN civil society?’ What does it do? How does it engage? What is its relationship with the other working bodies? Where does its expertise stem from? And what resources are at play?

As we saw earlier in this chapter, the issue of inclusion of civil society in international organizations is not a straightforward matter. To start with, it raises the question of what inclusion actually means. Is it gaining access to the building, being granted the floor to make an official statement or being able to communicate with decision makers informally? And if the ultimate goal is to have an impact on the ratified text, would it not be safer to simply analyse the text and ascertain what advocacy items civil society pushed for appear in the text? Analysing the accreditation process, or being granted access to perimeters, is different from analysing interactions between civil society members and state delegates and their lobbying techniques, which again is different from analysing the ideas retained in the final text civil society advocated for. These questions thus point to a process spanning from mobilization to textual outcomes. They ultimately pose the question of who takes part in global governance, with what resources, and what promise civil society is living up to.

There are several ways to read this book. For the scholar focusing their research on civil society and international organizations, this book suggests new insight into the mechanisms of inclusion of civil society in decision-making processes. It also elucidates why the perception of inclusion may vary depending on the actor. For political scientists, I show the influence of the everyday elements of international action that the discipline usually regards as unimportant or irrelevant to understanding macro-level issues. For the sociologists, I hope to convince them that we are legitimate scholars to study international organizations since we have valuable concepts and theories to contribute to the study of global governance and multilateral scholarship. For a student of international organizations and global governance, I demonstrate that civil society actors engaged at the UN embody a collective normative and sociological space and that it is effective to treat these actors as a unit of analysis. Furthermore, for the student wanting to research international organizations, I share methodological hurdles and encourage craftiness. For the reader interested in social science theories, I contribute to three related topics at the cutting edge of research: the increased attention to practice and ethnography in political science; the focus on micro-level dynamics in the mechanisms of inclusion; and the attention to the everyday in the anthropology of intergovernmental negotiations. For the researcher looking for historical or anthropological data, I present a wealth of unique ethnographic material on how the Women's Major Group advocated in the negotiations leading to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. For the expert on disaster risk reduction, I highlight the feminist approach that is developed in international policy.

Lastly, for policy makers and practitioners, this book suggests tools and ideas with which to improve efforts to include civil society. Potential advocates can also read this work as part of their preparations so that they know what to expect when they want to engage in international decision-making processes. And, concretely, it gives them insight when they arrive at UN headquarters, to avoid the pitfalls inherent to their colleagues' everyday practices, habits and narratives. Additionally, this book may help local NGOs to better understand how the UN engages with civil society partners in finding ways to develop more productive relationships with UN actors.

It is important to keep in mind that the members of civil society I study are an example of a broader group. As will become clear in the course of the book, and as I further elucidate in the concluding chapter, the theoretical and empirical insights that I offer can help scholars and policy makers to better understand other domains of international relations from a range of thematic issues. My approach and findings provide a way to illuminate the practices and narratives that influence the inclusion of voices other than Member States' and that yet remain insufficiently studied.

Overview

Empirically driven and theoretically based, I develop my argument in five subsequent chapters before ending with a concluding chapter.

Following this opening chapter, [Chapter 2](#), ‘Civil Society Inclusion at the United Nations: Looking Backwards, Forwards and Sideways’, allows me to first look back and analyse the UN’s uneasy relationship with its so-called civil society and clarify how civil society has been approached and theorized in the literature. With civil society gaining increasing interest in world politics through its growing role and presence, it has called for different theoretical stances and changing methodological implications, as we can witness in the literature on international relations. Then, if the inclusion of civil society could be measured as the number of NGOs the UN accredits each year, I argue for a more fine-grained analysis at the individual level to analyse the inclusion contingent on interactions and power dynamics at play. I hence draw on the sociology of organizations to analyse the power dynamics among civil society actors and the UN system with its Member States and its staff members in each apparatus. I propose an innovative theoretical framework, drawing on a pragmatic approach, combining interest group theory and *dispositif*, to analyse the inclusion of civil society as a process from its beginnings of mobilization to its end, the outcome written document.

[Chapter 3](#), ‘The Spotlight on Disaster Risk Reduction: The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction’s Impetus’, presents the context in which the research took place. As the ten-year programme, the Hyogo Framework for Action, was coming to an end, UNISDR initiated new impetus in the creation of what was going to be the Sendai Framework. While UNISDR fights for disaster risk reduction, promotes resilience and updates outdated frameworks, by convening Member States in intergovernmental negotiations, it opens the debate globally by inviting and consulting with civil society. The chapter delves into UNISDR’s vision, such as its agenda, the alignment – or dissonance – of Member States, and the claims of civil society. The chapter gives background information, which sets the stage to understand how actors get involved and position themselves in the Sendai process.

[Chapter 4](#) addresses the first dimension of inclusion, institutional inclusion. With its title, ‘We the Peoples’, referring to the UN General Assembly statement in 1945, the chapter provides a solid basis to look at who the individuals are that mobilize forces for disaster risk reduction in the institutional apparatus. To better grasp the claims, resources and the way they organize as Major Groups, the chapter draws on collective action theory to help get a sense of the motivations and networks that build around the Major Groups. Combining collective action with the concept of career borrowed from [Becker \(1952\)](#) allows to depict the essential milestones required for

a civil society member to be institutionally included and considered as an ‘insider’, that is, to take part in the Sendai process as a member of the Women’s Major Group.

In [Chapter 5](#), entitled ‘Disentangling the Social’, I discuss the second dimension of inclusion, social inclusion, looking at the nitty-gritty practices around the text that form world politics and how it all plays out; navigating between policy arenas and decision venues, incorporating UN codes, organizing access and performing advocacy strategies. Harnessing Goffman’s concepts of front-stage and backstage, I present the various activities members of civil society develop, be it front-stage, for official activities, or backstage, namely informally, in the interstices of formal meetings. The framework helps shed light on civil society’s times of *social* inclusion and times of *social* exclusion. Building on the concept of *social apparatus* informs of the numerous codes and tacit expectations required to navigate particular settings in order to ultimately best impact the final text.

[Chapter 6](#) investigates the third dimension of inclusion, substantive inclusion, under the title ‘The Text Before All Things’. Here the analysis puts centre stage the subsequent versions of the Sendai Framework in the making from July 2014 to March 2015 to highlight specific agenda items pushed by civil society and the Women’s Major Group especially. It shows the importance of words – for some contentious, for others, vehicles for consensus building – by highlighting what is retained in the text and thus what is substantively included or excluded. A retrospective analysis from the first ratified document dedicated to disaster risk reduction in Yokohama in 1994 to the one ratified in Sendai 2015, with a special focus on gender provides a socio-historical account of gender gains and losses in the past 30 years and the challenges that arise with using the term ‘woman’.

The concluding chapter, [Chapter 7](#), ‘Exclusion in Light of Inclusion’, first looks back at the empirical chapters and discusses the various forms of inclusion, built on Foucault’s concept of apparatus, namely the institutional, social and substantive inclusion. Each form of inclusion depends on each apparatus, respectively institutional, social and substantive, in which UNISDR and Member States embody inclusive or exclusive practices. Investigating the interdependence between each apparatus provides additional nuance to grasp the hurdles that impede the inclusion of civil society. Moving forward, I propose three scenarios, ultimately answering more accurately what it means and entails to be included as a member of civil society. In sum, in an evidence-based approach, the research nuances the UN’s claims of being an inclusive institution.

Acknowledging the growing effort scholars have shown in sharing and discussing their methodology regarding research on international organizations, [Appendix II](#) is dedicated to the methodology deployed for the realization of the research that eventually led to this book. It reveals

the extensive story and the analysis behind the data generation. Because embedding a UN programme not only accounts for the data I was able to produce, it also revealed the conditions under which I was included and the hurdles that needed to be overcome to take part in the Sendai process. I hence provide a detailed description of my ethnographic journey following the creation of the Sendai Framework as a member of the Women's Major Group. I discuss issues about access, sustainability in the field and changing research questions in light of the observations I made during fieldwork, all of which speak to a researcher's quest towards heightened methodological self-consciousness (Badache et al, 2023).

Civil Society Inclusion at the United Nations

Looking Backwards, Forwards and Sideways

If we go by ‘We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance’ as it was stated in a General Assembly document, A/58/817, under the title *Strengthening of the United Nations System* published by the United Nations (UN) on 11 June 2004, civil society appears as a main component within the UN along with global governance. The irony remains that ‘We the Peoples’ is in fact defined in groups and institutions, rather than the actual peoples. In the past decades, theoretical frameworks in international relations (IR) have slowly but surely integrated civil society as a key player in international world politics. Simultaneously anthropologists and sociologists have started investigating international organizations (IOs) from within. This endeavour gives an account of civil society’s growing presence and is in line with the UN’s inclusive claim in light of its ongoing quest for legitimacy in dealing effectively with the manifold challenges of the 21st century (Schwartzberg, 2013, p 179). Civil society has thus become more visible in international fora as it responds to the need for ‘inclusiveness’. At the same time, the UN reaches out to civil society for participation because it can help identify global priorities, raise new issues, assist in global policy making, build partnerships, connect the UN with public opinion and in turn enhance the organizations’ legitimacy (Willetts, 2006). Hence analysing the relations among various actors is key to understanding global governance.

Furthermore to assess whether civil society is included in global governance and at the UN in particular, we must go back in time to understand the UN’s relationship with civil society and analyse how it envisages its presence. What does civil society do? How is civil society organized? Only then will we be able to tackle the heart of the matter, namely the inclusion of civil society.

To analyse civil society's inclusion at the UN requires, on the one hand, a historical overview of their relations. On the other, it entails taking stock of the theoretical integration of civil society in the field of IR as well as understanding the UN through the prism of the sociology of organizations. Taken together this endeavour enables to define more precisely the concept of inclusion, namely civil society's inclusion at the UN.

Overall, scholars have many times implicitly approached but seldom tackled civil society's inclusion in their research as they tend to view civil society actors as influential in world politics. Inclusion has been analysed either from the perspective of IR through the lens of the constructivist paradigm, or from theories about organizations, such as organization theory, anthropology and sociology of organizations. To date, empirical work points towards institutional inclusion as access with accreditation procedures (Niezen and Sapignoli, 2017) and social inclusion for participation (Willetts, 2006). Rare are the accounts of substantive inclusion, namely the words and ideas inscribed in ratified documents civil society advocated for (Bellier, 2012). Furthermore, scholarship has not linked or made sense of the relations between these different forms of inclusion. Yet a comprehensive definition of the concept of inclusion, which could satisfy both IR scholars and organizational sociologists and anthropologists is missing. This is in part due to the lack of substantial academic contributions that point to the conditions of how to include civil society, its process and required resources, and because there has not been an in-depth effort in breaking down the various forms of inclusion in IOs. While institutional inclusion might come across as being easier to investigate due to the rigorous criteria set by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), there is more to be said about the alternative forms of participation, namely social inclusion. Moreover, social inclusion, whereby civil society is called to participate by sharing expertise and knowledge, must be analysed empirically to better appreciate the organization's dynamics. In other words, we can question whether inclusion is always the appropriate word, or whether 'exclusion' might at times be more relevant. Drawing together epistemological and ontological features of the sociology of organizations allows us to raise the issue of inclusion in line with civil society's experience at the UN and to appeal to both bodies of literature.

In this chapter, I first present the early ties between the UN and civil society by presenting civil society's historical inclusion. I then highlight how scholars have integrated civil society into their theories on IOs. What exactly do they mean when talking about the inclusion of civil society? I further dedicate a section setting a robust theoretical framework that enables a fine-grained analysis of the dynamics revolving around the inclusion of civil society. Ultimately, I propose a more comprehensive definition of what

inclusion of civil society entails in intergovernmental negotiations at the UN that allows to unpack the various forms of inclusion.

Civil society and the United Nations: a complicated marriage

The UN and civil society's relations are complex. Going back in time and looking closely at who constitutes the UN's civil society allows us to analyse these complexities. For the sake of clarity, we use the term 'non-governmental organization (NGO)' to refer to the UN's historical ties with civil society and use 'civil society' to reflect on theoretical implications and current debates in academic literature. Throughout the volume, however, I use 'civil society' or 'civil society members' to talk about the engagement of individuals who are neither UN staff nor Member State delegates in the Sendai process.

Hereafter we delve into the growing presence of NGOs since the establishment of the UN and how terms – referring to NGOs – have changed in the past 60 years. We investigate the various incentives around the inclusion of civil society and present the different constraints involved in the inclusion endeavour.

A brief historical overview

Back in 1945 in San Francisco, at the time of its establishment with its Charter, the UN pledged to interact with civil society. Chapter X on ECOSOC – the body responsible for coordinating civil society, referred to as NGOs and their various inputs (Anheier, 2018) – mentions once, and once only, in Article 71, the position of NGOs: 'The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for *consultation with non-governmental organizations* which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned.'¹

According to the said paragraph, authority is given to ECOSOC which establishes the rules, the so-called *arrangements*, by which NGOs come into contact with the UN. Their role was defined first and foremost in legal terms overlooking their functional purpose (Gordenker and Weiss, 1997). Non-state actors accredited by ECOSOC can thus participate in setting agendas, make appearances to advocate policies and fall under intergovernmental control (Gordenker and Weiss, 1997). This comes to say that whether as consultative bodies related to ECOSOC or as actors for other UN organizations, NGOs have been around from the beginning and their participation institutionalized at least within one body of the UN system, ECOSOC. However, it has historically been less inclusive in comparison to the League of Nations or the

International Labour Organization, which is a tripartite organization. Borders were set more clearly, such as excluding them from the General Assembly, and denying them voting rights and equal status with governments.

In the following subsections, I present the dramatic increase of civil society towards the 1990s and the shift in terms used to address civil society.

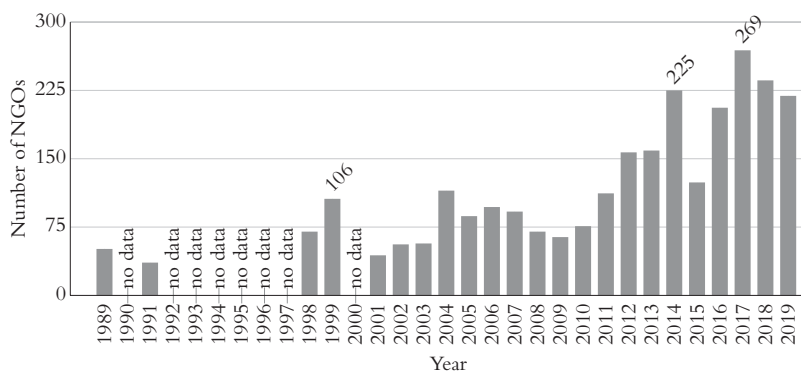
A dramatic increase

Despite NGOs' institutionalization within the UN, non-state actor participation was at its lowest during the Cold War. With two major blocs confronting each other, totalitarian communist regimes suppressed dissident voices (Weiss et al, 2009). At the same time, as globalization was increasing, traditional governance processes were slowly weakening. Growing global economic integration reduced the power of national governments while granting other economic and political actors access to the world stage (Sassen, 2002). In the second half of the Cold War, the number of non-state actors timidly evolved. As a reference, the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm hosted 250 NGOs but represented few compared to the post-Cold War era.

In the early 1990s, the UN suddenly experienced a tipping point in NGO participation (Cohen, 2004), as was mentioned in Chapter 1. The 1992 Rio Earth Summit became a witness to this explosion. Over 25,000 individual representatives of non-state actors attended the UN conference, representing over 1,400 NGOs from 167 countries. Most of them participated in parallel Global Forums. Three years later the figures grew to 32,000 individuals participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (Charnovitz, 1996; Betsill and Corell, 2001; Weiss et al, 2009; Schwartzberg, 2013). Since the late 1990s, over 250,000 NGOs work across state borders, 3,000 of which are affiliated with the UN (Willettts, 2006; Schwartzberg, 2013). The 'Big Bang' of NGOs – as scholars relate to it – echoes the increasing social movements, demonstrations and protests that criticized IOs for their policies and decision-making processes (Tallberg et al, 2013). Figure 2.1 illustrates the increasing number per year of NGO accreditations via ECOSOC up until the COVID-19 pandemic. It shows that 1,847 NGOs had been accredited between 2009 and 2019.

On the one hand, scholars argue that the growing number of NGOs over the past 30 years – described as the 'NGOization' of public space (Kaldor, 2003) – is rooted in the fact that civil society is no longer confined to borders and thus spreads transnationally and globally. Post-1989 corresponded to the end of the prevalent use of ideology to suppress critical voices. Groups fighting for human rights and environmental issues could now benefit from the openness (Kaldor, 2003). On the other hand, scholarship hints to civil society members' claim to access decision-making arenas to participate in

Figure 2.1: Non-governmental organizations granted consultative status at the Economic and Social Council per year



the creation of new norms and values that will impact their lives (Frouville, 2017). It is unclear whether this claim is a result of the NGO explosion or NGO internationalization and is a kind of ‘What came first? The egg or the chicken/hen?’ question.

Nonetheless, in the transformative decade of the 1990s, the ‘Big Bang’ decade, civil society groups underwent a significant change. Rather than primarily seeking the attention of the states, these groups started directing their efforts towards engaging with transnational networks, institutions and foreign governments. Post-1989, civil society widened and moved away from the state-centric approach it had since the Treaty of Westphalia (Kaldor, 2003). It combined more individual concerns and personal autonomy. In this way, civil society spawned self-organized advocacy groups undertaking voluntary collective action across state borders in pursuit of what they deemed to be of wider public interest (Price, 2003), strong enough to counterbalance the state and prevent it from dominating the rest of society (Joachim, 2017). Nevertheless, defying the views and decisions of the state has remained a terrain of contestation (Kaldor, 2003, p 27).

With the end of the Cold War and civil society organizations (CSOs) on the rise, the UN sensed the upcoming change. In this context, it created Agenda 21, the outcome of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992. It put forth a set of goals for the 21st century. Shortly after the Earth Conference in Rio, NGOs’ claims and the UN’s responses kept bouncing back and forth. Following Agenda 21 during the 1993 Vienna Conference, NGOs voiced the need to approach and talk to Member States directly (Frouville, 2017). After Kofi Annan took office in January 1997, he called for UN reforms consisting of ‘engaging civil society and making it a true partner in its work’ (Willettts, 2006, p 306). ‘Annan was proposing on his own initiative to extend the UN from being a diplomatic forum to being

the focal point for wider global politics, as no previous Secretary-General would have dared to do' (Willetts, 2006, p 306).

The UN ratified document bears witness to not only recognizing civil society's quest to voice its concerns, but also to institutionalizing its participation. In it are stipulated the clusters by which NGO actors need to engage. NGO engagement was divided into nine Major Groups: Women, Indigenous Peoples, Farmers, Local Authority, Business and Industry, Science and Technology, Children and Youth, Non-Governmental Organizations, Workers and Trade Unions. These Groups were to gather NGOs under the banner of their key interests. With new engagement impetus, civil society at the same time claimed 'inclusiveness' which eventually countered the prominent discourse about the democratic deficit in global governance (Scholte, 2005; Steffek and Nanz, 2008; Nasiritousi and Linnér, 2016).

With this system in place, the UN manages to channel NGOs representing diverse sectors of society and helps engage citizens, economic and social actors, and expert practitioners in intergovernmental processes. Since then, members of NGOs ever more perform as state delegates, representing the interests of these constituencies, engaging in the exchange of information, negotiating and providing policy advice (Betsill and Corell, 2008; de la Poterie and Baudoin, 2015; Joachim, 2017).

Looking back, in the last six decades, both states and international intergovernmental organizations have promoted the growth of NGOs by providing new political opportunities and incentives to organize (Reimann, 2006, p 48). The expansion of civil society involvement at the UN and the international system more generally is twofold. On the one hand, are resources in the form of grants, contracts and other kinds of institutional support (food aid, transportation costs, technical assistance, and so on). On the other, are political access to decision-making bodies and agenda-setting arenas. Indeed UN corridors have filled up with a dramatic increase in civil society's presence (Jolly et al, 2009), while UN conferences have welcomed an increase in accredited non-state observers. Ever since the UN negotiations on global climate were initiated in the early 1990s, NGOs, businesses and local governments have been present as activists, experts and diplomats (Newell, 2000; Betsill and Corell, 2001; Betsill, 2015; Bäckstrand et al, 2017). In the 2015 climate summit in Paris, over 13,482 civil society members were accredited (Müller et al, 2021; Bexell et al, 2022).

Scholars have analysed this growth in light of three main trends. First, new communication and information technologies has led to broader and more diverse stakeholder engagement (Anheier, 2018). Second, the prevailing ideas of liberalization and democratization became the normative basis for contemporary transnational civic activity. Third, 'the ongoing erosion of state sovereignty as not only giving political space to new actors and

modes within the wider realm of global governance, but also disrupting the capacity of states to confront global problems, paves the way, thus, to the claim of new actors in the world stage' (Mitrani, 2013, p 172). The growth is also accompanied by a shift in the terms the UN and scholars use when addressing civil society.

From non-governmental organizations to civil society: changing terms accounting for the increase

Non-state actors have been visible as actors in their own right in UN texts from the start in spite of having been referred to in different ways throughout the UN's lifespan (Götz, 2016). While some terms resist the impact of time within the organization (for example, NGOs), some are fished out from Ancient Greece (for example, civil society). Using one rather than another has consequences on the organization and the way it perceives its relations with them. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the term 'non-governmental organizations' was coined to encompass them all regardless of their interests, what they represented and the ties they maintained with states (Cohen, 2004). The mention of NGOs was an effort to give credit to the many charitable and professional organizations that played a role alongside the United States and their allies during the war. More specifically, 42 consultants and 160 NGO actors were present in California (Weiss et al, 2009).

However in the wake of the end of the Cold War civil society begins to be seen thereafter as a global actor, defined as 'the realm of services rather than self-interest and a breeding ground for attitudes and values like cooperation, trust, tolerance and non-violence' (Trent and Rahman, 2007, p 9), frequently considered as 'forces for good' (Götz, 2016). While certain scholars argue that our comprehension of the meaning and implications of global civil society remains limited (Anheier et al, 2001), a consensus exists among those studying the UN; a set of networks, movements and non-profit interest groups' organizations that unite to advocate for interests, identities or causes beyond state-based and controlled political institutions (Otto, 1996). These entities actively engage in international negotiations, employing diplomatic tools (Betsill and Corell, 2008, p 4).

Although the Charter specifically mentions civil society as NGOs, the choice of the term 'civil society' over 'NGOs' since the 1990s highlights two trends. First, as a concept consistently linked to actions and values that stand in contrast to those associated with war, its use depicts the evolving character of civil society towards a more transnational actor. Second, since its internationalization in the 1990s, civil society as a diverse set of actors in academia, media, think tanks, the private sector, trade unions, professional associations, religious groups, indigenous people, parliamentarians and local

authorities (Mercer, 2002; Trent and Rahman, 2007, p 31) embodies the perfect actor the UN seeks to foster close relationship with for the sake of inclusion.

There is no doubt, something had changed in the 1990s with IOs opening at a greater pace (Tallberg et al, 2013; Zürn, 2014). The UN recognized civil society's growing interest for participation and became sensitive to finding in it a partner in the post-Cold War period. While the UN instigated an array of summits in the 1990s, it had at heart to overcome the atrocities of the 20th century (McKeon, 2009, p 10). Issues of sustainable development with the UN's climate diplomacy was for instance not addressed without consultations with the Major Groups. UN's engagement with Major Groups thus pioneered the enhanced access and representation of civil society members via a range of participatory mechanisms (Bernstein, 2012). Since 1999, the UN uses the term 'multistakeholder dialogues' to refer to consultations with Major Groups, wherein they foster 'partnerships' as highlighted during the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Henceforth terms such as 'stakeholders' and 'partners' appear alongside NGOs and Major Groups terms in UN jargon pointing to renewed relations.

Therefore, the term 'civil society' is perceived as more comprehensive and aligned with the transformations witnessed in the 1990s (McKeon, 2009, p 13; Shepherd, 2015). This terminology more accurately reflects the UN's commitment to 'inclusiveness', evident in the increased prominence of NGOs and civil society in international forums (Sassen, 2002). In fact, the numbers highlight this shift, with the count rising from 15,440 in 1990 to 31,000 in 2016 (Anheier, 2018). Nevertheless, the fundamental categorization of what falls under 'civil society' or 'NGOs' has not undergone significant changes since the establishment of the UN.

Analysing the UN's shift in the use of its term – from NGOs, to civil society – points to the momentum for inclusion and has been theorized since the 1990s. Rather than adhering to the UN's continually evolving and sometimes inconsistent terminology and to avoid blindly using a term that may be instrumentalized for political purposes, scholars have not only used the term 'civil society' but have also developed terms deriving from it. Tallberg et al (2013) use 'transnational actors' to encompass NGOs, social movements, philanthropic foundations, business associations and multinational corporations, because IOs increasingly engage such actors as policy experts and as service providers (Tallberg et al, 2013, p 1). Weiss et al (2009) offer the 'Third UN' as a concept that encompasses transnational actors such as all non-state actors. The 'Third UN' consists of 'outsiders', namely persons who are not on the regular payroll of a government or a secretariat and who complement the 'insiders' of the other two UNs in collective efforts to generate, debate, implement and disseminate ideas and

programmes (Weiss et al, 2009). These emerging terms appeared in the post-Cold War era, the Big Bang decade, right at the time when civil society underwent a transformation in the ways it linked up with various groups beyond national borders in different parts of the world (Kaldor, 2003, p 1). At that time, civil society challenged not only states but institutions because it can transcend state boundaries that affect the global commons (Betsill and Corell, 2001; Kaldor, 2003, p 2). They have become both an ‘outcome and an agent of global interconnectedness’ (Kaldor, 2003, p 2).

What we need to remember for the sake of this research is that civil society, or NGOs, however we decide to refer to them, are organizations, or groups of individuals who act together to bring about transformation in society (Kaldor, 2003, p 82; Götz, 2016). Compared to social movements, NGOs and the UN’s civil society, as we will see especially in Chapter 4, are generally institutionalized and professionalized. They include voluntary associations, charities, foundations or professional societies and are usually registered formally (Kaldor, 2003, p 86). This said, how well are they welcomed in UN spaces?

An uneven marriage

The literature portrays the UN as the actor with the upper hand. It is the one who sets the rules and in turn benefits from civil society’s presence. This subchapter presents arguments highlighting the existing unequal relation between the UN and its civil society.

Institutional and formal inclusion

Civil society inclusion within the UN more often than not depends on institutional and legal measures; as we saw earlier, the first measure goes back to the UN Charter with NGO accreditation via ECOSOC granting ‘consultative status’, and the second with Agenda 21’s institutionalization of the Major Groups for engagement.

More specifically ‘consultative status’ accreditation is made possible in two ways; either through the Department of Public Information (DPI) or through ECOSOC. On the one hand, DPI hosts about 1,300 CSOs, seeks information about the UN, and looks for opportunities to support the organization at the international, regional, national and community levels (White et al, 2017). More concretely, it organizes annual conferences, weekly briefings, communication workshops, and orientation programmes for new representatives and NGOs. DPI also aims to facilitate the exchange of information and development of partnerships around issues relating to civil society within other offices of the department and with colleagues in the UN Secretariat as well as to reach out to civil society partners around the world

to enhance their interaction. Indeed, when listed, NGOs receive regular information about the UN's activities from the UN's DPI (Otto, 1996).

ECOSOC, on the other hand, grants NGO accreditation. An NGO needs 'consultative status' as established by ECOSOC in accordance to Article 71 of the UN Charter X (Schwartzberg, 2013). Box 2.1 shows the information provided on the UN website regarding the procedure for accreditation.

Box 2.1: Non-governmental organization registration guide on the Economic and Social Council's website before 2024

The profile registration will take about 10 minutes. Once completed, your profile will be reviewed by a substantive officer of our Branch. You will be informed by email when your registration has been accepted. It might take a few days for your profile to be approved. Please ensure that you do not submit your profile more than once.

- Copy of constitution/charter and/or statutes/by-laws and amendments to those documents (pursuant to paragraph 10 of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31).
 - Copy of certificate of registration. According to resolution 1996/31 an organization 'should attest that it has been in existence for at least two years as at the date of receipt of the application by the Secretariat'. Please provide a copy of the registration paper or, if your country does not require registration, please provide other proof of existence.
 - Copy of most recent financial statement and annual report.
 - Optional: Copy of examples of your publications and recent articles or statements.
 - Optional: Organization chart (if available).
-

Source: <https://ecosoc.un.org/en/ngo/apply-for-consultative-status>

It is through DPI and ECOSOC that the organization sets institutional measures, a type of screening mechanism (Defrain-Meunier, 2019), to include civil society and facilitate its engagement. Yet with four professionals, one associate and four assistant staff in the NGO Relations Section at ECOSOC, the number of staff members working for the UN bodies seems ridiculous when taking into account the many requests from NGOs (Schwartzberg, 2013, p 181). Furthermore, one may ask if the UN has the operative capacity to handle the concerns of over 4,200 registered NGOs, notwithstanding the 200 to 400 new applications for consultative status received each year and even benefit from it (Anheier, 2018). Indeed, in 2016, 464 NGOs applied for official status at the UN, of which 188 were approved, 41 rejected and 235 deferred (Anheier, 2018). Another example is the 2009 Climate Conference in Copenhagen which had a chaotic accreditation process which severely

limited participation by civil society (Bäckstrand, 2011; Bäckstrand and Söderbaum, 2022). In this context, it is legitimate to question how several thousand NGOs can expect to have their voices heard, much less their messages studied and acted upon (Schwartzberg, 2013, p 181).

This said, accreditation – which I define as institutional inclusion – however long the procedures may take, does not confer decisional powers. This is clear from the UN’s standpoint. The power of civil society is a soft one; they can argue, propose, experiment, denounce and be exemplary. It is, however, not in their power to make decisions (Schwartzberg, 2013).

They serve the UN in that *they can lead and say things I cannot say*. There are times we don’t like what they say or do and times when they don’t like what we say or do and there are moments when they are ahead of us. They can lead and say things I cannot say. We cannot operate in the field without our essential partners. (Kofi Annan in Schwartzberg, 2013, p 113)

In other words, NGOs may have a voice but they have no vote (Kaldor, 2003, p 141). Nonetheless the UN encourages this marriage and draws powerful narratives from its presence.

Incentives for integration: gaining legitimacy

As we saw earlier, historical research of the past 30 years points towards civil society’s both increasing presence and claims. Claims amount to access to decision-making spaces and participation in the creation of new norms and values that impact their lives (Frouville, 2017). ‘When citizens in any society believe their concerns are not taken into account in decisions vitally affecting their well-being, they will question the legitimacy of the body making those decisions and their governments’ (Schwartzberg, 2013, p 179). The growing claims coincided with a time when the activities of IOs, with the support of governments, had been increasing and affecting many layers of social life in the 1990s. To maintain its legitimacy the organization was urged to take stock of the claims and subsequently made steps to meet them. Ratifying Agenda 21 in 1992, as mentioned earlier, marked a new point of departure for cooperation between civil society, governments and the UN (Betsill and Corell, 2008; Allan, 2020). In 2004, the Cardoso Report, entitled ‘We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance’ led by the former Brazilian President, Fernando Cardoso, generated new ideas for civil society engagement based on the claims of civil society and the UN’s response in the 1990s. It acknowledged the increased institutional engagement by civil society within the UN and helped to promote an inclusive approach to the management of globalization. However, the report remained vague

and did not identify best practices to interact with NGOs (Willetts, 2006). While it set guidelines, it had no legal implication and thus, we may say, only worked ‘symbolically’, to include civil society and strengthen the democratic deficit in global governance (Willetts, 2006).

The practice of including civil society has been reiterated since. The crises stemming from the 2009 Copenhagen Summit where states failed to reach an agreement that replaced the Kyoto Protocol propelled the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change into expanding the role of non-state observers in the international climate regime (Green, 2014). Of the roughly 10,000 delegates present, about 2,200 belonged to accredited non-state and intergovernmental organizations, as well as to the media (Bäckstrand et al, 2017; Bäckstrand and Söderbaum, 2022). Copenhagen’s legitimacy crisis marked a transition from the top-down regulated Kyoto Protocol to the bottom-up Paris Agreement and subsequently offered an array of climate actions (Streck, 2020; Bäckstrand and Söderbaum, 2022).

Legitimacy stems from three prominent values: accountability as the possibility to sanction power-wielders; representativeness as similarities along politically relevant dimensions; and deliberation as political decisions that everyone can accept and is willing to comply with (Agné et al, 2015). If civil society at the UN were to be representative of the peoples, it would entail accountability and legitimacy. Yet the UN in this sense faces the legitimacy–accountability–representativity conundrum (McKeon, 2009, p 142), which makes it difficult, not only for NGOs but for the UN as an organization, to find sufficient arguments to counter the efforts of governments to keep them at bay. They thus draw their legitimacy from acting openly and transparently while exerting a moral authority (McKeon, 2009, p 142) and by having CSO and non-state actors participate in global governance (Karns et al, 2015, p 38).

However, the literature on civil society inclusion also emphasizes that the increased access and participation of civil society actors manifests in politicization and contestation (Van Rooy, 2004; Symons, 2011; Zürn, 2014; Bexell and Bäckstrand, 2022), which leads to ambivalences.

The Janus-faced United Nations

Viewing the UN as a body that accredits civil society solely institutionally and formally would be too easy in our context. The complexity stems from the fact that the UN at its core is not a homogeneous organization, but contains two main groups of actors. On the one hand, the UN and its staff members – the Second UN (Weiss and Thakur, 2010). On the other, its primary stakeholders, the Member States – the First UN (Weiss and Thakur, 2010) – for which the organization has the mandate (Jolly et al, 2009). While we pointed out the uneven marriage that exists between the UN and its civil society, one may ask if there are alternative processes towards

inclusion that would counter the seeming exclusion experienced by civil society. In the following subsection, we first explore the exclusion before tackling alternative forms of inclusion.

Institutional and formal exclusion

While the 1990s was a time when civil society assessed the need to integrate intergovernmental processes at the UN, hesitation and reservations grew among governments regarding their presence. Indeed, the relative objection of Member States derives from civil society's nerve to raise prickly issues and pose thorny questions as highlighted by Kofi Annan. Its members can, for instance, ensure surveillance in places where government authority is contested or abusive and touch upon issues such as human rights, the environment and relief in war zones (Gordenker and Weiss, 1997). Furthermore, civil society can influence governments and enhance political responsiveness by aggregating and expressing the wishes of the public via non-governmental forms of association and prevent, or at least limit, the government's ability to impose arbitrary rules by force (Otto, 1996; Clark et al, 1998).

The UN's relationship with civil society is therefore extremely ambivalent.

On the one hand social movements are feared because they threaten the established bases and forms of international interaction. On the other hand, they are courted since the values they defend, the energy they mobilize and their capacity to attract young people seem to hold a key to the relegitimization of the UN. (McKeon, 2009, p 14)

The ambivalence reflects the UN's double-faced composition. On the one side, it refers to the UN as the Second UN (Weiss and Thakur, 2010), an organization independent of its stakeholders, open to civil society because UN staff consider NGOs as do-gooders and the good conscious of the UN (McKeon, 2009, p 12) or as a source of academic expertise located outside the system for instance (Mingst et al, 2017). On the flip side, it points to the Member States – the First UN (Weiss and Thakur, 2010) – and their fear of influence. CSOs have already proven to marshal the resources of naming and shaming and pressuring not only multinational corporations, but also governments of specific states, to change their behaviour (Karns et al, 2015). The ambivalence hence stems from the inadequacy between the First and Second UN's willingness to include civil society at the UN and most specifically in international decision making (Reinalda and Verbeek, 2004).

The ambivalence resulted in two trends. Civil society was either gently put aside in intergovernmental negotiations, despite having no voting rights and alternatively integrated in separate parallel NGO conferences in

a formal way. Or, more radically, civil society was denied entry into official meetings in an informal way. These actions were applied throughout the 1990s in the Vienna Conference in 1993, the Beijing Conference in 1995 and in Johannesburg in 2002 (Weiss et al, 2017) because governments feared the influence and damaging information civil society actors could release to the world press. In the view of governments, negative representation could be detrimental to their reputation. Member States felt threatened by the presence of civil society and they wanted to ascertain that they remained the main interlocutors for country-level engagement with the UN (Kofi Annan in Willetts, 2006). In this vein and today's context the apprehension of Member States persists, and Member States remain on the defensive. Studies of the African Union, for instance, point out this uneasiness. Though the African Union has officially developed an organizational identity around a people-centred approach and a people-driven organization, the access and participation of transnational actors is profoundly undermined by a number of restrictions that limit civil society accreditation and participation (Bexell et al, 2022, p 304). In other words, global governance has become more difficult in a geopolitical context where the national interests of Member States seem to be gaining weight (Anheier, 2018).

While the official accreditation process leads to a form of exclusion which I describe in the empirical chapters (Chapters 4–6), today unaccredited advocacy groups are most likely – at least institutionally – to be excluded (Anheier, 2018), reflecting Member States' willingness to keep civil society out. As an example, in 2016, countries participating in the General Assembly excluded nearly two dozen advocacy groups, mainly the ones representing transgender people and drug addicts, from a global summit meeting combating HIV and AIDS (Anheier, 2018).

Alternative forms of inclusion

This having been said, alternative forms of inclusion, bypassing formal and institutional ones, do exist. If the First UN's prerogative of including civil society is straightforward on its websites, for example, it raises the question of whom exactly it is addressed to. In other words, the UN selects the NGOs it is willing to include and work with in a context where a large amount of CSOs want to engage (Schwartzberg, 2013). However, the patterns are hard to grasp. What groups manage to integrate the UN? Or what groups should be integrated? That raises a normative question. Should all academics and NGOs be examined for accreditation? Where does one draw the line (Jolly et al, 2009)? In the end, data shows that only a small proportion ends up collaborating with the organization, namely the ones with a strong membership base, ample funding and sophisticated public

relations capabilities. They are the ones that have a reasonable chance of winning out in the competition for attention. NGOs thus highly criticize accreditations issued by the UN for their lack of rigour in the ECOSOC selection to the extent that Member States are often accused of granting passes in return for political favours (Cohen, 2004).

If civil society gains access to the UN in two institutionalized ways to answer the UN's pressing issues, UN organizations also enjoy leeway in the manner they engage with civil society. Even if the UN may take them into account (McKeon, 2009, p 125), the organization may circumvent the formal institutionalized procedures (DPI and ECOSOC). Charnovitz (1996) made an inventory of the various techniques of NGO involvement in IOs (pp 280–282). He recorded ten techniques for NGO participation (see Box 2.2), which I refer to as *alternative forms of inclusion* because they do not require going through ECOSOC or DPI. I name civil society participation *social inclusion* for it relies on the various roles civil society members can embody at the UN.

Box 2.2: Ten alternative forms of civil society inclusion according to Charnovitz's inventory

Variety of NGO Participation in IOs

1. Individuals from an NGO can be included on a government delegation to an international conference. The role of the individuals is to advise a government; they are not free to conduct negotiations uninstructed by the government.
2. Individuals from an NGO can be included on a national delegation to an international conference. The role of the individuals is to represent the NGO; they are free to conduct negotiations uninstructed by their government. The principal example is the ILO [International Labour Organization].
3. NGOs can send delegates to semi-public international conferences. An early example was the International Statistical Congress, which had representatives from governments.
4. An international organization can establish a formal advisory group that includes individuals from NGOs. These individuals are chosen for their expertise.
5. An international organization can give NGOs the opportunity to participate in ongoing policy development.
6. An international organization can enlist NGOs in the implementation of programs.
7. An international organization can give NGOs the opportunity to participate in an official conference in view of drafting a treaty. NGO participation in environmental treaty drafting today is less formal and is often tied to a government delegation. The new ECOSOC resolution declares that NGO participation in U.N. conferences 'does not entail a negotiating role'.

8. An international organization can give NGOs an opportunity to participate in a preparatory committee for an international conference.
9. An international organization can hold a special session to give NGOs an opportunity to make presentations.
10. An international organization can include NGOs as members.

Source: Charnovitz (1996, pp 280–282)

As we seen in [Box 2.2](#), civil society can rely on ten alternative institutional inclusion types supported by symbolic inclusion and therefore bypass mainstream accreditation processes through ECOSOC and DPI. The list of alternative ways of engaging also hints at the forms of participation at the UN because the alternative forms of inclusion implicitly call for a type of participation. We can thus consider it a social inclusion since we see an immediate implication deriving from accreditation via ECOSOC or elsewhere. The list represents both the formal alternative to formal institutional inclusion which implies accreditation, and also implies that different roles are to be embodied as advisors, experts or as representatives of civil society. These alternatives partly meet the UN’s vision of civil society inclusion. Seven out of the ten alternatives are contingent on the organization’s decisions to include civil society. While the UN enables alternative integration, it allows civil society to participate in side events without having to interfere with intergovernmental routines. The UN supports its networking and the preparation of position papers. According to [McKeon \(2009\)](#), parallel forums and multistakeholder dialogues (numbers 8 and 9 in [Box 2.2](#)) are widely accepted and common practices. The UN enables civil society members to intervene throughout debates with free intervention outside the decision-making times ([McKeon, 2009](#), p 129).

However, defining civil society’s inclusion at the UN is not as straightforward as we might think. Some scholars refer to the accreditation allowing access to UN perimeters, others talk about inclusion as participation, whereby civil society provides expertise, information and divergent views from those of governments. Both features fall under the term of inclusion although the two positions vary considerably. On the one hand, inclusion is described as an institutional and material inclusion as a way to gain access to various halls and meeting rooms with a badge. On the other, inclusion falls under the description of participation defined as social inclusion where civil society engages with Member States or UN staff and builds relations either to the First and/or Second UN. Even though the First UN can set up measures, it seems the Member States, the Second UN, are still the ones who establish the rules for who may participate and hence determine the very nature

of civil society's participation (Betsill and Corell, 2008, p 6). ECOSOC accreditation stands out as an example to highlight these dynamics.

According to the literature, two major events shook the UN's relations with civil society; on the one hand, the context of the UN's establishment as an institution in the post-Second World War era, and, on the other, the fall of the communist bloc. Defining 'inclusion of civil society' thus varies according to the context and the perspective we analyse it from (see Table 2.1). In the aftermath of the Second World War, inclusion meant mentioning NGOs in the UN Charter as potential consultants with ECOSOC status. At that time, nothing else seems to have been put in place to foster the engagement of civil society. This changed drastically with the explosion of NGOs arising in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. New institutional instruments, such as Agenda 21 with its nine Major Groups, were set to include civil society. When Kofi Annan took office in 1997 he crystallized this impetus by setting the trend for relations with non-state actors. The figures and settings to voice concerns point in that direction. This was reiterated in 2003 when Fernando Cardoso, former president of Brazil, sought best practices to integrate civil society to enhance the democratic features of the UN.

We note, however, that scholarship fails to present the inclusion from civil society's perspective. It overlooks relations civil society maintains with the First and Second UN as well as its ability to adapt to the UN. The literature points to formal inclusion, namely institutional and social inclusion and as a result of symbolic and material inclusion, by referring to ECOSOC accreditation and alternatives which imply not only access but also participation (Box 2.2). Yet the way the literature describes social inclusion does not highlight the informal inclusion which intuitively calls for an analysis of informal relations between individuals. Looking thoroughly into the ins and outs of the UN's dynamics with civil society could unravel the informal conditions of inclusion. I argue that to better understand what inclusion entails for civil society at the UN, research needs to specifically focus on civil society as an actor, by analysing who hides behind that category; the background of its members, their skills, and so on. That in turn would enhance the sense of UN's inclusion more broadly.

We have looked into the UN's historical ties with civil society and given cues to understand the uneasiness it faces when dealing with what Jolly et al (2009) consider an 'outside-inside' actor. The underlying interrogation points to the question of civil society inclusion and the way scholars have addressed it in their analyses. For some it starts and ends with access to perimeters, for others, it is a way of engaging with governments and UN staff. I pursue this by looking broadly at how the inclusion of civil society has been theorized in the literature.

Table 2.1: A changing concept of inclusion

Inclusion					
Historical	Contextual	Institutional	Social	Symbolic	Material
1945 Charter	Post-Second World War	ECOSOC can consult with NGOs	10 alternatives	160 NGOs present in California	Badge, access to meetings/halls
1992 Earth Summit	Post-Cold War	Agenda 21: institutionalization of Major Group	10 alternatives	25,000 non-state actors, 1,400 NGOs Earth Summit in Rio, 1992 + narrative incentives	Badge, access to meetings/halls + participation in parallel Global Forums
1990s NGO explosion	New impetus by civil society organizations	ECOSOC can consult with NGOs + Agenda 21: institutionalization of Major Group	10 alternatives	Cardoso Report: identify best practices for democratic legitimacy + narrative incentives	Badge, access to meetings/halls + Participation in parallel Global Forums

Civil society inclusion at the United Nations through different theories

Even if NGOs have been present at the UN since the beginning, scholarly acknowledgement and consideration for their presence began later. IR theories which include civil society as an actor in world politics only appeared in the last three decades. It took IR scholars until the 1980s to shift their perspective and recognize its presence and contribution. The shift corresponded to the time when IR opened its perspectives beyond a state-centric approach to an intergovernmental one and considered IOs as actors alongside states. Since then, growing scholarship has pointed towards the uneasy relationship IOs maintain with civil society such as in the areas of interdependence, representation and mobilization (Lagrange et al, 2021).

In the following section, I discuss the most prominent theoretical approaches researchers developed thus far to analyse civil society inclusion in IOs. First, I present inclusion through the prism of IOs – a macro approach – with constructivist IR and democratic theories. Second, with mobilization theory, a meso analysis, and practice theory, micro analysis, I show inclusion from a civil society perspective. Third, I discuss the inclusion of civil society from the perspective of organizational sociology, an approach that is gaining traction and which stands at the intersection between meso and micro analysis. With each perspective, we will see, comes a different take on how scholars give an account of civil society's inclusion.

Constructivism in international relations theory: acknowledging the presence of an actor different from states

The UN has been extensively studied across multiple disciplines, such as political science, history, economics and law, and this since its creation in 1945 and earlier if we take into account previous settings of multinational discussions such as the League of Nations. Scholars have developed various theoretical approaches, often in competition with one another, to examine the organization. In IR theory, which primarily draws from political science, the dominant perspective had been the intergovernmental approach centred around realism. Until the 1970s, realism played a central role in IR (Weaver, 2008), focusing on power dynamics within the General Assembly and the Security Council, particularly through voting patterns (Alker and Russett, 1967). It emphasized the distribution of power among states, neglecting the significance of state cooperation (Keohane and Nye, 1974; Katzenstein et al, 1998; Battistella, 2015). International relations primarily focused on sovereign Member States, disregarding the importance of IOs and civil society (Carlsnaes et al, 2013; Rittberger et al, 2019). Realists depicted a bleak portrayal of world politics, presenting the international system as a

ruthless arena where states sought opportunities to exploit each other, leading to a lack of trust among nations and making global peace seem unlikely. However, the limitations of realism became apparent as evidence of state cooperation emerged, prompting paradigm shifts in the field of IR, thus challenging the realist interpretation (Mearsheimer, 1995).

During the 1980s, the study of IR underwent a transformation that recognized the importance of IOs. Constructivist scholars shifted the focus from states to IOs (see Reinalda's [2013] introduction for an extensive presentation on 'international organisation as a field of research since 1910'), considering the latter as influential actors that contribute to the formation of shared norms and values. In this perspective, IOs were seen as significant players in IR. Constructivists also acknowledged the autonomy and power of these organizations, as they actively shape and construct the social world. With IOs taking centre stage, scholars started analysing the various actors associated with them, extending beyond Member States. This marked the beginning of a new era in research known as the study of global governance. 'International governance is whatever international organizations do' (Kratochwil and Ruggie, 1986, p 756; Müller, 2013). According to Weiss and Thakur it is the 'sum of laws, norms, policies and institutions that define, constitute and mediate relations among citizens, society, markets and the state in the international arena' (2010, p 6). In that sense, constructivism and global governance are two sides of the same coin.

Scholars subscribing to this paradigm emphasize the constructed nature of IR. IOs collaborate with Member States, as well as key actors such as transnational activist networks and NGOs, to promote new ideas. Constructivists recognize the fundamental role of civil society in disseminating local knowledge, technical expertise and public participation through networks, activities and communication, and argue that the presence of alternative voices has become an integral part of world politics (Florini, 2000, p 3; Emmerij, 2005). These alternative voices contribute to the formulation of norms, adapting to the ever-changing international context and driving ideational change. They are new actors that shape understanding and interests through persuasion, socialization and pressure.

Recognizing the presence of civil society led Weiss and Thakur to coin the term 'Third United Nations' to refer to these alternative voices, consisting of NGOs, external experts, scholars, consultants and committed citizens who closely collaborate with the UN system. This concept complements the 'First' UN, represented by Member States present in all IR theories, and the 'Second' UN, recognized in constructivist theories as the organization's staff members. Within this context, the 'Third' UN proposes solutions to problems, both formally and informally, by engaging in debates with states, taking initiatives and advocating for change. These 'outside insiders' are integral to the UN today. 'What once seemed marginal for international

relations now is central to multilateralism' (Jolly et al, 2009, p 123). Constructivist scholars view civil society as a significant actor involved in articulating and disseminating new norms, principles and actions worldwide.

In recent years, IR scholars and constructivists in particular have offered valuable insights regarding the role and presence of civil society (Reinalda, 2016) and in the past half a decade regarding the opening of IOs. They commonly discuss the involvement of transnational and local CSOs in policy making and implementation (Holthaus, 2021), assuming that the emerging norm obligates IOs to allow access and participation of CSOs (Dingwerth et al, 2020). However, despite the increased presence of CSOs in IOs since the Cold War, the ability of advocacy groups to influence political agreements tends to be limited (Tallberg et al, 2018; Lucas et al, 2019). Various studies in the literature highlight instances of strained collaboration, such as the challenges faced by the UN and CSOs in working together due to shifting geopolitical dynamics and resource constraints. Finding innovative ways to collaborate are hard to come by (Anheier, 2018). NGOs are often seen as representatives of the privileged, gaining entry into global governance and perpetuating existing inequalities in the international system, rather than serving as agents of change (Hasenclever and Narr, 2018).

Since the paradigm shift in the 1990s which compelled IR scholars to acknowledge and hence theorize the presence and role of civil society actors in IOs, they mainly refer to the inclusion of civil society as an active actor participating and influencing IOs and therefore world politics. Even if that makes sense intuitively, it is not consistently backed up with empirical data, making it hard to grasp what influence means and how it plays out at the UN.

The democratic principle: justifying participation

Recognizing the involvement of civil society in global governance opens up opportunities for considering its presence. Scholars have identified three dimensions for understanding the opening of IOs: the functionalist incentive, the legitimacy incentive and the democratic incentive (Tallberg et al, 2013). The functionalist incentive views civil society as a valuable actor when the UN faces governance challenges. Civil society actors, with their access to diverse resources and skills, provide the UN with first-hand information, experience and capacity (Willetts, 2006). By strengthening their ties with NGOs, IOs – and especially the UN – gain a comprehensive understanding of societal problems, which is crucial for finding effective solutions (Zürn, 2014). Furthermore, civil society members offer non-political and diverse expertise that enhances the quality of policy making (Willetts, 2006), plays an essential role in documenting human rights violations, engages in fact-finding, and urges Member States and UN staff to promote and protect human rights (Weiss et al, 2017, p 226). From a functionalist perspective, the

focus is on the practical benefits of utilizing expertise beyond government actors (Stevenson, 2016, p 408; Slaughter, 2019). It recognizes that certain functions are better suited to local, regional, continental or global levels of operation.

The second incentive revolves around the legitimacy of the organization. Incorporating civil society's perspectives enables the UN to establish legitimacy in the policy-making process, which becomes a core principle (Schwartzberg, 2013). It is believed that by engaging with civil society, the UN can benefit from their participation in various ways: identifying global priorities, raising new issues, assisting in global policy making, fostering partnerships, connecting with public opinion, and thereby enhancing the UN's democratic legitimacy (Cohen, 2004; Schwartzberg, 2013; Agné et al, 2015). Civil society, representing diverse actors, ensures that individual interests are heard in policy discussions (Willets, 2006). McKeon (2009) argues that the UN utilizes NGOs to gain moral and intellectual input from entities such as international trade unions, faith-based organizations, and international councils of women and youth. In essence, civil society is viewed as a source of innovation due to its diversity and its direct connection to real-world problems, making it better equipped and more likely to find solutions than a bureaucratic system like the UN (Anheier, 2018). Moreover, a body of literature suggests that opening IOs to civil society is a practice of legitimation (Scholte and Tallberg, 2018; Dingwerth et al, 2020) and a prerequisite for democratization (Zürn, 2014).

The third incentive revolves around democratic principles and hence democratic pluralism, spearheaded by inclusive participation. From this perspective, the participation of global civil society holds the potential for democratizing global governance in policy making (Willets, 2006; Bexell et al, 2010). Unlike the functionalist incentive, NGOs are not perceived as instruments of governmental and intergovernmental action. Instead, they are seen as a diverse range of institutions that should be involved at all levels (Otto, 1996). This approach is grounded in the context of the 1990s, marked by a democratic revolution where a clear majority of governments worldwide became democracies. During democratic transitions, civil society plays a significant role in mobilizing pressure for political change. Various organized social groups, including students, women's groups, farmers' organizations, NGOs, trade unions, religious groups, professional organizations, the media, think tanks and human rights organizations, are considered a crucial source of democratic change (Diamond, 1994; Mercer, 2002). This vision strengthens and supports the democratic process within the UN, reflecting the principles applied within states. In other words, 'the spread of democracy has facilitated the growth of civil society in countries where restrictions on citizen groups have been lifted' (Karns et al, 2015, p 7). Many view the participation of non-state organizations in global

governance as a significant stride towards achieving global democracy. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for example, has championed democratic values such as participation and accountability, drawing from the domestic level (Bäckstrand and Kuyper, 2017; Bexell et al, 2022). For IR scholars, CSO inclusion is seen as the only way to ensure that stakeholders' arguments are voiced (Steffek et al, 2007; Agné et al, 2015) while democratic participation is considered a precondition for effectiveness in achieving goals (Bexell and Bäckstrand, 2022). In this way, civil society takes on the values and aspirations associated with peoples rather than with states (Otto, 1996), and organizes all sorts of causes and rights to promote human imagination, human aspirations (Charnovitz, 1996, p 186), and global and general interest (Frouville, 2017). Members usually advocate a cause (that is, human rights) as advocacy NGOs, but also carry out programmes on the ground (for example, disaster relief) as operational NGOs. They may be local, global or both (Charnovitz, 1996, p 186). NGOs bring a wealth of relatively disinterested experience and expertise to international politics in such fields as the social, the physical sciences, law and constitutionalism, economic development and humanitarian aid, and institutional philosophy and organization (Trent and Rahman, 2007, p 9). Consequently, IOs open up to CSO actors, claiming 'inclusiveness' and countering the prevailing discourse on the democratic deficit in global governance (Scholte, 2004a; Steffek et al, 2007; Nasiritousi and Linnér, 2016).

Tallberg et al (2013) developed a framework to assess the extent to which IOs open up to civil society. They use two axes, combining the measures of range and depth, to demonstrate the progression of IOs' inclusivity over time. Access, distinct from participation, is understood as subject to informal or formal processes. Their measure of access is calculated by summing the scores of range and depth. The 'depth' dimension captures the level of involvement of transnational actors in IO activities, which can be equated to participation or social inclusion. The scale ranges from 1 to 4, with a score of 4 representing full access and progressively decreasing scores indicating more restrictive forms of involvement, ultimately reaching 1, indicating *no access* (Tallberg et al, 2013, p 62). By using numerical values, this measure provides an overview of the access granted by IOs over the past several decades, demonstrating their increasing inclusivity and enabling of participation. However, it is important to note that this measure does not directly indicate the influence gained through access. Having access to decision-making processes does not necessarily equate to influence (Dür and De Bièvre, 2007; Sénit, 2020) and participation does not automatically entail influence and may never do so (Dany, 2014; Mace, 2023). The measure primarily focuses on inclusivity from the perspective of IOs and does not fully

consider the viewpoints of organizations within civil society. There is limited understanding, for example, regarding whether and how CSOs legitimately represent marginalized groups, such as the world's 'Bottom Billion', especially in intergovernmental negotiations (Sénit and Biermann, 2021). The issue of democratic legitimacy in global policies remains contentious, considering the imbalances between CSOs from the Global South and the Global North (Sénit and Biermann, 2021).

Mobilization theory: recognizing the hurdles of inclusion

If democratic aspirations encompass concepts such as representation, minority rights and civil society engagement, mobilization theory emerges from the study of social movements where the term interest group – and specifically international non-governmental organizations in IO contexts – is frequently used. Traditionally, the analysis of social movements has examined the motivations behind mobilization and the factors that influence their political outcomes. By integrating the inclusion of CSOs with mobilization and interest group theories, scholars have redirected their attention from the perspective of IOs on inclusion to that of CSOs.

At the international level of analysis, interest group theory often concentrates on the inclusion of CSOs in international conferences for it provides a concrete context and relevant starting point for studying their activities, advocacy strategies and influence (Betsill and Corell, 2008; Hanegraaff, 2015a; Rauch, 2018). Two main mobilization theories have been used to comprehend the inclusion of CSOs in IOs. The first theory, based on the 'political opportunity' approach (Amenta et al, 2010), examines CSO inclusion by considering various dimensions, such as institutional factors, availability of resources and policy-related factors that shape interest group politics (Betsill and Corell, 2008; Hanegraaff, 2015a; Dellmuth and Bloodgood, 2019; Dellmuth, 2020). Scholars analyse the overall participation of CSOs and their strategies in interacting with policy makers and exerting influence at transnational conferences, assessing whether they achieve their goals (Keck and Sikkink, 1999; Betsill and Corell, 2001; Hanegraaff, 2015a). It has been observed that CSOs that mobilize early tend to secure more effective representation at political venues during international conferences (Hanegraaff, 2015b). Additionally, Lucas et al (2019) demonstrate that policy makers are more likely to engage with advocacy groups when faced with increased political pressure, suggesting that CSOs support policy makers rather than merely providing expertise (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2017). More recently, Drieghe et al (2022) expanded on Arnstein's citizen participation ladder (1969) to illustrate different levels of CSO participation and inclusion in EU trade policy. Their four-level ladder highlights when a CSO is invited:

1. to participate in the implementation process for legitimization purposes only;
2. to share expertise and provide views on policy consequences;
3. to critically evaluate policy decisions; and
4. to actively participate in decision-making, exerting direct influence on implementation.

Their analysis reveals that CSOs are largely included at the logistics level (1) and partially included at the information sharing level (2), while monitoring capacities remain limited (3) and their impact on policy making is almost non-existent (4), despite CSOs' aim for policy influence.

The second theory, known as the 'resource mobilization and organizational forms' approach (Andrews and Edwards, 2004; Minkoff and McCarthy, 2005), focuses on analysing CSO engagement through their resources. Groups that possess the necessary resources to establish and maintain close contact with policy makers (Dairon and Badache, 2021; Dörfler and Heinzl, 2022) experience advantages when seeking to influence policy outcomes, particularly in situations where northern CSOs are outnumbered (Hanegraaff et al, 2020). Paffenholz (2014) draws from an analysis of civil society involvement in peace negotiations to identify nine models of civil society inclusion, ranging from the most direct to the least direct forms of involvement. Rather than taking a normative stance on whether civil society should be included, Paffenholz focuses on questioning how and under what circumstances civil society is included. According to her scale (see Box 2.3), achieving access and institutional inclusion, as well as being able to participate as a civil society group at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, would represent a mid-range inclusion, namely level '6', referred to as 'high-level civil society initiatives'. In this context, civil society actors can formulate initiatives either before or alongside official negotiations, contribute to the effectiveness of the negotiations, provide facilitation and, depending on the situation, advocate for specific issues to be included in the agreement (Paffenholz, 2014).

Box 2.3: Nine models of civil society's inclusion in peace negotiations

1. Direct representation: CSO can be a party to the negotiations on their own or as part of a delegation.
2. Observer status: The objective is to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of agreements.
3. Official consultative forums: Act as consultants to negotiations processes.
4. Consultations: The objective is to make the negotiations more effective and mobilize civil society to put pressure on the conflict parties.

5. Inclusive post-agreement mechanisms: The main functions of this model are monitoring and advocacy.
6. High-level civil society initiatives: The selected participants can formulate initiatives either before or at the same time as the official negotiations, strengthen the effectiveness of the negotiations, provide facilitation and depending on the case, advocate for specific issues to be included in the agreement.
7. Public participation: Activities that seek to connect large segments of the population.
8. Public decision making: When binding, it seeks to provide democratic legitimacy to the process, by ensuring public support and the sustainability of the agreement.
9. Mass action: Citizens' groups in the form of street protests or signature campaigns can mobilize significant numbers of people.

Source: [Paffenholz \(2014, p 76\)](#)

Although mobilization theory provides valuable insights into CSO involvement and strategies in international conferences, it falls short in analysing the organizational dynamics within interest groups as it primarily focuses on the outcome rather than the process. Nevertheless, it does offer the merit of considering inclusion from the perspective of civil society, rather than solely from the perspective of IOs. This perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of inclusion. And what becomes evident with mobilization theory is the considerable challenge that civil society faces in being included.

Practice theory: seizing dynamics of inclusion

Practice theory, which represents the most recent paradigm shift in IR scholarship, has emerged as a means to examine the intricacies of CSO inclusion within IOs ([Kostova, 1999](#); [Adler and Pouliot, 2011](#); [Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014](#); [Autesserre, 2014](#); [Pouliot, 2016](#); [Bueger and Gadinger, 2018](#); [Bruneau, 2022](#); [Pouliot and Thérien, 2023](#)). This approach, supported by influential sociologists like Pierre Bourdieu, Erving Goffman and Bruno Latour, highlights the importance of understanding the everyday practices and activities of IOs, shedding light on the power dynamics involved in CSO inclusion ([Pouliot and Thérien, 2018](#), p 166; [Holthaus, 2021](#); [Holzscheiter and Holthaus, 2024](#)). Practice theorists argue that a more careful and nuanced examination of these practices is needed to comprehend IR in a broader context. They view practices as socially organized and meaningful patterns of recurring activities ([Pouliot and Thérien, 2018](#), p 163). These practices are seen as the ways in which individuals and groups engage with one another within an organization, shaped by shared knowledge and competencies. By focusing on the procedural dimension of practice, practice theorists explore how practitioners within IOs work and interact. Understanding

how people carry out their activities is crucial for comprehending both macro-level phenomena such as order, institutions and norms, as well as micro-level processes such as rational calculations and the subjective meanings actors attach to their practices (Adler and Pouliot, 2011). Consequently, the inclusion of CSOs in IOs intersects with practices that are intertwined with power dynamics, gender relations, racial dynamics and postcolonial legacies (Holthaus, 2021). Practice theory provides a valuable framework for analysing and unpacking these complex dynamics within the realm of IOs.

Let's take a look of few examples. Anderl et al (2021) analyse the responses from a transnational social movement to the opening up of IOs. They highlight two key aspects. First, they demonstrate how activists' reactions are influenced by their perceptions of the quality of the IOs' opening up process, taking into account national and local contextual factors. Second, they reveal that these perceptions undergo significant changes over time, shaped by the experiences and interactions that CSOs develop with IOs. Examining the dynamics of time and space, Kimber and Maertens (2021) shed light on the exclusion of CSOs in intergovernmental negotiations within the UN. They identify two dimensions that contribute to this exclusion. First, decision-making power is attributed by assigning chairs for negotiation sessions. This can lead to sessions being extended and Member States' interventions being prioritized over those intended for civil society. Second, hierarchical relations are sustained, resulting in civil society not having a say in determining the location of events. As a consequence, CSOs bear the burden of mobilizing resources to attend events held in various locations.

Using primarily ethnographic methods, supplemented by document analysis and participant observation, the analysis of civil society's inclusion allows for a deeper understanding of the dynamics among various actors (Cornut and de Zamaróczy, 2021). Practice theory offers a framework that acknowledges the subtleties embedded in habits, routines and everyday activities. Unlike the previous subsections that focused on the IO or the outcome, practice theory shifts the analysis towards the organizational processes of inclusion and exclusion, shedding light on the intricate mechanisms at play.

Organizational sociology: grasping the process around inclusion

The analysis of organizational processes draws inspiration from organizational sociology, which has a long history of borrowing concepts to study IOs (Badache and Kimber, 2023). Building upon the critical perspective introduced by Cox and Jacobson in 1973, followed by Reinalda and Verbeek in 1998 and 2004, scholars of IR started examining the internal workings of IOs, unveiling their machinery (Maertens, 2016). The seminal works of Barnett and Finnemore in 1999 and 2012 established the foundation for studying the UN as a bureaucratic structure. Since then, a growing body of

research has analysed international bureaucracies, with a focus on the UN. While [Barnett and Finnemore \(2012\)](#) paved the way by employing the sociology of organizations and the concept of bureaucracy, recent studies highlight the significance of organizational sociology in understanding IOs ([Badache and Kimber, 2023](#)). Organizational sociology offers valuable theoretical tools for understanding the dynamics of inclusion. Beyond the notion of ‘bureaucracy’, a shift from viewing organizations as static entities to understanding ‘organizing’ as a dynamic process emerged in the 1990s. Organizational sociologists advocated for examining organizations as ongoing processes and emphasized the importance of interpersonal relations within and between organizations. This perspective aligns with the network theory paradigm, developed in the 1970s and 1980s by psychologists and sociologists, which highlighted the relational aspects of organizations and their environments, including resource-dependence connections. [Weick \(1993\)](#) laid the groundwork for studying organizations as processes, emphasizing the significance of relationships both within and outside organizations. In this regard, organizational sociology provides valuable conceptual tools for analysing the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within the UN.

Through the lens of organizational sociology and the concept of ‘boundary organizations’ and ‘boundary work’, [Guilbaud \(2023\)](#) examines case studies from the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization. Her research reveals how the staff of IOs engage in the classification and hierarchization of non-state actors, thereby redefining the boundaries between civil society and the organizations themselves. This process of classification and hierarchization leads to the exclusion of civil society actors. Building upon the notion of ‘temporariness’ in organizations, I conceptualized civil society in intergovernmental negotiations at the UN as a ‘temporary organization’ ([Kimber, 2023a](#)). By intertwining the concepts of exclusion and ‘temporary organization’, I highlight how civil society’s temporary nature can generate mechanisms of inclusion while also shedding light on the practices of exclusion exercised by Member States and UN staff, referred to as the First and Second UN, respectively. However, by emphasizing civil society’s autonomy, which is manifested through its inherent temporariness, I reveal a nuanced relationship between civil society and the more permanent structures of the First and Second UN, challenging existing literature on the subject.

While examining the UN within its broader environment could provide insights into subsistence in time and space and acknowledge the influence the environment has on organizations, this book primarily focuses on the relationships among actors within the organization. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the boundaries of organizations, particularly in the context of the opening up of IOs, have become more permeable, flexible and interconnected. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of civil society’s

inclusion or exclusion at the UN requires not only an examination of the organization's rules, structures and institutional characteristics but also a careful analysis of power dynamics among various actors and the everyday practices that shape these dynamics. Combining both levels of analysis allows us to raise the question: Who has the power to exclude? Where does the power to exclude lie?

Looking back and ahead to capture inclusion altogether

In the literature so far, civil society inclusion has been conceptualized as gaining access to UN perimeters (institutional inclusion) and as participation (social inclusion). However, what participation entails remains blurry. The theoretical perspectives fail to describe what happens within the IO once the IO admitted access to civil society members and also fail to describe who these members are. 'Invoking the international community is a lot easier than defining it' (Weiss et al, 2009, p 139), in the same way that invoking the UN's civil society is a lot easier than identifying who constitutes it. The 'Third UN' is usually seen as a homogeneous group. Raising the issue of 'who' engages invariably poses the question of 'who gets access' to global decision-making arenas and what background and career paths the individuals have. As we saw, engaging at the UN requires accreditation. In New York and Geneva, the UN is issued a list of accredited groups allowing it to distribute documents, invite representatives, issue security passes and organize input to debates. This leads to say that the presence of NGO members at the UN is questionable in terms of who participates in global debates. 'It is not that civic engagement is being questioned more than the practice of civic engagement may be distorted in favor of organizations with greater resources and more access to decision-makers in capital cities, perhaps marginalizing grass-roots constituencies in the process' (Schwartzberg, 2013, p 115). Analysing the inclusion of civil society at the UN provides fertile ground to look into *who* constitutes the NGOs accredited by the UN and *what* they gain from being present in UN corridors.

Once NGOs gain access to intergovernmental meetings, they present written statements, make speeches and lobby for specific texts to be adopted, but how these activities are carried out and with what resources are yet to be unveiled. To date, NGOs are still predominantly limited to conferences and the subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC (Willetts, 2006). They hold informal status within the General Assembly, the Security Council or the international economic institutions, just as in 1945 or the 1990s. Given many NGOs want their rights to be extended to forums, significant opposition among the UN's member governments still persists (Schwartzberg, 2013), hence a perceived sense of exclusion. Overlooking the dynamics occurring between

the UN and civil society would perpetuate the blind spot on relations among the various bodies.

Concretely speaking, if we go back to March 2015, after the many months of negotiations, a final text was ratified at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai. Talking about civil society inclusion – vaguely – as it had been done up to then was not sufficient in the context of a text ratification. If we assume that civil society had been included in an international negotiation process only in light of the terms defined previously (access and participation), an essential part of its work would not be accounted for. Analysing civil society's inclusivity from the standpoint of the text limited to the dimensions of access and participation does not suffice. To go a step further regarding inclusion, if a ratified framework aims to inscribe specific words or sentences, taking stock of what has been retained in civil society's favour is crucial. That work precisely reflects the lobbying efforts which appear at the very end, once the text is ratified. In other words, the question of inclusion should be: to what extent has the contribution of civil society been inscribed in the text?

Raising the question in that way avoids confronting the highly debated question of influence in interest group theory; talking about a group's influence in political decisions and policy making is a sketchy road to take because influence is intimately tied to power (Betsill and Corell, 2008, p 21). To date, no tools can measure influence because of the difficulty of isolating the influence of one actor from that of others (Uhlir, 2016, pp 31–32). It hence makes it ever more appealing to opt for 'preference attainment' as an indicator for inclusivity.

If we want to better understand the underpinning dynamics of inclusion in the context of UN intergovernmental negotiations on disaster risk reduction held between July 2014 and March 2015, we need to break the concept of inclusion into three main categories. The first one, 'Who?', points to access, or institutional inclusion where selection is made based on rigorous criteria or alternative access based on social inclusion. The second, 'How?', shows the nature of participation and its strategies as social inclusion. The third, 'What?', refers to the words retained in the text and can only be analysed retrospectively once the text has been ratified and preference attainment has or has not been reached.

Despite the empirical and theoretical contributions pointing to a growing presence of CSOs in IOs, their objective and subjective inclusion remains relative (Mitrani, 2013). Taking stock of the literature in IR on the one hand, and the contribution of the sociology of organizations on the other, the following chapters investigate the processes of inclusion – and exclusion – in intergovernmental negotiations in the run-up to the ratification of the international framework that the Sendai Framework was.

Hereafter I develop an analytical framework to grasp the dynamics of inclusion in intergovernmental negotiation processes at the UN.

Civil society inclusion in intergovernmental negotiations: developing an adequate lens

The state of the art and questions discussed previously set solid foundations in highlighting a major gap in IO literature about the inclusion of civil society— especially in intergovernmental negotiations – namely that of defining civil society inclusion. Here the issue is to account for its inclusion in negotiation processes – a combination of being physically present, having a voice, submitting contributions and witnessing advocacy policy outcomes. It, therefore, questions more specifically the times of inclusion – and thus of exclusion – as well as the resources and strategies at play.

To frame civil society's inclusion concerning its institutional inclusion, that is, access, its social inclusion, that is, participation, and its substantive inclusion, that is, what has been retained in the text, I combine political science theories on interest groups as well as interactionist theory from organizational sociology. On the one hand, organizational sociology allows to look at power relations, rules and inequality as well as practices, habits and routines, all of which help to grasp the machinery of IOs. Indeed, international politics are established by human beings who act in and upon the world (Cornut, 2017). On the other hand, interest group theory points to the impact of these groups on final policy outcomes through their resources and strategies for influence, power relations and mobilization opportunities. This innovative theoretical framework aims to think of inclusion as a traceable process by addressing the UN as a whole – in line with global governance theories combining the three UNs (Weiss and Thakur, 2010) – to address civil society (the Third UN) as part and parcel of IO studies.

I first present the concept of *dispositif* as a way to talk about power, a relevant concept to describe the UN setting in the context of intergovernmental negotiations. I continue by discussing interest theories by highlighting the necessary milestones for policy outcomes. Finally, I argue that capturing civil society inclusion is best done by weaving in *dispositif* with interest group theory in a pragmatic approach. I close this chapter by raising the questions for which I provide answers in this monograph.

Building the United Nations' apparatus

The first theoretical tool draws on interactionist organizational sociology. It allows us to grasp the power dynamics and their processes around inclusion at the UN. I first shed light on how to understand the power and its relations and then move on to argue that civil society's inclusion takes place in various types of *dispositif*. I then show how to frame the apparatus – the UN's apparatus – by justifying its theoretical importance in the context of the negotiation process of an intergovernmental agreed text.

The power to include

Before diving into deeper analysis, let us acknowledge that ignoring the issues of power and influence in organizations omits critical social processes (Pfeffer, 1992). This is true of civil society's inclusion at the UN, which can be analysed as a permanent organization consisting of the three UNs and as a temporary organization in the case of the Women's Major Group (Goodman and Goodman, 1976; Lundin and Söderholm, 1995; Kimber, 2023a). Power, as we understand it, must not be reduced to the exercise of formal authority or hierarchy, where higher levels have the power to hire or fire, measure and reward behaviour, and provide direction (Clegg, 1989). Power goes beyond the functionalist perspective (Pfeffer, 1992), and this is in various types of organizations. Foucault, for instance, suggests power in a structuralist, or post-structuralist sense, as the power over – such as discipline and control – in a relational perspective. In this way, power is not the possession of some people who wield it over others, dominating and constraining them, but rather a relational and productive feature (Foucault, 1984). Nobody has power over another, rather power exists in action (Merlin, 2009).

Sharing Foucault's view, Crozier and Friedberg (1977) developed the *strategic model analysis* (Crozier and Friedberg, 1980) in organizations with an interactionist perspective focusing especially on the power emerging between actors. 'L'analyse stratégique' does not rely on techniques, market, tradition or history, but is the result of interactions among actors. No actor is thus inherently powerful. Rather, power derives from a relation where A has power over B if B does something that would not have occurred without A's request. Actors take on the autonomy and resources such as expertise, information, knowledge and rules at hand to attain their objectives, which are not always the ones dictated by the organizations. In other words, without power, nothing is achieved.

In UN terms, that would mean that actors, the First, Second and Third UN each have objectives, some of which are aligned, some of which are different, with various resources at hand to attain them. Civil society inclusion thus derives from the power that emerges when civil society manages to get something from either the First or Second UN; alternatively it is excluded when it does not attain what it aims for. Observing actors' practices sheds light on the formal and informal rules that are used, bypassed and so on. If turned into a table Crozier and Friedberg's dimensions would point out the various actors at play, their objectives, constraints, resources and strategies.

Table 2.2 gives a rough idea of what to expect in the context of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction lead-up led by United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction based on Crozier and Friedberg's *strategic model analysis*.

Table 2.2: Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction led by UNISDR

Actors	Objective	Constraints	Resources	Strategies
UNISDR	Have a new framework (text)	Disagreements among Member States	Collaboration with various actors in the UN system	Organizing a conference
Member States	Have their interests integrated	Contingent on other Member States, countries' imperatives	Coalitions among certain Member States	Being present
Women's Major Group	Have their interests integrated	No voice in negotiations	Information, experience, field expertise, knowledge	Lobbying, advocating, informing, being present

Resources are the fundamental component when discussing power. They lie at the heart of power relations in that they allow barter. In our case, power underpins the inclusion process. Although this gives general clues on power relations among the three UNs, the use of this table provides a new tool to understand the inclusion of civil society especially if we analyse, for each type of inclusion, objectives, constraints, resources and strategies in evolving contexts, relations and materiality.

Yet staying too close to an interactionist perspective fails to take stock of the UN's laws and processes for inclusion, such as accreditations, guidelines for taking the floor, routines around informal meetings and so on. In that way, leaning towards institutionalism provides a stepping stone in further supplementing a robust framework, that of giving an account of civil society's inclusion at the UN. Institutionalism provides a lens to identify institutional elements defined as easily transmitted to newcomers, maintained over long periods without further justification or elaboration, and highly resistant to change (Zucker, 1987).

Including in the United Nations' apparatus

To go a step further in the analytical framework, building on the idea of power within organizations leads us to Foucault and his concept of *dispositif* or *apparatus* because power is ingrained in an apparatus (Deleuze, 1992). Apparatus is a concept that studies the underlying procedures in which action takes place (Peeters and Charlier, 1999). In Foucault's words an apparatus is 'a thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid' (Foucault, 1984, p 299). It comes

about at a given time in history to respond to an urgency and therefore has a dominant strategic function located in a power relation (Agamben, 2009). The apparatus connects elements among themselves to create a network where knowledge and power lie. In addition, the notion of apparatus holds the logic of a means to an end (Beuscart and Peerbaye, 2006), making it essentially strategic. Apparatus contains manipulations of the relation of forces with rational and concrete interventions that push in a particular direction, to block, stabilize or utilize these forces. The apparatus is thus always inscribed into power play (Agamben, 2009).

Initially, an apparatus in Foucauldian terms had a technical component whereby professionals and/or technicians were in charge of making organized systems work and function and it was conveyed as a negative concept due to its reference to alienation and social control (Beuscart and Peerbaye, 2006). However, studying the UN as an apparatus enables us to analyse actors, their relations among themselves and the work around a text, because it involves ‘cutting across distinctions of thought, practice, and materiality and focusing on networks of tactics and strategies’ (Legg, 2009).

If Foucault were to analyse the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction’s structures as an institution, he would be looking at the power relations, the architecture of the building in which sessions are held, UN rules that govern life within, the various activities which take place, the different actors who navigate and their functions, all of which constitute a ‘block’ ensuring ratification of a text on disaster risk reduction (Merlin, 2009) (see Table 2.3). The types of behaviour that develop within the UN, such as signs showing the willingness to take the floor, negotiation techniques, taking the floor to make a statement or proposing text modifications, to name just a few, all fit under power procedures observed throughout sessions. In analysing the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)’s apparatus, we view the organization as an institution – characterized by its

Table 2.3: Foucauldian analysis of UNISDR’s structures

Apparatus			Structures		
Foucault’s	Within which power is ingrained	Underlying procedures where action takes place	Responds to an urgency	Connects networks	A means to an end logic
UNISDR’s	Power relations emerging among the three main bodies	Accreditation procedure, taking the floor, submitting a statement	Responds to growing disasters	Connects UNISDR, UN at large, Member States, civil society	Creating a ratified document on disaster risk reduction

power – which influences action and shapes actors’ beliefs through action. Actors thus enact the UN as an institution in everyday life (Munir, 2015).

In sum, organizational sociologists have tools that can be applied to analysing the UN’s civil society inclusion by identifying how certain actors limit access to UN perimeters and decision-making arenas (institutional inclusion), while others strive to open up the political game (social inclusion). They look at organizations’ formal and informal structures (Law, 1992) and power relations (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977; Foucault, 1984), information flow (Law, 1992) and consider them as a plethora of elements rather than a monolithic entity in order not to miss how it functions (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007). The aim is to report on the UN and its civil society’s inclusion in detail to avoid talking about the UN in the same way the media, certain researchers (political scientists, jurists, historians, and so on) and laymen tend to talk of “‘the British Government” rather than all the bits and pieces that make it up’ (Law, 1992, p 380). In so doing, the sociology of organizations helps to look behind the opaque curtains of IOs and analyse the machinery of international politics.

Seizing inclusion

The second theoretical tool, interest group theories, finds its roots in political science. Studying interest groups draws attention to the influence organized groups have on policies inscribed in democratic political systems. However, pinpointing and measuring interest group influence is probably the most challenging and tedious task for researchers at any level of governance (Binderkrantz et al, 2017).

Political scientists have suggested looking into four crucial stages to identify the dynamics contingent on influence and to trace the influence process, calling it the influence production process. First, it analyses the formation of groups and the mobilization of individuals organized according to their interests for political action. For example, recent research shows how digital media has changed the mode of transnational coalition formation (Tallberg et al, 2018). Second, it looks closely at the interactions within the system that support influence strategies, providing insight into the groups’ collaboration and coordination in light of policy outcome influence. Third, it points to the actual influence strategies – lobbying – they mobilized for in the first place. Fourth, it highlights the consequences for policy outcomes in which groups’ efforts are reflected. In other words, the final stage manages to describe with hindsight elements the groups advocated for and retained in the agreed document, allowing to highlight preference attainment.

The following subsection sheds light on the most updated paradigm in interest group theory while providing an overview of what is at stake. In particular, it emphasizes the concept of access and the way it relates more

broadly to the literature on interest groups before turning to the four most commonly known stages that enable to identify empirical influence processes.

A neo-pluralist approach: competing for influence

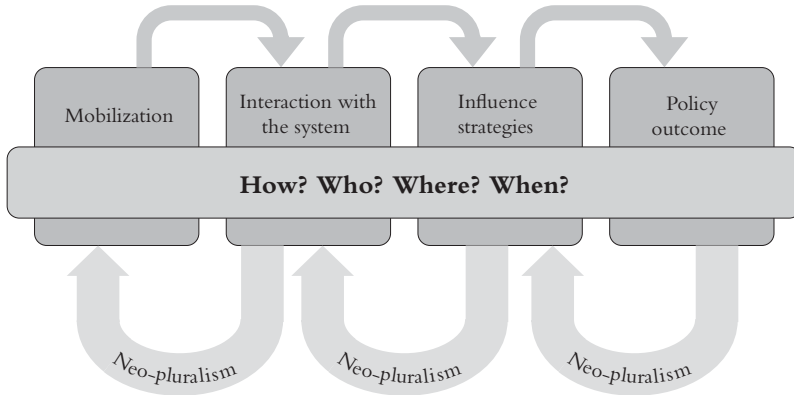
Interest groups – the way they influence policy, their organization, mobilization, and dynamics within and with the political system at large – have been extensively studied since the mid-20th century, especially in the United States. In Truman’s world, a pioneer in interest group theory, interest group mobilization reflected the evenly distributed salient interests in society (Lowery and Gray, 1998, 2004) whereas other scholars at the time believed that ‘interests unfairly influence governments by pushing competing groups aside’ (McKay, 2012). With hindsight, scholars defined Truman’s view as a pluralist one, emphasizing the plurality of groups and voices in political arenas and policy influence processes.

Studies have since been overrun by neoliberalist theorists who defend the idea that we are neither in the ‘pluralist heaven of Truman’ nor the ‘pluralist hell of the more extreme versions of the economic perspective’ (Lowery and Gray, 2004). In-depth empirical work enabled us to nuance Truman’s view. To date, three dominant approaches have analysed interest representation, each favouring one characteristic:

1. the pluralist perspective takes stock of society’s salient interests;
2. the economic perspective underscores the financial resources at hand which allows interest groups to work toward policy influence; and
3. the neo-pluralist perspective holds the idea that competition is key to understanding how interest groups influence policy.

In other words, interest groups compete for influence. From a neo-pluralist perspective, interest alone is not a sufficient incentive for political groups to mobilize. This makes it all the easier for policy makers to trade incentives for participation. Incentives depend on resources and vary across groups, even if policy outcomes do not necessarily reflect democratic demands (Lowery and Gray, 2004).

While the different perspectives (economic, pluralist, and so on) consider these various steps as independent of each other, the neo-pluralist perspective analyses the interlinkages between them. Formation and political mobilization intertwined with the competition between interest groups, linked to advocacy strategies, are all reflective of policy outcome (Varone et al, 2017). For example, neo-pluralists would claim that differential rates of mobilization strongly structure the density and diversity of interest communities (Lowery and Gray, 2004), which in turn strongly influence the range of lobbying (Lowery and Gray, 2004). In sum, the influence

Figure 2.2: Linkages in a neo-pluralist model

Source: Discussion with Professor Frédéric Varone

production process cannot be disconnected theoretically or empirically from the population stage, nor can the policy outcome be disconnected from the strategies, tools and interactions with the political system at play (see [Figure 2.2](#)). The population is crucial at every step of the way to grasp interest representation and its linkages.

To illustrate these linkages, it is interesting to question how the nature of mobilization impacts the tools organizations use, how the structure of interest communities constrains prospects for mobilization, or how the influence tools are conditioned by diversity and density. These reflections are relevant because regardless of the influence tools interest groups use, they do not always generate actual influence ([Lowery and Gray, 2004](#)). However, scholars do agree that interest group resources play a big part in the capacity to influence decision makers and policy outcomes ([Dür, 2008](#)). In particular, the literature refers to these resources as information provision based on knowledge and expertise, money, and legitimacy through interaction and support by public opinion and political support ([Dür, 2008](#); [Tallberg et al, 2018](#)).

Furthermore, there seems to be no unifying theory, be it at a national or international level, to guide interest group research, thus hindering any chance for potential academic consensus ([Lowery and Gray, 2004](#)). Based on empirical findings, at a national level, recent research suggests that political organizations are less impactful than public opinion in legislative creations, meaning that legislators are more strongly influenced by public opinion ([Giugni, 2008](#)). However, at an international level, a mere consensus lies in the literature whereby organizations such as NGOs do succeed in shaping IO policies, especially for human rights, environmental protection, conflict resolution, international trade and international aid ([Bexell et al, 2010](#);

Tallberg et al, 2013). That leads to say that, unlike findings at a national level, material resources and public opinion mobilization do not appear to matter systematically for NGO influence in global governance.

Questions as to how/who/where/when are crosscutting throughout the process (see Figure 2.2). Empirical research addressing these questions contributes to deepening the knowledge by giving an account of the dynamics within influence processes. It is safe to say that resources come into play at each step, some being more appropriate at times than others. However, identifying them is contingent on research design and thus on data collection, but not only. Challenges may arise. For instance, when one wants to measure how much information or knowledge an actor possesses (Dür, 2008), or one wants to analyse in what case networks and coalitions among interest groups exert greater influence than acting alone (Tallberg et al, 2018). Tallberg et al (2018) insist, for example, that in global governance advocacy, strategies consist of either inside or outside lobbying, where the first refers to direct interaction with decision makers and the second to mobilization of public opinion. Yet they omit the fact that looking at mobilization or analysing interaction with decision makers needs to be done by looking more closely into the NGO interaction with the system as a whole. In sum, NGOs' relations with decision makers depend on their mobilization.

Bartering access

If we revert to the beginnings in the 1950s of interest group influence studies, access was already then at the heart of discussions. Truman argued that interest groups cannot gain influence 'without access to one or more key points of decision in the government' (Binderkrantz et al, 2017).

Analysing influence calls for an analysis of the conditions of access to decision-making arenas and the key points of decision. In global governance, NGOs exchange information with access, because IO policy makers require multiple forms of information that cannot be sufficiently and efficiently generated within. NGOs typically become resources specialized in collecting and providing information that is relevant to their cause. In addition, NGOs usually operate closer to local populations and therefore have better knowledge of the various violations and claims. That allows both parties to engage in mutually beneficial exchanges. In this way, information and access go hand in hand. Tallberg et al (2018) go as far as saying that the more information stemming from expertise, for example, the more likely NGOs enjoy access to policy makers and, in turn, influence political outcomes through policy outcome documents. Influence is thus contingent on both access and information (see Figure 2.3) and increases only if information and/or access increases.

Figure 2.3: Interest group influence, a scheme based on Tallberg et al's argument, 2018



This raises the question of threshold; when has an NGO gained access or sufficient access to influence? [Binderkrantz et al \(2017\)](#) define access as when a group has entered a political arena and/or passed the milestone of a gatekeeper, thus securing its institutional inclusion. This would imply that access be defined as the step after mobilization. It also means that access does not necessarily imply having to be present, but entails being able to attend phone calls or be joined by email.

[Tallberg et al \(2018\)](#) underscore the leverage NGOs have in IO policy making processes. First, influence – regardless of the issues at stake – is all the greater when NGOs are active in the early stages of policy-making processes ([Tallberg et al, 2018](#)). Second, creating networks and coalitions allow them to join forces among themselves to build strength and more power. Third, since they do not expect financial support and provide the information for free, IOs can in part decrease their research costs. Furthermore, what makes them successful relies greatly on the fourth point, that of information exchange. NGOs' impact thus seems to rely on three fundamental components: access to decision-making arenas; knowledge about the mechanisms; and the time of involvement ([Binderkrantz et al, 2017](#); [Tallberg et al, 2018](#)). However, access and time of involvement are closely related and depend on information and gatekeepers.

The notion of interest group access is thus complex in the same way that civil society inclusion is because it cannot be answered straightforwardly. Talking about access is recognizing that there are challenges, resources and exchanges at stake along the way. The idea of access, which refers to the ability of interest groups to participate in decision-making processes where decision-makers hold authority, relates to our institutional inclusion. Meanwhile, interest groups can only influence decisions if they manage to gain access, highlighting our social inclusion ([Varone et al, 2017](#)). I thus understand the concept of inclusion as encompassing gaining access and attending negotiations (institutional inclusion) and lobbying (social inclusion). Inclusion, in our terms, is thus understood as an overarching issue for interest groups at the UN. I align my argument with that of [Binderkrantz et al \(2017\)](#) who claim that inclusion is an extension of access, and that access

is fundamental for influence, all of which is encompassed in the concept of inclusion. Inclusion must be understood as a dynamic process throughout the influence process.

Attaining preference: bypassing the measure of influence

Scholarship has pointed towards the twofold conditions under which interest groups influence decisions and ultimately policy outcomes. On the one hand, studies show that social movements influence policy makers through their internal characteristics independently of external support. On the other, studies stress the importance of the political environment and the context of social support (Giugni, 2008). Yet all seem to favour looking into organizations' resources over analysing their activities and routines (Giugni, 2008).

This is, however, challenged by new research. While 'resources' is commonly defined as money – referred to as 'revenue' for businesses or 'budget' for non-profit groups – new research points to other important characteristics such as activities as a byproduct of money (McKay, 2012). Experience and connections, for instance, or lobbying intensity, fit the additional characteristics, whereby experience is defined as government experience, graduate degrees or intensity as the time (number of hours) dedicated to lobbying, writing policy papers, and so on (McKay, 2012). The ongoing debates revolving around interest groups' compositions, resources and activities tend to reflect the difficulty researchers encounter in defining the influence of groups due to the variety of the actions it comprises and the challenges it poses in measuring it (Dür, 2008).

IOs, more specifically, interest groups – referred to as NGOs as defined earlier – build their success based on a list of tricks and characteristics of internal or external support; transnational networks, material resources, expertise, access to decision makers, capacity to mobilize public opinion, moral authority, ideational resources and information provision (Tallberg et al, 2018). However, whether they be at the same time inherent characteristics or factors for policy influence, placing the various suggestions in a hierarchical order of importance does not appear feasible because of methodological limitations. How can a researcher be certain one factor prevails over another in a policy outcome? For example, how can a researcher affirm that an NGO – that is not a country nor an IO itself – pushed for a particular aspect of a given policy?

To overcome having to identify the groups' direct influence on policy, scholars have wisely chosen an alternative measure, that of *preference attainment*, which compares lobbyists' preferences with the outcome. If the preferred wording and/or idea is integrated into policy papers, we talk about attained preference. Lobbying success is thus defined as an attained preference

(Bunea, 2013), bypassing the hurdles of measuring whose influence counted more, that of governments versus that of interest groups. Using preference attainment, lobbying success and policy influence as interchangeable words allows us to have a more in-depth look into the factors that analyse interest groups' success rather than nitpicking on influence.

The advantage of the influence production process, and the reason why it seems to be a good fit to grasp influence, is because NGOs have strategic incentives to contribute information favouring their interests and IOs have imperfect means of screening NGOs. The outcome of these exchanges lies in the policy decisions that reflect some degree of NGO influence. My argument ties in with a growing literature that emphasizes the many similarities between NGOs at international level and interest groups at the national level in how they operate in world politics. In this way, Varone et al (2017) advocate for a larger, more encompassing understanding of the analysis of interest group influence in the policy process, be it at national or international levels.

Civil society inclusion on a continuum: finding solace with pragmatism

Combining the interactionist theory of organizational sociology with interest group theory appears like a sweet marriage in identifying civil society's inclusion at the UN. The joint articulation allows us to understand the dynamics and processes at play by moving away from a monolithic understanding of an inclusive or exclusive state. Because scientific inquiry is not the addition of a research problem and a problem solver, it requires creative methods and theories to grasp social phenomena.

On the one hand, the sociology of organizations sharpens the analysis around the dynamics among the various actors forming an IO. It draws attention to the structuring effect of informal, at times institutionalized, ways of doing things, especially in light of inclusion and exclusion processes (Pouliot and Thérien, 2018). On the other, interest group theory points towards interest groups in a policy-making network and their likelihood to influence policy-making processes. It focuses in particular on actors, relations and the overall network structure (Varone et al, 2017). Both give valuable empirical cues to seize the dynamics of inclusion most certainly because they both draw from the same philosophical background. Proposing such a rich and fruitful combination comes first and foremost from abduction; a term coined by pragmatists which points to a process of 'noticing anomaly and getting an explanatory hunch' (Pettersen, 2013, p 113).

The typical situation for abduction is when we, as social scientists, become aware of a certain class of phenomena that interests us for some reason, but for which we lack applicable theories. We simply

trust, although we do not know for certain, that the observed class of phenomena is not random. We therefore start collecting pertinent observations and at the same time, applying concepts from existing fields of our knowledge. Instead of trying to impose an abstract theoretical template (deduction!) or ‘simply’ inferring propositions from facts (induction!), we start reasoning at an intermediate-level abduction! (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009, p 709)

In a pragmatic perspective, theories can be combined as long as they are compatible at some fundamental level. Data helps to identify the right combination of theories (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009). This subsection addresses the fundamental level which enables the combination and intertwining of such data and theories.

Pragmatism: an encompassing theoretical approach

Pragmatism is known to be the most important philosophical contribution and intellectual leap in science of the 20th century. Even if it took time to reach the social sciences, the philosophical objective was clear in that it called to ‘cut through the layers of abstractions and get down to the observable and therefore, presumably, the “real”’ (Smith, 1964, p 600). On the one hand, pragmatism grew among sociologists, especially within the School of Chicago and symbolic interactionists then spread to other social science disciplines with researchers such as Follett, Mayo, Homans, Bentley, Dewey and Truman (Smith, 1964). On the other hand, it grew among political scientists who were particularly dedicated to group theory, due to their historical and philosophical bond to politics (Smith, 1964). The practical political situations and changes of opinion come centre stage to analyse the actual processes of politics (Smith, 1964). Both theories, under the umbrella of pragmatism, call for acute attention to processes, because interest (or interests) do not exist a priori but are generated by activities (Smith, 1964), in the same way that knowledge is a social product yet always takes on material forms (Law, 1992). Only then can one understand the politics, the importance of informality and the influence processes.

Pragmatism, group theory and relational organizational sociology theory come together and make for a good description of political action. The importance of a certain political action varies with time and circumstances because it gives attention to activities and people in the doing rather than people in their intentions, dilemmas and in their thinking (Smith, 1964). Interest group theorists consider the direct impact of political organizations on policy change, that is, the impact organizations have after considering other potential influences (Burstein and Linton, 2002). Organizational sociologists look at institutional structures and procedures and their impact

on power relations. While IR scholars have often embraced pragmatic commonsense, they have done so without professing pragmatism as a formal doctrine (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009).

Not only will pragmatic researchers try to understand the texture of human practice via objectifying observation; they will also be reflexive about the intersubjective rationalizations of the practitioners themselves; and they will ruminate on the conceptual instruments used for observation. Pragmatic researchers will not uncritically impose their categories, nor will they become enmeshed in interpretive or ethnographic research to such an extent as to surrender all critical judgment to the practitioners in the 'field'. (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009, p 714)

These two theoretical frameworks originate in different disciplines. Nonetheless, they find themselves claiming the same endeavour, to follow the political process (interest group theorists), as well as relations and networks (organizational sociologists). They both have the advantage of not having to try to rationalize ex-post the way they would like to see their activity but rather are dedicated to giving an accurate description of how they went about their business (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009). Assuming pragmatists do not shy away from generating knowledge, they give up on the positivist ideal when presenting results. This having been said, the relevance of combining these two theories allows us to understand the relationship between context and action, which is critical in tackling the larger theoretical question of the relationship between structure and agency (Minkoff and McCarthy, 2005).

Women's processual inclusion in the United Nations' apparatus

Combining these theories sheds light on the milestones of inclusion enacted in the UN's apparatus which holds the accreditation process, the creation of a text as well as advocacy relations and strategies, among others. This endeavour must be understood more broadly as constitutive of the overall inclusion process. I present three fundamental types of apparatus, all of which are intertwined, namely the substantive, the social and the institutional, which when the process thereof is fulfilled points to civil society's inclusion.

The UN's three types of apparatus towards inclusion allows to depict activities, actions, relations and networks within them. The apparatus thus provides a conceptual framework to think about the conditions that lead to civil society's inclusion in each apparatus. Civil society would thus be included in each apparatus after having overcome the trials that develop in each given apparatus. By trials, we build on Latour's definition, which calls

for ‘experiments of various sorts in which new performances are elicited’ (1999, p 311) where manifold actors, things and people, systems and relationships come together to form and dissolve attachments (Lehtonen, 2003). It is in those trials that we would see what civil society actors are capable of to overcome exclusion (Lehtonen, 2003, p 365). Trials must be understood as moments of confrontation between different logics, not necessarily institutionalized, controlled, codified or regulated (Tremblay and Gendron, 2011, p 263), involving peoples, discourses, types of knowledge and action. Trials therefore shine through in Crozier and Friedberg’s strategic analysis model when we map out issues, objectives, resource constraints and strategies of different actors.

First, the institutional apparatus raises the issue of who – what individual, group or organization – engages and thus invariably answers the question, in retrospect, as to ‘who gets access’ to global decision-making arenas. This underpins social mobilization and political opportunity, which presumes together with the political process that protests may change public policy (Minkoff and McCarthy, 2005). In this regard, the individuals within the Women’s Major Group in the disaster risk reduction process between 2014 and 2015 could be considered ‘easy riders’ if we rely on social movement theory. The literature states that movements arising later – in our case, after the institutionalization of the nine Major Groups at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 – are ‘easy riders’ who effectively take ‘advantage of a political opportunity structure that others struggled to open up’ (Minkoff, 1997b). However, it is with the concept of career, borrowed from Howard Becker, that I analyse the dynamics of the institutional apparatus such as who and how individuals gain access to IO perimeters and with what resources. I argue that engaging at the UN, from seeking accreditation to receiving documents, invitations and security passes to participate and give input to debates, is embedded in an individual’s *career* that comes to light in the Sendai process.

Second, the social apparatus sheds light on actors’ lobbying activities, such as integrating intergovernmental meetings, providing written statements and giving speeches (Willetts, 2006). More specifically this apparatus accounts for the exchange relation logic driven by formal institutions and rules. Although NGOs are formally invited to do so at times and are asked to move away or step aside at others due to time constraints, for example, the literature notes that collaborative network structures seem to be more informally driven (Varone et al, 2017). Looking closely into when and where civil society can engage and most importantly how it participates in these activities, grasping the formalities and informalities, analysing their subjective goals, along with their resources to barter access, gives a fine-grained analysis of the powers at play and the trials to overcome towards inclusion. I use Erving Goffman’s concept of front-stage and backstage for

it allows me to better grasp the mechanisms that drive formal and informal interactions in the social apparatus.

Third, the substantive apparatus is certainly the most central of all and the UN's *raison d'être* and for the text, in our case, the Sendai Framework becomes the reason why individuals are put to work. The text thus lies at the heart of the process. Analysing what is written and the process of what is being retained in the final document builds on textual trials. The negotiated text becomes the 'inscription', the result by which activities have managed to translate interest into a material form (Callon, 1990) if we borrow Actor-Network Theory's jargon. The inscription gives – even enmeshed – a puzzle of the various contributions. Looking at the text as who, when and how it is inscribed is interesting not because of what it says, but because of the kind of action it enables by being material, mobile and combinable (Lise and Mouritsen, 2011, p 177). The document is thus the end, the means of which are the actions, relations and material dimensions, where inclusion is explicit (or not).

Table 2.4 presents the institutional, social and substantive apparatus drawing from the table of 'strategic analysis model' by Crozier and Friedberg (1980). Compiled with empirical data, the table allows us to highlight the objective, resources, constraints and strategies in each of the UN's apparatus pointing to the powers that include or exclude civil society from the Sendai process.

In sum, while interest group theory gives a sense of the expected linearity needed to understand the inherent dynamics of inclusion, the sociology of organizations and more specifically interactionist theories look closely into the activities, the relations among actors, and the role of formal and informal procedures. Both need to be analysed as a continuum in the apparatus because

Table 2.4: Strategic analysis model: complexified table

	Complexification	UNISDR	Member States	Women's Major Group
Objective	Institutional inclusion Social inclusion Substantive inclusion			
Constraints	Substantive inclusion Social inclusion Institutional inclusion			
Resources	Substantive inclusion Social inclusion Institutional inclusion			
Strategies	Substantive inclusion Social inclusion Institutional inclusion			

nothing is rigid and fixed in time and space. In other words, all three types of apparatus are interlinked and need to be studied as such – as a whole policy-making process (Varone et al, 2017) – to grasp the ways in which civil society’s inclusion unfolds in intergovernmental negotiation processes, here with UNISDR. It accounts for the Women’s Major Group policy success in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and interest groups at the UN more generally. Hence combining these theories from two disciplines in social sciences innovatively complements each other and highlights the inclusion process of UN’s civil society. The articulation of the theories and data that come along with it helps to fill a gap in the literature of interest group theory to understand how the various forms of inclusion connect. Lowery and Gray (2004) go along these lines by affirming that little effort has been put into better understanding the behaviours at the different stages, for the different types of apparatus and how they interact with each other. That, they argue, is due in large part to the exclusive reliance on large-n and/or single case studies. For the sociology of organizations, integrating the notion of process, by hinting at various stages of action and various power relations with iconic sociological concepts (that is, career and front-stage/backstage), helps shed light on the way IOs as actors in world politics function.

Research questions and the way forward

Building on the state of the art and the theoretical framework I develop, I define the UN’s civil society inclusion, in intergovernmental negotiations, as the process of individuals’ capabilities to overcome trials formed in each UN apparatus, namely the institutional, social and substantive, and to attain the objectives of each apparatus. This research provides answers as to whether civil society, in particular the Women’s Major Group, can be considered as having been included in the Sendai Framework process and *in extenso* as having been included in global governance decision-making processes. While inclusion is an outcome inscribed in a process of actors’ dynamics and power relations, I bring attention more closely to the resources used at specific times and in the substantive, institutional and social apparatus. The fundamental question thus relies on finding out what the times of inclusion are, pointing to what dimensions are ‘most’ inclusive; the what, the how, the who. The answers enable us to better understand the Women’s Major Group’s role, as a proxy the UN’s civil society, in the creation of an international agreement, perhaps giving insight into Burstein and Linton’s question (2002) as to how much influence interest groups can expect to have.

Even though the research lacks comparison either with a different process or with a different civil society group within the same process, the research observations underline that network position within the apparatus, actors’ strategies and resources overturn the potential influence from social

movements outside the apparatus (Varone et al, 2017), making influence all the more effective when strategically situated. Furthermore, this research may be an inkling as to the best time for an NGO to be involved – the earlier the better according to Tallberg et al (2018) – and perhaps point to the best time, spanning from the first preparatory committee to the world conference, to integrate a process.

Thanks to an in-depth ethnography as briefly described in Chapter 1 and extensively discussed in Appendix II and III, this book provides an opportunity to fill the gap in the literature, at national and international levels of governance, as to the strategies and resources needed to influence at best policy outcomes. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 subsequently delve into the three apparatus, namely the institutional one, where civil society actors' incentives and motivations come to light – the *who* is put to work – the social apparatus where strategic actions take place – the *how* everything works and is put to work – and finally the substantive apparatus, which accounts for the text and its policy outcomes – the *what* is worked at.

The Spotlight on Disaster Risk Reduction

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction's Impetus

To better understand the negotiation process to which civil society was convened, let us look into the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)'s organizational history to grasp the initial impetus for 'disaster risk reduction' (DRR) at an international level. Drawing from the work of other scholars who have focused on UNISDR's organization and the narrative it has developed enables us to deepen the elements presented in [Chapter 1](#). I rely in particular on French anthropologist Sandrine Revet's publications; she analysed the organization's narrative regarding disasters and looked into the organization's mandate and history. We build on her contributions and complement them as we go along with information drawn from UNISDR's website.

I first trace back UNISDR's vision and initial contribution as a tool for its agenda-setting to seek institutional recognition, legitimacy and visibility. I point out the organization's narrative to fight for an international cause while promoting *resilience* and delivering a paradigm based on *possibilities* rather than probabilities. I then show UNISDR's limits with the necessity to keep its narrative somewhat vague and end the chapter by presenting the initial imperatives civil society sees as UNISDR opens the debate globally when convening stakeholders to participate.

We thus examine UNISDR's narrative to maintain its programme and the strategies it develops. Indeed, it delivers a new paradigm based on past disasters, promotes a concept in vogue and shies away from contentious issues to maximize the chances to deliver a final document within the allocated time. I raise the thorny topic of vagueness while suggesting an interpretation for its reasons.

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction has a vision!

To begin, on its website UNISDR exposes its chronology, pointing out the main milestones. We learn that the first world conference on DRR was organized in Yokohama in 1994 in the context of the ‘Decade for Disaster Prevention’ headed by a former United Nations Environmental Programme employee. As indicated on its website under ‘who we are’, the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990–1999) was launched by the General Assembly in 1989. [Revet \(2009a, 2009b, 2018, 2020\)](#) offers an in-depth analysis in addition to providing a critical view of the narrative. She argues that the initial drive behind the conference was based on the need to study disasters beyond the lens of earth sciences to discuss the term ‘natural’ when addressing disasters. The underlying idea was to add a social science perspective to the overall study of disasters. However, towards the end of the Decade, the issue was not only to add scientific competence but also to ensure the organization’s sustainability. Consequently, the ‘Decade for Disaster Prevention’ became institutionalized as an organization. Subsequently, in 2001 the General Assembly decided to create a United Nations (UN) organization and named it UNISDR with a specific mandate. The organization became recognized in the UN system as an interagency platform promoting activities for DRR. While 25 persons had been hired to work during the Decade, only 17 people remained after the platform was institutionalized in 2004. Between 2001 and 2005 the UN programme, headed by a former United Nations Relief Organization staff member who influenced the missions from an emergency response perspective, remained quiet and ill-known within the system.

UNISDR was established in 1999 as a dedicated secretariat to facilitate the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly resolution (56/195), to serve as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction and to ensure synergies among the disaster reduction activities of the United Nations system and regional organizations and activities in socio-economic and humanitarian fields. It is an organisational unit of the UN Secretariat and is led by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction (SRSG). (UNISDR, nda)

On 26 December 2004, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami struck. The event immediately launched the topic of *natural* disasters on global considerations. A few weeks later the Second World Conference brought together Member States around a Framework entitled the Hyogo Framework

for Action (HFA). The World Conference scheduled to target this issue not only confirmed but also legitimized, the need for such an organization. UNISDR's team suddenly grew from 17 to over 100 staff members, turning the programme into an indispensable actor in dealing with disasters at the international level.

Since its creation, UNISDR coined the topic 'disaster risk reduction' which meets the expectations of two of the UN's fundamental mandates, namely humanitarian and development. Historically the fracture between humanitarian agencies, dealing with emergency response, and development agencies, dealing with prevention, within the UN system divides practitioners both at headquarters and in the field. 'Humanitarian and development organizations tend to compete with one another for money, turf, and credit' (Moore, 1999, p 104). Indeed the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), a humanitarian mandate, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a development mandate, both tackle 'natural' risk and 'natural' disasters. The establishment in 2001 of UNISDR overlapped the mandates of both well-known and long-established organizations, that is, OCHA and UNDP.

Two decades later, with a mandate at the crossroad between the humanitarian and development mandate, UNISDR collaborates with both organizations. In that way, UNISDR's programmes focus on decreasing vulnerability in the face of disasters from a development point of view and a humanitarian perspective by linking climate change with early warning systems to reduce losses.

Goals: Increase public awareness of the risks that natural, technological and environmental hazards pose to modern societies. Obtain commitment by public authorities to reduce risks to people, their livelihoods, social and economic infrastructure, and environmental resources. Engage public participation at all levels of implementation to create disaster-resistant communities through increased partnership and expanded risk reduction networks at all levels. Reduce the economic and social losses of disasters as measured, for example, by Gross Domestic Product. (UNISDR, ndb)

Analysing UNISDR's agenda-setting process more closely is crucial because it determines which issues are to be dealt with and in what terms (Littoz-Monnet, 2012). In 2014, its vision to decrease the risk of disasters worldwide relied on enhancing recognition of disaster threats, and in finding ways to lower the risk by engaging with governments at all levels and with persons in all fields. Ultimately UNISDR believed that working for DRR ought to become everyone's concern. In this way, UNISDR actively engaged with civil society to ensure DRR implementations. With 'DRR' at hand,

UNISDR thus performs a legitimization function by signalling to states and all other actors that actions tied to reducing disaster risks are appropriate (Joachim, 2003). ‘UNISDR cooperates directly with both individual organizations and works to *actively strengthen and grow civil society networks*, globally and regionally, for outreach and implementation’ (UNISDR’s website, Civil society, last accessed: 15 January 2020). Based on UNISDR’s reports published between 2014 and 2015, I break down the organization’s vision into three distinct dimensions. The first dimension is the ‘fight for DRR’, the second is the ‘promotion of *resilience*’ and the third is the ‘update of international ratified frameworks’. The three encompass the broader prerogative of including all stakeholders in its endeavour. These dimensions come under the umbrella of UNISDR’s agenda-setting which I discuss in the following subchapters.

Box 3.1: The disaster risk reduction programme's history

The programme found its roots in 1965 when the General Assembly of the UN enjoined Member States to inform about disasters that occur in their respective states. Since the 1970s the UN has provided assistance in cases of natural disasters with the establishment of the United Nations Disaster Relief Office, later to become the UNISDR. At the end of the 1980s, the General Assembly recognized the importance of not only responding but also reducing the impact of natural disasters. To this end, it set the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction spanning 1990 to 1999. The Yokohama conference, held in 1994, was emblematic of this decade and created a Plan of Action. In 1999, the International Decade came to an end. Particular attention was given to the need to foster a global culture of prevention. In 2000, the General Assembly endorsed the Secretary-General’s proposal to establish an inter-agency task force and inter-agency secretariat for disaster reduction under the direct authority of the Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. This slowly led to the institutionalization of a UN programme, the UNISDR, with the mandate to coordinate disaster response on behalf of the Secretary-General. In 2005, UNISDR convened the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Kobe, Japan, which resulted in the HFA 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. In that vein, the Sendai Framework ratified on the evening of 18 March 2015, was the response to the end of the HFA.

Fighting for disaster risk reduction

While UNISDR’s vision focuses on DRR, I introduce how the organization pulls its narrative forward. At the opening speech of the first preparatory committee which brought together all members, states and civil society organizations, Margareta Wahlström took the floor. As the Special

Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction from 2009 to 2018, she expressed the need to fight for DRR to decrease losses. She recounted the long haul dedicated to reducing disaster risk.

9h30: Margareta Wahlström tells a short history. ‘The HFA was created after the tsunami in the Indian Ocean. In 1971 we had UNDRO [United Nations Disaster Relief Organization] as the main organization, then in 1989 the General Assembly set up the International Decade, and then in 1994, we had the first World Conference and then the establishment of UNISDR in 1999. *Along the years, the aim has been to reduce the loss of life and bring significant change.* The impacts should be on nations and communities. DRR is the foundation for a common language and an international platform for learning. To date, economic and cultural losses add up to over 1 billion dollars. Floods and cyclones have increased beyond the GDP/per capita. We need to manage risk and protect lives. *Losses of lives can be prevented!* In 2011 the HFA Midterm Review happened and critical areas were addressed. In 2012, we started mobilizing for consultations. In 2013, we invited 40 consultants to Geneva. The most important now is to build on HFA and the prevention of new risks to decrease vulnerability and exposure and increase inclusiveness and renew an agreement for climate change. This is an intergovernmental process. In post-2015 framework, we will reach the common good for all thanks to Switzerland and Japan that host the conferences.’ (Observation notes, opening speech by Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative to the Secretary-General, PrepCom1, 14 July 2014)

More specifically and according to the ‘Progress and Challenges in Disaster Risk Reduction’ published in 2014 by the UN, UNISDR states five priorities to fight for DRR:

- Ensure that DRR is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation;
- Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks to enhance early warning;
- Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;
- Reduce the underlying risk factors;
- Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels. (UNDRR, nd)

These priorities are the result of analyses UNISDR conducted based on the reports it received between 2011 and 2013. They were targeted towards the

168 countries that adopted the HFA in 2005, the predecessor of the Sendai Framework of 2015. The reports not only focused on progress but also on issues and key challenges countries face and will face in the post-2015 Framework. Working on the HFA and building disaster-resilient communities, Margareta Wahlström claimed, relies on collective efforts such as governments, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, in an interview with me, Margareta Wahlström also recollected looking towards the future to substantiate the need to concentrate on DRR. In doing so she asked scientists to work on figures leading to 2050 to establish where the world would potentially be if the international community overlooked DRR in the coming years.

Probably what was not as strong – as we may have wanted – is to look into the future, into 2050. I actually tried. I asked several researchers ‘and you don’t even have to put your name on it’ because I know researchers are very careful about their reputation, but I said, ‘Can’t you help us do an extrapolation, as if things continue as they do today, with the current trends that we extend to 2050, tell us what the world would look like if we don’t take preventive measures in a more consistent manner?’. But no one wanted to do that. It’s too difficult, we don’t have data. (Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative to the Secretary-General, interview, 20 December 2017)

This never came out because scientists were not ready to make an approximation for such a long timeline.

Consensual, yet highly political

Fighting for DRR appears as non-controversial for all, be it at the UN, among Member States or civil society. There is a common understanding that fighting for DRR is necessary to decrease losses and damage. International consensus is attained in negotiation rooms when expressing the desire to limit the impact of natural disasters. In this context, the creation of the frameworks, be it the HFA, the Sendai Framework or the likelihood of an upcoming document in 2030, should *a priori* be straightforward.

Yet in international settings, despite their ‘hate of politics’, even basic understandings turn into highly political debates (Louis and Maertens, 2021). This is the case when addressing ‘conflict’, for example. Some states, mostly Western ones, wished ‘disasters in conflict zones’ were integrated and recognized as more treacherous than in more politically stable areas. Margareta Wahlström talks about it:

I think I’m actually quite happy with the outcome because we worked so closely with countries during the negotiation. Any concern that

anyone had could be managed in quite a good way. The big thing really about Sendai was that *many countries would have wanted to include 'conflict'*, not dealing with the conflict, but recognizing that countries in conflict also have disasters which makes their challenges even worse. Now for political reasons – that have absolutely nothing to do with the Sendai Framework – that was not really possible. (Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative to the Secretary-General, interview, 20 December 2017)

The Sendai Framework, however, is not a legally binding text – which implies no obligations for states to strictly follow the framework's principles. Rather, it sets guidelines and aspirations. The 2015 year was extremely dense; four documents were being ratified. The Sendai Framework was the first, followed by 'Financing for Development' in June 2015, the 'Sustainable Development Goals' in September 2015, and the 'Climate Change Summit' in Paris in December 2015. In other words, whatever Member States would agree on in Japan would set the pace for the year ahead. Although not much was at stake for Member States in the Third World Conference on DRR, their positions would set the pace for the upcoming negotiations for an international agreement that same year.

As a result, DRR turned into an even greater political issue because it was linked to 'financing', the core issue in the following conference, such as 'who' would finance DRR programmes locally, nationally, regionally and internationally? Most sticky points, except for conflict issues, were turned into issues of international cooperation, with technology transfer for instance. Developed states, mainly represented by the United States, conflicted with developing states. The United States and Kenyan representatives, positioned on opposite spectrums, both expressed their points of view on the 'sticky points' in the Sendai Framework negotiations.

I guess for the US government, we of course still have certain challenges; technology transfer is one of them, and then international cooperation was another one for us. And yet it is not that we do not contribute to international cooperation. I think the US is one of the largest contributors and funders to disasters and even climate change. (Tatiana, interview, 13 December 2016)

As for Kenya:

In technology transfer the whole point is money. *We are not against respecting intellectual property and patents.* We do believe it should be recognized, but *the problem is our access to it.* We don't have the means to purchase these things that will supposedly 'save our lives and reduce

death'. It's money!! (Observation notes, informal discussion with Stephanie, Sendai, 14 March 2015)

We thus observe that while striving for DRR seems to be a consensual topic, politically charged issues get in the way. The contentious topics mostly refer to the phase following negotiations, namely implementation, which calls for financial resources to ensure that DRR is addressed at all levels.

With a paradigm shift

Fighting for DRR, both from a prevention and response standpoint, was the beginning of UNISDR's establishment by the General Assembly. It embodied a change of paradigm in itself. Rather than focusing solely on disaster responses, UNISDR encompassed and emphasized disaster prevention by decreasing the risk of a disaster to occur. 'The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction reflects a major shift from the traditional emphasis on disaster response to disaster reduction and in effect seeks to *promote a "culture of prevention"*'. UNISDR is the secretariat of the International Strategy and mandated by the UN General Assembly to ensure its implementation' (UNISDR, ndb). Moreover, the initial paradigm shift not only reflected the way UNISDR tackled disasters, but the way it adapted to new ways of conceptualizing disasters over the years based on lessons learned. As an example, after the earthquake which devastated Haiti in 2010, UNISDR was forced to think of disasters differently. Steve, a UNISDR staff member, explains in his terms how UNISDR went from approaching disasters from a deterministic perspective to a probabilistic one. The shift mirrors Lee Clarke's argument, a well-known sociologist at Rutgers University, in his article 'Possibilistic thinking: a new conceptual tool for thinking about extreme events' (2008).

For risk I distinguish determinism and probabilism. A probabilistic approach assumes that most disasters have not yet occurred. I always take the example of the first model we put in place in 2013 with the Global Assessment Report (GAR), where we made a map by saying that in the region of the Philippines, we could have winds going up to 300km/h. And then right after, we had Typhoon Hayan. We didn't come across as fools. We were taken seriously. Yet before that, we had a deterministic study, where we calculated the risks and with this approach, we completely missed out on Haiti. I'll explain why. The deterministic study took into account past events. So with no mathematical model to prevent the future. Based on everything that happened, we did a search, quantified, and went as far back as making an inventory of all the tremors in the past 200 years. Yet the last Haitian earthquake occurred over 250 years ago. *The first map we did of the risk level of Haiti was 'no*

risk'. So when it happened we had not foreseen the risk for Haiti. We, as in the UN. Our Global Assessment Report presented *the risk of an earthquake to Haiti down to 0 because at the time we used this first approach*. After that event, we questioned ourselves. We basically got to the limit of determinism and have had to move to something more complex with mathematical models. And that's how and why *we started thinking of ALL the catastrophes that may occur and which have not yet occurred*. It's what we can call a paradigm shift, exactly! (Steve, interview, 16 September 2016)

If we focus on the characteristics of this new paradigm, UNISDR calls for governments to consider disasters as endogenous events, as well as involve actors at all levels. In other words, UNISDR's new paradigm echoes Ulrich Beck's argument: we need to live with risk, consider it in all areas of life, as an inherent characteristic of our modern-day world (1986). Sandrine Revet (2009a, 2009b) explains that since the mid-1980s, the introduction of the notion of risk had been a milestone in many different fields, influencing policies and governance concerning their conception of 'security'. She claims that the progress of science we inherited from the Age of Enlightenment created suspicion in light of the massive technological crises in the late 1970s and early 1980s out of which emerged the concept of the 'risk society' (Beck, 1986). As a result, over the last 40 years, due to the growing incidence of natural hazards and the increase in death and destruction, many international organizations began creating a legitimate role for themselves. These organizations now play a major role in promulgating norms and spreading knowledge (Revet, 2009b) while managing risks and effects of disasters. Unlike in the 1970s and 1980s, she says, where all relief efforts were focused on the response of disaster situations, today, we 'live with risks' and the UN's prerogatives widened to include 'prevention' (Revet, 2009a). The idea of natural threats thus became a permanent and essential part of our existence.

With this in mind, it is no surprise that the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was established in the 1990s. The use of concepts such as vulnerability, disaster mitigation, DRR and resilience within international organizations bears witness to this change of paradigm.

I hereafter more specifically address UNISDR's promotion concerning resilience. I cannot, however, understand this shift without bearing in mind the fact that international organizations constantly seek new narratives and concepts, mainly based on academic literature, to maintain themselves and adapt to the world's needs and expectations (see Table 3.1).

Promoting resilience

The concept of resilience is far from new. It was initially used in the field of physics to describe the ability of a material to absorb energy when it is

Table 3.1: UNISDR's paradigm shift in disaster risk management policies

	Old paradigm	HFA	New paradigm
Risk perception	Exogenous	Ambiguous mix of exogenous and endogenous risks	Endogenous
Problem recognition	Need for effective response and recovery	Need for DRR	Risk is embedded in development processes (with a focus on underlying factors)
Main policy tools (examples)	Contingency plan, emergency drill	Early warning systems, DRR investment such as levee construction	Land use planning, risk proof investment, ecosystem management
Required knowledge		Risk and loss assessment	Risk, loss and socioeconomic impact assessments
Actors	Disaster management agency	Disaster risk management agencies within different levels of government, various stakeholders (public, private, non-governmental organizations)	More involvement of other stakeholders, especially private sector and local level actors
International frameworks		Millennium Development Goals	Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change Policy

deformed elastically. The concept made its way into the social sciences and has thoroughly been studied in the last (almost) three decades in academia especially in literature on emergency and disaster management (see [Demiroz and Haase \[2019\]](#) for a bibliometry). It derives essentially from other trendy concepts such as adaptation, adaptive capacity, vulnerability, exposure and sensitivity which are interrelated and applicable in many scientific fields ([Janssen et al, 2006](#)). There seems to be a common understanding of what resilience should be in a broad sense: the capacity to undergo disturbance and maintain its functions and controls; the ability to survive and cope with a disaster with minimum impact and damage ([Gunderson, 2009](#)). For international organizations, *resilience* is associated with disasters in relation to aspects of reducing risks in a given population.

Resilience in particular began to be used in the context of hazards, crises and disasters in the late 1990s and early 2000s and became the outcome of

vulnerability. Indeed vulnerability was key to studying natural hazards and poverty until the late 1980s, but was usually portrayed in negative terms as the susceptibility to be harmed (Janssen et al, 2006). Resilience therefore rose as the positive replacement for *vulnerability* which could be worked on and improved. UNISDR was the first UN agency to adopt the word resilience and in making it a central concept in its programmes, namely the HFA, 2005–2015 and the Sendai Framework, 2015–2030.

UNISDR's visions: 'Vision: *To enable all communities to become resilient to the effects of natural, technological and environmental hazards, reducing the compound risks they pose to social and economic vulnerabilities within modern societies. To proceed from protection against hazards to the management of risk through the integration of risk prevention into sustainable development.*' (UNISDR, ndb)

In negotiation sessions with Member States *resilience* was rarely discussed, synonymous to 'DRR' and consensual. Its definition was a result of the suggestion made by the UNISDR staff, which did not trigger any further discussions. 'The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions' (UNISDR, 2015). *Resilience* is thus associated with reducing the risk of disasters. Yet as appealing as it seems, promoting resilience as part and parcel of UNISDR's vision has its limits. It struggles both with the vagueness of its definition as well as with the means for its implementation.

A vague concept nobody enjoys defining

When Holling (1973) and Burton et al (1978) set the basis for the concept of *resilience* in social sciences, which gave rise to a number of research focusing on *resilience*, vulnerability and adaptability, they probably did not anticipate the amount of confusion it would generate about its terminology. Authors have complexified the concept to clarify it. Some suggested to include a duality – such as passive versus active resilience (Somers, 2009); reactive versus proactive resilience; inherent versus adaptive resilience (Rose, 2004) – which highlights the fundamental question as to whether *resilience* is intrinsic to a system or a dimension which needs to be built, whether it is finite or an ongoing process.

Uneasiness appears when it comes to talking about *resilience* in the Sendai process. Interviewees from all three UNs struggle with answering the question about what *resilience* is. Adam (World Health Organization) keeps it simple and refers to resilience as the capacity to manage risks, Florence (UNISDR), mirrors it to 'sustainability' and argues that everyone wants to

be resilient, in the same way that everyone wants to be sustainable even if the definition is vague. George, from UNISDR, questioned me and asked if he really needed to talk about that concept, and he subsequently pointed me to UNISDR's definition. Katherine, from the Women's Major Group, refers to resilience as 'just a word', which can be used in different ways according to context.

It comes to the point when the vagueness of the concept creates disparities among the actors in the Sendai Framework creation. The vagueness fosters confusion and irritation because nobody uses the same definition. While the initial impetus, promoting resilience, is a noble cause, it raises the question of what it actually is, making it a 'bad abstraction' (Felli, 2016).

Linda, from the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group, and Maria, the representative of Ecuador, were both highly critical of its definition. In their view, *resilience* is 'more' than 'bouncing back' after a disaster, they rather see it as an effort to improve from a given situation. The point is not to get back to a pre-disaster state but to learn and transform effectively after a disaster strikes to better cope with the potentiality of a disaster hitting again.

The definition of resilience I thought was really wrong, because they were just talking about 'bouncing back and maybe adapting a little bit after disaster' as being a definition. 'Bounce back' and 'adapt to disasters' I think was a step back from the previous UN definition. They changed it a bit. Resilience for me is the ability to transform and improve in spite of disasters. However that wasn't there. It was really about coping. I think that that sort of disagreement of what resilience is, with actors not being on the same page about exactly what we are aiming for with the Sendai Framework has led to some of the disappointing targets in the frameworks. As a consequence, there aren't any positive capacity building game-based targets. (Linda, Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group, interview, 17 October 2016)

Retrospectively, the analysis shows a divide; UNISDR considers *resilience* as a basic definition – rather than a conservative one – that of solely bouncing back, while few persons, such as Linda and Maria expected *resilience* to take a more engaging stance regarding the improvement of a situation. In other words, *resilience* for them could be associated with a 'building back better' concept the Japanese government was putting forth and which was rarely retained in negotiations (Table 3.2).

Conceptual ideal versus unattainable realities

Resilience tackled in the Sendai Framework process and outcome has ambivalent traits. It is on the one hand filled with ideals and positivity,

Table 3.2: Definitions of resilience

Resilience definition	Holling and Kates (1970s)	UNISDR	Japan + few Major Group members
Rebuilding	✓	✓	✓
Bouncing back		✓	✓
Building back better			✓

which other scholars such as Felli (2016) have identified, and yet it falls apart when we talk about operationalization. Its major downside is that there is no consensus on how to measure it (Klein et al, 2003), despite various attempts (Cutter, 2016; Asadzadeh et al, 2017; Tariq et al, 2021; Hisham et al, 2021).

Just today here is the Swedish Red Cross; I talked to my colleague and he made this comment that he saw Resilience and DRR in Sendai re-emerging very strongly precisely because no one can operationalize resilience. And *operationalizing is what we need to do to turn ideas into action*. I think resilience will stay there as a very high-level description of something that is good. (Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative to the Secretary-General, interview, 20 December 2017)

In an interview I conducted with a member of the Women’s Major Group, Ashley shared the ways in which she fosters resilience in her job in a US government development organization. She mostly relies on both qualitative and quantitative tools, making it a mixed-method approach to establish the need in increasing *resilience* in the communities she works with. While some researchers, former PhD students and think tanks build *resilience* scales, there is no universal scale, due in part to the vagueness.

People don’t know how to consider resilience and *there is no measure for resilience*. It’s really a difficult thing to do. So we wrote a proposal on how it could be measured using a composite index which is based on indicators that are already being collected at the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals], which could be brought together to make resilience more of a holistic idea. (Emily, UK-based NGO, interview, 11 February 2016)

In the same way ‘evidence-based medicine is the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients’, evidence-based resilience would invalidate previously accepted definitions and replace them with new ones that are ‘more powerful,

more accurate, more efficacious and safer' (Sackett et al, 1996). Scholars hence continue 'Exploring Resilience' (Wiig and Fahlbruch, 2019) because there is no gold standard, or 'one size fits all' definition.

Drawn to UNISDR for its use of the concept, I explored the inherent limits of operationalization in the way the UN uses the concept (Kimber, 2019). First resilience appears in the text as a 'snake biting its tail' because it is simultaneously referred to as a means and a goal. Second, it builds on a 'constructive ambiguity' (Fischhendler, 2008) and 'boundary object' logic (Star and Griesemer, 1989; Brand and Jax, 2007). Constructive ambiguity leads to greater leeway in implementation, which according to Fischhendler means that states end up circumventing obligations under other agreements and improve their negotiating positions in other ongoing processes (2008). A boundary object is a facilitator as it facilitates communication across disciplinary borders by using a common word even if the meaning diverges among parties. Resilience on the one hand serves as a boundary object to tie the divide among agencies working on humanitarian response and development and links divergent mandates; on the other hand, it is seen as constructive ambiguity and offers leeway in ways countries interpret a word to fit their regulations and needs. Third, it rarely appears as a stand-alone; with the inability to single it out, the concept cannot be defined in itself. Finally, it is up against an irrevocable paradox. According to the literature, resilience should be characterized by spontaneity and creativity at a given time (Weick, 1993). Yet the UN defines a concept with guidelines and a framework that inherently should be left to creativity and innovation.

I argue that using *resilience* at the UN serves an institutional purpose. On the one hand, as a non-controversial concept *resilience* provides an ideal towards which all actors converge. As a positive outlook on vulnerability, it suggests that communities can better themselves and improve, which in turn becomes a driving force and a goal to reach. On the other hand, as an unattainable reality due to its vagueness, *resilience* provides a concept for diplomatic strategies (constructive ambiguity, boundary object) and ambiguous goals (resilience attributed to different fields and other concepts) (Kimber, 2019). As the saying goes, 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions', in the same way that the road to resilience might be paved with good intentions. Yet if we consider hell as a lack of operationalization tools, resilience falls into hell, serving first and foremost international institutions. In that vein, we can share other critical views on the use of the concept, that of a neoliberal one that aims to keep the status quo – a conservative understanding of adaptation, one emphasizing the reproduction of existing structures and power relations – rather than that of broader political and social changes (Pelling, 2010). If we look at other such concepts and buzzwords used in international organizations, we notice that the implementation and realization struggles not only hold true for *resilience*, but also for other

concepts such as *development* (Rist, 2007). Here too, its actual meaning is still elusive and has been so since its first use in the 1960s. In sum, it depends on where and who uses them.

Updating 'outdated' frameworks

Updating frameworks is often inscribed in long-term processes. Even though this research focuses on an eight-month negotiation process, from July 2014 to March 2015, paced by specific milestone meetings, UNISDR regularly holds regional and global meetings to discuss the future of DRR. On its website, UNISDR explains that before the establishment of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, an Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction regularly met between 2000 and 2005. The purpose of the Task Force, established under UNISDR's authority, was to serve as the main forum within which the UN could discuss the issue of disaster reduction. In particular it defined strategies for international cooperation at 'all levels in this field'. The United Nations General Assembly convened a World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan in January 2005 intending to take stock of progress in DRR accomplished since the Yokohama Conference of 1994 and making plans for the upcoming ten years. This resulted in the HFA. The subsequent Global Platforms in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013 played a key role in the HFA's implementation and paved the way for its successor agreement, the Sendai Framework, adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015.

Margareta Wahlström, as the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, explains in an interview how she came to look forward to the end of the HFA. After all the efforts the organization, governments and civil society put into working towards DRR, it was fair to also acknowledge its gaps and assess future needs.

We started looking at the HFA and the timing. The HFA had an end year, 2015. It was a ten-year framework, and since we were approaching the end of the ten years in 2012, we had to ask the community: 'Should we just keep going, or should we do something new? *Should we update the HFA?*'. *And the answer was: 'Absolutely!* There are so many things happening! We have to take another look at it!'. And then of course our work was very much focused on capturing what is it that the new HFA should say. (Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative to the Secretary-General UNISDR, interview, 20 December 2017)

I continue by showing what the HFA was lacking, the challenges to overcome in writing the text and subsequently present what the Sendai Framework contains. From the perspective of organizations, the ongoing changes and

evolutions UNISDR undergoes is similar to organizational reforms. While reforms can be perceived as dramatic organizational changes, by solving administrative problems and answering international urgencies, these changes, or organizational reforms, can be understood as organizational stability because they are ‘highly self-referential’ (Brunsson, 2006).

What the Hyogo Framework for Action was lacking

As the HFA was coming to an end in 2015, Member States, UNISDR and civil society agreed that improvements were needed. Some essential components of DRR were missing. In the interviews carried out after the ratification of the Sendai Framework, interviewees looked back at the HFA and identified the gaps. What appeared first was the lack of inclusion of non-state actors. Whether it be one of the two co-chairs, who reminded of this new inclusion in a debriefing meeting with Major Groups in Sendai, Agatha, a member of the Major Group for Children and Youth, Ashley from the Women’s Major Group, or Margareta Wahlström, the Special Representative to the Secretary-General, all recognized the failure of addressing other actors.

So that is also something I felt really quite pleased about. One thing I was particularly pleased about, was that the non-state actors, civil society, academics and all of us including the UN were now part of the framework. We were not in an annex [appendix], like in the HFA, where we were all sitting in an annex [appendix]. *The HFA was only about states. The Sendai Framework is about everyone* actually and that was a major achievement, that no one really fought against. Some people asked themselves why, but no one actually was against it. It was also a major success. (Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative to the Secretary-General, UNISDR, interview, 20 December 2017)

Second, Ashley, from the Women’s Major Group, goes into more detail. While she argues that the HFA cannot be totally disregarded, in that it was the first framework for DRR, it missed out on essential elements such as human rights, in particular acknowledging the equal rights of men and women such as it is stated in the Preamble of the UN Charter ratified by the General Assembly in 1948. The HFA never mentioned the human rights aspect (Zaidi and Fordham, 2021), which for her is a fundamental recognition when addressing DRR. The Preamble of the Charter states the following:

We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the

equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. (United Nations, 1945)

She, together with the members of the Women's Major Group, believed that the gender component had to be detailed and enhanced. UNISDR took on the battle and made it a central focus. 'UNISDR's work is focused on the promotion of gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction. For its action, UNISDR focused on the need to mobilize more *attention on gender dynamics* in disaster risk reduction programmes, policies and practice' (UNISDR, ndc).

Véronique, from the disability caucus, in an informal discussion with various Major Group members, while sitting in the lounge area while a consultative meeting was taking place, explained how they had managed since 2012 to finally get UNISDR to physically accommodate persons with disabilities by addressing the language barrier, that is, using sign language, or enabling people in wheelchairs to access places. She hoped that these major improvements in logistics would reflect what should also be integrated in the text. What she explained on 2 October 2014 was later confirmed by Matthew who said in an informal discussion with me during the Sendai Framework: 'It's the first time in Japan that there were sign language interpreters for the deaf, even though it wasn't on the screen. This is a historic moment!'

Another gap in DRR was the link to other programmes. While the HFA was acting for itself with the members who ratified the framework, it seemed to be a stand-alone agreement. In light of the various agreements that were to be ratified throughout 2015, it became obvious to most actors in the negotiations, starting with Margareta Wahlström, the Special Representative to the Secretary-General, that there was a need for connections between DRR, climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals. The idea was not only to integrate DRR into the other frameworks for more recognition but also to connect climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals into the DRR framework to ensure consistency and coherence.

The UN system has committed to:

- Make disaster risk reduction a priority for UN system organizations;
- Ensure timely, coordinated and high quality assistance to all countries where disaster losses pose a threat to people's health and development; and,
- Ensure disaster risk reduction for resilience is central to post-2015 development agenda. (UNISDR, ndb)

With this in mind, Margareta Wahlström hopes that by 2030 there will be only one policy framework instead of four, which would be connected and would tackle risks, disasters, climate, economics, and so on, jointly. Such reasoning implies that the UN organizations in charge of these diverse agendas collaborate and even merge. Would UNDP, United Nations Environmental Programme, UNFCCC, UNISDR become one by 2030? As it stands today, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (formerly UNISDR) was the sole leader for the Sendai Framework midterm reviewing process, spanning from 2022 to 2023, with no hint of any organizational merger.

Challenges in writing the text

While civil society members and UNISDR staff had no trouble talking about the gaps in the HFA, writing a whole new framework addressing these gaps proved to be challenging. Marius from UNISDR had the lead on writing what was going to be called the Sendai Framework. His work was based on the regional and global meetings that took place between 2012 and 2014 in consultative meetings with Member States and civil society. In an interview, he jokingly shared ‘you know from the outstart that it will be bad, because all the discussions that were held for two years now need to fit into just a few pages’. During the whole process, negotiators pieced together language word by word which he then needed to make sense of. While the first draft had to be ‘good enough’, as he put it, to stimulate constructive discussion, the document also needed to be structured coherently. With the help of so many ‘cooks’, as he said, and the two co-chairs leading the negotiation processes, his role was to ensure that the text was acceptable and made sense to the reader. Such prerogatives are not new to scholars. Annelise Riles in ‘Infinity within the brackets’ highlights the challenges: ‘The text should be “strong” and “consistent” but not “redundant”. ... It should borrow language from other documents, but it could not replicate those documents wholesale. It should be “brief” but also “comprehensive”’ (Riles, 1998, p 387).

Recognizing the effort put into writing the text, both Bella from UNISDR and Maria from the Ecuadorian delegation were overall satisfied with the outcome. The Sendai Framework in their view was as good as it would ever get. It is not in the headlines that the text shows they say, but rather in every paragraph because the document is comprehensive and one can extrapolate its meaning in many ways. Marius was in charge of drafting the Sendai Framework based on the various consultations with Member States and stakeholders. He shares his point of view:

There are no bad parts of the job, believe it or not. It’s just really hard. We had the consultations of the Post Hyogo Framework for Action [The Sendai Framework] that started in 2012. So you’ve got two

years of consultations. And then comes a point in time – because of the formalities of the process – where a text must be delivered. You know for a fact that it is going to be bad [he laughs]. You know that and you have to accept it! *You essentially need to condense and synthesize consultations held in a two-year process.* The comments were very broad and yet needed to boil down to a few pages. That is not easy. Yet the first draft needs to be good not for acceptance, rather it has to be good enough to stimulate constructive discussions. (Marius, UNISDR, interview, 30 September 2016)

What the Sendai Framework contains

According to interviews and text analyses I carried out, the Sendai Framework turned out to be a significant advancement from where UNISDR had left off in 2005 with the HFA. In line with the paradigm shift mentioned earlier (see Table 3.1), the document concentrated on reducing disaster risk rather than disasters themselves. The goals were aimed at preventing new risks from developing, reducing existing risks as well as strengthening resilience (UNISDR, 2015, Foreword by Margareta Wahlström). In an interview with Peter, a UNISDR staff member, on 4 October 2016, he praised the evolution of the Sendai Framework. He highlighted that the scope of a disaster was now beyond natural ones and included man-made disasters as well, be they technological, biological, small- or large-scale disasters. In an interview on 17 October 2016, Linda from the Non-Governmental Organization Major Group stressed that there was a focus on local-level involvement in DRR and an incentive to include all stakeholders, especially civil society both in the design as well as in the implementation of DRR. In other words, the Sendai Framework became more of a people-centred framework as expressed by the representative of the United States, in an interview on 13 December 2016. In her view, Member States were not the only ones to put together the document. Overall Major Group members were especially happy to implement disaggregated data into national data collection, which allows us to identify more closely the most vulnerable and devastated groups. Margareta Wahlström clearly summarizes the Sendai Framework's accomplishments in an interview:

The first accomplishment is the very determined focus on the local; local government, local communities, everything local. This has been a theme in the consultations that were leading up to the conference [Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, March 2015] and I think it's firmly embedded in this outcome document. The second accomplishment was the focus on stakeholders; stakeholder groups – for lack of a better word – encompass the great universality, the active

members of society, who all are required to contribute to reducing disaster risk. *The third accomplishment was health.* The mention of health was absent in the HFA, but now included in the Sendai Framework such as health systems and pandemics and epidemics. This plays a very strong foundation for the deeper focus. (Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative to the Secretary-General, UNISDR, interview, 20 December 2017)

Some actors remained critical. Adam from the World Health Organization, for example, claimed that the focus was too much on prevention and not enough on recovery and response. He suggested that this move forward had to do with Member States' inability to identify what the needs are in terms of recovery at all levels of society.

Keeping disaster risks on the agenda

While UNISDR until 2018 and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction thereafter continues to fight for DRR by promoting resilience, it echoes the international urgency of addressing rising disaster risks together with the actual growth of disasters and the losses and damages that derive from it. A study mandated by OCHA published in 2022 compared the average national disasters over the last 30 years (1991–2020); the total frequency of global natural disasters in 2021 was 13 per cent higher, with 81 per cent fewer deaths, impacting population 48 per cent less but causing 82 per cent more direct economic loss. At the same time, UNISDR updated 'outdated' frameworks, caught in its own institutional fight for survival. UNISDR's vision in essence is to constantly gain and maintain legitimacy in the work it is carrying out. It manages to do so in part by fighting for DRR in light of growing disasters, by promoting resilience as a new goal to attain, and by updating outdated frameworks to fill gaps, all of which appear as subtle strategic tools to ensure its organizational sustainability. Its strategies are intertwined and thus serve both institutional survival and international urgency prerogatives.

More specifically it manages two distinct timelines. On the one hand, UNISDR ensures survival and sustainability as an organization. On the other, the organization works around unexpected disasters with its mandate to help prevent, respond and recover from them. The first is institutionalized and runs according to a calendar the framework is set to fit, with a beginning and a prefixed end such as the 2015–2030 Sendai Framework. The organization hence works with a set of objectives in mind. The deadline is a constant reminder that the goals are achievable (Perrot, 2002) – because who would enjoy setting an impossible goal? – and it allows to align actors' expectations (Aykut, 2016; Aykut et al, 2021). The second is unpredictable in nature. Yet

while UNISDR's focus is primarily on disasters, it paradoxically has very few references to past ones throughout its discussions with Member States and civil society in the negotiation context. UNISDR does not seem to adjust its programme to hypothetical future disasters but rather sets its own pace according to the General Assembly's mandate. More specifically, towards the end of a defined programme (that is, HFA from 2005 to 2015), UNISDR reinitiated the need for further improvements by creating a new programme (that is, the Sendai Framework 2015 to 2030). In this way it maintains itself by invoking the necessity to fill the gaps of the previous programme to a point where the timelines do not fit unless the disaster is major (in terms of losses and emotional impact). Only then is a window of opportunity created leading to a reorganization.

Prior to COVID-19, only three disasters impacted UNISDR's functioning and paradigm. As major events, they became 'focusing events' (Birkland, 1998), defined as sudden, relatively uncommon, harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms, around which people organize and mobilize their interest and passion (Clarke, 2008).

The first such major event was the Southeast Asia tsunami. In the run-up to the final negotiation of the HFA in 2004, the Southeast Asia tsunami turned out to be a driving force that allowed fruitful and time-efficient negotiations during the Second World Conference. This catastrophe almost appeared as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). While UNISDR was working on a framework to reduce the risk of natural hazards, 'the prediction of catastrophe can at times take on lives and produce effects quite independent of their initial validity' (Barkun, 1977, p 219).

The second event was the Haitian earthquake. Five years into the HFA, an earthquake struck Haiti in 2010. Up to that point programmes had been based on the probability of disasters to occur. Yet by relying strictly on probabilities calculated from data reflecting the past 200 years, the latter should not have happened. The paradigm shift comes from the need to look into *worst-case* scenarios. Such an undertaking entails imagining beyond probabilities to anticipate and prepare better (Perrow, 2007; Clarke, 2008).

The third event was that of Fukushima Daiichi. The succession of events, which defined the Fukushima Daiichi catastrophe in 2011, was another of those major disasters. The event started with an earthquake that caused a tsunami to hit a nuclear power plant which subsequently led to three nuclear meltdowns. The domino effect phenomenon was later reflected in negotiation rooms as a basis for inventing a new term in the disaster context, namely 'cascading event'.

UNISDR fulfils its mandate by responding to what it was initially established for and in doing so seeks legitimization in its environment to sustain itself (Brunsson, 1989; Geoffroy, 2012). By keeping DRR on the agenda, it fulfils its mandate at the crossroads between the development and

the humanitarian divide, and takes on a concept – *resilience* – which allows it to address the complexity of disasters and risk from both perspectives. Furthermore, it modifies its narrative focusing more importantly on the prevention phase with a probabilistic stance, and finally creates new international frameworks that attest its ongoing efforts by opening the discussions and convening civil society to its debates.

While keeping it vague

As we saw with *resilience*, which holds also for other words we will encounter later in the book, for example, gender equality, women’s empowerment, and so on, words used in internationally agreed documents carry important notions. However, their weight does not stand up to their full potential. Though the words are seemingly strong they simultaneously lose their strength because of lack of context. While they are at the forefront from a normative perspective, they are not guaranteed implementation. This can be seen in documents international organizations produce, namely impersonal verbal and nominal constructions with an absence of identifiable authors, apparent neutrality and a propensity to use a vague lexical field with positive connotations (Siroux, 2008, p 20).

The UN language could be thought of as Orwell’s *Newspeak*, an international language, stripped from its definitional complexities with syntactical and grammatical difficulties (Thody, 1994). In national contexts, language is instrumentalized for political means to serve totalitarian regimes to alienate their subjects. *Newspeak* typically corresponds to a language spoken by a six-year-old for its simplicity, lack of depth and precision (Courtine and Willett, 1986; Thody, 1994). At the UN, *Newspeak* could consist of ‘positive Globish’ (see Chapter 5), the international approximative English, which calls for continuous positive impetus.

In this subchapter, we analyse the vagueness of these words and statements to shed light on the apparent gap between conceptualization and realization. I argue that the UN’s gap between conceptualization and realization, its detachment from ground issues, and the rare links to current affairs may also be cues to understanding the inherent vagueness of international frameworks.

Conceptualization versus realization

Vagueness as we saw in the case of the concept of *resilience* serves international organizations in their agreements. If we extrapolate the analysis I made of the concept of resilience, understanding it as a *boundary object* or as *constructive ambiguity*, more broadly to other concepts such as *gender equality* and *women’s rights* (see Chapter 6), we could again see emerge the necessity of international organizations to stay at the conceptualization level. Concretely speaking,

it takes eight months to negotiate and ratify a text, versus 10–15 years to implement it. While statements are general and generic enough to suit 193 Member States, they never seem to have concrete implementation guidelines to the extent that sentences are shaped to become slogans.

In an interview Margareta Wahlström gives a good example of the tension that lies between conceptualization and realization. Unlike *risk*, defined as a situation involving exposure to danger (Perrow, 2007), *disasters* – defined as a dysfunction and more specifically a social disruption (Perry and Quarantelli, 2005) – are concrete because they can be referred to in the past, are visible and have notable impacts. ‘Concepts are extremely difficult to translate from one language to another because they represent ideas and not facts’ (Margareta Wahlström, 20 December 2017). Yet UNISDR struggles with that tension. This can be seen in interactions that occur with the Women’s Major Group, for instance. UNISDR encourages the Women’s Major Group to hint at how its agenda items would follow through with the implementation phase. To illustrate, I observed this struggle when George, a UNISDR staff member in charge of engaging with Major Groups, recommended Women’s Major Group members anchor their statements into concrete implementation processes and speak in terms of concrete implications. He wished the group were able to effectively show the audience what the consequences would be if women’s empowerment rights were not implemented.

Demonstrate the materiality of the loss. Show how the loss of women’s leadership impacts the loss of so many women in disasters. Show how that loss of women’s leadership is a huge hit on your ability to deliver the resilience that you’re aiming for. I don’t know if that particular narrative is going to do it, but *demonstrate the materiality of the loss to prove the case, more so than saying we need ‘gender disaggregated data’*. It provides ways that people can respond to. (George, debriefing with Women’s Major Group, PrepCom2, observation notes, 17 November 2014)

While George asked the Women’s Major Group in November 2014 to be more concrete and specific about the implementation phase in their statements, he enticed all Major Group members in Sendai to head to a side event held at a nearby museum to talk directly to governments and share with them what works and what fails in concrete situations of disasters.

As early as the first consultative meeting after the first preparatory committee organized for Major Groups and Member States, the co-chairs announced that the indicators, which would help measure the success of the Sendai Framework by 2030, would have to be worked on thoroughly after the final days of the conference in March 2015. Even though a working group of experts had started looking into the feasible indicators, for lack of time the work would have to be pursued after the ratification of the final document.

Though UNISDR gets the credit for the text and the framework, it is ultimately up to the countries to implement and report back on their achievements. Minutes after the text was ratified on 18 March 2015, Margareta Wahlström took the floor and made a speech. In that last plenary held in Sendai, she called governments not to lose sight of the framework and to work on the implementation.

As we now leave the conference today, we have 120 commitments and I trust that this will now keep going on. Because of course as we now move on and we go to our offices and different tasks tomorrow, what matters is implementation and I trust that this framework will be a big series for a concrete guide to the future on how to manage and reduce disaster risk and to contribute to sustainable development. Thank you so much for your support and I wish you a few hours of good rest! (Margareta Wahlström's speech, last plenary, Sendai, observation notes, 18 March 2015)

The vagueness is partly due to the fact that as with the concept of resilience (Kimber, 2019) and development (Rist, 2007), it is easier to talk at conceptual levels. Establishing concrete guidelines at international levels becomes a burden for organizations, the mandate of which is to guarantee that all its members have a set of laws that permit it.

Discrepancy: headquarters versus local communities

Another dimension contributing to vagueness has to do with the existing discrepancy between UN headquarters and local communities. While the frameworks are negotiated and ratified with government officials, national delegates and professional negotiators, they are ultimately intended for local communities which do not participate in the sessions. I break down the discrepancy into two observations. On the one hand, I observed a detachment from ground issues, and on the other, the rarity of links to current affairs. 'The thing is that I'm a bit sceptical about UN processes because it's very global. Sometimes you cannot apply them at regional or local levels. So it's kind of a lot of talking and discussing without actually producing an action plan' (Agatha, Major Group for Children and Youth, 30 January 2016).

Detached from ground issues

Issues discussed at headquarters, as a reflection of the perceived reality, fundamentally mismatch what happens in communities. Adam, from the World Health Organization, has a critical view on this matter and claims

that governments have interests that differ from communities and other stakeholders. Working on standardized frameworks in effect loses touch with the infinite realities in day-to-day community practices.

The persons implicated in the Sendai process who most likely are in touch with communities are civil society members. Adriana, from the Women's Major Group, working as a peacebuilder in Fiji's rural communities, confirms that having an international standardized framework is only the first part of the work. The second part is the most difficult because it means having to translate not only into a different language but also into specific community 'binoculars' the meaning of the document. First there is a question of understanding what is written, but then also, and most importantly, how does that translate into community reality. Ashley, who worked for a US-based development organization and was also involved as a member of the Women's Major Group, witnesses that practitioners in communities are not even made aware of these international frameworks. She referred specifically to the HFA and talked about her experience in the United States, where regardless of the international agreement, communities do not pay attention to international frameworks. Doris, a feminist involved in the Sustainable Development Goals process in New York and advocating for women's reproductive health rights, despises some of the UNWomen staff members at headquarters. She claims that they do not support this principle while UNWomen working closely with communities would never in a million years disregard what seems to be a fundamental principle for women.

It gets to a point where the setting itself is disconnected and allows for persons involved in the UN system to be remote from community realities. Agatha, a member of the Major Group for Children and Youth, shared the feelings she experienced when entering the UN building for the first time in Geneva. She felt grateful to take part in the process led by an international organization, established in a big, imposing building in Geneva. It represented wealth and power. At the same time, she expressed her sadness at the apparent contradiction with what is happening in 'real life' with poor, vulnerable and affected people worldwide.

Agatha's remark mirrored an observation I made some days after the World Conference when I took advantage of visiting communities close to Fukushima, devastated by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, with my fellow colleagues of the Women's Major Group. On our way back to Sendai together with Cassandra and Ellen, I was commenting on the fact that George, the UNISDR staff member, had returned to New York just hours after the conference ended, and he would not have seen anything of Sendai and its surroundings except for the conference centres. A member of the Women's Major Group agreed and expressed her view: 'By always being in such spaces and conferences they lose the sense of what they are doing and why they are writing all these texts; *there is a disconnect between their life as UN*

professionals and the work it is intended for. They completely lose the point!’ (member of the Women’s Major Group, 11 February 2016). While inherent discrepancies in the text are evident due to the conflicting political views among the 193 governments who ratify the document, it is most certainly reinforced by the fact that people who work at headquarters have rarely if ever experienced disaster themselves, be it hands-on or as a witness.

Rare links to current affairs

According to World Vision, five major natural disasters occurred in 2014. A typhoon in the Philippines affected 4.2 million people, and floods in the Solomon Islands, and India and Pakistan displaced over 50,000 persons in India, while killing over 1,300 persons in Pakistan. In China, a 6.5 magnitude earthquake killed over 600 people while displacing over 230,000 individuals. Floods in Bosnia-Herzegovina displaced more than 90,000 people. Yet none of these disasters, despite having affected thousands upon thousands of people, not to mention the material damage caused and economic repercussions, were even once mentioned throughout the Sendai process.

The only disaster recounted by a government official – and not even considered as ‘natural’ – was the terror attack on the staff of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris on 7 January 2015, the attack which was followed by the assault on a kosher supermarket which altogether killed 17 people and wounded 22 more in two days. Negotiations at the Palais des Nations in Geneva in mid-January 2015 resumed a week after the attack as originally planned by the organization’s initial timelines following the Christmas and New Year break. The Japanese representative was ‘shocked and outraged’ when learning of the attacks and expressed ‘solidarity with the people and the government of France’.

Another incident was at the heart of the discussions within the Children and Youth Major Group. In the wake of the Swiss Central Bank’s decision to abolish the minimum Swiss franc to euro exchange rate of 1.20 Swiss franc to one euro on 15 January 2015, a member of the group was concerned about the grant in euros she was receiving from Germany and how the bank’s move would affect her studies in Geneva.

The only mention of the ongoing ‘natural’ disaster came from the representative of the Trade Union Major Group who in the first plenary meeting in PrepCom1 took advantage of the Ebola crisis to raise awareness of first responders’ sacrifices and conditions in such disastrous times.

We need to acknowledge the sacrifices of these workers, the health workers who are dying as we speak in dealing with *the Ebola disaster*, the firefighters killed in the line of duty, even the UN staff, who are sent to the most troubled parts of the world, to help people when most of

our institutions have failed. Two hundred of these workers have been killed on the job over the past ten years. (Representative of Trade Union Major Group, PrepCom1, plenary statement, 15 July 2014)

Although UNISDR wishes to see more action-oriented initiatives inscribed within the Sendai Framework by encouraging civil society and Member States to look ahead towards the document's implementation phase, it keeps most decisions on indicators for after the final conference. Deciding on indicators is another lengthy process; it convenes experts from various delegations to discuss measures and their means and tools. In this way, UNISDR ensures that the framework is delivered and gives it the direction from which the work on indicators can progress. Vagueness can thus be viewed as an instrument to keep the momentum of discussions going. This momentum generates greater consensus and aims to accommodate as many positions as possible. This serves UNISDR's pressing deadline, that of making a final presentation, submitting it to governments, and showing the world a ratified text on how to best conduct DRR. Time pressure must be considered a key factor in understanding the very need for vagueness.

... opens the debate on disaster risk reduction globally

Building on what was presented earlier in this chapter, we retain that DRR, as UNISDR sees it, encouraged by Member States and civil society in the years leading to the Third World Conference, is no longer a one-way street for Member States. UNISDR felt compelled to broaden the debate on DRR globally. Based on this premise, I present the main contribution first of the Member States and second of the Major Groups. This gives us an idea of what was raised in the 'writing workshop' where civil society members, as the dominant actors, generally share the same language as the Member State representatives. This enables us to have an overview of the ways different actors perceive the needs and challenges of DRR, but it has no pretense to give a full-fledged analysis of each state's thorough take on DRR. In fact, whether it be Member State representatives or UN secretariat members, all share the same notion, that is, having to open the debate about DRR more broadly, because it is everyone's concern. Whether it be in interviews or during meetings, this idea is expressed regularly:

[The] Hyogo [Framework for Action], first of all, was only for experts. It didn't permeate society. That's the main difference. Hyogo was more for 'disaster risk reduction' people [experts]. *[The] Sendai [Framework] is for everybody*. You do need the Ministry of Finance, you need the private sector, [you need] everybody! (Maria, representative of Ecuador, 10 April 2017)

In light of rapid urbanization and climate change it makes us vulnerable and we need to take action. We are discussing [the] post-2015 [framework]: international agreements, rights, resilience increase and economic growth. UNISDR aims to have inclusive partnerships because they are indispensable for the thought-process and the implementation. There needs to be an impact on millions in the world. *We will have an inclusive process* up to the 3rd meeting [of the Sendai Framework process]. (PrepCom1, speech from UNISDR staff member, observation notes, 15 July 2014)

Such analyses essentially stem from official statements made available in the hours following the first preparatory committee in July 2014. By proceeding in such a fashion, I share the first impetus on *DRR* voiced by different actors. I will present interviews conducted among countries or unions from various continents and country representatives. I chose to look at the European Union because it speaks in the name of 28 countries including France. For its geographic and cultural affinity as a Swiss scholar based in Geneva, I further chose France and interviews with Gabriel and Switzerland with interviews with Hans. I also interviewed Ecuador, represented by Maria, due to her country's high implication in the process and for being located in Latin America; I interviewed Stephanie, representing the African Union, for speaking in the name of countries such as Kenya and with whom I discussed issues on several occasions and additionally Japan as the host country for the World Conference in March 2015. Last but not least, I also chose to look at the United States' positions, for its position as a key player in UN negotiations, due to its financial contribution and position as a permanent member of the Security Council. I interviewed its representative, Tatiana.

What Member States say ...

Opening the debate globally not only reinforces UNISDR's initial claim but in addition helps the organization set priorities in the creation of the document. Countries take stances early on, all pointing towards reducing disaster risk. However what varies are the different ways, means and challenges coming into play to approach *DRR* as efficiently as possible.

The African Union, for instance, acknowledged that the HFA set the basis for a paradigm shift, going from crisis management to risk management with a heightened political commitment. The representative expressed that such a programme fostered public awareness and helped put in place policy, legal and institutional frameworks, and other mechanisms for *DRR* on the African continent.

For countries such as France and unions such as the European Union and the African Union, the framework needs to be overall coherent, the process

towards DRR must be transparent and the accountability well defined. Furthermore, these same countries together with the United States and Japan called for a better integration of DRR in climate change adaptation, marking an explicit link to the agreement that was going to be held in Paris the following year.

Both the Swiss and Ecuadorian representatives wanted to see a more multidisciplinary approach when addressing DRR and therefore a more holistic one, which both Ecuador and Japan want to see transformed into better action-oriented programmes for measurable outcomes.

The United States and France talked about the need to eradicate poverty in order to increase DRR. France was more specific in noting that its eradication would only take place if the international community tackles environmental, economic and social resilience. Here is an extract from the European Union:

Improving accountability and transparency should constitute a key principle of the new framework. Risk management policies are essential to ensure sustainable development and economic growth. The framework should therefore better target and empower those most in need and most vulnerable. The various global processes culminating in 2015 provide a unique opportunity to *address sustainable development, poverty reduction, climate change, and disaster risk reduction in a coherent and mutually supportive way*. (Official statement, PrepCom1, 14 July 2014)

Member States seem to be genuinely involved in promoting DRR, not only in their own country but also in line with UNISDR's vision by making it 'everyone's' concern. Yet I acknowledge that agenda-setting tactics at the UN level most likely differ from those at the domestic level in that political actors need to frame their issues in such a way that they fit the UN's remit (Littoz-Monnet, 2012). What we do witness is that they express wanting a coherent programme in close relation with other international agreements as well as concrete evaluations. Early on in the negotiation process leading to the creation of a framework states seem to act for the better good. Only later in the process do contentious issues arise.

What Major Groups say ...

While a whole chapter is dedicated to analysing what the Women's Major Group advocated for (see [Chapter 6](#)), I here present the means and challenges for the other Major Groups to maximize DRR. I point out the concerns of the Farmers, Local Authority, Business and Industry, Science and Technology, Indigenous, Children and Youth, Trade Unions, and Non-Governmental Organizations.

To begin, the Children and Youth Major Group calls for greater investment in youth and children, the argument being that we, as a collective, need to invest in the future. Its members' claim is to be considered equal partners at all levels of decision making and implementation because they are – just like others – able to network and self-organize. As young people they want to be empowered with adequate skills, knowledge and know-how.

The Local Authority Major Group believes in decentralization, giving more space to local governments to engage with citizens. The Business and Industry Major Group tackles the issues of finance and financial investments, promoting the private sector. The group states that over 70 per cent of all investments in national and international economies are made by the private sector. The Major Group hence strives for more public/private partnerships and seeks to enhance resilience by encouraging businesses to be risk-sensitive. 'Economies cannot exist without community and communities cannot exist without economy' (Business and Industry Major Group representative, PrepCom1, plenary statement, 15 July 2014).

The Science and Technology Major Group strives for new forms of interaction between science, technology and political decision-making. It addresses the issues of data and sharing technologies to promote complex modeling and develop predictive analytics while engaging with communities.

The Major Group of Indigenous Peoples urges Member States to consider indigenous peoples as key stakeholders in DRR, addressing them not only as beneficiaries of DRR policies but as active participants in the design and implementation of such policies. Furthermore, it calls for a linkage with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Non-Governmental Organization Major Group wishes to see the recognition of gender-sensitive and community-driven interventions. It is adamant about establishing a people-centred approach to strengthen local leadership and think about better public and private partnerships. It wants to see more transparency and accountability mechanisms.

The Trade Unions Major Group calls for better protection, particularly for first responders, based on a rights-based approach, which would provide basic social security guarantees. 'We ask that the representatives of missions here in the room move messages back to your governments about the role of workers in this whole process' (Trade Unions Major Group representative, PrepCom1, plenary statement, 15 July 2014).

Finally, the Farmers' Group shares three essential concerns to achieve any such goal of which DRR is comprised: generating resilience; reducing existing risk exposures; and addressing anticipatory risks.

While the Member States spoke in generic terms about multiple interests without going into detail, yet acknowledging that its principles needed to be applied internationally, we notice that the Major Groups are more centred around their interests. Each one of them takes the floor to express

more specific areas which they believe should be tackled to fulfil UNISDR's vision, namely DRR.

Conclusion

Analysing UNISDR's impetus sheds light on the organization's process for legitimization and sustainability. The Sendai Framework, as a vehicle for the inclusion of civil society, enables us to highlight the political process the text undergoes until its final ratification. It is strewn with pitfalls such as its crosscutting struggles and sticky points for which the organization needs to find the right tuning in agreement with its stakeholders.

Inclusion must first be understood as UNISDR's power to include in its successful agenda-setting by using a rhetoric all stakeholders can relate to (natural disasters as an apolitical issue at first glance). The federating rhetoric made it possible for interest groups to mobilize, due to its vagueness – in terms of policy objectives – and appeal to many representatives (Littoz-Monnet, 2012). Yet I argue that its impetus is not sufficient to guarantee inclusion after all.

‘We the Peoples’

Analysing who constitutes the United Nations (UN)’s civil society opens the question as to who mobilizes and how mobilization is organized. In turn it sheds light on who is included or considered included by the UN in its negotiation processes. In other words, how does the ‘institutional apparatus’ include individuals from civil society who seek to engage in the Sendai process? These questions are even more interesting in the context of the Major Group structure established by and for the UN in 1992 that channels civil society organizations into nine Major Groups. We may ask ourselves whether these organizations actually represent the full dynamic and diversity of civil society organizations today (Anheier, 2018) and if, once accredited and institutionally included, these actors are forever part of the so-called Third UN. Or rather, do they move in and out depending on the issue, their influence or the calendar (Weiss et al, 2009)?

The attempt to identify the members of UN’s civil society is not new and resonates with prior work looking into ‘who governs the globe’ (Avant et al, 2010). These inquiries in the UN context are important because they raise the issue of democracy in global governance. ‘Who decides on global issues?’ remains a major weakness of the global order (Pianta, 2005). Opening up international institutions to civil society would reduce the major democratic deficit in global relation governance, questioning straight up what the implications of civil society mobilization are for democracy in global governance. A voice of protest? A voice of advice? (Scholte, 2002; Pianta, 2005).

This chapter goes back to the essentials. It discusses the terms that we read (for example, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], civil society, partners, and so on) and unveils who the UN’s civil society members are. It examines with mobilization theory the resources (that is, the various experiences), the political opportunity (that is, UN’s established Major Groups) and its frames (that is, the women’s group identity). I argue that the collective action revolving around advocacy for disaster risk reduction (DRR) needs to be understood in light of individuals’ careers, not only professional

but also institutional careers, borrowing Becker’s concept. I thus show that institutional inclusion is a process that not only requires accreditation at a particular time. It is co-dependent on an individual’s UN civil society career, contingent on the UN groups on the one hand and the identity-based groups on the other. I thus show that the *practice turn* developed in international relations can be applied to collective action theory.

Mobilize!

Studying civil society engagement at the UN through the lens of mobilization scholarship does not appear to be that bold. Della Porta and Diani laid the groundwork to connect literature on civil society and social movements because ‘social movements may be seen as integral components of civil society and vice versa’ (Della Porta and Diani, 2011, p 69). Collective action, the study of which civil society and social movements come under the umbrella of, is an area well-documented in both sociology and political science. I do however acknowledge that their respective literature traditionally differs. Civil society has been viewed as more ‘polite’, less contentious and especially more consensual to generate long-term solidarities with goals defined broadly enough to make them acceptable. Social movements are often defined as more confrontational. In popular imagination, they are portrayed as dynamic and dramatic mobilizations that challenge the state to recognize group rights (Minkoff, 2002). This having been said, they overlap empirically and historically when addressing the mechanisms that facilitate or discourage individuals’ involvement in collective action and when understanding issues such as autonomy and associational life (Della Porta and Diani, 2011). In this context, I build on Diani’s definition of social movements – ‘informal networks created by a multiplicity of individuals, groups, and organizations, engaged in political and cultural conflicts based on a shared collective identity’ (Diani, 1992, p 1) – and put it to work in the context of the Women’s Major Group (WMG).

Analysing the WMG through the lens of collective action enables us to shed light on its motivation, drawing on characteristics such as its resources, its identity and its organization.

At national level

If we go deeper into the understanding of what social movement entails – studied historically at the national level – scholars have more specifically analysed the motivations for mobilization and the determinants for political consequences. To date three main determinants, both for political consequences and mobilization motives, are commonly discussed in the literature, namely resource mobilization and organizational forms (Andrews

and Edwards, 2004; Minkoff and McCarthy, 2005), framing strategies and cultural processes and political opportunities and contexts (Kriesi, 1995; Giugni, 1998, 2004; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Amenta et al, 2010). These determinants refer to a series of paradigms that proved successful in the past century.

Before the 1960s, mobilization in a democratic state was studied with respect to collective behaviour with grievance theories. This view was later contested, especially in light of the women's and civil rights movements in the United States, which have been studied in various disciplines such as sociology, political science, psychology, law, anthropology, women's studies, queer theory and others (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Rational action theories put resources at the heart of the analysis. They focus on material and symbolic interests and examine the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements (Minkoff and McCarthy, 2005). To overcome a somewhat limiting view on mobilization, which focused primarily on movements' resources and building on them, political opportunity allowed to shift the analysis to the political structure of the political environment. The political environment is not necessarily formal nor is it necessarily permanent, but it may provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure (Meyer and Minkoff, 2004). In other words, from the perspective of political opportunity, context determines activists' prospects for advancing particular claims, supporters' mobilization and the effect of influence (Meyer and Minkoff, 2004).

The 'cultural turn' in social movement studies came mostly as a reaction to political opportunity theory (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999; Goodwin, 2004), proposing a pragmatic perspective to look at social mobilization in organizational terms through the lens of culture, discourse and identity (Cefai, 2001; Minkoff, 1997b). This led to understanding collective action in light of the common 'we' linked to the three types of overlapping and interacting identity constructs (Snow, 2001): personal identity defined by oneself; social identity attributed by others and often grounded in social roles (that is, a teacher); and collective identity as a shared sense of 'witness' anchored in attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity. In particular, Polletta and Jasper (2001) define collective identity as an 'individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly and is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of personal identity' (p 285). Analysing a collective identity thus has value in understanding the internal motivations that affect a group's lobbying

intensity on an individual rights issue (Snow, 2001). At a later stage, analysing the organization’s collective identity, ideology, belief, expertise, objective and goal point to its lobbying strategies in terms of the venues or arenas it chooses to act in (Pralle, 2010).

At international level

At international level, collective action, analysed with mobilization theory, coupled with international relations theory, provides a new analytical framework, namely that of a ‘transnational advocacy network’ (Keck and Sikkink, 1999). These networks reflect a category of relevant actors working internationally, on behalf of networks, on an issue, bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services (Keck and Sikkink, 1999, p 2), but also in light of political opportunity (Keck and Sikkink, 1999, p 33). These transnational networks, understood through the prism of global civil society, can be portrayed as contributors to democratic global governance for they give voice to stakeholders and thus shift global politics towards greater participatory democracy (Scholte, 2004a). In this sense, civil society’s political opportunity and presence contribute to global governance in two ways: first, governments and bureaucrats’ needs for technical support and expertise; and, second, governance agencies’ needs for information provision, testimonials and analyses of governance agencies (Charnovitz, 2002). As such, civil society groups open a political space to give voice, for instance, to the poor and to women who tend to get limited hearing through other channels and thus make a full democratic contribution to global spaces (Scholte, 2004a). Yet all interested parties must have access and preferably equal opportunities to participate otherwise civil society can reproduce or even enlarge structural inequalities and arbitrary privileges connected with age, class, gender, nationality, race, religion, urban versus rural location, and so on (Scholte, 2004b). Member States governments continue to play a primary role in policy making especially in international organizations contexts. On the one hand, before the European Union, transnational advocacy networks express political preferences about Europe in domestic rather than transnational venues (Imig, 2002). On the other, they use states and international organizations as structural frames and focal points to put pressure on them and in turn have an impact at the national level. This is the principle of the boomerang effect (Keck and Sikkink, 1999).

Little research has investigated civil society individuals who mobilize and constitute international organizations let alone the processes through which individuals and organizations create or resist something resembling a global civil society (Keck and Sikkink, 1999, p 33). These issues are all the more relevant in a context where the UN, especially, includes civil society as a source of legitimacy (Schwartzberg, 2013). Looking closely

at who civil society is in global decision making and how it organizes itself can have an impact on the way we perceive civil society's legitimacy, answering questions such as 'Who are these people anyway? Why should we give them time and attention? What right do they have to interrupt and even obstruct the governance of global relations?' (Scholte, 2002). For example, the literature on the UN's civil society rarely mentions who the NGOs are but does not refrain from using the generic groups such as think tanks, media, churches, trade unions, intellectuals and NGOs (Keck and Sikkink, 1999; Siméant, 2015). Apart from the International Union for Nature Conservation, World Wide Fund for Nature, Greenpeace and Oxfam in the Earth Summit, scholarship is stingy when it comes to analysing who these actors are and how they mobilize (Ollitrault, 2010). What we do know is that social movements have become increasingly transnational in scope, presenting unique conditions for resource mobilization and the mobilization of protest (Minkoff, 1997a). But like any community of people, its members and organizations vary enormously in terms of age, experience, gender, access to resources and basic interests. Back in 1997, Krut stated that only little data or basic descriptive material on international civil society existed (Krut, 1997). And despite growing interest in civil society and international organizations (Florini, 2000; Anheier et al, 2001; Khagram et al, 2002; Keane, 2003; Edwards, 2009), few delve into *who* its members are and their backgrounds.

In other words, looking at mobilization in global governance points to who is involved and helps unravel identities (Jourdain, 2017) with the underpinning question of why they engage by showing the mobilization opportunities and the political environment for organizational constituencies (Minkoff, 1997b). If we accept the UN's civil society as an essential component of organized social movements (Diani, 2015), we would agree to analyse the WMG concerning the political opportunity which arises with the particular groups. The Major Group can thus be viewed as a political opportunity to engage in, as an organization which forges a specific identity and as a space that enables to look at civil society's resources, namely its individuals' careers in accordance with the UN's requirements for engagement.

If we understand the WMG members as individuals carrying out an institutional career path integrated in an organization with its activities and behaviour (Pralle, 2010), then we can analyse and understand the dynamics of work organizations and the movement and fate of individuals within them (Becker, 1952). This enables us to point to the resources and conditions individuals need to integrate the WMG and advocate for DRR and allows us to gain an overall understanding of what it entails to be institutionally included.

To attain a comprehensive understanding not only of civil society's inclusion at the UN, but also of the mobilization conditions, I borrow

the concept of career developed by Howard Becker in an interactionist perspective in his famous book *Outsiders*. Becker defines ‘outsiders’ as individuals who break a rule agreed on by a group. He is thus considered by the group as a deviant. The perspective is interactionist in that an individual is never an outsider, nor a deviant, by themselves, but becomes labelled as such because their behaviour comes up against social creations of rules which they infringe. They are considered deviant only after having been labelled as such and not the other way around.

Moreover, if one becomes deviant, it necessarily implies a process. Becker identifies three successive stages for a person to become and be considered a deviant. Primary deviance refers to the initial acts of deviance that only have minor consequences for that individual’s status or relationships in society. Most people violate laws or commit deviant acts in their lifetime, yet they are not considered deviant for that matter. Secondary deviance, however, is deviance that occurs as a response to society’s reaction and consequently labels the individual as such. This type of deviance, unlike primary deviance, has major implications for a person’s status and relationships in society. The third deviance stage consists in integrating the group of ‘outsiders’, a group whose behaviour is deviant and similar to that of the individual’s. This is a direct result of the internalization of the deviant label.

Becker’s ‘labelling theory’ draws from his experience as a jazz pianist when he was playing in a band in Chicago in the 1950s. He collected extensive observations simply by being one of the members of the band. This was the occasion to analyse the so-called ‘career’ of marijuana consumers, the person who becomes and is accepted as a regular or occasional marijuana drug consumer. The first stage is about acquiring the technique. The second stage revolves around acquiring the perception of the effects. The third and last step consists of acquiring the taste of marijuana effects. Each step either enables or hinders the next in such a way that if one step is missing, the person fails at fulfilling a career as a marijuana consumer.

I argue that analysing civil society members’ presence needs to be viewed, not only as a professional career in terms of fulfilling a path with particular resources – in the humanitarian sector, for instance (Ollion and Siméant, 2015) – but also as a career at the end of which the UN considers civil society members as eligible, as ‘insiders’.

In line with the theory on deviance presented previously, I suggest that the institutional inclusion process goes through three decisive steps that speak directly to Becker’s process towards obtaining the status of ‘deviant’. In the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)’s case, civil society’s first step is to acquire expertise around issues of DRR. The second entails being integrated in an organization which works to promote and implement DRR. While the first two steps both refer to an individual’s curriculum vitae, the last stage must be thought of in terms of resources to

acquire to integrate a specific Major Group. To this end, I discuss a UN's civil society member's career as an addition of:

1. an individual's resources in terms of expertise and experience related to DRR;
2. political mobilization opportunities in the context of the nine Major Groups;
3. the group's (assigned) identity with respect to gender issues for the Women's Group.

The fulfillment of such a career shines through in an individual's presence in the context of UN's civil society engagement.

While inclusion in international relations theory has been addressed from the perspective of international institutions, I fill the gap by tackling inclusion from the perspective of civil society groups with tools borrowed from mobilization theory. I consider that sensitivity, memory, imagination and affect are fundamental dimensions of mobilization alongside institutional constraints set by the UN (Cefai, 2001). That enables to contribute to our understanding of the UN's behaviour and enhance global transparency even if civil society might fail to meet standards of openness in its own activities. Indeed, decision-making processes within civic bodies can be quite opaque to outsiders (Scholte, 2002), hence the need to unpack them.

The chapter is divided into three parts. It examines the WMG's institutional inclusion process in the creation of the Sendai Framework building on mobilization theory and Becker's concept of career. First, I show the resources at play to fulfil the first and second career milestone following the UN's imperatives to claim a voice in international negotiations. Second, I present the conditions in which individuals do 'organizing' (Weick, 1993) within the Major Group system imposed by the UN. Third, we take a deeper look into the WMG's identity and convictions, pointing to the artificial 'we-ness' created by the UN civil society channels for engagement. I conclude by providing insight into who is institutionally included, considered as 'insiders' and what it means for individuals in the Sendai process.

Claim a voice!

If we go by the figures, 2,000 individuals participated in the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan in March 2015. However, as we will see hereafter, only a few members appear regularly in the process leading to the international event.

By describing the professional trajectories of Major Group members, I shed light on who is part of the Third UN, how its members got involved, and from which standpoint they claim a voice. If we assume that civil society

is a major contributor to multilateralism, it is time to gain a thorough understanding of its characteristics, its resources and the way its members ensure a career as part of the UN's civil society. While the Third UN is often mentioned in place of civil society at the UN and is constituted essentially of NGOs, I unpack who hides behind these actors and show how they integrated the UN in the Sendai Framework process.

We will first describe their work experience before presenting their convictions and the way they 'appear' in the Sendai process.

With disaster risk reduction experience

Major Group members get involved in DRR internationally. They base their knowledge on three grounds: personal experience; academic expertise; or professional experience. Regardless of the member's age, personal experience and intellectual endeavour, their drive to advocate for DRR is rooted in particular settings and conditions tied to their childhood or early adulthood.

Personal experiences

Six of the members interviewed draw their DRR mobilization from personal, first-hand experience. Whether it was a major event they underwent in life or the context in which they were raised, both converge towards DRR. It may be the experience of war as a child, an accident barring the pupil from attending school, or a lack of infrastructure to take on disability, experiencing a level 5 hurricane, or dire conditions in which some people live in the Global South.

Lya was three when the war broke out in 1991 in Bosnia-Herzegovina. She started attending school in 1995, a year after the war ended. She tells the story of how her lessons were held on the upper floors while refugees were still living on the school's ground floor. Her memories of school are more vivid than the ones she has from home. During the war, she witnessed bombings and windows shattering and the need to cover windows with plastic, the only material at hand.

When he was young, Michael was in an accident that badly mangled his foot. He was excluded from school on account that he could not walk up the flight of stairs with his crutches. He was only able to resume attending classes once he could walk without crutches.

My parents were like 'What the fuck did you just say?'. My dad was an engineer you know. And my parents just went ballistic. And really, really taught me a lot as a little kid. *I was systematically excluded from school* for a long time. I became very sensitized to these issues. (Michael, Disability caucus, interview, 17 February 2016)

Frances, while on a research sabbatical in Central America – awarded by her university – experienced a devastating category 5 hurricane; Hurricane Mitch. Initially interested in gender issues and development, the life-changing experience led her to consider gender and disaster rather than gender and development. Experiencing the challenges of a ‘natural disaster’ put Frances on a different research path. Ever since 1998, she researches topics about women and gender in the context of disasters.

Gladys, Adriana and Rosemary were born in the ‘Global South’. Gladys was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya, Adriana in Fiji and Rosemary in Sri Lanka. All three contribute to communities in their own country. Gladys and Adriana set up their own NGO as a way to meet the needs local organizations, for which they worked, did not reach. Adriana built two NGOs. The first one, established in 2007, focused on peacebuilding and fostering dialogue in Fiji. The second, founded in 2012, works for peacebuilding and conflict analysis.

When I started, I joined a women’s organization. ... I was there for five years, but within the five years, we had so many financial cuts that we couldn’t guide the organization where we could send the women to go. *We didn’t have local systems where you could send a woman for counselling.* She would have to come and look for us all the way. And Nairobi being a capital city it’s quite far for many of them. So coming to look for help meant investing a lot of money to come and find a place to stay and all that. That for a woman who is already going through violence was a heavy loss. So I left and started [my own] organization which I came with. (Gladys, WMG, interview, 7 July 2017)

Academic expertise

Researching disasters and the impact of such events on people and infrastructure is a field of research on its own. *The Next Catastrophe* by Charles Perrow (2007), *What is a Disaster* by Perry and Quarantelli (2005) and *Risk and Culture* by Douglas and Wildavsky (1983) are a few examples bearing witness to such intellectual endeavours. Scholars have looked at the impact of disasters from a social science perspective, arguing that disasters are nothing but natural. While some urge to look at disasters ‘not [as] exceptional but [rather as] a normal part of our existence’, for Perry and Quarantelli (2005) we need to integrate the social and political factors in order to understand what a disaster represents for a specific population. This effort is in line with Beck’s take on ‘risk society’ and new risks which encompass catastrophic climate change, global financial crises and suicide attacks (Beck, 2009, p 19). In this way all sorts of international actors, namely international organizations, NGOs, the state, universities,

corporate companies and insurance companies are implicated in managing the risks and the effects of natural hazards. It is with this heritage and these founding scholars that some Major Group members approach the DRR field as scientists.

Katherine's initial focus on disaster studies in relation to floods and flood management led her to find significant gaps, in the early 1990s, in the study of gender and disasters. In the context of a lack of research on the topic until the late 1980s she opted, as a professor at a university in the United Kingdom, to dedicate her research to this field.

Cassandra's experience in the Peace Corps allowed her to witness the extent of damage a typhoon had caused on an island in Micronesia. She was reading about the social impact of disasters during her mission when she came across a book entitled *Disaster and Development* by Fred Cooney. He was cutting edge in the late 1980s; he called attention to the discrepancy between what was taught at universities and what organizations do in the field when managing disasters, pointing out that the aid provided to communities is in effect detrimental.

When you're in the field and you deal with a disaster from an operational point of view it is different. *He [Cooney] started showing how the aid that we provide actually destroys the local community.* By bringing all this assistance from outside, when you could be bringing it from another part of the country and help those farmers out would help the whole country to recover. But instead, by bringing in all the assistance from outside, the market dissipates and the farmers don't get paid. You then end up creating another disaster because the country ends up owing money to the IMF [International Monetary Fund]. These dynamics got me thinking. (Cassandra, WMG, interview, 11 February 2016)

In some people's cases DRR came to light when they were students, prompted by a professor or from reading scientific articles. Alice, Kristen and Lya got interested in DRR through their studies. More specifically, during her medical studies Kristen was exposed to disaster medicine. Although she intuitively knew that this was the direction she wanted to take when she began her studies, reading articles on the topic coupled with research on humanitarian response confirmed her choice. Linda chose to do her Master's degree in Disasters, Adaptation and Development at a university in the UK and learned about resilience and how disasters are not just a natural phenomenon. She studied the most relevant approaches of disasters. In my case, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I carried out fieldwork in New Orleans in 2012 and pursued a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of Tel Aviv with a specific disaster

management orientation. Ashley carried out a PhD under Cassandra's supervision. Cassandra was a professor specialized in resilience, climate change adaptation and gender.

Professional background

In certain organizational contexts DRR is sometimes unavoidable. This may gear some members to address it within their work. Gladys, for instance, uses the concept of DRR in her NGO about conflict because she views disasters not only in environmental terms, but also in terms of human conflicts. In other words, conflicts are disasters for which resources must be mobilized.

William came across DRR in the UK context during his time in a government office focusing on floods and the need for resilience.

My job at [a UK government organization], one of the key messages of that bill, as it was going through parliament, was to increase the resilience of English and Welsh communities against flooding. There was a lot behind the scenes dealing with local authorities, who have control over planning in their district. Local authorities were trying to push forward a bill that would prevent building on flood plains. And if projects were being built they were pushing for enhancing resilience by introducing engineering projects that comply to flood prone areas. There were a lot of political discussions there. Sendai was my first experience of resilience at an international level. (William, Science and Technology Major Group, interview, 28 January 2016)

It is however likely that the UN's civil society members have at one point or another been in touch with the UN through their work, either by working directly or indirectly with the organization.

UN internships: a rite of passage

As medical students Alice, Kristen and Lya got involved in the Sendai Framework thanks to internships they carried out at the World Health Organization. All three report having worked on identifying links between health and DRR. Alice gives an idea of what it entails.

During my internship, the kind of work I did was break down the Sendai Framework [while it was being written, negotiated and ratified paragraph by paragraph, meeting after meeting], to identify what we had achieved in terms of health. How many times was health mentioned? In what setting? Are there any good examples? How can they be used when

talking to medical doctors and other people? So there was quite a lot on that at the World Health Organization. (Alice, Major Group for Children and Youth, interview, 10 February 2016)

This experience gave them a good idea of what was at stake from a health perspective in the Sendai text. Internships seem to be a gateway to the professional world of UN bureaucrats, and they undoubtedly help in getting accustomed to the UN and its functioning.

The United Nations: from within and outside

In Rosemary and Michael's case, both were involved in the UN programme on DRR. Yet their jobs at the time were with other UN organizations in which they carried out specific tasks. Rosemary had been working for a UN organization for three years when she engaged in the DRR process in a personal capacity. She did so via voluntary work she does with a local Sri Lanka-based NGO.

Michael had been hired as a consultant to perform an audit on the UN's physical access for persons with disability during the time of the Sendai Framework process. Simultaneously, he advocated for the recognition of people with disability in the text of the Sendai Framework.

They have to be there. I'm always trying to get people with disability to take on this kind of consultancy. Because I can complain all I want about a place, for instance about the Palais not being accessible after so many decades. *I did the original accessibility audit at UN headquarters in New York.* I was part of the two-person team that did that. I worked for the Mayor's Office, Mayor David Dinkins for Giuliani. And it took years to get an agreement from the UN to allow us in with our clipboards and our cameras to do that assessment. They only in 2015 finally made one key room – a meeting room where lots of important things happen and the podium – accessible. (Michael, Disability caucus, interview, 17 February 2016)

Non-governmental organization, hospital, government work

Ellen and Linda work for policy-making NGOs. Their main task is to connect their NGO to specific issues raised by the UN and to advocate for their views. In this capacity Linda works towards increasing resilience throughout communities and Ellen towards empowering women worldwide.

Linda's job more specifically entails learning from the organization's members, listening to their concerns, understanding their positions and priorities to best advocate in their favour in the creation of the Sendai

Framework text. To do so and in hopes of conveying their message she was in touch with members' government representatives at the UN.

Ellen works for an organization well-known at the UN whose focus is on advocacy for women's empowerment, women's leadership and gender equality.

I have these two sides to my work. The one side is very much the administration of the organization and the other is the programme work. ... *The programme work is pretty much, almost all related to the UN* in some way. [The New York-based NGO] is known for being very knowledgeable about the policy processes held at the UN, whether taking place in New York or elsewhere. There are essentially two processes that [the New York-based NGO] follows: 1) Sustainable Development; 2) Climate Change. So you know the reason why I'm going to Marrakesh is because [the New York-based NGO] has a role as a co-focal point for the Women and Gender constituency for the Climate Convention for the UNFCCC [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change]. The role is basically the same as being the organizing partner of the Women's Major Group for the sustainable development process and then for the DRR process. (Ellen, WMG, interview, 8 November 2016)

Ashley works for a US-based government development organization. She travels far and wide to foster, she explains, 'international development and humanitarian efforts to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance and help people progress beyond assistance'. She maintains ties with communities which she visits regularly.

Leah: So you are going to El Salvador?

Ashley: Yes on Saturday. I'm there all the time. I was just there three weeks ago. I've spent collectively about seven months over the last year and a half. One of my main community and DRR projects is in El Salvador.

Leah: So you're basically between El Salvador and the US?

Ashley: And Myanmar and the Philippines and Mainland. ... Right now my project concentrates on community disaster risk reduction and health and contingency planning and preparedness in different countries. (Ashley, WMG, interview, 25 February 2016)

Lya is a member of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations. Having completed her training and residency, she now works as a physician in a hospital located in a rural area. Though her work is not

within an NGO, like Ashley's, she uses her professional experience, skills and expertise for advocacy work.

I've been working in the ER medicine. Up until recently I was working in a city an hour away from Zagreb, in a small rural area. It was fun but I was just tired of commuting. I was using the bus and the connection was not good. I wasted so much time. I changed. I now work in the capital. (Lya, Major Group for Children and Youth, interview, 5 February 2016)

William works for a UK government organization and joined the government office in the run-up to the Sendai Framework as an environmental scientist with a focus on DRR. Sayaka, a former Mayor of a Province in Japan, joined UNISDR's process in 2012 prior to the Sendai Framework process. Working for a government can thus take on various forms, from being a politician to working in a department focusing on DRR.

On the way back from the cocktail dinner organized by the City of Sendai, I had a nice long talk with Sayaka. I mainly asked her about her life. I found out she had been a journalist in Japan for over 30 years and became famous for her work and documentary tackling daycare and women. In 1989, she covered the Tiananmen event in China. Then she started a career as a parliamentarian for 11 years and became a governor for nine years. Many issues on gender changed in the legislation during her time. (Observation notes, Sendai, 15–18 March 2015)

We here introduced some members of Major Groups and the ways in which they got involved in DRR issues (see [Table 4.1](#)), leading them to engage in the Sendai Framework process. While Adriana, Ashley, Rosemary, Gladys, Sayaka and Michael (6) work for NGOs tied to communities in rural areas, other members (13) work in local or international institutions doing research or implementing government-based programs. Abel, Agatha, Kristen and myself (4) all studied as PhD candidates. Abel, Agatha and I were carrying out our own research. Cassandra, Frances, Katherine and Vickie (4) are professors at universities, while Ellen and Linda work for an international NGO and William at a government organization.

Table 4.1: Diversity of professional backgrounds

Professional backgrounds					
Internship	UN contract	NGO work	Research and consultancy work	Physician	Government work

With convictions

The experience individuals gain is coupled with the urge to do something at the international level. Whether their actions take place at the international level only, namely at the UN, or are combined with local or regional work, they strive to reduce inequalities, loss and environmental impact, to name just a few. In this way, they concretize an altruistic calling, a selflessness to act in favour of a better world.

Alice, the medical student from Sweden, is driven to do something when she watches or hears the news: 'You know the feeling, you watch the news and you want to do something!' Alice, Linda and Ellen believe the international level has value in trying to trickle down positive effects from a global policy perspective, especially when it comes to the environment. For Kristen and Lya, both medical students, there is a sense of wanting to help 'the most vulnerable' (Kristen) and 'communities' especially in the context of the aftermath of a war that pitted Serbians against Croatians (Lya), because of the awareness of inequalities and in particular the 'people most silenced', such as women, children and older people (Katherine). 'There's no patient that is in much more in need of receiving health care than someone in a war' (Kristen, Major Group for Children and Youth, 14 February 2016).

While all seem compelled to work towards a better common good, some met inspiring people during their work; people who survived disasters and managed to cope with destruction and loss. Listening to personal life stories becomes a driving force whereby members aim to be mediators conveying messages in international spaces where others can't. These life stories give the members substance, enabling them to speak accurately about inequalities, loss and suffering (see [Box 4.1](#)). Throughout their encounters, they collect and remember stories of loss and suffering which they carry in their quest for bettering the world. Sharing stories they have heard and which moved them becomes a calling in itself.

Box 4.1: Cassandra's testimony describing loss

One day, I interviewed a local woman leader. She was coordinating work in her village to try to get resources after a disaster. She told me that she had gone to planning meetings and that this jackass as he was talking about the resources said to her 'Oh well you're all really lucky that we are going to come in to do this work for you.' Imagine! He was saying this to a person who had lost her babies as they floated away in the tsunami. The only reason she survived is because her hijab hooked on a tree and held her up out of the water. And her babies were pulled out of her arms. So here's this woman who survived this and she's working and coordinating with her community and she has an amazing positive attitude. However when the waters had

sounded and she came down and looked around she was devastated. But then she saw these children that had lost their parents and they needed someone, so she started helping to keep people together. She worked hard, coordinating, to find the missing people of the community. That's what she knew how to do. She felt like she had a purpose. She started acting instead of remaining devastated and passive. When this guy [from a UN agency] said this to the group, she stood up and said 'Excuse me Sir, but we just went through a tsunami. We just survived and you're telling us that we are lucky? No Sir! We are not the lucky ones. The lucky ones are you, who are getting paid ridiculous salaries to come in here for the recovery. And if you were to take even 1 per cent of the money you and your colleagues are earning – who are getting paid these ridiculous amounts – and put it into a fund, that money would help my community recover.' I told her that was so brilliant. I was so happy that someone said this! But it's because you meet, people like her who don't have a lot of resources and that are working really hard for their communities, who help their communities recover and are actively thinking about how to empower other women's lives. And when you meet these kind of people, you think 'Wow I'm lucky to meet these kinds of people'. And so where I have access to negotiations – this woman doesn't – but where I have access to these spaces, I am and feel privileged. So I have to be able to carry that into you know – at least helping hopefully on a global level or whatever level. So that's why I stayed involved in these processes like the PrepComs and this last process for UNISDR. (Cassandra, WMG, 11 February 2016)

With data collected through interviews and informal discussions, it appears that Major Group members are suited to speak for the communities and constituencies they are sensitive about. Yet with a 'voice not a vote' they are not representatives and do not claim to be representatives. What they do claim is their legitimacy in voicing concerns based on different factors. Some evoke the number of organizations they are in touch with ('We are a network of about 900 organizations around the world in 140 countries' [Linda]), others the number of individuals they have encountered in their NGO operational work.

The part that is so amazing about civil society organizations or representatives is that we are not only representing our field. *Many of us are representing our communities*, whether that community is a geographical community in which we were born and raised or moved to, or a community of other advocates and other practitioners. We all represent communities. If the process of inclusion of those civil society communities is limited or completely excluded, the quality of the product ultimately, like the Sendai Framework, will suffer. (Ashley, WMG, interview, 25 February 2016)

Giving a voice to the communities and the constituencies they represent is the Major Group members' fundamental leitmotiv. Representing the absentee and the underprivileged lies at the heart of their cause. While non-state actors at the UN are often referred to as NGOs, we see here that non-state actors do not all work for NGOs. Yet all seem to have ties with UNISDR in one way or another; perhaps because of an internship in an international organization addressing issues relating to those of UNISDR (Kristen, Lya, Alice), or due to a member's organization's mandate to work at UN headquarters for policy advocacy (Linda, Ellen), or because of their job working for the UN either as a full-time employee or as a consultant (Michael, Rosemary). All work with DRR in mind, whether it be in a policy-centred NGO, an operational NGO (Ashley), from a research perspective (Cassandra, Katherine) or a governmental office (William).

With network and information

One does not suddenly appear in the Sendai process regardless of the amount of DRR experience and determined conviction. Tracing the paths of individuals to the process gives cues to understanding who the UN, in this case UNISDR, interacts with and ultimately provides insight into the values it abides by. Based on the interviews with the WMG, two categories appear; the first and most prominent one is the category of researchers, the second is the one made of local NGO representatives. Hereafter I give some individual details to illustrate these categories.

On the one hand, we observe the researchers. Katherine vaguely remembers that she got close to the UN after having been invited as a speaker to a European conference about flooding in her capacity as a researcher. This must have been in the 1980s, she recalls. That event became the link to the UN University, which then fit into UNISDR and finally the Sendai process. Although the exact chain of events and interactions remain blurry to her, her involvement with UNISDR is in large part due to the network of experts she co-founded around gender and disaster which became a solid partner for UNISDR back in the early 2000s.

Just like Katherine, Cassandra got involved with UNISDR long before it was UNISDR. In fact after her experience with the Peace Corps in Micronesia and her interest in the gender and disaster topic, she communicated with a person working at the UN, named Joseph Chang, who helped set up the international decade for DRR in the late 1980s. In the late 1990s, thanks to her communication with people from the UN and academia, as a PhD student and later as a professor, she developed theories and worked on 'best practices'. In 2005, at the Kobe conference, she shared having been part of the collection of women activists dedicated to including gender in some of the sessions.

Ashley got into the process, prior to the Sendai Framework, in the Global Platforms UNISDR organized in 2013, thanks to Cassandra, her PhD supervisor at the time. The Hyogo Framework for Action was a big part of her dissertation among other policy frameworks. Both her interest for UN policy frameworks, and thus awareness of their timeline, and Cassandra’s lengthy experience enabled her to submit an application to attend the Global Platform, which she did alongside Cassandra.

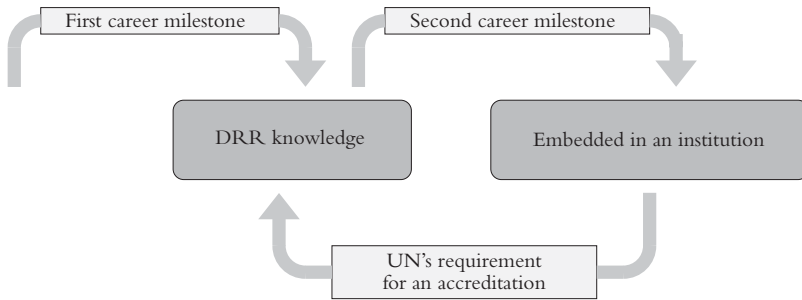
As for Frances, she was asked to join the Dean of the Faculty she had integrated at the university she teaches at, who was carrying out work for the UN in light of the post-2015 development process agenda. The UN had set up a high level panel and submitted a preliminary draft with some illustrative goals. During the process, in 2012 and 2013, they took part in many consultations and discussions and during one of them realized they didn’t know enough about gender. Her dean then solicited her to write a draft including ‘gender’ which she accepted. She later got involved in the Sendai process when they were coming to the end of their input in the Sustainable Development Goals. She noticed the Sendai process, closer to her areas of research, namely disasters, and was interested in knowing what was going on there. ‘So I said, well off I go!’.

On the other hand, we have individuals working in NGOs, some at local and others at international level. Gladys got involved in the Sendai process after having been recommended by UNWomen whom she had been working with at national level in Kenya as part of the NGO she had founded. Adriana was encouraged to attend the Sendai process by the director of the local NGO she was working for since she had contributed to fora on disaster risks previously. The NGO Ellen works for is essentially turned to UN work, trying to influence policy outcomes. She thus got engaged in UN processes because of the very nature of the organization she is working for.

While NGO representatives seem to be invited to carry out the voice of the local ‘reality’, academics obtain a legitimate space to discuss their area of expertise. If NGO representatives can certainly argue the importance of their work and impact at an international level to their donors, for instance, academics most likely take the opportunity to tick the box in their ‘resume’ under the banner of ‘knowledge transfer’ and ‘expertise outputs’. In this way, public engagement with international organizations would act as a means for these encouraged activities to meet university standards and injunctions.

Experiences, convictions, information and network pertaining to the Sendai process can be portrayed as crucial resources for the first career milestone for mobilization at the UN. They become all the more important because together they draw the path to integrate an institution which works towards DRR. This thus points to the two milestones an individual needs to achieve in light of a career in the UN’s civil society (see [Figure 4.1](#)). These individuals have DRR experience, be it personal, research focused or

Figure 4.1: First career milestones in interaction with United Nations requirements



professional, coupled with being integrated in an organization which works. This combination allows the UN to institutionally include such individuals on account that their institution is Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accredited. However, for organizations with no ECOSOC accreditation, Major Groups' organizing partners (OPs) come into play. Whether accredited or not, individuals still have to comply with the Major Groups' structure. They need to integrate one of them, based on their channels of interest. Engaging in one of the Major Groups becomes an opportunity for legitimate and predictable mobilization, allowing the actors to reinforce their conviction regarding their collective action despite the unknown outcomes and costs of their efforts (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p 79).

In the next section we look at the third and last milestone for a person's 'career' as a civil society member in UN negotiation contexts. I highlight the implications this has on the collective identity in the mobilization context relying on mobilization theories.

Do 'organizing' in silos!

Working for the DRR cause and wanting to engage for the Sendai Framework is only made possible if individuals manage to integrate one of the nine Major Groups. In [Chapter 1](#), I presented how UNISDR chose to work with civil society in the run-up to the Sendai Framework by relying on the Major Group structure, which has existed since 1992. This format aims to channel civil society organizations according to specific interests, namely Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous, NGOs, Farmers, Local Authorities, Business and Industry, Science and Technology, Workers and Trade Unions.

To fulfill the General Assembly and Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) mandates regarding multi-stakeholder

engagement, the CSD Secretariat works with and supports the major groups to facilitate their inputs into the UN CSD process in an efficient, participatory and transparent way. Working arrangements are in continuous evolution and often serve as a model to other UN led processes. (UN SDG website, last accessed 10 April 2024)

In so doing, individuals need to be accredited, hence embedded in a recognized institution (see [Figure 4.4](#)), to integrate one of these groups. If accreditation is usually delivered on account of an individual’s affiliation to an ECOSOC accredited organization, I show here that there are other ways. As observed, an individual can circumvent the most established accreditation procedure with the help of a Major Group’s gatekeeper.

I zoom into the WMG to shed light on how members gain accreditation and when members form the WMG in accordance to the UN’s prerogatives. Even though we could assume that all individuals interested in advocating for gender issues in the DRR framework could de facto become members of the WMG, it appears that various criteria and thus different resources are at stake. In this section, I will not only show by what means members enter the Major Group, but also highlight the moments that consolidate the group.

I unravel the constant changes the group faces and its needs to sustain itself throughout the process. And last, but not least, I highlight the way in which the group organizes itself – behind the scenes so to speak – around advocacy and coordination for influence. This not only allows to focus on the issue of inclusion, namely answer the question of who is included in the WMG, but also enables to build on [Chapter 3](#), which shows concretely what impact the WMG had in the Sendai process as well as setting the ground work for [Chapter 5](#), ‘Disentangling the Social’, in which I focus specifically on advocacy strategies.

Identifying the gatekeeper

Integrating a Major Group relies on the UN’s gatekeepers for civil society, known as the OPs in UN jargon. They play a decisive role and hold a key position in accrediting persons for whom accreditation through ECOSOC is not possible. These individuals officially have seven main responsibilities. According to the UN’s website, they:

- (1) Consult networks to create written and oral statements, identify new challenges to be met by the Major Group, as well as relevant participants,
- (2) Organize and disseminate data and information,
- (3) Consult with networks,

- (4) Provide guidance and logistics for Major Groups to maximize their presence during sessions,
- (5) Find expertise to develop policy positions,
- (6) Coordinate and facilitate participation for representatives,
- (7) Have proper and valuable knowledge of the UN and its processes to provide the group with background information. (United Nations Sustainable Development, nd)

The WMG held Ellen as OP. She works for an NGO based in New York and she embodies the WMG OP's mission. In this way, the OP embodies networks: 'they provide information that would not otherwise be available from sources that might not otherwise be heard and they must make this information comprehensible and useful to activists and publics who may be geographically and/or socially distant' (Keck and Sikkink, 1999, p 18).

The OP is supposed to be there to manage the communication's flow so that everyone in the constituency or the group knows what is happening in terms of the opportunity to give input, and how to register for events and to support that registration if someone has no accredited organization to sign up from. So the role of OPs is to help individuals to earn accreditation and help facilitate advocacy opportunities. I think that can be done at different levels. For me, I'm accustomed to doing it in a more consensus building way, but it's also about leaving the space open so that people can be part of the WMG and be able to use that and say 'I'm here and I'm officially part of the WMG and here's the expertise that I bring that can support XZY country in what they are doing'. Furthermore it's also making sure that there's the opportunity to speak. And besides doing it for their constituency group, OPs have a responsibility to ensure space for civil society overall. (Ellen, OP for WMG, interview, 8 November 2016)

To understand how a civil society member is designated as OP by the UN for a specific Major Group, we find answers in the NGO's historical ties with the UN. The New York-based NGO was established in 1991 by former US Congresswoman Bella Abzug (1920–1998) and feminist activist and journalist Mim Kelber (1922–2004) to specifically become a leader in organizing women for international conferences and actions. In this way, the organization earned a reputation as a 'trailblazer in the international women's rights movement'. It is known for being 'very knowledgeable about policy processes through the UN in New York and elsewhere' (Ellen). It has been involved since its establishment, hence its position as OP in the Sendai Framework process. '[The New York-based NGO] was an organizing partner around energy and climate change in the Rio+20 conference without having been elected. Thereafter, we went through a whole election process.

There are now eight OPs for that specific Women's Major Group' (Ellen, interview, 8 November 2016).

We could imagine other NGOs to fit the role as OP due to their expertise in DRR, for instance. That was the case for the Japan-based women's NGO centred on DRR. In addition, it was highly active in the lead-up to Sendai. However, having extensive knowledge about the organization and its functioning is determinant to becoming an OP. The UN prefers working with UN-experienced organizations and thus tends to decline others. 'I don't think your Japanese colleagues had an insight as to how the WMG worked. So when [the New York-based NGO] said they would take the lead we said great!' (Margareta Wahlström, interview, 20 December 2017). Ellen, as the OP, accredited women who did not have ECOSOC status by integrating them under the banner of the WMG. In the preparation of PrepCom2, she sent out an email on 4 November 2014 stating: 'You are registered under the [the New York-based NGO] delegation, but you are not there as an official representative of [the New York-based NGO].' In this way, she accredited Gladys, Cassandra, Ashley, Frances and me, Leah, while the others were accredited through ECOSOC.

I went through UNISDR and Ellen. For the accreditation, it was Ellen through [the New York-based NGO] who made sure I got it. UNISDR introduced me to Ellen and I wrote to her. We then had a discussion, and she told me about the process and what I needed to do and that's what I did. (Gladys, WMG, interview, 7 July 2017)

It appears that the UN relies on OPs to constitute the Major Groups. Though the rules for a person to integrate the Sendai process are formal (one needs to be affiliated to an ECOSOC-accredited organization), gatekeepers enjoy a leeway in accrediting persons they deem worthy for the process and who don't benefit from ECOSOC status.

Major Groups should be self-organized. I mean that's one of the principles and the beautiful thing about all these processes. They need to be autonomous and independent, self-organized and at the same time connected to whatever agency's secretariat. We don't want UNISDR to say 'Here's your gender focal point within UNISDR, here's their agenda on what they should do'. We want UNISDR to say 'Here's a gender focal point who has a lot of resources and would love to meet with you and support you getting an understanding of who our contacts are', helping us to orientate to the space. Then back and forth we can say 'Well here are our priorities. This is how we work with them'. *But we never want the UN to tell us what to say!!!* (Ellen, interview, 8 November 2016)

Box 4.2: Financial constraints

It took Ashley a lot of 'pushing on her part' to get the US-based NGO she worked for to fund her trip and stay for the second PrepCom and the World Conference. Frances, a professor from the United Kingdom, took the opportunity to carry out interviews tied to her own research for which she had received funding every time she flew to Geneva for consultative meetings at the UN between PrepCom1 and PrepCom2. Katherine, a retired professor, expressed her take on the financial ordeals of taking part in the process: Now I am no longer at the University, I don't have any funds to call upon. So how do I go to UN meetings? I can't! Unless I am going to pay for myself. You go to Geneva even for a few days and you end up spending £1,000. I can't do that. I don't have that money and that's me from a developed country. So you come from a developing country, going to Geneva is crazy – you might as well say: Go Into Space!

The financial constraints experienced by my colleagues point to the possible inclusion, or rather exclusion, civil society could undergo regardless of the individuals' willingness to participate in the process.

The New York-based NGO representative, as the OP, is well aware of the UN's power to disseminate its ideas and views at any level. However, Ellen also sees an opportunity to counter, even just a bit, the impact the institution can have on civil society members. The relative freedom she is granted as the UN's right hand – by accrediting individuals she deems worthy – enables her, if needed, to challenge the system.

Fervent advocate versus United Nations tourist? The composition of the Women's Major Group

The WMG's composition undergoes constant changes throughout the Sendai process. Engaging early on does not guarantee permanent involvement. Rather the group is subject to evolutions and mutations, which requires constant co-definition in light of activities being done. We observe multiple forms of engagements where coexistence is perpetually re-discussed. These forms can be the following: attending meetings consistently or sporadically throughout the process; contributing online via online sharing tools regularly or seldomly; appearing at certain occasions punctually.

Addressing the WMG composition throughout the process is relevant in light of Major Groups' recurrent concern, namely to make sure civil society – individuals and NGOs, not governments nor businesses – is being heard in a coherent and consistent manner. In so doing, Major Group members, with the OP's help, physically integrate conferences and meetings to voice

their principle ideas and convictions. Despite being officially recognized as a key participant in the process, civil society members need to fight for their voices to be expressed and heard. As we will see in detail in [Chapter 5](#), civil society members need to proactively engage to sustain their position. If they slip, no one – neither governments nor UNISDR – will call upon them. Absenteeism as a principle does not apply in voluntary participation.

We here take stock of the various forms of mobilization observed in the WMG to give an account of the individuals who engage, at what moment, in which context and with what means in a forever evolving process. Understanding mobilization in terms of resources makes all the more sense when the decision to travel to Geneva and Sendai constitutes a financial burden. As a side note, Geneva is the third most expensive city in the world in 2022 according to Forbes, or seventh according to the BBC and the World Economic Forum – a constant in the past years since *The Economist* already ranked the city fourth in 2019. In this context, a woman from Ghana emailed Ellen days before PrepCom1 to inform her of her absence. ‘Dear Ellen, I will not be able to attend the meeting due to financial constraints. I look forward to participating in any online discussion that may arise. Thank you’ (email, 14 July 2014). In fact, when the Sendai process officially started in the context of the first preparatory committee held in Geneva in July 2014, Ellen organized a session in which only nine women attended although she had accredited 25 persons through the New York-based NGO. ‘11h15: Hall XXVII. 10 women are seated around the long table. Ellen, the OP, introduces herself and the reason why she is here. Women around the table introduce themselves’ (observation notes, PrepCom1, 14 July 2014). Hereafter I give an account of the individuals who gravitated from close or far around the WMG. I categorize them into three groups: the pillars, the long-distance members and the sporadic members.

The pillars

To describe the ‘pillars’, we take a closer look at the members who consistently attended the Sendai process. In the months following the first preparatory committee, UNISDR set four consultative meetings which took place between September and October 2014 in Geneva. Only Leah and Frances attended the sessions in person. They became the pillars.

I mean you know most of the time it’s only you here, which is fine. But most of the time, no one told you anything. Ellen I know struggled. That’s why I started to get involved to try and give her a hand. *But most of the time it was me and her and you.* And then suddenly, you meet all these people at the meetings and it’s like ‘Oh OK!’. You must have despaired because you were here all the time! *You were doing all the leg*

work and then everybody else appears and it's like 'who are you?' (Frances, WMG, interview, 11 February 2016)

Pillar members embody the role of the fervent advocate. They have in-depth knowledge of the system due to long-term engagement at UN level. As a reminder, some women had been involved in UN advocacies for years before Sendai. We saw them integrate DRR processes prior to Sendai, such as the Global Platform in 2013, but also as part of the discussion on climate in Copenhagen in 2009.

I was working on that at the same time with UNISDR and then the GGCA [The Global Gender and Climate Alliance] came up and so there was a lot of momentum. We were then doing trainings and things that led up to Copenhagen. And so *Copenhagen was where I met Ellen*. She was number 2, deputy or something like that at [the New York-based NGO] at the time. And I'm trying to remember because a few months earlier, we had all been in the Philippines for a meeting on gender in DRR and climate change. (Cassandra, WMG, interview, 11 February 2016)

The pillars also attend major events dedicated to the Sendai Framework (PrepCom1, 2, 3 and World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction [WCDRR]) and thus have sufficient resources to take part in meetings and network, be on top of salient issues and acquire knowledge about the UN's functioning. Later, at PrepCom2, PrepCom3 and WCDRR, Frances and I, as initial pillars, alongside Ellen as OP, were backed by Cassandra, Katherine, Ashley and Sayaka who actively contributed to the activities. The WMG thus had consistent dedication from seven persons, which we call the WMG pillars, without whom the process, we might think, would not have produced the same outcome.

There comes a point when fervent advocates perceive that their position is at risk when the funding application is open to everyone beyond the established 'pillars'. Since funding is the main challenge to participate, pillars expect to be supported – we could almost say rewarded – for their advocacy endeavours. Travelling to Geneva, Switzerland and to Sendai, Japan from various parts of the world requires financial resources to cover not only travel costs, but accommodation in expensive cities. In December 2014, as negotiations were being pursued, the question of who among the various Major Groups would obtain funding for Sendai became a topic of discussion raised by UNISDR. Members from three Major Groups (WMG, Major Group for Children and Youth and NGO Major Group) wrote to UNISDR staff formulating their worries and concerns. By adopting the Major Group structure, UNISDR was allowing any civil society member to apply for funding and to participate in the Sendai process through

the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS or NGLS). However Major Group members who had been involved and had followed the plenaries and the consultative meetings thoroughly from July 2014 onward wanted to secure their attendance until the last days in Sendai. They therefore formulated an email (see [Box 4.3](#)) addressed to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, head of the UNISDR, Margareta Wahlström. The aim was to be recognized as consistently invested members, as pillars.

Box 4.3: Email sent to UNISDR on behalf of several Major Groups regarding funding

Dear Margareta; George, CC Rosa,

We, the representatives of Major Groups are extremely grateful for the support and opportunity to contribute to the process towards the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. Since the start of the process we – as Major Groups – have worked hard to ensure that diverse voices are included and that it has produced meaningful inputs to the sessions. We strive to be able to continue to do this through the upcoming steps up to and at the WCDRR and ensure that civil society participants can access the DRR space and that their ideas are heard. In order to ensure this, active participants must be able to attend the WCDRR and have access to the discussions. ...

The open call through UN NGLS does not guarantee that anyone who has been active in the process until now will be able to attend, which makes us very concerned. Supporting representatives from each Major Group at the WCDRR will ensure that the ongoing work of those who have committed to a process is recognized and that diverse civil society views are presented. ... Our issue is not their inclusion, but no allocated space for Major Group participation in addition to the plenary. We are thereby convinced, that in addition to the UNISDR and UN-NGLS call we still need to ensure that the Major Groups and its representatives are represented through the availability of funding. We therefore strongly urge the UNISDR Secretariat to ensure that there is funding support available for some representatives from all Major Groups. ... We are looking forward to hearing your thoughts on this and finding a solution that ensures a meaningful and effective civil society participation.

Sincerely, The Representatives of Major Groups, The UN Major Group for Children and Youth, The Major Group for Woman.

Source: Draft email to UNISDR, December 2014

Although this email was finally never sent to Margareta Wahlström nor to the rest of UNISDR’s team (Indigenous Group and WMG withdrew on the account that a call with George – civil society’s focal point at

UNISDR – would suffice to clarify their concern), we take stock of the members’ stance deeming it more important that consistently involved and physically present members be encouraged, supported and funded by the UN. In other words, in the pillars’ view, things happen because they are present, write emails, make phone calls and engage with UNISDR staff; therefore, ultimately, they deserve to be funded.

The long-distance members

To counter the impact of travel costs, Ellen created a Google Group in the lead-up to the second preparatory committee (PrepCom2). This online tool enabled her to integrate persons who had shown interest in working in the WMG towards the Sendai process. In this way, after UNISDR – represented by George as the Major Group focal point – called out to civil society members to help contribute to the indicators’ framework, women reached out to participate from afar.

Dear Major Group Organizing Partners,

As discussed in telcom on Friday, a Major Groups Consultation with the Informal Working Group on Targets and Indicators has now been confirmed for Monday 10th November, 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm in Geneva (see attached agenda). All Major Groups are welcomed to attend. In addition, a maximum of 20 remote participants can be accommodated via ebex. All Major Groups are requested to signal their interest to participate. (Email from George, UNISDR, Major Group focal point, 4 November 2014)

Out of the seven women who reached out to participate, only two participated in the Sendai process (Katherine and Rosemary), one of whom is a pillar (Katherine).

The remaining five were persons from Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Bangladesh, Indonesia and India, and shared their intention to participate from a distance.

The list of interested people is:

Gia, NGO, Trinidad and Tobago

Guerda, NGO, Haiti

Damairia, NGO, Indonesia

Rosemary, NGO, Sri Lanka

Katherine, Professor of Gender and Disaster Resilience, UK University

Miriam, Director & Professor, Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies & Former Professor in Sociology, University in Bangladesh

Carmen, NGO, Bolivia

From the emails I [Ellen] saw that Katherine has been actively working on it [Indicators’ framework]. Who else? (Email from Ellen, to wmg3wcdrr@googlegroups.com, 5 November 2014)

Dear Ellen, I would love to join remotely from Indonesia. Cheers. (Email from person in Indonesia, 5 November 2014)

In parallel, Ellen developed online documents for other volunteers, to suggest wording for the WMG Key Messages elaborated in light of the second preparatory committee (November 2014). On another Google Doc document entitled ‘DRAFT – WMG Key Messages and Specific Recommendations’, Rosemary (Sri Lanka), Sayaka (Japan), Frances (UK) and Stuti (India) contributed. Long-distance members provide input alongside pillars with the difference that they do not join meetings consistently.

The sporadic members

The day before PrepCom2, the women who came to attend the WMG decided to meet to discuss the procedure for the following days (17–18 November 2014). This meeting saw newcomers, that is, women who had participated neither at PrepCom1 nor at any consultative meetings. Kate, Karen, Osho, Stuti and Rosemary introduced themselves to Cassandra, Katherine, Leah and Sayaka who had been present at PrepCom1. Cassandra, Katherine, Sayaka and myself were the only participants who had attended PrepCom1. Rosemary and Osho’s faces were new to the group, but they were known for their input in the drafts for the group’s statement and UNISDR’s text.

When I arrived at the Warwick Hotel, Cassandra was there with Kate. Kate speaks Japanese and works for Sayaka. I’d never seen or heard of her. Moments later the others joined us. ... We sat at a table near the bar. The women present are Cassandra (US-University), Karen (INGO), Sayaka (Japan-based NGO), Osho (Japan-based NGO), Kate (Japan-based NGO – seemingly a translator), Stuti (Research institute, India), Katherine (UK University in the UK), Rosemary (Sri Lanka-based NGO), and myself (University of Geneva). (Observation notes, pre-PrepCom2, 16 November 2014)

At the final PrepCom (3) and for the Third WCDRR, in Sendai other ‘newcomers’ joined the WMG’s party. Vickie from a university in Japan – engaged with Japan-based NGO, the Japanese NGO headed by Sayaka – joined the event. Vickie had not communicated with the WMG before then

(from PrepCom1) but had engaged with UNISDR before the beginning of the process.

In 2013, I had organized a conference in Ottawa and brought in the UNISDR representative in New York to come to that conference. I particularly wanted her to meet Sayaka who I had been bringing to Ottawa Canada as my Keynote speaker. *The event facilitated a first interaction with UNISDR's New York office.* I also did a follow-up policy dialogue at the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo together with the UNISDR representative in Asia Pacific. There were two different instances of bringing in regional UNISDR representatives to meet Sayaka's network. (Vickie, WMG, interview, 10 October 2017)

If we look back at the type of engagement (Table 4.1), it appears that individuals engage from around the world even if they cannot be present at meetings. They engage online, via Google Docs, to add comments and suggest specific language. We also notice that some get accredited through the New York-based NGO but never manage to attend. Others turn up at big events, such as PrepComs, without having given prior input. Still others have been engaged for over a decade and work in the background. The model of the fervent advocate might be a person who engages throughout the cause before, during and after the Sendai process. These persons are key because they tie relationships leading to efficient advocacy (see advocacy strategies in Chapter 5). However, this requires resources not all members have. Hereafter is a take on civil society's role according to a UN staff member from a UN organization.

I think it's *very important to have a relationship* with the ones who are negotiating on behalf of their Member States, especially if your role, as a civil society members, is to advocate for a certain language. Helping Member State representatives bring the substance that they might not have is highly appreciated. (Birgit, UN organization, interview, 28 January 2016)

In the world of mobilization (Thévenot and Boltanski, 1991), the fervent advocate seems to embody one major characteristic of worth, that of dedication and consistent attendance. While we might associate the term to individuals whose attendance and contribution only happens sporadically – understood in most circumstances as a derogatory term – *UN tourist* invites us to reconsider the term altogether. According to the dictionary, a tourist is a person who is travelling or visiting a place for pleasure. In this case, the place must be understood as the Sendai process, which calls persons who engage to travel within the UN space (to Geneva and Sendai from their home base), for an activity that procures pleasure and satisfaction. The sporadic

member, in return, lacks follow-up and building relations. Even if both pillars and sporadics can be seen as UN tourists, because they volunteer and enjoy engaging, sporadics could take on the derogatory term of the UN tourist. As a sociologist, I propose the term 'tourist' because I felt uncomfortable for not having attended a whole week of negotiations on Sustainable Development Goals at the UN in New York in the summer of 2015.

I emailed Rokhia asking her if she had time for coffee. She answered saying she had been worried about me not being around. Indeed I had been sick. She also said she had gone through a sleepless night drafting a document. That is nuts! I felt like an imposter, coming when it 'suits' me and not giving any input, while I relied on the goodwill of other women's participation. I sort of now relate to the women in the Sendai process who were sporadically showing up at the UN in Geneva during the DRR process. (Observation notes, UN New York, July 2015)

Consolidating the group

As we saw in the previous section, the different individuals composing the group have common interests yet different levels of engagement and thus seem to act in an un-united manner. To counter this, mechanisms are at times put in place to, as I analyse it, consolidate the group. We will see in this section how the selection of participants for a grant acted as a means to solidify the group's composition, at the expense however, of other valuable members.

We go back to a particular moment in the Sendai process which revolves around selecting a participant to attend the second preparatory committee in November 2014. This illustration will serve as a strong basis in order to reveal the formal and informal criteria that help fund a participant. While most WMG members who attended the meetings had managed to get their NGO to pay for travel and accommodation, not all NGOs had sufficient means to send their representatives to Geneva and/or Sendai. Overall, most members are funded through their organization. Those with financial difficulty have the option to apply for UN funding. There ensued a debate causing uproar among some Major Group members who believed priority should be given to pillars. While I observed that most pillars were funded by their organization, it seemed that the UN's incentive was to provide long-distance members with the opportunity to contribute in person. This having been said, criteria are specific. Analysing the selection process for funding gives cues to understand what resources are required to be recognized by the UN as a viable candidate; this goes beyond experiences, convictions and the organization a member is part of.

As the OP for the WMG, on 16 October 2014 Ellen wrote an email to the WMG members. The email was sent with an attached document

Table 4.2: Composition of the Women’s Major Group in the lead up to the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in alphabetical order

Name	Age	Country of origin	Degrees	Current job	Major Group	Multilingual Positions (English + more)
Adriana	54	Fiji	Bachelor + Master: unknown	Fiji based NGO	Women	Yes Long-distance member
Ashley	33	USA	PhD: disaster resilience	US-based development organization	Women	Yes Pillar
Cassandra	46	USA	PhD: disaster resilience	Professor, University in the USA	Women	No Pillar
Ellen	43	USA	Master: international affairs	New York-based NGO	Women	Yes Pillar
Frances	48	UK	PhD: geography	Professor, University in the UK	Women	Yes Pillar
Gladys	46	Kenya	Unknown	Kenya-based NGO	Women	Yes Long-distance member
Kany	Unknown	India	Unknown	India-based NGO	Women	Yes Long-distance member
Karen	45	Brazil	Unknown	International NGO	NGO	Yes Sporadic WMG member to
Katherine	62	UK	BSc PhD gender and disaster resilience	Professor, University in the UK	Women	No Pillar
Leah	26	Switzerland	PhD enrolled: sociology	Teaching Assistant; Volunteer for New York-based NGO	Women	Yes Pillar
Osho	Unknown	Japan	Unknown	Japan-based NGO	Women	Yes Sporadic member
Rosemary	46	Sri Lanka	Master: rural sociology	United Nations organization and volunteer for Sri Lanka-based NGO	Women	Yes Long-distance member
Sayaka	82	Japan	Unknown	Retired; volunteer for Japan-based NGO	Women	Yes Pillar
Stuti	Unknown	Bangladesh	Professor: gender and disability	Professor, University in Bangladesh	Women	Yes Sporadic member
Vickie	39	Canada	PhD: political science	Professor, University in Japan	Women	Yes Sporadic member
William	35	UK	Master: environmental politics and globalization	UK government organization	Science and Technology	Yes Sporadic member to WMG

giving a summary of the context in which the selection was to take place, the condition for funding and what it would entail. She informed the group that UNISDR had resources to fund one person for the Geneva event. The application window was short and the deadline set for 21 October 2014. The members only had five days to decide. They had two options: either apply for the grant in which case a thorough submission was required or apply as reviewer for the funding selection. A minimum of three people had to review the applications, meaning that it was indispensable to be familiar with the Sendai process and its content. The background paper in the email gave an overview of the aim of the conference, the importance and value of the second preparatory committee and a reminder of the role and purpose of the WMG.

Box 4.4: Example of the organizing partner's coordination work

The Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held in Sendai, Japan in the Spring of 2015. After the initial preparatory committee (PrepCom) meeting in Geneva in July 2014, the co-chairs released a pre-zero draft framework on disaster risk reduction, which will be an update of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). The second PrepCom (Geneva, 17–18 November 2014) will take place to approve the Conference program of work as well as to continue to develop the post-2015 draft framework for disaster risk reduction – in particular focusing on the Zero Draft which is expected to be released in October. The WMG engages in the HFA2 process aiming to ensure that efforts toward and goals of, gender equality are included in the new disaster risk reduction framework and that women actively participate. The WMG also aims to ensure that HFA2 is developed and implemented with the full recognition that women's rights, experiences, knowledge and leadership are crucial to reducing the risks from and coping with the aftermath of disasters, as well as that an effective, people-centered and rights-based HFA2 will mutually support realization of women's rights and gender equality.

Source: Email sent by Ellen to the WMG, 16 October 2014

To apply for funding, each applicant was required to provide brief background information, while emphasizing DRR knowledge and expertise (the first selection criterion) (see [Figure 4.2](#)). In a 500-word cover letter, candidates were to describe how s/he met the selection criteria, their motivation in integrating the process, the work s/he does related to women's rights and gender equality in DRR; explain how and with whom s/he plans to share the experience of the conference and add any relevant information that supports her/his application.

Figure 4.2: Biographical data for financial support**I. Biographical data****First name:****Last name:****Address:****Country:****Email:****Tel:****Organization:****Organization website:****Languages (indicate if beginner, proficient or fluent)****Language 1:****Language 2:****Language 3:****Attach your CV (or provide a link)**

These indications are inscribed in UNISDR's requirements that come with the following criteria:

1. from and working in the Global South;
2. actively engaged in the process to comment on the pre-zero draft and the draft interventions;
3. experience at international and/or regional conferences related to gender equality and DRR;
4. ability to contribute to coordinating and advocacy activities at the PrepCom (meetings, taking notes, arranging meetings with delegates, delivering consensus WMG statements, and so on);
5. unable to travel to Geneva without the travel support in this grant.

In addition, participants needed to provide a reference letter from a person and organization with whom s/he had worked. Furthermore, practical information regarding visas was essential. The question was whether the person had a visa to enter Switzerland and if not if s/he could get hold of one in a short period of time.

Five members responded positively to the call and formed the selection committee, namely Ellen, Cassandra, Gladys, Frances and myself. Among the five, four had been physically present at PrepCom1. Although Frances integrated the process only after PrepCom1 in the informal meetings held in September and October 2014, she participated, long-distance, as a pillar alongside Ellen, Cassandra, Gladys and myself. As a result, Ellen wrote to the committee reiterating in her words the purpose of the grant and

suggesting a way to coordinate the rankings the committee was to submit to UNISDR. In addition, she mentioned she would not be able to make it to Geneva for PrepCom2.

I will not be at PrepCom2, so I would like the person who is funded by ISDR to have a general understanding of the process of the PrepComs and lead up to the World Conference in Sendai. *The person will be taking an active role in contributing to the Women's Major Group work* (some or all of the following: organizing meetings among WMG; setting up meetings with Member States; drafting and editing interventions). Since all of you have participated in person at some point in the last months, I know that you will also bring this knowledge to PrepCom2 and can probably support some of the coordination on site. I wouldn't expect any one person to do everything, of course. The application form itself included some basic criteria/guidelines that we need to consider and I recommend that each of us note how well they meet the 'Priority Criteria'. If it is not clear in their application, but you think they are qualified, you can recommend that we email them with a specific question in order to get more information. *We can try to have a call next week on Tuesday the 28th to briefly discuss.* But, if that will be too hard, we can each commit to send in a ranking of the candidates and the main reasons why each person would be recommended or not for the funding. (Email, Ellen, 24 October 2014)

After the application was sent out, five female applicants submitted a funding request: one from the Caribbean, two from South America and two from Southern Asia. The committee created a table to rank the candidates according to UNISDR's five criteria (see [Table 4.3](#)). The ranking was then discussed over a Skype call. After some discussions among the committee, two persons qualified. Defining the ranking became tedious. 'It is a shame that only one person can be funded as the candidates were very strong, especially the 2 with the top ranking' (email from Sayaka, 27 October 2014).

Skype Meeting, 28 October 2014 with Ellen based in New York, Frances in London, Gladys in Nairobi and her connection is bad, cuts off many times throughout the call, myself in Geneva.

- Ellen: Leah, your chart is super cool!. [Ellen said she knew both women from Sri Lanka (Rosemary) and India (Indira)]
- Ellen: Rosemary participates. She's already involved. As for Indira, the substance didn't match what she said.
- Frances: Rosemary did more in that respect.
- Ellen: I would like to support Rosemary even if I know her.

Table 4.3: Selection process for funding

From and working in the South	Engaged in the process: comments on pre-Zero draft	Experience at international level-related to gender equality and DDR	Ability to contribute in coordinating and advocating PrepCom	Unable to travel to Geneva without this grant	Rank
Colombia YES	YES Interesting input/ in on the pre-Zero draft in the documents	No No mention in the documents she has sent	Most likely	YES	2
Bolivia YES	No No mention of the engagement in pre-Zero and Zero draft	YES	Most likely	YES	3
Trinidad & Tobago YES	No No mention of the engagement in pre-Zero and Zero draft	YES	Most likely	YES	3
India YES	YES Very active in the comment made in the pre-Zero draft	YES	YES	YES	1
Sri Lanka YES	YES Very active in the comment made in the pre-Zero draft	YES	YES	YES	1

Frances: I'm going on what's on paper. I had the same feeling as you, Ellen and Leah. Basically Indira and Rosemary.

Ellen: Out of all, Rosemary is at the top. Let's wait for Cassandra and Sayaka to join the call! It seems Lucia has good experience, but poor English. Her application is all in Spanish. Although it's not good to have only English, with poor English it's hard to make an adequate contribution. Yet all seem great to me in terms of what they can bring!
(Notes of Skype meeting, 28 October 2014)

In sum, the two best applicants covered all five criteria. They were on their way to start a career, but needed an extra push, meaning extra funding, to go all the way. [Table 4.4](#) details the cost of flying to Sendai, Japan and the

Table 4.4: Total cost of the trip to Sendai from Geneva

Event	Description	Dates	Cost
Flight	Geneva to Sendai	10 March 2015	
Flight	Sendai to Geneva	21 March 2015	
Total Hotel	Sendai Rich Hotel	11 March 2015 to 20 March 2015	CHF847.80 USD50.00 per night
Total			USD500.00
Local travel	per diem		USD250.00

Notes: Sendai Rich Hotel Kokubo, three-star hotel; address: Kokubuncho 2–14–25. I paid for my airline ticket and the New York-based NGO covered my accommodation fees and provided me with a per diem.

accommodation. Those who were in third place gave no mention of their engagement in the DRR process and had not commented on the pre-Zero draft. The final selection process debate boiled down to two people, Rosemary and Indira. While both had fulfilled the required criteria, the final decision was made based on whether the committee knew them. In effect, Cassandra, Sayaka (who finally did not join the Skype meeting) and Ellen knew Rosemary, which helped make the decision. Finally, it was Rosemary who was recognized as the best candidate and who took part in PrepCom2 in Geneva. While the official criteria determined by UNISDR served as a basis to make the first selection, unofficial criteria, among the WMG, appear as decisive for a candidate to get funded. Being known and integrated into a network, and possessing a good command of English, turn into additional and essential criteria once candidates fill in the formal requests set by UNISDR.

As we pointed out, the WMG of the Sendai process is composed of individuals from various parts of the world who join together to influence policy outcomes for the Disaster Risk Reduction Framework. In a time of ever-growing connectedness, video calls (Skype and WhatsApp) and online document sharing (Google Docs) counter the impact of time and place in an effort to maximize participation and minimize environmental footprints. However, members evoke meeting in person as an essential component to develop the sense of being part of the WMG. Contributing from afar is acceptable to a certain point, but meeting as a group at a particular time and place is part and parcel of feeling part of the group. Sayaka, at the dinner meeting organized by and for the members of the WMG, states it clearly: ‘I think networking is very important because we cannot meet every year. This time we got the chance to meet in Bangkok and Geneva. But we don’t have so many chances to meet like this’ (observation notes, WMG meeting dinner, Sendai, 16 March 2015).

According to field notes, the consolidation of the WMG takes place when members, who have consistently taken part in the process, get together to discuss issues about the negotiation process and its content and reflect on who they are as a group. In their view, pillars are thus the ones who create the group. Yet according to Weick, a psycho-sociologist, each person can become the group ‘if each individual in the [WMG] mentally takes all roles and therefore can [identify ways of contributing], acknowledge [the limits for physical participation] and facilitate coordination’ (1993, p 640). In other words, the group can also exist while integrating the long-distance and sporadic members, not only when people gather in a consistent way because an organization must be thought of as a process, ‘continually produced, recreated in interaction, constituted and constitutive of interpersonal processes, power dependencies and contextual constraints’ (Weick, 1993, p 645). In this vein, the long-distance and sporadic members may also feel as part of the group, even remotely despite the pillars’ perception.

Fostering advocacy

Understanding the WMG’s leeway regarding the manner in which it organizes itself under the auspices of UNISDR requires looking at the ways information circulates, who writes the papers, based on what impetus. Who delivers the statement and arguments, using which channel? Who corrects and edits the drafts? How is the group coordinated for the various activities? This subchapter offers a look into the WMG’s functioning, and its dynamics around coordination and work, especially in a context where civil society may have a voice, but no vote. ‘Transnational advocacy network’ – a concept used in global policy-making literature – seeks influence in mostly the same ways as other political groups or social movements. They are not powerful in the traditional sense of the word, they must use the power of their information, ideas and strategies to alter information and value contexts within which states make policies (Keck and Sikkink, 1999, p 16).

Impetus from the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

According to the data collected from my embeddedness, UNISDR is the one to give Major Groups the impetus to engage. UNISDR staff members, whose job is to secure relations with Major Groups, inform OPs of the upcoming channel for engagement via emails sent to OPs. As an illustration, [Box 4.5](#) presents the email UNISDR sent out on 3 September 2014 after PrepCom1.

Box 4.5: UNISDR's email to Major Groups

From: C.... R....

Date: Wed, Sep 3, 2014 at 4:13 AM Subject: Open-ended informal consultative meeting with Majors Groups, Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction To: xxx@iccwbo.org, xxx@childrencyouth.org, xxx@gmail.com, xxx@iafrica.com, xxx@iclei.org, xxx@uclg.org, xxx@globalnetwork-dr.org, xxx@climatenetwork.org, xxx@pbv.or.jp, xxx@huairou.org, xxx@icsu.org, xxx@NewYork-basedNGO.org, xxx@if.dk, xxx@wfo-oma.org, xxx@ituc-csi.org Cc: xxx@un.org, xxx@un.org, xxx@un.org, xxx@un.org, xxx@un.org

Subject: First Co-Chairs' consultation with Major Groups, Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction – 9 September 2014

Dear Organizing Partners,

With reference to the letter of 8th August 2014 from Ms. Päivi Kairamo, Permanent Representative of Finland and Mr. Thani Thongphakdi, Permanent Representative of Thailand and co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee for the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, kindly be reminded of the first Co-Chairs' consultation with Major Groups on Tuesday 9th September from 09:30 to 13:00 in Geneva, at the Palais des Nations, Room XVI.

Kindly find attached:

A copy of the Letter from the co-Chairs of 8th August 2014 and its attachment An agenda for the consultation, A note for participants from outside Geneva and related registration form (to be filled out and submitted via email to wcdrr2015@un.org by 4th September), and A copy of the pre-zero draft of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, which serves as the basis for the open-ended informal consultative meetings. Please note that the translated version of the pre-zero draft is available on the website: <http://www.wcdrr.org/preparatory/post2015> Grateful if you could share this communication and related attachments with your respective Major Groups for their information and relevant action by the set deadline. Please note that detailed information regarding the open-ended informal consultations is available on the World Conference website (<http://www.wcdrr.org/preparatory/openmeetings>).

For any additional information, please contact Ms X in Geneva (Tel: +41 22 xxx xxxx – Email: xxxxx@un.org) or Mr Y in New York (Tel: +1 917 xxx xxxx – Email: xxxxx@un.org).

Sincerely,

WCDRR Team, The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

This email illustrates UNISDR's engagement towards Major Groups to encourage participation especially in an arena dedicated to them.

Impetus from the organizing partner

As we saw, OPs are the intermediaries between the Major Groups and UNISDR. Building on UNISDR's email, Ellen, as the OP, transferred the information to the Google Group of the WMG. She determined two activities: writing the statement based on comments two members of the WMG made on the pre-Zero draft and identifying a person to deliver the statement in person at the session. Hereafter is an email dated 27 August 2014 concerning the consultative meetings which were to be held in September and October 2014.

Dear Women's Major Group members,

Please find forwarded below a reminder from UNISDR regarding the first Co-Chairs' consultation with the Major Groups, in Geneva on 9th September 2014. The deadline to submit a registration form to attend that consultation is September 4 (Thursday)! We still need someone(s) from the WMG who can attend in Geneva on the 9th. We will prepare a statement that 1 person reads on behalf of the WMG. Others can of course contribute from their organizational perspective, but a WMG contribution is important. Please reply if you can attend. The MG consultation on September 9th will address: Structure and general views; Section A: Preamble; Section B: Purpose, Scope, Outcome and Goals; and Section C: Guiding principles. The WMG statement will be based from the comments to the pre-zero draft (so far only 2 people have commented, please contribute your comments, either on the Google Doc or to this listserv or me),

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qWakMkTx5L87oOcrip70xQ4mEOEtcFrZnQC1ozEyI/edit?usp=sharing>

We do not need to do line by line edits, but concrete ideas (and examples from different regions) are strongly encouraged.

Please find the attachments from ISDR, including the Conference Registration form.

Best regards, Ellen

In the days following the email she sent, women replied and made themselves available; they took charge of leading comments on separate sections on an online document open and accessible to all in the Google Group via Google Doc. They also announced whether they would be present to deliver oral statements. Ellen chose to organize tasks into sections. Two women, Frances (a pillar) and Kany (a long-distance member) took the lead for sections C, D and E, respectively 'Guiding Principles', 'Priorities for Action' and 'International Partnership in the implementation and follow-up process'. Ellen led comments on sections A 'Preamble', B 'Purpose, Scope, Outcome and Goals' and F 'Transition Phase'.

Dear all,

I've had a few responses from people who can lead sections and/or attend meetings in Geneva.

To facilitate comments on the pre-zero draft in a collaborative manner, we've created a Google Doc that you can all access and make edits in. Please note the instructions (identify yourself, choose a color, don't delete anything, comments boxes are also welcome). LINK: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qWAKMkTx5L87oOcripr7OxQ4mEOEtcFrZnQC1ozEyl/edit?usp=sharing> . If a Google Doc is a real challenge for you, then feel free to make edits on a WordDoc and share with the group and with section leads.

Leads for sections. We have volunteers to lead Sections C, D, E
Section C: Frances
Section D: Kany and Frances
Section E: Kany
For now, I can lead on A, B, and F, but others please do volunteer. Leads will be responsible for making their own comments as well as compiling and editing the remaining comments from other participants (without losing the initial comments for reference). Then, leads (and others) will work to draft the statements to be forwarded to Member States and to be delivered during the Consultations with Major Groups.

Attendance in Geneva

Sept 9th: no one yet...

Sept 18th: no one yet...

Oct 2nd: Leah (others?)

Oct 9th: Frances and Leah (others?)

Looking forward to collaborating with all of you!

Best regards,

Ellen (3 September 2014)

Suggesting edits to a text which is handed to UNISDR is quite a different undertaking from writing a statement for plenary or informal sessions even if in both cases the challenge is to remain as consistent as possible. To give input to UNISDR's proposed text, members need to refer to a specific paragraph in the Sendai drafts or suggest wording to be used in oral statements and despite wanting to share general ideas about women's role and needs to enhance community resilience. In a meeting with George, the WMG focal point to the UNISDR, Cassandra, shares how she is basing her edits on UNISDR's text inputs made by WMG while trying to keep everything coherent.

I've been working on editing some of the language around the 0 draft. I was trying to get something done tonight. As we are looking at different themes, I am making sure that all of our messages are represented by the insertion of ideas into that zero draft. For consistency, I am trying

to make sure the draft reflects the comments we made in the interventions.
(Cassandra, in WMG meeting with George, 17 November 2014)

However, when it comes to texts to be delivered orally, the OP works on a first draft which is submitted to the group. Each member can change, modify and suggest new wording, after which the text is again brushed up before being presented at a meeting. Figure 4.3 shows members of the WMG at work, reading drafts, integrating various items into the text and making sure it is readable. ‘I received Ellen’s speech early in the morning minutes before passing the UN gates. I’m about to take the floor and start reading the text she just sent me’ (observation notes, consultative meetings, 2 October 2014). Furthermore, the OP gives newcomers clear indications as to how to present oral statements. Thus, when Ellen initiated me to the first session where I was on my own, she asked that I mention from which standpoint I was taking the floor. In other words, I was asked and expected to make the statement on behalf of the WMG. ‘[Ellen:] When you take the floor, say that you are a member of the Women’s Major Group and that you are making a statement on behalf of the Major Group. The text has been developed as a group’ (observation notes, Skype conversation with Ellen, 17 September 2014).

When the pillars work for inclusiveness

In an effort to respect democratic principles, the group works towards inclusivity, the idea being to include as many comments as possible.

Figure 4.3: Women’s Major Group building up advocacy, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 18 November 2014



Source: Member of the Women’s Major Group

The challenge though is to ensure coherence, readability and to respect the restrictive format set by UNISDR to avoid lengthy contributions. The consequence of such a democratic endeavour is that it becomes extremely tiresome for the ones who take it upon themselves to brush up final versions.

As we were sitting in room XXIII, Ashley was sharing with me that the drafting work among the Women’s Major Group was taking too long because *she would have to include all comments and edits into the final version to be submitted to UNISDR*. It strikes me how committed the members of the group are to inclusion. Katherine came back after a session called the ‘Chairs Dialogue’ and again started working on the indicators to measure the implementation and success of the framework. Rosemary had just reviewed them before going to the negotiation room. Gladys was working on the zero draft for a little while. The debates among the WMG members were mainly on phrasing. (Observation notes, PrepCom2, 17 November 2014)

Despite the process being inclusive and a collective effort, there comes a time when the text is filled with edits and does not read fluently. It then falls to a pillar member, most likely at a time very close to the deadline, to take on the task of rereading the document and cross-examining all changes and suggestions and ultimately make the document as coherent and fluent as possible.

[Email from Cassandra sent at 7.04am, 18 November 2014]

to: Ellen, Gladys, Ashley, Leah, Rosemary, Katherine, Katia, Sayaka, Frances:

I have looked through all of the comments and double-checked against the Zero Draft – great that you already put such a lot of work into the revision comments. Where I could, I tried to answer your questions also. I’m sorry I’m attaching it now ... fell asleep with the computer ... and dreamed of the Zero Draft. *I tried to clean up the language in some areas*, but I still have problems with the technical development of the draft that in many cases demonstrates a lack of what DRR is, or resilience, or how you discuss the process that should be engaged. I think that it could benefit greatly from the specific SDG language and targets which is a strong recommendation from several of you. And as Ashley, Katherine and others have pointed out, the targets and indicators should more clearly be articulated throughout the draft. *I tried to make sure that the key messages that we have been developing are in the draft somewhere* – although I still think there could be more specificity in the draft. Depending on the negotiations, I’m not sure spending more time on edits would be better or investing time in reviewing our statement to make it stronger. I hope this helps.

Cassandra

This task is greatly appreciated by the OP and is in line with the idea of what a Major Group is, an expert delegation that can have lasting and significant input.

For me, I really needed to work with the members of the WMG. That's one way how [New York-based NGO] operates. *We consider all of our partners at different levels because of the information and knowledge they bring.* But certainly, in DRR it was extremely important to know and work with, Marianna and Cassandra who really had technical skills and background. (Ellen, WMG, interview, 8 November 2016)

Depending on the time and the length of the text written by the WMG, the person delivering the text sometimes has to cut certain paragraphs due to time constraints. In most cases, oral statements cannot exceed five minutes. During sessions, UNISDR is there to remind presenters to respect the format.

Dear all,

We have a draft, of the statement that Sayaka will deliver tomorrow in the plenary session on behalf of the Women's Major Group for you to review. *We have cut the document that Ellen emailed previously and estimate that is about 5 minutes to deliver* (but we will practice tonight and may need to cut a little more).

Please let us know if you have anything that urgently needs to be addressed.

Thanks, Cassandra. (Email from Cassandra to the WMG, PrepCom1, 14 July 2014)

The work the Major Groups carries out for the presentation of written or oral statements needs to be analysed in terms of back-and-forth movements, eased with meetings, emails, online documents, and also paced as per UNISDR and OP's impetus. While UNISDR sets the rhythm for civil society contributions, members enjoy leeway to integrate edits into UNISDR's proposed text. Although they come against time restraint challenges for delivering oral statements or content coherence, they strive to integrate as many suggestions and inputs as possible. WMG activities can be defined as collective actions comprised of objects, tools, narratives, rituals and symbols, and also by the division of work anchored in environments containing objects, socio-technical apparatus and operational circuits (Cefaï, 2009).

Individuals can integrate the Sendai Framework providing they dedicate their advocacy interest through the channels of a specific Major Group and coordinate among themselves to deliver outputs for UNISDR (see

Figure 4.4: Third and last milestone for an individual's career as United Nations civil society advocate

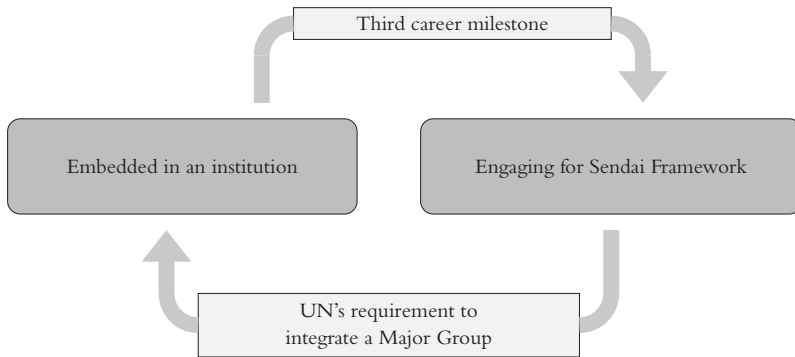


Figure 4.4). In doing so, UNISDR designates a gatekeeper for each group and establishes criteria for participation. The UN's civil society individuals in turn work as a group – as pillars, long-distance or sporadic members – as much as they can depending on their commitment and heavily contingent on financial resources. Political opportunity can thus be understood as complying with UN's expected career path (Figure 4.5) to advocate. The group is an organization according to collective action literature because it can take on various models within social movements, from hierarchical to informal structures, targeting their efforts at opponents or also providing services and life opportunities to their own constituents (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p 161). But most importantly, the Major Group can be understood as a network, which characterizes a form of organization – through which and in which information flows – for its voluntary, reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange and its open relations among committed and knowledgeable actors working in specialized issue areas. In this way, pillars, long-distance and sporadic members form a political network around issues where information binds the network members together and is essential for network effectiveness (Keck and Sikkink, 1999, p 18).

Questioning the identity of the women's organization, proposed and determined by the WMG structure, raises questions I address hereafter.

Calibrate for 'women'!

After looking into who constitutes the WMG, from close and afar, and the way it organizes itself for advocacy, I address its collective identity (Polletta, 2009; Snow, 2001) for engaging in the creation of the Sendai Framework as a civil society actor. To fulfil a career as a UN civil society member, individuals need to integrate one of the nine specific groups. While the

group of ‘women’ is created by the UN, I unveil how its members relate to the group’s identity under that banner and how they make sense of the ‘artificial’ set-up. I situate the WMG’s position vis-à-vis feminist theories.

Despite being quite homogeneous from an education perspective and embracing similar views about the need to promote women on all fronts, debates arise about the group’s identity beyond the ‘Women’s’ banner. It might not come as a surprise that the WMG identifies as being sensitive to gender concerns. Not only is it a constitutive trait of the group but it is a channel through which gender issues such as women’s leadership, empowerment and rights are being discussed, pushed and advocated for. However, other issues such as collaboration with the private sector come into play. Analysing the debates allows for a better understanding of the standpoint from which members speak.

We here dive behind the scenes of the WMG to get a better understanding of its feminist positions. I show how its members co-exist and develop the ‘we-ness’, a consciously developed common frame of meaning, a task complicated in part due to cultural diversity within transnational networks and in part due to the imposed channel of engagement set by the UN.

Following suit for gender

Historically and from the beginning of its creation the UN has placed the issue of gender and the role of women’s rights high on its agenda. The Commission on the Status of Women established by the UN ECOSOC bears witness to this recognition. In honor of the Commission on the Status of Women’s 25th anniversary in 1972, the UN declared 1975 the International Women’s Year which further led to the UN Decade for Women (1976 to 1985). During this decade, three world conferences – pointing towards elaborating UN policy on women and gender, such as gender-balanced decision making, equal participation of women as policy makers and gender mainstreaming – were held: in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985. Ten years later, a fourth conference was organized in Beijing (1995) (Kaldor, 2003). These efforts highlighted the need for a gender perspective in all phases of policy making.

According to Kaldor (2003), the Beijing Conference’s aim was to promote women and was divided into two categories. First, it sought to secure and guarantee equal political rights for women. Second, it paid attention to the role played by women and gender in economic development. In other words, the conference promoted gender equality and women’s empowerment by mainstreaming gender in all UN documents. Most definitions of gender mainstreaming across institutions adhere closely to those set out by ECOSOC (United Nations, 1997, p 28).

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (Moser and Moser, 2005, p 12)

UNISDR's programme as part of the wider UN is adamant about enacting these views and values into policies and does so, unexpectedly, via the WMG.

In this context, the OP (in this case New York-based NGO, represented by Ellen) fulfils the UN's vision, by advocating for gender equality from the WMG's vantage point. In her emails, she encourages group members to take on the commonly accepted narrative which states that women as disadvantaged groups need to be represented and their interests acted upon. 'Gender equality as a guiding principle; gender-responsive policy; recognition and support for women's leadership and participation (capacity, financial resources, changing norms/creating space); rights-based outcome; other' (email from Ellen to WMG, 24 December 2014). Furthermore, Ellen promotes the principle of reciprocity. While she notes the need to look at UN processes through the gender lens, she also puts forth that in processes in which gender is the focal point, the group needs to advocate for environmental issues, such as disasters and sustainable development.

We are supposed to advocate for two things! 1) that environmental processes have to look at everything through a gender lens so that gender equality and women's human's rights are part of environmental and sustainable development, agreements, and processes, and also 2) that processes around women's rights like the commission on the status on women and others are thinking about sustainable development and environment. (Ellen, WMG, interview, 8 November 2016)

The New York-based NGO, through the WMG structure, fulfils the role of the UN's vector to convey its views within the group. It is thus no surprise that the UN chose the New York-based NGO with whom to work hand in hand to promote and put forward its norms, beliefs and values. Framing a Major Group around women's issues, in a predefined structure, with an assigned identity, thus comforts both the women's network and the UN itself. It allows 'recognition of the world and guides perception' which allows to build expectations about what is to happen (Della Porta and Diani, 2006,

p 74). With the help of the OP, the UN manages to sustain its vision and remain coherent with its past work and in turn legitimizes the ‘women’s’ silo.

Identifying as ‘women’

Developing the group’s ‘we-ness’ with respect to the common ideological commitment to gender and women’s rights is different from identifying with the group’s collective identity and its diverging views. Polletta and Jasper (2001) state the clear distinction: ‘One can join a movement because one shares its goals without identifying much with fellow members. Likewise, people can develop collective identity based on their distinctive know-how or skills, but such know-how and skills can have influence even in the absence of collective identities around them’ (2001, p 298). This has value because collective identity gives clues as to why individuals mobilize and align within a given frame. We will observe these differences and analyse the impact on the group’s collective identity because it broadly relies on a dynamic relationship between the group and the cultural heritage of the institution (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p 83).

Identifying as fighting for ‘women’ and more ...

Identity construction is fundamental in collective action. It enables actors to see themselves as people linked by interests, values, common histories (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p 113). In our context, fighting for women’s rights and gender equality, as an ideological commitment, is in line not only with the UN’s vision but also creates the opportunity to see a collective arise from a firm belief that women’s equality and women’s rights need to be implemented worldwide.

If we analyse this stance from a theoretical perspective, feminist researchers would most likely talk about a liberal perspective. This stance, referred to as the first feminist wave, demands equal rights for men and women and discounts the established ‘natural’ inferiority of women that legitimizes their subordination. Liberal feminists essentially promote limited intervention of the state to ease women’s empowerment and build on humanistic principles considering women and men, first and foremost, as human beings. Any differences with respect to class, race and sex are only contingent and hinder neither women nor men in acquiring equal rights in the political sphere (Parini, 2006). Women’s equality is thus enforced by laws solving the matter in the public sphere.

In fact these theories draw upon questions of social inequality with respect to sex and gender, which appeared in the 1960s and 1970s during the civil rights movement in the United States and the May 68 movement in France. Lorena Parini – in an effort to build a concise overview of various feminist

movements in *Le système de genre. Introduction aux concepts et théories* – divides feminist theories into three main directions. The previously mentioned liberal theory, Marxist feminism and radical feminism. The second wave, the Marxist perspective, states that women's oppression must be tackled above all with improved materialistic conditions. Economic conditions thus become the vector through which feminists deconstruct male domination. The third wave results from confronting both liberal and Marxist feminist theories. Radical feminism focuses on women's oppression in the public sphere and especially in the private sphere, putting less weight on economic factors and more on patriarchy, which is at the centre of its analysis. Radical feminists campaign for an in-depth analysis of patriarchy at all levels and in all spheres.

As we dig deeper into the interviews carried out with WMG members, the third wave feminist theory resonates better with their claims. I can thus argue that its members are a product of the most recent feminist wave. For instance, Cassandra's incentive to advocate for women is in reaction to witnessing and being struck by a male-dominated world and the perceived urgency to give women a voice and a face. Experiencing spaces where women are underrepresented and, worse even, not present, they feel compelled to work towards balancing the gender equality gap. The criticism is directed at a system which allows men and, more particularly, White, heterosexual men, to monopolize decision-making processes meant for people they cannot possibly represent.

My doctoral research is where I started focusing on gender even though I had worked on women's groups during my time with the Peace Corps. My doctorate was the first time I took a feminist lens to study disaster management. I looked into the qualitative and quantitative data and I saw a gap. I would listen and participate in meetings related to DRR. *People at the table were all men and they were generally White or Asian in Hawaii. All the women were sitting in the back. We [women] set less rules, but we are the ones doing most of the coordination work behind the scene* and documenting. And when I asked the men why they thought there were no women, they answered there were not any that were qualified because you needed an advanced degree in public policy etc. And I was looking at them, like 'What the f***' and *realized these were political games that were being played to keep women's voices out of this group*. What does that mean for an organization if you are trying to reduce the impacts of disaster but at the same time you are leaving out a whole part of the population? When I was looking into the leadership of environmental community health organizations that are doing risk reduction activities – even though they are not being called that way – *80 per cent in the leadership were women. However when I was looking at the formal disaster sector it was all men*. The difference triggered

me and I started investigating the gender perspective in the context of the overall DRR framework. (Cassandra, WMG, interview, 11 February 2016)

Working towards gender equality from a civil society perspective does not only emerge by witnessing decision-making meetings orchestrated by men, it may also be a latent concern that materializes through research or NGO work. Advocating in the WMG can be understood as an urge to recognize women as constituting half of humanity and bringing them out of the dark so to say (Katherine, Frances), wanting to support them (Gladys) and the feeling that women don't have or do not occupy the positions they ought to; both Adriana and Gladys shared how women in disasters are lonely, always the last to leave the house (Adriana) and never in the peace negotiation processes where they should be represented and have a voice (Gladys). The shared narrative among the WMG is that women are agents of resilience. They need to be consulted and given leadership to enhance and improve communities in the face of disasters.

[E]ven during disasters women are not heard. Nobody talks to them. *Women are very lonely during disasters. They are the last ones to leave the house if they have to evacuate. And they are the first ones to go back to these homes when floods go down or when the cyclone leaves. And they have the resilience.* (Adriana, WMG, interview, 26 June 2017)

However, the 'we-ness' of the dedicated group is less a question of promoting gender empowerment and gender equality, let alone being confined to a given group, than it is about reacting to being reduced to the sole characteristic of 'women'. 'So yes "I am a woman". "I am a woman of the world, this is, that's me!"', as Frances says ironically in an interview. Watering down the complexities of what being a woman entails lies at the heart of the WMG. 'None of us really want to work in this little box. "I only work on gender". The real challenge, same for resilience, is *how do you bring these things together* and make them work. And I don't think we've solved that for anything' (Katherine, observation notes, WMG meeting dinner, Sendai, 16 March 2015).

The silo structure makes it challenging for its members to evoke the life conditions of an 'older woman with disability from the Southern hemisphere who is poverty stricken' (Michael). It would require using more than one Major Group, which questions where the complexities and intersections of human beings and their backgrounds can be voiced. 'We need to be aware of where we put the gender. *Children, women, vegetables, animals ...* that comes as a joke! We need to prevent the shopping list which becomes irrelevant at times and not catchy enough!' (Gina, observation notes, PrepCom1, 14 July 2014).

We observe here that the WMG members evoke the need to address intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), even if they use different words to express the concept ('People in all their diversity'). If liberal feminists seem to have concrete implementation solutions, such as building laws and regulations for states to recognize men and women as equal citizens, recognizing intersectionality and operationalizing it is a whole new ball game. The political projects attached to promoting 'people in all their diversity' raises concrete questions such as who to collaborate with and where to get the funding from. The lack of debate to position the group with respect to the implementation of intersectionality policies, experienced henceforth both in the public and private sphere, leads to contentious discussions around identifying as a homogeneous group, the collective identity, especially in light of funding.

I therefore argue that the UN remains conservative with respect to its feminist visions for two fundamental reasons; first for consensus purposes, second for implementation challenges. On the one hand, the UN needs to be as consensual as possible to suit all 193 Member States. Indeed not all governments are ready to accept 'people in their diversity', for it addresses for instance the status of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender/transsex, intersex, queer, asexual (LGBTQIA+) persons. On the other hand, while acquiring gender equality can be implemented with limited means and 'on paper' by laws, implementing claims pertaining to the third feminist wave requires structural changes both at the UN and the state level. Introducing the role of patriarchy and the need to deconstruct it in the public sphere, and more importantly in the private sphere, calls for fundamental societal changes with respect to norms, values and practices. As a result, the UN is not very bold when it comes to promoting women in all their diversity, and it seems to be at a loss to find ways to implement a more forward-looking understanding of women's position in societies.

Identifying as the Women's Major Group

The contention about the group's identity stems from the WMG's lack of resources for sustainability and implementation of more complex feminist claims.

At an informal dinner meeting in Sendai, the members raised the question of the group's relevance and durability in the times following the final conference. Identifying with the 'WMG' was questioned in-depth when the issue of collaboration with the private sector was raised among the members. 'I think we also need to think about the identity of the WMG. Is it a singular identity? I think *we are very diverse* around the table. It is an *artificial grouping* in any way set up by the UN just to deal with all these damn women' (Katherine, observation notes, WMG meeting dinner, Sendai, 16 March 2015).

While the question of diversity is well accepted and embodied with the variety of women and backgrounds represented within the group, the point of controversy revolves around using help from businesses. A woman raised the question of implementation, the need for funding and the opportunity to collaborate with the private sector to help finance these efforts. I took notes on what a woman shared with members of the WMG present at a briefing dinner meeting in Sendai.

A woman [I cannot tell who is speaking considering the table arrangement]: ‘I was in the private/public partnership multistakeholder meeting today and I used the Women’s card. I was acknowledged from the floor to speak. A CEO [from an unexplicited company] was there and I followed up with a question: what can the private sector do to promote business continuity planning? My question was specifically focusing on women. *How can we make sure that women who are in businesses and small businesses are part of that picture?* The CEO answered stating that business continuity planning is part of the commitment of the business and industry major group. A woman from the World Bank said [during the session] that they’re putting out a study – probably in May – because they are trying to come up with insurance mechanisms targeted towards women. It got me thinking about the implementation phase and about giving insurance to women. That’s part of the mainstreaming. As the first woman head of a Japanese company, *she’s personally very committed to the partnership with the private sector.* So I’m wondering if there’s not something to collaborate on for training, like a sponsor.’ (Observation notes, WMG meeting dinner, Sendai, 16 March 2015)

Building partnerships with the private sector did not appeal to all the members and set a new basis to discuss the identity of the group in light of what could become a divergent practice. In Ellen’s view, the WMG should distance itself from corporate funders and sponsors: ‘I mean as a facilitator of the Women’s Major Group it makes me a little nervous to call upon a corporate CEO’ (observation notes, WMG meeting dinner, Sendai, 16 March 2015). On this occasion, Ellen enjoined the members to think of the Major Group as a space set up at a particular time to ease the policy influence process, which loses its role in the follow-up and implementation phase of the Sendai Framework, rather than as an established organization.

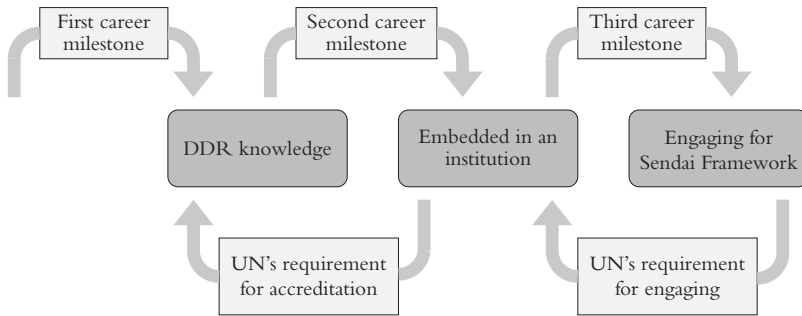
In terms of the Women’s Major Group, I wanted to say that it is *more of a space than an organization*. It’s just a way to bring everyone together in terms of this process. And you may or may not have noticed that in the outcome document there is no talk about the Major Groups

at all. There was a resolution by the General Assembly stating that the Major Groups would be integrated in this process through this world conference. But *after that, there is no clear role for the Major Groups whatsoever*. It’s kind of a confusing space. We are here now all together. We make sure to have a moment to speak in the official statements, to have a seat in the negotiations and to have that space, but it’s not that the Women’s Major Group is an organization or a group itself. I think that those organizations and groups that have been really active until now in all of this process are really the ones to take the discussions this forward. (Ellen, observation notes, WMG meeting dinner, Sendai, 16 March 2015)

Calibrating, as WMG members, for women has consequences in that it raises on the one hand the question of who they are as a collective and more specifically who they are as a collective fighting for ‘women’, and on the other how its members make sense of the world (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p 79) and make sense of having been shoved into a space. When the WMG members ‘calibrate for women’, they comply with the UN’s frame while acting to a certain extent on behalf of their ideologies. While frames are more flexible, more generic and in most cases derive from ideologies, we could also analyse the discrepancy between the UN and the WMG as the gap between the women’s ideologies and the UN’s frame (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p 79). In other words, the UN’s frame enacted in the WMG might actually be limiting and reflective of the UN’s inability to meet societal changes, especially regarding acknowledging ‘people in their diversity’. If some members contest the idea of being integrated into a group under a specific banner – here, ‘women’ – it would have less to do with the ideological commitment or the collective identity than with questioning whether the Major Group structure actually hinders more forward-looking, progressive thinking.

Finally ‘we [but not all] the peoples’

To conclude, this chapter gives a better understanding of who lies behind the civil society banner ‘We the Peoples’. The UN’s discourse and intentions are laudable. However, in practice the UN’s claim for ‘inclusiveness’ comes against observations. Through in-depth ethnographic work embedded within the WMG while interacting with other Major Groups enabled me to give an account of who takes part in negotiation processes. It allowed me to shed light on the networks and information members of Major Groups have and developed throughout the process. If institutional inclusion is one of the three processual inclusions at the UN, I shed light on the institutional apparatus that allows for civil society inclusion at the UN. More specifically,

Figure 4.5: Full institutional inclusion process

I here gave insight as to what it entails in the context of the creation of an international agreement.

Institutional inclusion thus needs to be understood as inscribed in an apparatus that forges career fulfilment via milestones the UN imposes with specific procedures (Figure 4.5). The apparatus determines who can have a civil society career, and how, and thus be present, as pillars or as long-distance or sporadic members. While the UN does not seem to exclude persons with limited funding opportunities to allow them to be present (long-distance and sporadic members), it includes individuals based on (1) their resources (experiences and convictions, command of English, funds and knowledge of the organization) and (2) willingness to comply with a particular siloed organization (Major Group), with (3) a pre-established identity (WMG). In this way, the UN manages to control who gets in, in an effort to reinforce its claim and vision of the world (in particular regarding gender issues). Although the OP embodies the principle of a self-organized group and ensures its independence by serving as a buffer when either Member States or the UN become too invasive, the Major Group structure helps the UN to maintain its public image of an inclusive organization.

As I showed in Table 4.2, the seven pillars come from Northern countries (four United States, two United Kingdom, one Japan, one Switzerland), seven out of the 16 members have a PhD or are enrolled in a PhD programme. More than half are above 45 years old. Based on observations carried out in the Sendai Framework process, 'We the Peoples' would in fact more accurately be 'We, Western-based, highly qualified, middle-aged women' which points to a rather exclusive UN with respect to its civil society inclusion.

Furthermore, even though the UN does not seem to be involved in the content regarding the WMG's gender convictions, it seems to dictate indirectly what is possible to advocate for. The UN thus organizes 'We [but not all] the peoples' according to its values, which shine through its basic

feminist understanding reflected in the WMG structure as silos. Women comply with the identity-based group, for lack of any alternative. Even if they dispute the lack of diversity and wish to include intersectional concepts which contribute to the group’s ‘we-ness’, they distance themselves from the structure (the collective identity), to avoid having to address salient issues such as potential partnerships with the private sector.

In sum, the UN’s institutional apparatus imposes its requirements throughout an individual’s entire engagement process, thus determining the career path a person needs to undertake – to mobilize – to be included and be an ‘insider’ in the UN’s civil society. This points to the relation *mobilization and the career in mobilization processes* have with *interaction with the system* and vice versa in the ‘Influence Production Process’ model (Lowery and Gray, 2004). It highlights not only the resources at play, but the framing issue, such as the ‘we-ness’ around gender together with the political opportunity to engage. If the question of legitimacy needs to be raised in global governance with respect to civil society’s representation, the burden cannot possibly rely on Major Group members, but rather needs to be tackled by the UN itself in its institutional inclusion process.

In this way, if we still had doubts about whether using mobilization theory held water in this context, we can safely say that the WMG fits Diani’s definition of social movements, namely ‘informal networks created by a multiplicity of individuals, groups, and organizations, engaged in political and cultural conflicts on the basis of a shared collective identity’ (Diani, 1996). Furthermore, through the lens of temporary organizations, the WMG can be analysed as a ‘group[s] [are] formed, organized or appointed to handle a felt need for action, by addressing particular problems in order to “make things happen” within or among organizations’ (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995, p 437; Kimber, 2023a). Yet shedding light on institutional inclusion at the UN requires thinking not only in terms of resources, political opportunity and framing strategies, but also in light of a person’s career, using Becker’s terms, fulfilled with specific milestones predefined by the international bureaucracy itself. That allows us to think of mobilization in terms of processes, each step being in interaction with the next, hence the need to integrate the *practices* into mobilization theory and name it as such.

Disentangling the Social

After having given a detailed description of the Women's Major Group members in the Sendai process – answering *who* is institutionally included – we turn to the dynamics observed within the United Nations (UN)'s social apparatus that allow the text to be written, by answering, this time, the *how*. In this chapter, we take a closer look at the various spaces and different activities in which the text comes to light to analyse the social apparatus. More specifically, I rely on Erving Goffman's microsociology, namely the concept of front-stage and backstage, to shed light on the times of formality and the times of informality where interactions occur. This, in turn, shows the strategies of Major Groups to get their voices heard and, ultimately, their language and suggestions integrated in the text.

The analysis in this chapter complements the literature on global governance which has addressed civil society's access to intergovernmental organizations and its increasing participation in international treaty-making processes (Willetts, 2006; Steffek et al, 2007; Bexell et al, 2010; Nasiritousi and Linnér, 2016). Building on what I presented in the state of the art in Chapter 2, scholarship has pointed out the reasons for such incentives, which have been depicted mostly in a functionally efficient perspective (Raustiala, 1997; Nasiritousi and Linnér, 2016). This highlights the skills and expertise civil society members can provide Member States with, namely policy advice, monitoring commitments and ratification risks (Raustiala, 1997, p 720; Clark et al, 1998; Edwards, 2009; Bexell et al, 2010). Moreover, in a policy cycle, studies have shown that Member States include agenda-setting, implementation and monitoring phases, but tend to exclude decision-making ones (Nasiritousi and Linnér, 2016). In this way, civil society's participation is hampered by civil society getting involved in the process at later stages and by various informal practices (Depledge, 2005). For instance, states at times prefer to close negotiations when the issues under discussion are sensitive (Raustiala, 1997, p 720; Depledge, 2007; Nasiritousi and Linnér, 2016).

Yet the sensitivity explanation alone does not fully account for the dynamics at play which exclude, so to speak, civil society actors from certain

discussions (Nasiritousi and Linnér, 2016). And what ‘sensitive’ actually means, for whom, and how the decision to negotiate behind closed doors is arranged, is still scarcely explored in the literature. To fill that gap, Nasiritousi and Linnér suggest to take political dynamics and historical institutionalism into account to convey a more accurate understanding of the times civil society participates and when it is excluded. The perspective of political dynamics shows how a factor may determine whether or not civil society actors are granted access to negotiation sessions. Historical institutionalism explains how negotiations involving a few sensitive issues can be closed to observers while others with high political stakes are held in open sessions (Nasiritousi and Linnér, 2016).

This having been said, highlighting inclusion and exclusion dynamics in their participation from the point of view of Member States and international organizations gives little attention to civil society’s artfulness to overcome forms of exclusion. Focusing on how civil society members meander throughout international processes points to other skills and forms of organizations which have not been extensively documented. Building on past empirical and theoretical findings which underline civil society’s exclusion, I here use the dramaturgical concepts of front-stage and backstage developed by Goffman (1959) in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* to point to the UN’s social inclusion in what I have defined as the social apparatus.

According to Goffman, ‘front-stage’ behaviour is characterized by persons being aware of being watched. It reflects internalized norms and expectations regarding behavioural patterns, shaped in part by the setting. Whether front-stage performance is intentional and/or subconscious, it is inscribed in cultural norms. ‘Backstage’ would be the latter’s opposite, such as people’s behaviour behind the scenes, free of norms and expectations, making for a more relaxed and comfortable individual. Nonetheless, when backstage, individuals are aware of the norms and expectations but behave in ways they would most likely not when front-stage.

Building on Goffman’s concepts and theoretical stance, that of a microsociology which depicts individual interactions, allows to analyse front stage and backstage as an analogy to observing formal and informal settings. This in turn reveals the social dynamics that constitute global governance. I thus argue that front stage, in the context of UN meetings, needs to be understood as the times when civil society is expected to be present, shows up and takes the floor, while backstage represents the times and places when its members are proscribed from participating or during which actors prefer to ignore their presence. In other words, front stage can be understood as the formal, planned and scheduled settings, while backstage represents the informality, the practices and behaviour which occur in the interstices of formal settings, whether it be civil society actors, Member States or UN actors. Shedding light on the ways civil society navigates socially,

while interacting with various actors in different settings, perhaps also in different languages, unveils what it takes to be *socially* included in UN text ratification processes.

I divide the chapter into three subchapters in which front stage and backstage come into play to point to civil society's inclusion in the UN's social apparatus: the first describes the diverse settings in which the UN holds meetings while highlighting how Major Groups integrate such sessions; the second focuses on the advocacy strategies Major Groups develop to seek as much integration as possible in the text; the third points to their advocacy challenges.

Integrating each session by ...

As we saw in earlier chapters, for civil society members to take part in the creation of a new framework requires many resources. I, for instance, put the emphasis on the various career stages required to participate in the Sendai process along with a collective identity needed to integrate a Major Group. Here I argue that institutional inclusion is not sufficient to secure civil society's inclusion. Once institutionally included, civil society members need to conform to certain practices and behaviours that come to light in a set of codes. Being familiar with schedules and timelines, knowing what meetings to attend, identifying speaking slots, learning what language to use, finding out whom to approach, represent all sorts of skills Major Group members need to acquire in the UN's social apparatus in order to lobby adequately with respect to UN's organizational culture.

Navigating between decision venues and policy arenas

From 14 July 2014 onward, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) officially set the pace for the creation of what would later be called the Sendai Framework. Throughout a period of eight months – until March 2015 – Member States, Major Groups and UNISDR came together to discuss issues pertaining to disaster risk reduction, share views on how to decrease disaster risks, and negotiate the choice of words in order to come up with an agreed text. The process was marked by all sorts of meetings; some formal, some informal, some integrating civil society, others that rejected it, some taking place on two consecutive days, others were stand-alone, and so on. The aim here is to have a better understanding of the different settings, which in turn allows to show more comprehensively the meetings which include or on the contrary those which exclude Major Groups.

The first official event held in July 2014 was the first preparatory committee on 14 and 15 July; it brought together all the bodies at play,

namely Member States, Major Groups, UNISDR and other UN agencies. The two-day conference was divided into various sessions such as plenary sessions, technical workshops and chairs' dialogue with Major Groups which I describe hereafter. More specifically, plenary is where the conference opens and closes, where major statements are made, and broad-ranging debate may be conducted and where all decisions by the conference are taken. The second preparatory committee (PrepCom) held in Geneva and the third one in Sendai had similar timetables such as the one presented later. Visually, we notice that sessions overlap (see [Figure 5.1](#) and [Figure 5.2](#)). While Major Groups are granted specific space with the co-chairs who lead the process, for instance, these spaces always overlap with other scheduled time slots dedicated to Member States. Unless Member State representatives split in half or have sufficient delegates on the mission, they cannot attend all meetings.

In PrepCom 1 and 2, UNISDR announced upcoming meetings. In the weeks following PrepCom1 in September and October, four consultative meetings took place. In November, the second session of the preparatory committee mandated the co-chairs to convene further open-ended negotiation meetings in Geneva to continue work on the draft. Negotiations which began during PrepCom2 continued until PrepCom3, specifically between 8 and 10 December 2014, 12 and 16 January 2015, and 26 and 27 February 2015. Describing these settings has value in that each 'stage' potentially alters the upcoming text. It is by shedding light on the details of each setting that we will get a better sense of the nuanced inclusion civil society undergoes. For each session, we identify different characteristics:

1. When are Major Groups allowed to take the floor?
2. Do participants speak spontaneously or according to a defined list?
3. Is simultaneous translation into the six official UN languages available?
4. Is real-time typing provided and projected onto a screen?
5. Are the seating arrangements pre-established or go on a 'first come, first served' basis?
6. Do sessions take place in a big hall or a small room?

Despite these varied settings, some constants remain. Co-chairs give instructions and microphones are always available. Let us go over the six different meetings UNISDR organized in the run-up to the Sendai Framework.

Plenary

Plenaries constitute the cornerstone of preparatory committees. These formal meetings allow Member States, positioned in alphabetical order, to take

Figure 5.1: Agenda sent out by UNISDR to the Major Group organizing partners, 5 July 2014

Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction Preparatory Committee		Provisional Agenda								
First session Geneva, 14–15 July 2014		Venue: Palais des Nations Building "E" Avenue de la Paix 1211 Genève 10								
Monday 14 July 2014	Capacity	9h	10h	11h	12h	13h	14h	15h	16h	17h
ROOM XIX (19) PLENARY	941 p	Opening- Procedural 09h-10h	Considerations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction 10h-13h	Technical workshop 1 (part I): Indicators, monitoring and review process for the post-2015 framework 11h-13h	Considerations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (cont.) 14h-18h	Chair's dialogue with major groups 13h15-14h45	Technical workshop 1 (part II): Indicators, monitoring and review process for the post-2015 framework (Part II) 15h-17h			
ROOM XVIII (18) BREAKOUT	644p									
Tuesday 15 July 2014	Capacity	9h	10h	11h	12h	13h	14h	15h	16h	17h
ROOM XIX (19) PLENARY	941 p	Considerations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (cont.) 9h-13h	Considerations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (cont.) 14h-17h	Technical workshop 2: Investing in disaster risk reduction 11h-13h	Chair's dialogue with major groups 9h-10h30	Chair's dialogue with major groups 13h15-14h45	Technical workshop 3: Mutual reinforcement of DRR, SDGs and climate change agreements 15h-17h		Report Arrangements 2nd PrepCom Conclusion 17h-18h	
ROOM XVIII (18) BREAKOUT	644p									

Legend:
 Intergovernmental segment (interpretation in 6 UN languages)
 Multi-stakeholder segment
 Technical workshops (interpretation in 6 UN languages)
 Chair's dialogues (in English)

Figure 5.2: Zoom of the agenda sent out by UNISDR to the Major Group Organizing Partners, 5 July 2014

Opening, Procedural items 09h-10h	Considerations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction 10h-13h		Considerations on the post-2015 framework for diaster risk reduction (cont.) 14h-18h					
	Technical workshop 1 (part I): Indication, monitoring and review process for the post-2015 framework 11h-13h	Chair's dialogue with major groups 13h15-14h45	Technical workshop 1 (part II): Indications, monitoring and review process for the post-2015 framework (Part II) 15h-17h					
9h	10h	11h	12h	13h	14h	15h	16h	17h
Considerations on the post-2015 framework for diaster risk reduction (cont.) 9h-13h		Considerations on the post-2015 framework for DRR(cont.) r14h-17h		Report, Arrangements 2nd PropCorn, Conclusion, 17h-15h				
Chair's dialogue with major groups 9h-10h30	Technical workshop 2: Investing in disaster risk reduction 11h-13h		Chair's dialogue with major groups 13h15-14h45		Technical workshop 3: Mutual reinforcement of DRR SDGs and climate change agreements 15h-17h			

the floor in that same order. Major Groups are invited to take a seat after 'Zimbabwe', the last Member State by alphabetical order. While Member States are allocated two seats at a table plus two chairs behind every seat, Major Groups get only one chair at a desk and an additional chair behind it, thus only two Major Group participants can be present. At the plenary held during PrepCom2, because Major Group representatives were more than two, UNISDR allowed the remaining participants to sit on the sides, the wings of the main room.

I am sitting right behind Sayaka under the Major Group banner. Seats are being attributed quickly. Someone asked me if I was with 'WMO' [World Meteorological Organization] because I was sitting behind its seat. I politely answered 'no'. (Observation notes, PrepCom1, plenary, 15 July 2014)

Please let me know who will be your Major Group representative at the negotiations and be prepared in the *plenary for the 1+1, one at the mic and one behind* for seating. Any other questions? (Observation notes, PrepCom2, Major Group meeting with George, 17 November 2014)

Rooms in which plenaries take place are the largest ones in the Palais des Nations in Geneva because all bodies and their representatives are expected to attend. These meetings confer a sense of anonymity because of the size of the rooms.

Unless the person is on stage, there is no way of knowing who is speaking. There is a form of anonymity. The halls are so big and the voices all have the same intensity since we are all listening to statements with earphones. (Observation notes, PrepCom2, plenary, 16 November 2014)

He [Iran] introduced me to Ireland. I said: '*It's so nice to finally put a face on your voice*'. She had taken the floor but I had never seen her. She smiled and admitted that happened to her as well. She confirmed there was a kind of invisibility behind these statements. (Observation notes, World Conference Disaster Risk Reduction, Sendai, 16 March 2015)

Each representative is invited to speak in their own official language providing it is one of the six UN languages, that is, Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. In the instance a representative's language is neither of these, they have to choose one and most opt for English. While plenaries at PrepCom 1 and 2 had simultaneous interpretation, the plenary held at PrepCom3 in Sendai had none. UNISDR kept its interpretation resources

for the final negotiation session although all delegates had a perfect command of English. ‘Mexico, represented by a man: “Is there no interpretation to Spanish?” he asked and immediately switched to – a perfect – English’ (observation notes, PrepCom3, Sendai, 13 March 2015).

In line with the idea of ‘invisibility’ described by the representative of Ireland, also interpreters are nowhere to be seen during plenaries. They are seated either above the room or in cubicles on the side or back of the room. ‘The interpreters are also invisible. Nowhere to be seen. I can’t tell where they are placed’ (observation notes, PrepCom2, plenary, 16 November 2014). For these sessions, UNISDR made real-time typing available for people with hearing difficulties and projected transcriptions on a TV screen by the stage (stage left, ‘côté Jardin’). However, the transcriptions were never sent out to participants because of potential mistakes. ‘George got back to me in the assembly Hall. He says the *transcription won’t be online* because there have *been mistakes, such as “affected” and “effective”*. The meaning is obviously not the same and cannot reflect what has been said’ (observation notes, PrepCom2, 16 November 2014). Plenaries are thus formal sessions where Member State, Major Group and UN organization representatives follow clear instructions set by the co-chairs who go according to a strict protocol as to whom to give the floor, the timing of each session and available interpretations.

Technical workshop

The technical workshops focus on various elements of the Framework, namely the coherence with other frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, for instance, or the focus on the financial aspect of the Framework with respect to its implementation and thus the creation of indicators for monitoring purposes. These sessions are not held by the usual chairs, but rather by a member of the Bureau. Major Groups are invited to take the floor by raising their flag. Experts in the field are present and take the floor soon after the session starts to indicate what to focus on.

Workshops are held in smaller rooms where mostly Major Groups convene (Figure 5.3). Seats are allocated on first come, first served basis and the interventions are not translated. More specifically all participants speak in English. Although these sessions appear on the timetable, they are informal in so far as they evolve according to discussions that take place during the session.

Open-ended informal consultative meeting

Consultative meetings – four of which were held between PrepCom 1 and 2 – take place in rooms smaller than the ones held for plenaries. They

Figure 5.3: Technical workshop during PrepCom2, 18 November 2014

Source: Leah R. Kimber

are essentially dedicated to Major Groups in an effort to give them a space to express their concerns and main points of interest to Member States. ‘The meeting is held in room XVI – about 50 people are in the room. I arrive by 9:20am’ (observation notes, consultative meeting, 9 October 2014). The meeting is designated as an ‘informal’ meeting because seats are not pre-established. Representatives can ask to speak by turning their flag vertically, which signals to the co-chairs that they want the floor. If too many flags come up at once, the co-chairs make a written list of the groups that wish to speak to repeat it to the hall. ‘As I wanted to talk, I didn’t know how to tell the co-chairs that I wanted to take the floor. I asked Gina [NGO-MG]. She made me *turn my “Women’s” flag vertically*. I realized that was a code I needed to learn’ (observation notes, consultative meeting, 19 September 2014).

In these settings, there is no simultaneous interpretation. Everyone speaks in English. ‘Everyone is speaking in English. There are no simultaneous translators’ (observation notes, consultative meeting, 18 September 2014). The irony of the situation is that while UNISDR sets up consultative meetings for Major Groups and Member States to share points of views and different perspectives on how to reduce disaster risks, only a few Member States show up. The sessions mostly are Major Groups each taking the floor and telling the co-chairs what they want to see appear in the final text.

Figure 5.4: Open-ended negotiations, Geneva, 16 January 2015



Source: Leah R. Kimber

Open-ended negotiations

Even though the term ‘open-ended’ negotiations may sound paradoxical, it implies that negotiations are scheduled to be reconvened, may it be in a different place, on a different day or a different time (see [Figures 5.4](#) and [5.5](#)). In an interview conducted with Stephanie, a representative from Kenya, she explains in her words that open-ended means ‘open to everybody, to all states’, namely to all Member States, without a specific timeframe on the number of hours it will last. As an example, negotiations during the last stages leading up to the ratification of a text can be conducted until dawn. The size of the room varies according to the rooms the Palais des Nations in Geneva allocates. On one occasion, negotiations were held in the buildings of the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva.

I came in at 9:00am. The tall lady with short white hair said ‘Hi’ to me as I walked into the building. I recognized her as UNISDR staff. At the desk, they didn’t seem to know what meeting I intended to attend. The UNISDR staff lady told me the big room was essentially for the Member States and that *we were recommended to take seats on the side*. She also said the room would probably not be full, since there

Figure 5.5: Informal discussions, open-ended negotiations, 16 January 2015

was a meeting on Syria many had to attend. The meeting would start at 10 am. Out of curiosity, I asked her when the meeting had finished the day before to which she replied ‘Around 18:40, which isn’t late’. (Observation notes, negotiations, 9 December 2014)

I am sitting in the back in room XXVI. I feel tired and am longing for a walk. But *the seats are tight* and I don’t feel like getting up and disturbing everyone, and making myself seen too much. (Observation notes, negotiations, 26–27 February 2015)

Negotiations are always held in English. Major Groups cannot take the floor. They can attend, but never raise the flag. ‘Oskar turned to me and said: “Isn’t it such a pity we cannot intervene!”’ (observation notes, negotiations, 15 January 2015). In order for the audience and participants to see what is being modified in the text, UNISDR uses a beamer to project the text – modified in real-time – on the wall.

Oskar [the NGO Major Group representative had some questions regarding yesterday’s negotiations]:

Will there be real-time changes on the screen?

George [UNISDR's focal point for the Major Groups]:

Yes and no. For an easy fix, yes there will be, there will be the screen and some simple changes will be made. But if there's a situation where six to seven government flags go up they will probably say: 'Please submit this in writing' and then they will address them down the line. So some of the text will go up. (Observation notes, PrepCom2, 16 November 2014)

Informal working group

During the first preparatory committee, the co-chairs introduced the agenda of the meeting and the role of the informal working group focusing on targets and indicators for the post-2015 framework. This setting became an open-ended meeting, reconducted seven times between 20 October 2014 and 9 December 2014. All other UN organizations were invited to participate in the informal working group, but only as observers.

The aim of such an undertaking is for the Member States to benefit from the best available technical expertise. In agreement with the co-chair, each Member State can suggest names of national experts, who are then nominated by the Member States. UNISDR contributes with a list of technical institutions from different regions of the world on the basis of their work on the targets and indicators already suggested in the pre-zero draft. Experts only integrate the session as of the third meeting such as requested by the Member States. Modalities for participation of experts are:

1. participate in the meetings of the informal working group through WebEx (maximum 20 experts) on a first come, first served basis;
2. participate in the meetings of the informal working group in person;
3. through the submission of written views to the secretariat.

In agreement with the Member States, co-chairs determine a date, after the third meeting to convene Major Groups. Only few representatives showed up.

Informal/informals

What are commonly referred to as informal/informals are closed sessions dedicated to Member States solely. The incentive for having these meetings is to foster better discussions around contentious issues when time is running out. About eight to ten delegates from different countries meet in an intimate room and discuss the 'sticky points'.

Informal/informal groups are meeting for one hour to try to move forward the negotiations. They will reconvene at 5:10 pm. Group 1 is on Climate Change: Canada, Australia, the US, Switzerland, Brazil, EU, Sweden, and Pakistan. Group 2 is on Technology Transfer: Iran, the UK, Kenya, The Netherlands, France, Russia, and two other countries I didn't catch. (Observation notes, Sendai, 17 March 2015)

And informal/informals is an even smaller group where the states that have the concerns or the issues can meet and discuss and *don't have to have the chairs or the coordinator*. (Stephanie, representative of Kenya, 7 April 2017)

Discussions are all in English. The co-chairs are not involved, and Major Groups cannot attend. 'Delegates need to speak English otherwise how would Saudi Arabia go speak to "Cuba" and "Bolivia" as I just saw him do right now' (observation notes, Sendai, 14 March 2015).

Side events

Side events are created by Major Groups and sometimes in partnership with Member States. They are organized and scheduled during world conferences as we reach the climax of activities which also involves the press. 'Abel: "So we have the Children and Youth Forum next Saturday from 6 to 7 pm and it's at Tohoku University. The head of UNISDR will be speaking, and The Netherlands will be speaking. And we have some Member States speaking. Kaeahir Sakura is the name of the room"' (observation notes, morning session with Major Groups and George, Sendai, 14 March 2015). Side events are held outside the main centre where negotiations and plenaries occur. Side event participants do not require a badge to enter the session, rather it is as inclusive as possible.

Having an overview of what type of sessions are held and the space provided for Major Groups, we already notice that inclusion of civil society such as promoted by the UN can be disputed. Hereafter (see [Table 5.1](#)), I draw a table to visually show the meetings Major Groups are convened to and the modalities of their attendance. It becomes clear that being present does not guarantee being able to formulate and express views and perspectives. Ironically, when Major Groups are invited to be most active, Member States rarely show up. Furthermore, we notice that Major Groups do not have the same formal leeway be it for decision venues – where authoritative decisions about policy are made – or policy arenas – where policy debates and conflicts emerge and play out in a non-authoritarian context. If we look at the row 'MG can take the floor', we see that Major Groups are invited to policy arena meetings (plenary, technical workshop,

open-ended informal consultative meeting), where discussions around policy are carried out. These meetings have no direct influence on the final decision (Pralle, 2010). In other words, Major Groups are invited and expected to perform in policy arenas in front-stage settings. The work Major Group representatives put into actively participating in the creation of a worldwide framework is thus questionable.

As we continue this chapter, we will see that civil society members find ways in the organization's interstices to lobby as much as they can and get Member State representatives to listen to them. More specifically, we see that Major Group members overcome the exclusion from decision venues, front-staged to Member States, by developing backstage practices.

Setting the stage: incorporating the UN codes

To get a better grasp of how civil society integrates the various sessions requires looking at the UN codes, its members have to have a good command of the tools needed to perform adequately in the UN's apparatus. Building on Goffman's theatrical analogy, we can only identify front-stage and backstage performance at the UN once the theatre's overall setting is clear and well-established.

Highlighting the norms, practices and tools required to work efficiently in the UN's apparatus must be understood as the stage set up within which performances occurs. In this way, integrating the UN as a civil society representative may come with a lot of frustration due to the lack of understanding. For instance Major Group members often criticize the UN for its heavy bureaucracy which impacts lengthy processes. Even if they know that this will never change, at least not in the near future, they go along with the rules and codes rather than not integrating at all.

A decision just takes so long and there's so much at stake. It goes on forever. We were talking yesterday about this process and how easy it could be to be like 'Who agrees that the destroyed and damaged houses indicators should be merged together? Put up your banners!' And those who don't should give a quick justification of why and suggest an alternative. That would be a much faster process. However *people want to say something so it can remain on the record.* (Emily, interview, Palais des Nations, 11 February 2016)

In this subchapter I show that navigating the UN apparatus in various settings needs to be coupled with integrating specific codes and developing certain tools. Acquiring them can be tedious as we will see but seems to be the only gateway to visibility and potential impact. By impact we mean observing preference attainment in the final text.

Table 5.1: Characteristics of United Nations settings

Sessions	Plenary	Technical workshop	Open-ended informal consultative meeting	Side events	Open-ended negotiations	Informal working group	Informal/informal meetings
Policy arena							
Room	Big	Between 50 and 200 seats	Between 50 and 200 seats	Outside the conference complex	Between 50 and 200 seats	?	Intimate
Translation	6 UN languages	None	None	Rare	None (except at World Conference)	?	None
Seating arrangement	Alphabetical order, MG after Z	None	None	None	None	?	None
Projection on the wall	Real-time typing	None	None	None	Yes	?	None
Member State attendance	Yes	Rare	Extremely rare	Rare	Yes	Yes	Yes
Taking the floor	List	Spontaneous	Spontaneous	Spontaneous	Spontaneous	?	Spontaneous
Major Group invited	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, as observers	No (only 1 date)	Never
Major Group can take the floor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

Fieldwork analysis has allowed me to identify four main codes and tools: sensing the importance of informality, using and learning the UN language, accepting monotony and boredom as part and parcel of the institution and, finally, creating statements. All are explored hereafter.

Sensing the importance of informality

Scholars in international relations have long accepted Barnett and Finnemore's argument suggesting one consider the UN as a bureaucracy. As a quick reminder, Weber defined a bureaucratic organization as having four essential components, namely formal rules, functional specialization, hierarchy without domination and professionalism (Weber, 1920, in [Godwyn and Gittell, 2012](#), p 73). With that in mind, we would expect the UN to follow strict regulations. However, alongside many organizational scholars, a bureaucracy cannot function without interrelationships, which means that informality overturns the structure of the formal bureaucratic rules. Mary Parker Follett states the following: 'In some cases, all the co-ordination there is depends on the degree of friendliness existing between the heads of Department, on whether they are willing to consult; sometimes it depends on the mere chance of two men coming up to town on the same train every morning' ([Godwyn and Gittell, 2012](#), p 25).

Yet the leeway co-chairs play with can be disconcerting when one first enters into the creation process of international framework. Civil society needs to get a grip on the dynamics which take place during organized and scheduled meetings and be aware of the ways delegates circulate within them. After having attended several meetings, it becomes obvious that decisions are not taken where one would expect. In fact, decisions tend to be made in the most informal settings. In this way, I argue that informality sets the pace for official meetings. In other words, co-chairs rely on the minutes preceding and following sessions to make progress on discussions. It gets to a point where meetings systemically start at least ten minutes late and usually last longer than scheduled.

9h40 am: Nothing has started yet [although the meeting was scheduled for 9:30am]. People are talking. (Observation notes, consultative meeting, 2 October 2014)

Thank you, I encourage you to have discussions outside the meetings. (Observation notes, consultative meeting, 2 October 2014)

In some instances, co-chairs even shorten a session to allow delegates to gather in an informal manner and foster deeper and more effective discussions. 'It is important that your interactions are continued after this

meeting so you come with combined requests and interventions. I shall not necessarily prolong the meeting' (Co-chair, observation notes, consultative meeting, 2 October 2014).

Working in such a context seems obvious to Member State delegates whose job it is to negotiate and tie friendships in order to prepare for a better common ground. It allows to clarify misunderstandings. It introduces different perspectives in a short period which makes it time efficient and enables to resolve many issues. It seems the best way for delegates to talk to each other instead of being more than one hundred persons in a room and having to request the floor to share ideas. Let us read an interview excerpt. Stephanie, a Kenyan delegate, describes why informal meetings are important and what it takes to get people to talk.

Stephanie: It's really cool. It's weird. You can get into a fighting match let's say. A verbal war from state to state. Like with Switzerland, for example, because we [Stephanie and myself] are here, over an issue and we disagree. Then at the end of the day we will be like 'Leah, really?'. And you just talk it over. *Most of these things we agree upon in the cafeteria at the Serpentine. Because when you sit down there with your flag in front of you, it's serious. Whatever you say, you have to say! But when you sit at the Serpentine [the café] you can be like 'Why would you say something like that?'. And you actually can deliver it and get to some form of a consensus that can bring back and talk to the Ambassador about and say 'You know Switzerland said this and we were like that and it was a little of a battle and they've agreed to let go of certain things if we agree to let go on these. Is this OK?' And then most things happen that way. Most things happen because you have a relationship with your colleagues. And if you don't have that relationship it's really hard to do anything.*

Leah: This is where the human factor comes into play.

Stephanie: Exactly. You maybe don't like what they said, but they didn't say it as Stephanie. If I don't like what you said, you said it with a [country] flag in front of you! That can't be me saying I won't speak to Leah ever again, 'Did you hear what she said?'. *She said that because that's what she's been told to say. That's what she had to say. But aside from the political debates, we will talk about [our] babies [our personal life], we can even debate the [political] issue [our respective countries discussed] further. Like now there's an issue on international humanitarian law. Half of it*

is being dealt with in the Serpentine. I'm telling you because, *there are issues that are supposed to be non-political but are actually extremely political*, such as 'detention of people' and 'conflict'. They are really political when they shouldn't be political in that forum. You're not supposed to engage politically. So the only way to deal with some of these issues is outside the negotiation room. So you'll have to be able to talk to your colleagues. And *it's because it's about being human above all that makes you go up and say: 'Can we have a coffee, lunch?'*. And most of the time you have something in common – most of the time. You either have babies in common, or you find out that not having husbands in Geneva in common [she laughs].

- Leah: On a human level that will help with the negotiations?
- Stephanie: Exactly. *You can always find something in common with another human and the minute you can identify one in thing you have in common – I don't know, you both like watches – you immediately break the ice. Really!* It's about finding something about the two of you, but there will always be one thing. It's about finding it! And *once you have some connection with somebody there's nothing you cannot discuss*. That's why you see people taking breaks. You see somebody coming out and you'll hear 'Yeah yeah let's go!' And you see little conversations happening everywhere, people trying to sort out things. (Stephanie, Kenya, interview, 7 April 2017)

Understanding that most decisions are not made while seated in front of a desk, but rather at coffee breaks, when sessions are late, gives cues for Major Group representatives to play by the so-called 'backstage' rules set by the Member State delegates and supported by the co-chairs. It allows them to navigate more conscientiously among the various actors in the perimeter. In some instances, restrooms even become a privileged space where ideas and views are exchanged.

Can you imagine that we are sitting here and all these people are like in huge rooms and all the decisions that are being made are not made here on the panel or here in this big room! People are here talking around the table and in line to speak, but most of the decisions are actually made in the hallway! *When it occurred to me that it was in informal settings that things were happening that I started thinking differently*. It changed how I work and how I move around UN and policy spaces. It was interesting for me to realize that a lot of things are being decided in quite informal ways. And this is how the world works. Later I noticed

it was the same dynamics at the national level, even at local levels, and even in your job. This is how things happen! (Lya, Major Group for Children and Youth, 5 February 2016)

As we witness through Lya's interview, acquiring UN codes as a Major Group representative newcomer starts by understanding that informality is key to the UN organization even if it appears as being counterintuitive with respect to its bureaucratic structure. Sensing the importance of informality in discussions and interrelations enables civil society to become more efficient as we will see later in the section on 'Performing advocacy strategies'.

Learning positive Globish

Regarding language, simultaneous translation is not a given in all meeting contexts and thus requires delegates to have a good command of the English language. After having observed and listened to the languages actors use in context of the Sendai Framework creation, it is no surprise that Member States delegates – whose official national language is not English – have a perfect command of the latter. English is without any doubt the UN's lingua franca. 'I saw Linda – representative of the EU – and Cuba together during the sandwich break at around 7 pm. I cannot believe Linda also speaks Spanish' (observation notes, negotiations, 27 February 2015).

We could have concluded that English is thus the dominant language – which it undoubtedly is – but this statement would also imply that all native English speakers 'naturally' understand everything that is being shared and discussed. Yet entering the UN as an English native speaker does not guarantee that you will understand what is going on and what is being discussed. It may take some time to adjust and learn the so-called UN jargon, its acronyms, its formulations, and so on. 'There's something about the wording and jargon during the election: "May I take it that the preparatory committee is taking this proposal? I see no objection. It is so decided"' (observation notes, PrepCom1, 14 July 2014).

In fact, fully grasping the language goes hand in hand with the feeling of inclusion. As Agatha puts it, she felt as if she couldn't belong to the group, that is, the Children and Youth Major Group, but also to the Sendai Framework context more generally for the lack of understanding and command of the 'UN language'. Without both its understanding and command, actors are at a loss, may feel inefficient and even isolated. This echoes Neeley's (2017) argument, whereby she explains that a lingua franca – in our case English, but even more so the UN language – enables a company or organization not only to have better external and internal communication, but also to promote a sense of belonging for employees located worldwide and serve as a reminder of the organization's global vision (Neeley, 2017, p 16).

The first time, *I didn't feel like I belonged to the group because I didn't get their [members'] language*. There are a lot of abbreviations even inside the Major Group of Children and Youth itself. I didn't know these people before. We only had contact through email, skype. The first time I actually met them was really awkward. The first time I came to Geneva as well. It wasn't a nice experience for me to be honest. It was more confusing. I didn't enjoy the negotiations. (Agatha, Major Group for Children and Youth, 30 January 2016)

Furthermore, beyond the jargon lies an interesting characteristic which can be perceived when listening carefully to the co-chairs. UNISDR staff formulates sentences in a positive manner and hardly ever makes negative statements. I thus propose to describe, first, what this language is and what it takes to become familiar with it; second, how to use it; and, third, offer an understanding of what positive Globish could mean in the UN context.

Learning and using it

As already said, using the UN language is not evident. All interviews I conducted converge towards agreeing that acquiring a sense of what is being discussed in meetings and with colleagues implies going through a learning curve which takes time and patience. Abel, from the Major Group for Children and Youth, recognizes that it might be challenging at the beginning; even with a background in policy work, entering the UN calls for new language to express policy. Alice (Major Group for Children and Youth), a Swedish medical student, shared that she had the feeling of having to learn English 'all over again', while George (UNISDR) referred to it as similar to starting a new job or studying a new discipline. In fact, it may not only be a question of English words, but of acronyms used as such, as a given, without explicating them to newcomers.

Missing out on the UN language command is perceived as a handicap for actors; they shy away from taking the floor or writing down ideas driven by the fear of making a mistake and the consequence of being turned down immediately because considered as politically unacceptable. As a science student also involved in the Sustainable Development Goals, André would easily use terms such as 'limited resources' and 'non-renewable resources', but was instructed by a scientific advisory panel in the Sustainable Development Goals session to change the terms he uses to 'planetary threshold'. If we inverted this example, actors would have to know what the term 'planetary threshold' actually means to grasp the general meaning as Margareta Wahlström (Special Representative to the Secretary-General, UNISDR) put it.

There is no secret in overcoming the unease first-time attendees feel when first entering the UN circles. All interviewees, be they from Member States,

UNISDR, UN agencies or Major Groups, say they acquired the language by reading UN policy documents and by sitting in sessions and listening carefully to the wording and formulations their peers use. An expert from the Swiss delegation admitted that working within the Sendai process, and all others for that matter, calls for teamwork. Scientists bring expertise and delegates translate it into acceptable policy wording and sentences. Major Group representatives confirm the importance of teamwork; they rely on each other to revise and correct documents in order to find the best tone to convey a message.

You learn it because it becomes your every day for 20 years. I understand that everybody is challenged at first. I just had a colleague from the government of Finland who said herself that it took her the first month just to learn the jargon and the ‘alphabet soup’, the whole acronyms etc. So it becomes part of your everyday and you learn it by reading it. And eventually it sticks to your brain and you know which one is relevant for which audience and how to use it. It just becomes part of your work. You know what I mean? You need to learn it to be able to be functional. It’s a tool. You need to do that. I mean I changed organizations three times. From UNDP, UNICEF and UNWomen and for each of those they have their specific jargon. Some things are definitely in common, but there are different things that are also very specific. So in order for you to function it’s an investment that you make, but once you keep reading and become familiar, it just sticks to your brain and then you realize that what is called at UNICEF this way is equivalent to another word in UNDP in a different way. They don’t necessarily coordinate among agencies. Not on all. Some things are in common. After a few years in the system, you don’t realize it anymore. I don’t realize it anymore in the same way an external person would. (Birgit, UN organization, 28 January 2016)

Birgit worked for a UN organization and was present at PrepCom2, in Sendai for both PrepCom3 and the World Conference. She advocated for gender equality and women’s leadership, arguments in line with that of the Women’s Major Group.

To become efficient and learn the right words and formulation, there is no way around it: actors need to be present in meetings, take part in discussions and have access to documents. Learning by doing seems to be the only way to learn and understand the UN.

Once Major Group representatives have attended sessions, read documents and familiarized themselves with the type of words and language they need to use to convey a message, the second step is to use it. Being fluent in this language is a major asset, especially in sensitive discussions. Using the

UN language also indicates that actors have identified which country is particularly sensitive to a certain issue, the reason being it does not exist in its sets of laws and regulations. As an example given by Ellen (Women's Major Group organizing partner), the United States refuse to talk about 'inheritance', for it is not a law and thus cannot be stated as such in a document submitted for ratification.

More specifically, in the disaster risk reduction negotiation process, discussions were raised in a late stage about what disasters were. The debate arose when touching upon sticky points. Disasters for some governments implied more than disasters related to hurricanes, droughts, fire, but worked towards including biological and health related disasters as well. Major Group representatives would have wished to see the definition of disasters grow to also include disasters linked to conflict, which was a redline for some countries.

As Lya (Major Group for Children and Youth) put it, it is obvious that an international institution such as the UN needs to find the correct wording to accommodate 193 Member States, each with different regulations, opinions, political conflicts and agreements, and it is up to Major Group representatives to first listen and then carefully learn all the nuances. In this way, she understands and justifies the vagueness the UN uses (see [Chapter 3](#) 'While keeping it vague').

Positive attitude: we will overcome anything!

After a few months in the Sendai Framework process, I was struck by the positive affirmations that were circulating and expressed in these settings. A perfect example lies in what Mr Thani Thongphakdi, one of the two co-chairs, shared with the Major Groups in Sendai, a few hours before the end of the conference, when no text was yet finalized due to many contentious points.

Mr Thani Thongphakdi (co-chair): 'Very briefly just to outline the process as it will move forward today. As we had informed you yesterday, the discussions today will focus on the issue of CBDR and international cooperation, mainly the issue of the means of implementation. That was the focus of the session this morning and as [my co-chair] had said, both sides are engaging very well with each other. We are coming closer. *There's more convergence and slowly but surely they are reaching closer and closer to each other I have to say.* And I think there's a sense, that we can see the light of the end of this conference. *There's a sense of cautious optimism* that we have something which may be workable because at the end of the day I think we all realize that we have to come up with a very focused document and we only have 24 hours to do so. So there

is a sense of urgency. People realize that a deadline is coming up and we really need to be involved in order to put forward the text. And I think that everybody realizes that at the end of the day – one way or another – we have to succeed. *A document has to be delivered from this conference as mandated by the General Assembly.* (Observation notes, briefing session with Major Groups, Sendai, 1 March 2015)

The issue of implementation mentioned earlier – common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) – was formalized in international law at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The principle balances, on the one hand, the need for all states to take responsibility for global environmental problems and, on the other hand, the need to recognize the wide differences in levels of economic development between states. These differences in turn are linked to the states' contributions to, as well as their abilities to address, these problems.

While everyone was sceptical about whether UNISDR would deliver a final text – the general atmosphere among Major Groups being rather pessimistic – with regard to the amount of time that was left and the little agreed language around contentious topics, co-chairs and UNISDR staff kept a positive attitude. They emphasized every little success. The secretariat and co-chairs seemed to be driven by a sense that they will overcome anything.

The positivity that emanates from the UN as a whole, far and beyond being a cultural trait, would not be possible without taking seriously the fact that words can be reworded and phrases reformulated to best fit all parties involved. Simply put, it is the language of diplomacy characterized by its polished and polite expression. It comes to a point where Ellen (Women's Major Group) laughs in sessions when listening to what is exchanged; so many sentences and yet avoiding to disagree and making a point. What surprised George at first when attending negotiations was the ability of Member States, together with the UN secretariat, to find alternative words to make a statement the least controversial as possible.

I unfortunately have only few concrete examples to share since interviewees revealed a feeling without managing to pinpoint exactly the terms they have heard. The most relevant example though, if I rely on what I presented in [Chapter 3](#), is the concept of *resilience* itself. While *resilience* was used in the context of hazards, crises and disasters in the late 1990s, it became the outcome of *vulnerability*. Prior to *resilience*, vulnerability was key to studying natural hazards and poverty until the late 1980s, but was usually portrayed in negative terms as the susceptibility to be harmed (Janssen et al, 2006). *Resilience* rose as the positive replacement for vulnerability, which could be worked on and improved. This example gives the general direction of my argument. UNISDR and the UN more generally do their utmost best to create positive language, *positive Globish*, to ensure sustainability.

A UNISDR staff employee, Steve, shared with me his take on the UN language.

And what struck me most beyond the jargon and acronyms was this particular kind of language that is used in emails because all emails are formatted a little bit the same way. Is it specific to the UN? *We all ask for the things in the same way, we use the same words, and yes we only change what is inside the sentence.* Yet the formulas of politeness, the way of asking a question, the way of answering it, or the way of contradicting something or someone is done in more or less the same way. *It is always very diplomatic* and expresses maybe only 5 per cent of what we feel. Sometimes *you get outrageous emails; they are stupid and useless. Yet the response is always polite, and toned down.* Beyond the jargon and the vocabulary, I have had to learn to use this kind of polished diplomatic language with these typical diplomatic formulas. So much so that even in emails I write – that have nothing to do with work – I notice that I write in a UN-like way. (Steve, UNISDR, interview, 16 September 2016)

Positive Globish, Globish because it refers to the English language everyone at the UN has a command of, be it fair or excellent, is paradoxically not an inclusive language for all to understand at first. Learning and using appropriate language calls for long hours among delegates, listening and taking notes of what is being discussed and negotiated. Civil society members – and any actor for that matter – who integrate UN processes need time and resources to adapt to certain words, certain formulations, bearing in mind that everything can be misleading. In fact, talking in a positive form does not necessarily mean that everything is positive and that threats are not ahead. Rather it is a fundamental trait within the organization, not only to keep everyone on board and keep hopes high, but also a way to control those who are in.

Scheduling monotony

The third ‘code’ Major Groups need to get used to at the UN is the role of boredom and monotony. Attending formal meetings in the context of the Sendai Framework, plenaries and consultative meetings specifically, can become lengthy and tiring. The protocol for each session repeats itself, language is ‘watered down’, negotiators – as perfect diplomats – do not raise their voices and remain diplomatically correct. It is extremely common to drift away in one’s own thoughts or take advantage of doing other activities during sessions. Staying in a comfort zone enhances the monotony, giving rise to boredom which makes actors undertake other activities. However, when

impatience kicks in and people have had enough, the atmosphere suddenly changes. Co-chairs in formal meetings have the power to lead the session and give a rhythm to the monotony, hence ‘scheduled monotony’. Later, we take a closer look at the comfort zone and when impatience appears.

Staying in the comfort zone

The comfort zone I refer to in formal meetings (except for negotiations), led by co-chairs (plenaries, consultative meetings), comes from the fact that every actor, from any delegation or any Major Group who requests the floor, reads statements. Indeed they wrote and prepared them prior to the session. If a statement were read once in a while, it would not necessarily have such negative impact on people’s attention, but continuous reading during every intervention does. Even if co-chairs – to induce dynamic interactions – at times encourage representatives to speak to each other rather than one after the other read their statement, actors still tend to read in order to remain in their comfort zone.

Speak to each other. So if one of you has put up a point and you want to amplify and reinforce it and talk about how you might be able to contribute and build a partnership around that, *you are encouraged to listen and not stick to the pre-read statement but rather react to the discussion as it appoints in the room*. I see some smiles. Is that wishful thinking? OK. (Observation notes, PrepCom2, 17 November 2014)

Marcus: ‘We need to send the written statements. I don’t know who will listen to all of this.’ Marcus is making it clear that the oral statements are lengthy and that *nobody really pays close attention to what is being said*. Marcus seems to know about the process and the various milestones. I myself still have no clue. (Observation notes, consultative meeting, 18 September 2014)

Furthermore, delegates hardly ever respect the time allocated to each statement as defined by the co-chairs, to the point where the audience undergoes over ten minutes of monotonous reading for each intervention. On two occasions, in consultative meetings, Major Group representatives spoke spontaneously, detached from their paper or screens and put more intonation into the points they wanted to put forward. This brought more impact and got everybody’s attention back to the main purpose of the meeting. ‘He is getting everybody’s attention in the way he talks. He is putting the requests of everyone together and highlights the convergence’ (observation notes, consultative meeting, 2 October 2014). However, reading the prepared statements gives persons who takes the floor a feeling of security; the language has already been formatted to fit UN codes, they are

assured to be able to say everything they had in mind and, most importantly, it allows delegates to send another person, mostly junior, in their stead to deliver a statement.

Nevertheless, staying in the comfort zone by reading statements enables boredom to overwhelm the room and leads delegates to turn to other activities, such as writing emails, communicating via WhatsApp on their phones or writing the statement they did not have time to prepare before.

Co-chairs use strategies to avoid abuse. At the plenary in PrepCom2, a countdown clock was ticking to mark the predefined three-minute statement period for each intervention. While its function is to keep track of time and give equal chance to each intervention, this process also infuses dynamism to delegates who ought to make their interventions more interactive by listening to one another. Yet if we look at the indications given by the co-chairs, civil society members' voices will be of secondary importance in plenaries. When time is running out and Major Groups are the last to take the floor, at the end of the day, they are enjoined to shorten their statements. 'At 17:34, a UNISDR staff person who was seated on the stage came to Gladys to ask her if she could keep her statement under two minutes; the co-chairs – he said – were asking. By this time, everybody is doing something different, talking, working on their computers, etc.' (observation notes, plenary, PrepCom2, 18 November 2014).

Impatience kicks in

Scheduled monotony has its limits and creates impatience, especially in the final negotiations in Sendai, when time is ticking and the need for a document is imminent. Actors' impatience takes over from boredom. In Figure 5.6 we can observe negotiators who have even fallen asleep, perhaps out of boredom, perhaps out of tiredness, perhaps out of both. A sense of urgency began to gain people's attention at the plenary in PrepCom3 in Sendai when no text had yet materialized and many paragraphs were still to be negotiated. Major Group representatives who had followed the process closely were in the hall and were carefully following each step. They were eager to see the final text in order to evaluate their contribution at the policy level and at the same time they were drawn emotionally to the process they had dedicated themselves to. The thought of not coming up with an agreed international framework haunted them as much as UNISDR and Member States and made them upset and impatient by the time the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction started in Sendai, on 13 March 2015.

Michael: *'They took a break and adjourned when they should have worked overnight!* Even this afternoon. It took them 20 minutes to discuss the

title of the session. I couldn't believe this was happening at such a late stage?' (Observation notes, Sendai, 17 March 2015)

The pressure is increasing. *It's already 10:51 am and negotiations were supposed to resume at 10 am.* The room is filling up again. Katia came by and told us that she was at the G77 meeting and I heard that they are going to threaten the donor countries because we are less than 24 hours away from the end. It seems like there's a crisis here. Ellen told me that since last night and according to the Canadian delegate, *only two paragraphs had been 'ad ref'ed, and they went until 3:30 am.* (Observation notes, Sendai, 17 March 2015)

Figure 5.6: Last hours before text ratification



At this stage of the game, co-chairs stepped back. They could not force actors to agree on contentious points. Although they could guide and encourage them, impatience and urgency were at the heart of informal/informal meetings. Co-chairs enable informal/informal sessions to happen, but are quite limited in that they cannot do more than wait for Member State delegates to come back to the room and declare what will be in the text.

In this subchapter, it was important to point out the practices in UN sessions. While throughout the process co-chairs give indications on how to proceed and how to share views, Member State and Major Group representatives remain in their comfort zone and take their time to deliver oral statements. This section can be relevant in that it gives additional clues to understand the dynamics of inclusion. Even if civil society members gain access to UN perimeters and attend sessions, there is no guarantee they will listen to all that is being said and discussed in formal meetings, nor is there any guarantee that they, in turn, will be listened to by the other actors. While they ought to make their interventions as catchy as possible to gain most attention, it requires on their behalf an excellent command of the language, but also full concentration for hours at a stretch, while sometimes also coping with jetlag or other obligations they try to fulfil at a distance, far from their office.

Box 5.1: Women's Major Group quest to hand in a document at Prepcom2, 18 November 2014

Gladys, Frances and I returned to room XXIII after the technical workshop. We had been using that room to place our belongings (bags, jackets, etc) and worked from there all morning. Ashley who had remained in that room seemed very anxious because of the documents we needed to revise. Ashley was telling us we still had two documents to work on. She pointed out to me that it was all taking so long because everything needed to be included in the final version; all comments and edits from all the members of the Women's Major Group. I couldn't but tell myself: 'it's crazy how all has to be so inclusive and infringes on the time at hand.' Time was running out. We still needed to submit the statement for the time slot given to Major Groups at plenary and submit the zero draft with the Women's Major Group input. More importantly, both documents needed to be written together to ensure they mirrored each other. Katherine was again working on the indicators Rosemary had just reviewed. Rosemary in the meantime went to the negotiation room. Gladys was working on the zero draft. Gladys and I wanted to make it simple and we said we would help in any way or form. Ashley remarked that it would be more complicated and that we couldn't make it simple. The statements had to reflect what was in the zero draft and vice versa. Moments later, Katherine and Frances went to the co-chairs' dialogue. Cassandra and Ashley went to get something to eat. I could tell they were tired. Minutes after they left, a group of Spanish-speaking people came to tell us they needed the room. A delegation had apparently reserved the

room. We tried to make ourselves comfortable in the hallway outside that room. There were a few chairs and a table. When Ashley came back, she said she couldn't work in the hall because there was too much noise. We started walking around to find a new place and got to the ground-floor cafeteria. The place was packed. Some sort of event was happening in building A. Countries were represented and selling their traditional foods. As we walked to the elevator to go back up we bumped into Karen who was coming out of the negotiation room. Ashley had heard from Cassandra that Karen was trying to push Member States to review the zero draft according to our ideas and was trying to draw their attention to specific paragraphs. Ashley was thus keen on getting updates on that front. We ended up not taking that elevator but the next one. We were blocking it while Karen and Ashley were chatting. We finally decided to meet in one of the empty offices next to the negotiation room on the second floor. Stuti, Cassandra, Gladys and I got into the elevator. By that time we were going back down, where we had come from and then went up. The guy from the business technical workshop was in the elevator. I had recognized him. After these ups and downs in the elevator, we finally made it to the 3rd floor. There we found an empty office with big windows on both sides, one facing outside, the other facing the corridor. There was a phone, a couple of chairs and two desks. Gladys, Cassandra and I started working on the statements. I could tell Cassandra was exhausted. She had written her last email at 2:43 am to submit the latest version of the zero draft. At that point, I was going through the track changes. I was skimming through the document quickly and soon got to a final version which I had not much to add. The challenges and debates within our Major Group revolved mainly around phrasing. The big problem was that because everyone had to be in agreement with the document, it ended up taking a whole lot of time. For the finance statement for example, we had agreed to trust Frances. Ellen wasn't here to coordinate and give the last word. And we knew that if nobody else took up that role, it would just go on and on and on ...

Organizing access

For Major Groups to integrate sessions calls for solid organization among and within groups. Even if each group works *a priori* as a team, with common interests and common collective identity (see [Chapter 4](#)), it must organize around (1) collaboration to ensure participation, (2) coordination to check if representatives will be able to attend all sessions, and (3) cooperation regarding online tools to communicate at best. We go over the various ways civil society organizes itself while drawing on the literature for better analyses.

In organization studies cooperation, coordination and collaboration fall along a continuum to describe the increase in interaction ([McNamara, 2012](#)). Collaboration, at one end of the spectrum, is defined as an interaction between participants who work together 'to pursue complex goals based on shared interests and a collective responsibility for interconnected tasks which cannot be

accomplished individually’ (McNamara, 2012). Coordination in the middle of the continuum underlines reliance on others’ assistance to achieve organizational goals. Cooperation, on the opposite end of the spectrum, is commonly referred to as ‘getting along with others so that you c[an] both achieve your own goals’. In other words, persons work together to serve their own interests.

With this at hand, we analyse the Women’s Major Group organizing effort to ensure inclusion throughout the Sendai process.

Collaborating to ensure participation

In December 2014, the Children and Youth Major Group and the Women’s Major Group became anxious about their participation at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. News had struck that UNISDR would, as it did for PrepCom1 and PrepCom2, support only one representative per Major Group to attend the final conference. Any person could apply for the funding regardless of whether they had participated in the lead up to the conference or not. The pillar members worried they would have to give up an opportunity for funding and decided to email UNISDR, as we saw in [Chapter 4](#) (‘Pillars’) to share their concern. This anecdote is key not only to shed light on the pillars’ sense of entitlement seen in the previous chapter, but also to point to the strategies to maintain a persistent role throughout the process.

In this way, with common interests in mind, the two Major Groups collaborated to maintain funding opportunity, a collective responsibility among the groups’ pillars and give them priority in the selection process for funding.

Hi Abel, That is a great idea to do a joint letter. We can keep it pretty simple and recognize that for the PrepComs 1 and 2, ISDR specifically supported at least 1 rep per major group (which ensures that a key coordinator of the MG can be there!). And that DESA always provides this support around Post-2015. *The open call does not guarantee that anyone who has been active in the process until now will be there, which doesn’t make sense to me.* Just because someone is an expert in DRR doesn’t mean they are ready to go to Sendai and ensure a strong outcome. I do, of course, appreciate the open call and the opportunity it gives for new voices, especially from the Global South. But I’m convinced we still need to ensure that the Major Groups are there in person. How do you want to proceed? (Email from Ellen to Abel with CC to Kristen and myself, 22 December 2014)

The email the groups drafted was never sent because Kristen and Abel had managed, over a Skype conversation, to express their views on the topic and worked out a solution together with George which ensured they would

select a person jointly with them. The participation was thus guaranteed, not only in terms of funding, but also in terms of accreditation.

Coordinating for overlapping sessions

Coordinating access is not only done among Major Groups, but also within a Major Group. When it comes to the Women's Major Group at the first preparatory committee, Ellen made an effort to try to dispatch the resources among the women's members who were present, to get as much information as possible from all sides. That allowed to think of best strategies to influence the text. As we saw in the first part of this chapter, when presenting the various meeting settings, preparatory committees are scheduled in such a way that different sessions happen in parallel. Later is an illustration of the coordination effort Ellen made to ensure members are scattered among the various hotspots.

Let's have WMG in all the sessions that run parallel. Today's participation roles: Leah will take notes in the Plenary. Cassandra will attend the Technical workshops today. Ellen and Mira (as NGO) will make statements at the Chair's Dialogue today. Others, as you wish, may intervene in the Dialogue and Workshop, as they are informal. Please do take notes. A WMG statement is scheduled for Tuesday around 11:30 am, to be delivered by Sayaka. Attached is the long version that was already submitted, which is being shortened and made clearer for the oral delivery. We will share the short version a.s.a.p. If you have comments, please share and we can work to incorporate them (possibly sending a revised long version, too). Generally, we should be thinking of concrete recommendations – not platitudes. (Email from Ellen to the Women's Major Group, PrepCom1, 14 July 2014)

Drawing information from overlapping sessions calls for distributing sessions among members and thus requires assistance from different Major Group members to achieve the Major Groups' goal (McNamara, 2012). Coordinating members worked well in light of gathering as much information as possible in the process of developing strategies to lobby efficiently.

Cooperating for communication

Coordination around what sessions to attend has to be communicated among the members of the Major Group. This means all participants need access to documents which serve as the basis to each session. For this reason, Ellen created a Google Doc file in which the Women's Major Group members could cooperate in finding and working on appropriate documents, such as the Sendai Framework drafts, statement drafts and finalized statements. This

practice gave participants access to all the documents and enabled them to be in touch with each contributing member. Such online software allows everyone to give input in full transparency.

As the process developed, more and more documents were created and uploaded to the Google Doc file. Though the main purpose is to allow transparency and information sharing, there comes a time when the number of documents is so big that it is hard to find the relevant one. Thus too many documents with similar names, too many sessions and revisions prove to be a hurdle for information sharing.

I centralized all the documents again in Google Doc and made quite sure everybody had access to all four main documents that were put together in one master document created by Ellen. I could feel *that people were getting a little frustrated with all these documents* and could feel them being tired and wanting their peace. (Observation notes, pre-PrepCom2, 16 November 2014)

Too much information and too many documents turn good intentions into an overflow leading to frustration at not being able to contribute efficiently; not finding the appropriate document because of time constraints is discouraging. Thus, cooperation among the Women's Major Group lacks smoothness and becomes tedious due to the amount of documents to read, comment and share, in particular when time is of the essence.

Creating statements

Just like Member States, Major Groups create written statements. They do so for different reasons, but first and foremost because it is a common advocacy practice in policy arena settings. This having been said, first it allows them to coordinate the various points they want to share beyond the group, align their narrative as a Major Group and agree on language and formulations. Second, it serves as a strong basis to deliver an official statement at a meeting (plenary, consultative meeting, technical workshop) and third it may come in handy as a document to send via email to different actors, namely Member State representatives, UNISDR staff or other Major Groups.

However, writing a statement requires time and consultation with other members. It needs to be concise, clear and convey the most fundamental ideas. Later we read an illustration of the dynamics around the various statements that were being created within the Women's Major Group at the second preparatory committee in November 2014.

Leah: Ellen is here on Skype. I'm sure she'd be happy to debrief with us.

- Ellen: You guys have been meeting there already for two hours. I don't want you guys to stay on forever.
- Leah: The whole plan for tomorrow is settled. Sarah is going to email it to you.
- Ellen: Are people still working on things? Or are they finalized and just ready to go and be presented?
- Leah: No we wish. [Laugh] We are not there yet. We are working on three different documents.
- Ashley: Ask us tomorrow night!
- Rosemary: We have three documents from today to finalize and two documents for tomorrow's interventions.
- Leah: If you want to drop in some comments, I'm creating a Google Doc.
- Ellen: OK, so say something on top of the document that something is current as of now. Because I think we all get a little bit confused in new documents. Just because I'm not there it's hard to ask people in person. I'm sorry I keep on asking questions by email. (Observation notes, debriefing session for WMG, PrepCom2, 17 November 2014)

While Major Groups put the emphasis on their own statements, there are times when the idea of joining efforts in making one single statement on behalf of all Major Groups comes to mind. Actors, from the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group specifically, namely Linda and Oskar, aimed to bring together several groups. Yet this endeavour never seems to get much reward. On the one hand, fellow Major Groups appear sceptical about losing too much space by concentrating all Major Groups into one slot. On the other, it also implies, practically speaking, more coordination and more work among the Major Groups. From one session to another the idea arises but nothing comes out of the initial impetus.

Oskar [Non-Governmental Organization Major Group organizing partner] came up to me at the informal meetings and wanted the Major Groups to *write a joint statement*. However ten days into the 'break' before 17 November I still hadn't heard from him. These initiatives seem great and full of *good intentions but then everyone goes back to their offices* and is caught up by other things and deadlines. (Observation notes, consultative meeting, 9–10 October 2014)

While gaining access to UN perimeters can be a hurdle, once in does not guarantee access to every session. Institutional inclusion doesn't imply social

inclusion. In the next subchapter, we shed light on the strategies civil society members develop to work towards integrating their language in the text.

Performing advocacy strategies

Being present within UN perimeters and attending the sessions civil society is invited to and where it convenes becomes the basis for advocacy. Aiming to have as much impact as possible on the final text, Major Groups develop strategies to succeed in their efforts. If being present, as we saw earlier, is a fundamental strategy, a front-stage practice, other modes follow in the backstage, such as networking with bodies, seeking guidance from UNISDR's focal point, getting Member State delegates to speak in their interest and relying on informal discussions.

The purpose of this subchapter dedicated to analysing the various strategies is to give insight to the expected, and unexpected, forms of strategies civil society develops and relies on to maximize influence.

There are two schools of thought really. *You can go the diplomatic way, softly, so you don't upset people, but you still contribute. Or you can go in fighting.* And I think you need both of those. It depends on who you are, your own nature and personality, and the nature of your group. Because you need both of those operating. In some forums you need to go in quietly and be doing it from the back and in others you need to storm in and sit down and say 'You didn't invite me but I'm here anyway!'. *Between the two, you sort of get somewhere.* (Katherine, Women's Major Group, interview, 8 February 2016)

Ensuring consistent attendance

While being present becomes a fundamental strategy for influence, it implies ensuring consistent attendance, hence Major Groups' ongoing coordination for access (see the section on 'Organizing access' in this chapter). This has two essential values. First, it reassures civil society that it is not missing out on anything crucial throughout the process and, second, it enables its members to keep track of what is going on, avoid getting lost in discussions, and be aware of major milestones decided during meetings.

I was invited but not obliged to attend. Yet if I can afford it and I can come, it would be a pity to miss one because I will miss the information. It's kind of like a sequence. *If you don't go to one and instead go to the next, you somehow don't get what's happening.* You could track it down by reading all email exchanges from the mailing list, but for me it's better

to come and to hear it in person. (Agatha, Major Group for Children and Youth, interview, 30 January 2016)

In an era where communication is easily done via Skype and conference calls, via emails and instant messaging applications on smartphones or computers, interviews with Major Group representatives, Member State delegates and UNISDR staff reveal that face-to-face meetings are sometimes unavoidable to ensure best efficiency. In their view, that holds true especially when it comes to important decisions, contentious issues or approaching deadlines. The United States' delegate, Tatiana, mentioned the importance of conveying emotions and gestures that technology and electronic media cannot accurately translate. From a different perspective, Michael shared the worry of actors talking about the missing ones – in his case the disability caucus – without faithfully expressing and addressing their concerns. Actually, he says it bluntly, 'If you're not at the table, you're not on the menu!'

Persistent presence is thus the most fundamental strategy that keeps civil society alert and aware of what is going on. Although Member State delegates seem to go by the same logic, Linda (Non-Governmental Organization Major Group) wished the Member States' turnover would happen in the process. She explains that having the same people implies having the same discussions, while it would be more interesting and more challenging to have new 'blood' to 'shake things up', as she puts it.

On the contrary, Rosemary from the Women's Major Group and Maria the Ecuadorian representative both involved in UN meetings over the past decades, wished Member State delegates would ensure consistent attendance throughout various processes and throughout the years. Working with the same delegates would enable them to pursue discussions where they had been left off, rather than having to set the basis each time a new framework is being discussed. In fact, following multilateral negotiations at the UN in the past 25 years allows to pull back agreed language that seems 'natural' by relying on resolutions and language that had already been adopted years back. Maria refers to the irritation she witnesses when talking about 'sexual and reproductive health and rights' agreed in the 1990s for women and girls, which is not a given anymore.

Cairo! Cairo, 1994, is the conference on population. At that time the world agreed that there were sexual and reproductive rights. *In 1999, there was a big shift back.* Yet we preserved the idea of sexual and reproductive rights. Now, however, that is gone! There's no rights anymore. We are now coming up with the idea of the 'right to have access to service of health'. Even the right to access is not there anymore. Now it's just health services [from a gender perspective]. (Maria, representative of Ecuador, interview, 10 April 2017)

Consistent attendance can be seen as double-edged. On the one hand it can help ensure that the memory of the institution prevails, with actors reminding of former discussions or the already adopted language, while on the other hand, it can disserve because it creates a sense of stagnation with respect to ongoing discussions.

Concretely speaking, ensuring consistent attendance for Major Groups – as a front-stage advocacy strategy – implies taking notes to identify potential partners. In the Women’s Major Group case, the partners evoke gender and support women and girls’ rights, but also share information among the members about the process.

Ellen assigns me a task: *‘Whoever mentioned Gender in the workshops yesterday, identify them and go give them a card or offer them coffee. It’s always nice to give support and then try to twist their mind.’* I identified several countries: Japan, Finland and Panama. According to the sessions that are happening in parallel to plenary, the idea is to dispatch the members of the Women’s Major Group to maximize contact and ‘influence’ with countries. (Observation notes, PrepCom1, 15 July 2014)

Moreover, I observed an interesting phenomenon. While Major Group pillars do their utmost to attend each and every session they are allowed to integrate and thus committedly integrate the process, Member States seemingly do not have the same priority. These observations stem from plenary sessions, in which many governments do not show up and especially in the consultative meetings where delegates only rarely take part. Even if these sessions are specifically dedicated to Major Groups in order to share their views with Member States, they turn to the co-chairs in the hope that they will either convey their messages further or integrate some language in the text regardless of Member States’ absence.

In sum, for civil society to be absent is clearly felt to be a disadvantage and goes in line with the pillars’ commitment, namely the consistent members, we saw in [Chapter 4](#). The motto is the following: even if Member State delegates are not there, better be there to make sure not to miss anything rather than running the risk of being at a loss. This makes all the more sense in front-stage advocacy practice, when Major Groups are invited to attend a session.

Hi everyone, Thanks Karen! I hadn’t seen this. It is really important to review it, especially paragraph 13 as Karen noted. I suggest that anyone who has time, go ahead and share thoughts on this list asap. I’m not sure that anyone will be in Geneva next week to do advocacy, which puts us at a disadvantage. (Ellen’s email to Women’s Major Group, 9 January 2015)

Taking the floor

Handling UN codes and tools, knowing how to navigate the various settings enables Major Group representatives to take the floor at different times in policy arenas (plenaries, technical workshops, open-ended informal consultative meetings, side events). While UNISDR dedicates physical space, with seats for Major Groups and time slots to make an oral statement, in light of an inclusive process, its members take advantage of these moments and turn them into another front-stage advocacy strategy. Formal meetings, like all other meetings, begin late, but all start with the same ritual. Co-chairs identify people who raise their flags in consultative meetings and technical workshops and call on them to speak one after the other. Taking the floor in a context where co-chairs animate the session becomes a formal meeting (see [Figure 5.7](#)).

Later we read fieldnotes taken during a consultative meeting held on 18 September 2014. The excerpt represents the first paragraph of the official statement I read on behalf of the Women's Major Group. This gives a sense of the intensity and length of the statement, but also reveals the concrete challenges in conveying as much information as possible.

The floor started at 9:50 am opened by Mr Thani Thongphakdi the Co-Chair. The conference starts when the co-chair takes a wooden hammer and taps on the desk. At that moment people stop talking in the hall. People with disability speak first. I am a little nervous; I will be pressing on the button soon myself to take the floor. The text Ellen sent me is to be read aloud. I've practised a little to make it sound less boring. The Women's Major Group –which I represent alone today – is up next. (Observation notes and statement, Consultative meeting, 18 September 2014)

The Women's Major Group was aiming for a people-centred and a more gender-based approach. At the end of the statement I made, Oskar turned to me and gave me two thumbs up. The full statement can be read in [Appendix I](#). This is what I read:

Good morning co-chairs and distinguished colleagues, the Women's Major Group is working together to respond to the pre-Zero draft and make specific recommendations. Because today is the first session to discuss Section D – we would like to share some general ideas about the focus and tone of Section D. We will also make more specific comments about the sections up to 21. First, *we welcome the opportunity* to continue these *dialogues and exchanges* and we look forward to seeing our comments reflected in the Zero draft. We also welcome *the multi-stakeholder approach* in this section, recognizing that there is

local-level knowledge that is useful for risk reduction. Overall, we feel it is important to ensure that the document *is people-centred*. It must explicitly place people at the centre of all policies, especially vulnerable and marginalized populations, the main aim being people's *safety and improved wellbeing*. Here specifically, it is important to understand vulnerability in relation to disaster risk management capacity of the area and people and not just as a product of hazards. (Observation notes and statement, consultative meeting, 18 September 2014)

Taking the floor comes under the banner of another front-stage advocacy strategy in that Major Groups are invited and expected to participate. It allows to formally, meaning in an official setting, share civil society's positions. The hope, of course, is that it will be heard and taken into account seriously even if there is a risk for the audience to be dulled by the monotony of statements read aloud (see the section on 'Scheduling monotony' in this chapter).

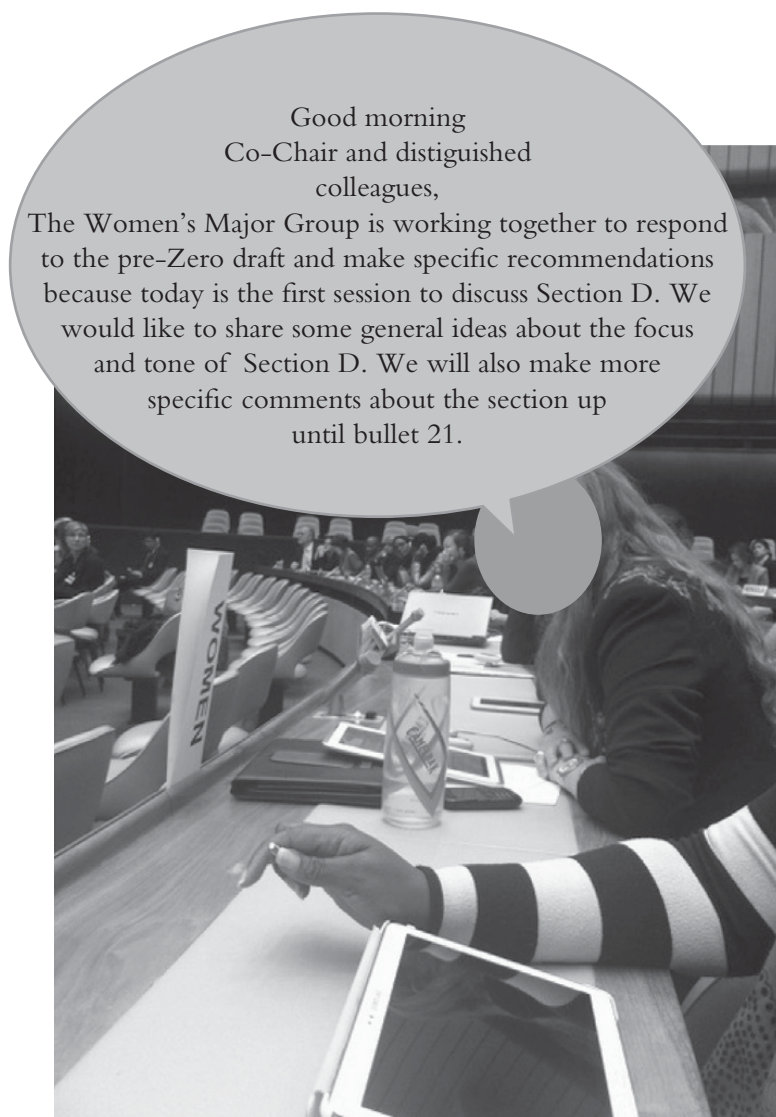
Networking: the advocacy sport

The next strategy identified during fieldwork is informal and consists in networking. Civil society members need to master that skill if they hope to get as much information as possible on how the process is evolving. For better insight regarding the process, UNISDR staff is the body to turn to: to clarify elements left unclear or not paid attention to; to know whom to seek for further information and advice, or guidance on where to go and what meeting to attend. In the Sendai process – which went on for eight months until the final ratification – the same people attended and, consequently, relations were being built with fellow civil society members, UN staff at large and Member State representatives. Each connection could potentially be helpful for the next stage of the process. Civil society pillars turned up at every opportunity to network, not only to closely monitor what was happening in the process, but also to build relations and make connections.

In a context where most decisions are made in unofficial settings, as described earlier in 'Setting the stage', Major Group representatives are deemed crucial to foster informal communication with actors who have privileged access to information. Unsurprisingly, the best informed actors are Member State and UNISDR representatives. Member State representatives may share information from informal/informal meetings and settings reserved exclusively to Member States while UNISDR staff members are in charge of leading the process.

Around 4:50 am, Gabriel came in and gave us a little summary. He was actually surprised because the G77 wasn't as difficult as they thought they would be. Brazil wanted Rio+20 to appear and that was that. Bolivia apparently was threatening to leave for issues she considered

Figure 5.7: Women's Major Group member taking the floor in technical workshop



Source: Leah R. Kimber

being red lines but then never left. So *after the 3rd threat to leave, all delegates were like 'OK ... Whatever'*. Gabriel was also saying that there was something about Western Europe, Australia, Canada and the USA. They rule everything. They agree, help each other out and in small sessions completely monopolize the discussions. Even Gabriel, who represents France, doesn't even have a word to say because what

he brings up isn't of these big actors' concern. He was pointing out to me how they speak the same language and are culturally similar. (Observation notes, Sendai, 17 March 2015)

Naming this subchapter 'Networking: the advocacy sport' reveals that advocating is an activity civil society members enjoy and consider fun and entertaining. In both sports and advocacy, while each success is welcomed with satisfaction and gratitude, civil society's success in the process is the ability to reach out and receive information. 'The thing that strikes me, is that when you get to know a person everything suddenly opens up. Thanks to Gabriel for instance the whole French delegation became super nice to me' (observation notes, Sendai, 14 March 2015).

Developing relations without preconceived specific demands also becomes an activity in itself. Mingling becomes essential in UN processes. Spontaneous conversations arise around coffee breaks or at the desks when people wait for the co-chairs to start the meeting. As Major Group representatives, communicating with Member States becomes the focus. To cultivate these relations is fundamental because it eases further advocacy work. In a context where civil society members attend meetings from different processes, or have attended meetings for decades, relations are either based on acquaintances made during the process or at previous processes. In the interview excerpts later, we listen to Birgit and Katherine's voices, which express their take on the need to foster relations and the positive outcome it results in. Katherine also shares how inconvenient it is when people move offices; it implies having to rebuild relations from scratch.

Based on acquaintances made during the process

You shouldn't even go to the negotiations if you don't have that relationship. It's a fundamental asset for you. That's why I believe that if we start a certain negotiation, *we need to do all we can to keep the same focal point and we don't keep changing faces. Because every time, you have to build another relationship, another trust.* There are also institutional linkages in the sense that [UN organization] sends letters to different Member States. However, we must identify and communicate with the person who is going to communicate it on behalf of their own government. It's super important and I think you are fantastic at also building relationships. (Birgit, UN organization, interview, 28 January 2016)

Based on acquaintances from previous processes

And the other thing is also the change of personnel. People are moving. I am halfway through an email trying to chase down who it is, in

the UK cabinet office because *now the person I deal with has gone*. He's moved on. So now I have to develop a whole new relationship though previously I had a great relationship with the cabinet office. I knew him, he knew me. He would bring me in, but he's gone now. *I've got to start all over again in order – again – to make any impact at all here in the UK, never mind anywhere else*. When I think about what we managed to accomplish, I nearly always think about certain people who have been the conduits for specific things to happen. (Katherine, Women's Major Group, interview, 8 February 2016)

Networking becomes an essential component of backstage advocacy for it does not require having to comply with the characteristics found in the sessions – sitting in rooms, using seating arrangements, employing defined UN language. Although networking is an expected practice, the conditions in which it is carried out vary and may be random: in airports during transits, in toilets, cafés and restaurants, and so on.

Seeking guidance from the focal point

At the beginning of the process, UNISDR arranged for every Major Group to have a focal point. The focal person is in charge of building close relations with the group members. They are assigned to keep the groups updated regarding the process, to guide them along the way and answer their questions. In the case of the Women's Major Group, George, a UNISDR staff member, whose work was to coordinate all nine Major Groups with respect to UNISDR's schedule, ended up being the Women's Major Group focal point as well. In the instance when the UNISDR-appointed person in charge of fulfilling this task did not show up at meetings, George stepped in. He took on the task of meeting the group's demands. There might not be a coincidence for George's involvement. George and Cassandra's friendship began way back at university.

George was available to answer all sorts of questions throughout the process, starting in July 2014 and ending in March 2015. Later is the transcription of a meeting which took place at the end of the first day of PrepCom2 when the Women's Group specifically asked George to join them in a small room not far from the plenary hall. They were eager to get some guidance and insight about the process. There were questions about what type of details the statements needed to contain, if the group ought to attend different meetings. This excerpt illustrates in part the relation George and the Women's Major Group developed.

Katherine: We were hoping you would guide us to what the most strategic directions are to get the most out of this and get our various messages across.

George: I think there are two things to keep in mind. First of all, it's very important – governments are saying this – that you express what you want to see beyond the text. As we move into means of implementation *we need more governments to understand what is a tangible partnership with various women's groups*. Think of it like this. If you're looking over a five-year or ten-year timeframe, at national or local level, *what would the repercussion of women's leadership look like* – as an outcome? It would be helpful to get a vision so they can envisage how to get from 'here' to 'there'? If there's clarity, if they have a sense of what it is that different women's groups want to achieve, it gives them a signal to understand what the enabling environment would be. Second, in terms of where you would want to see yourself in the text, *I would focus a fair amount on the unpacking of 'Women's Leadership'*. I think that would be very helpful. However in terms of courting the chairs, quite frankly I wouldn't recommend it for two reasons. One, the co-chairs are exhausted. *They have got no bandwidth to take on another issue. They certainly don't want every Major Group approaching them with 'Hey don't forget this!'* It should be coming through in your statements, which they will read, and through the inputs of governments. Furthermore, it sends a really bad signal to the Member States. You have so many people who are sensitive to your issues [women's rights, women's leadership]. They are reading the text and reading what you write so [don't be pushy]. (Observation notes, guiding session for Women's Major Group with George, 17 November 2014)

George, as the focal point, gives the Women's Major Group cues about:

1. who to approach and what behaviour to adopt or not to adopt (when he encourages the members not to approach the co-chairs);
2. what language to advocate for (that is, disaggregated data);
3. in what part it most likely will be well-received (that is, Preamble, Guiding Principles, and so on); and
4. reassures that it is not essential to show up at every session.

The focal person thus provides guidance for content as well as for the form, but is approached in an informal way. We can consider this relation to be a backstage relation.

Getting others to speak

Thanks to consistent attendance which enables taking notes of Member States' positions, Major Group representatives identify government representatives who might be interested in listening to the Major Groups' positions more closely. In a context where civil society does not always get a space and a voice alongside Member States, Major Group representatives do their utmost to find partners to speak in favour of their interests and specific language.

At the end of the meeting, Frances stood up and went to *give her card to the Member States that support gender* and based on what was said in PrepCom1. I made a list of them in the morning: Finland, Japan, Panama, Benin, West African States, the USA, Nigeria, New Zealand, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Norway, Samoa, Canada, Coco Islands, UK, Burundi. (Observation notes, consultative meeting, 9 October 2014)

I identify three sub-strategies within 'getting others to speak' for civil society to give its voice to a government. As backstage strategies, first, they send their statements to persons they have made contact with; second, they write generic emails to UNISDR hoping those in charge of writing the text will be sensitive to their requests; and, third, they engage on a one-to-one basis in formal and informal settings.

Specific emails to individuals

Reaching out to Member States by email is a well-known strategy in today's negotiations. It allows to send documents with specific terms and exact language which a face-to-face discussion might not permit. However, obtaining email addresses first requires a one-on-one discussion where actors make initial contact and exchange cards. For emails to be well-received and taken seriously, Major Group representatives must make sure that Member State representatives are willing to consider the suggestions and only then can emails circulate. While this activity may be carried out in parallel and during meetings, we may easily consider it to be an informal strategy.

I guess it's our role to go and support them and also support the agenda that we are interested in, and which is useful for certain areas. So, for example at Sendai *we were focusing on Member States that we were hoping would implement some support* and we wrote to them before and sent them two pages to support them either during, before, or after the negotiations. It's still in their hands, but it's kind of trying to make that

connection and reach out. If they need support and assistance, we can provide that. (Emily, Non-Governmental Organization Major Group, interview, 11 February 2016)

Generic emails to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

After each formal intervention, UNISDR asks delegates and representatives to send their statements via email. This serves two purposes. First, it allows governments and civil society to have their statements put on the website as a testimony while it also serves as witness to their engagement and statements. Second, it enables UNISDR staff in charge of writing the text to have a written document on which to rely and which eases the compilation of all ideas which emerged. ‘Many of you send proposals to make the text better. It might become very complicated to implement all the things that have been repeated’ (observation notes, consultative meeting, 18 September 2014). Even if sending emails does not necessarily mean that representatives, co-chairs and UNISDR staff speak during meetings in the name of civil society, these bodies might integrate their voices in the text and make civil society visible on UNISDR’s website. We can consider this also as a backstage practice, in that it is not a performance per se and is done behind the scenes so to speak.

Engaging on a one-on-one basis

Engaging in a one-on-one basis can be considered as the most effective way and most informal path to advocate. Building on the strength of informality, Major Group representatives are more at ease when engaging and adopting the codes set by Member State representatives. For instance, in the last hours of the negotiations in Sendai, the Women’s Major Group engaged by soliciting various individuals. This observation also entails that within a group several members can engage simultaneously with different individuals and thus maximize the opportunity for interaction. What follows is an illustration of the teamwork the Women’s Major Group managed to spontaneously put together to get countries to voice their interest.

Birgit and Ellen were working on the political statement to change paragraph 5 and add a sequence on ‘gender equality’. *We then went chasing after the Member States who would potentially deliver it tomorrow.* Japan told Ellen it wasn’t in their hands and that they should get others to say it. We thought we would need a developing country. I subsequently texted Stephanie [the representative of Kenya], my new ‘bff’ [best friend forever] as Birgit put it. I WhatsApped her, but she was in the informal/informals and didn’t answer. Ellen was looking

for Mexico. Nobody was there and we didn't know where they were. We went back to print the 2nd paragraph in color to make sure the sentence was in blue so we could distribute it to the people we thought could make the change. Finally, Stephanie texted me back telling me they were still in there. When she came back, I asked her to do me a favour: *'Could you put this forward?'*. She said yes, but she would consult with her boss. She is such a sweet person. After having talked to her boss who was sitting at a table, Stephanie turned to me and said *'OK, but only if you can get other African countries to support it!'*. I said I would go see anybody. She recommended Ethiopia. I told her: *'She scares me'* and she said: *'No! Why? She's really nice! Go talk to her!'*. I asked if I could say she was sending me and she nodded. *So I quickly went to Ethiopia.* She was her usual self, a pretty cold lady. She said not to email her anything, but that she was supporting it. *'We have no problems with gender issues!'*. (Observation notes, Sendai, 16 March 2015)

Thus providing something concrete, with materiality, helps when engaging in a one-on-one basis. Figure 5.8 is a photo taken of the handwritten suggestions for changes, which Birgit and I distributed in the negotiations held in Geneva in January 2015.

Based on my observations, I also noticed that Major Group members prioritize their engagement with representatives from their own government. This comes as no great surprise when we think about the first characteristic two individuals have in common. Another observation I made was the importance of maintaining privileged relations with some Member State representatives even if the relation implies sexual harassment. In other words, *'The show must go on!'*

I went to Kristen. She was overwhelmed and told me she was stuck with a person representing Iran who started WhatsApping her in a very flirtatious way. She thought about going to Margareta Wahlström [SRSG-UNISDR], but at the same time, she knew she needed him to get an understanding of the 'juicy political' issues and to maximize lobbying and advocacy. I told her it feels like these conferences are all about mingling, and networking, but also ego and seduction, which she totally agreed with! (Observation notes, negotiations, 13 January 2015)

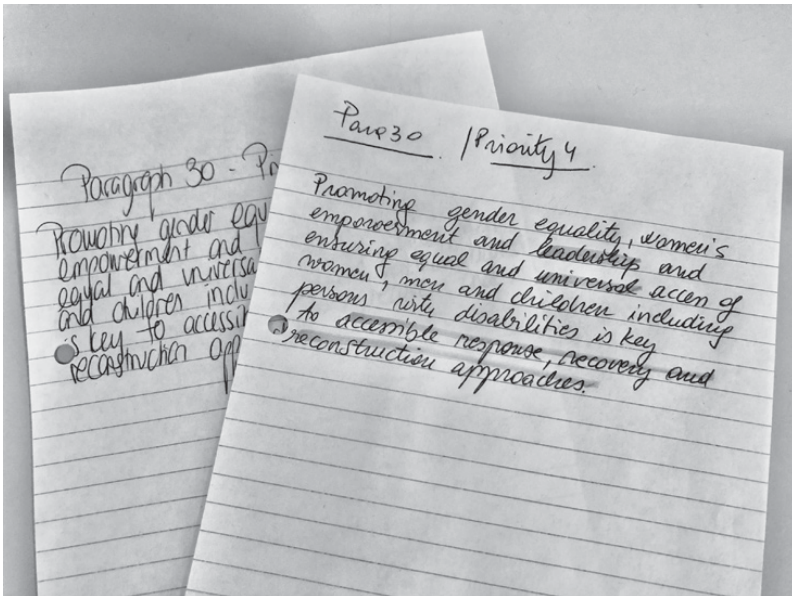
This incident is most likely not an isolated case, it sheds light on power relations at play between Member States and civil society representatives. Scholarship has, to my knowledge, not yet delved into the gender dynamics in international negotiation settings. This perspective would deserve further analysis and in turn propose valuable cues to the understanding of the micro dynamics which constitute global governance.

As a result, establishing relations with individuals from governments has one major value; it increases the chance to push civil society's voice to the forefront of negotiations and ultimately get the language into the text. Major Groups' statements thus instantly gain more weight the moment a government has supported the idea, because, as we know, Member States are the ones to vote and make the final decisions. With this in mind, Major Group representatives must be creative and even quirky in order to gain as much support as possible. They navigate from formal to informal meetings to approach potential advocacy partners.

But regardless, the importance is to persevere and to figure out how to approach the delegates. *If you just send them an email it doesn't get you very far. You need to meet them one on one.* It might take you to ask them out for coffee or compliment their shoes or say you really like what they said. You're never quite sure what's going work, but you need to be creative. Maybe become friends first? You really need to be able to adapt to how the delegates interact. (Ellen, Women's Major Group, 8 November 2016)

In a context where Major Groups are at times uninvited and forbidden to take the floor and share views, they find advantages in the system's interstices.

Figure 5.8: Photo of handwritten suggestions of wording distributed to Member States during open-ended negotiations on 12 January 2015



Source: Leah R. Kimber

Unable to enjoy participation in all settings, they turn their disadvantage into a particular leverage. Unattached to governments, they manipulate the rules of diplomacy and may even embody a transgressive position due to their invaluable leverage, namely not having to censor their concerns. If we rely on Austin's performative utterance, civil society members wield language not only to speak their views, but also to mark their presence. Furthermore, unlike government diplomats, they are not subject to move positions and countries every few years. They may be engaged for several years and even decades, giving them an understanding of the organization and Member States' stances. While UN staff or UN Member State representatives undergo constant turnover, civil society members become 'the memory of the organization' (Henri, former organizing partner in UN processes, interview, 18 October 2016).

But facing advocacy challenges ...

Although strategies, such as ensuring consistent attendance, networking, creating statements, seeking guidance from focal points, taking the floor or getting Member States to speak in the interest of civil society are developed to maximize advocacy, Major Groups face challenges in their undertakings. I divide the challenges into two dimensions. The first has to do with the need for Member States to (re)gain control over the process, when they feel that civil society is taking up too much space and the second has to do with being taken over by salient political issues that have Member States negotiating regardless of civil society's presence. From civil society's perspective, negotiations are always challenging. It would like to speak and have a direct voice, but is compelled to keep silent and be there only as an observer (see open-ended negotiations). It would like to see debates build on what has already been agreed in previous frameworks but notes that this hardly ever happens because of delegate rotations and the need to restart negotiations from scratch for many processes.

In terms of the negotiating process, that's always the case. *You feel like you are back a few years, because governments don't send the same persons and there is no institution. The person who comes has not attended any of these things before and doesn't know anything and hasn't picked up on things. Even the engagement of that country in the whole process can be new. So that's when it gets difficult.* (Rosemary, Women's Major Group, interview, 15 January 2018)

Member States (re)gain control

UNISDR made it a point to be as inclusive as possible even though we saw how exclusive it was with respect to civil society members' careers.

In this context, UNISDR solicited the Major Group structure to have as many constituencies represented in the Sendai process as possible. It created time slots and set special meetings for Major Groups (that is, consultative meetings, held for Major Groups and the co-chairs) and ensured George, together with the focal points, were doing their job in conveying the relevant information to them.

Yet there was a sense coming from UNISDR that Member States wanted to remain ahead of the game. This was mentioned on several occasions by George in informal sessions, such as in morning or evening briefings dedicated to Major Groups. On one occasion a Member State stepped up and made a comment to a Major Group representative. Agatha reveals the incident she had with her government, a country from South East Asia.

Agatha: I want to tell you another story about negotiations. I had time to intervene at that time.

Leah: I remember, I was next to you.

Agatha: And then after that the *** Member State came up to me and told me I actually shouldn't say what I said. You have to be careful when you talk about certain issues. Maybe I mentioned my government, maybe I did not. I can't remember. I think I mentioned my university.

Leah: I remember you mentioning the university [which is not in Agatha's home country].

Agatha: Anyway they said 'You shouldn't say that, you have to be careful'. I felt like I was being controlled by my own Member State.

Leah: What was so contentious?

Agatha: I was talking about governance; the more actors, the better and the more inclusive. Because it was my intention to come. I come from the governance and inclusive development sector, but then *** is a very hierarchical country and it wants to give the power to government actors. I know it's a long debate if we talk about this, but I feel like my freedom to talk has been blocked by my own government in the Sendai process. (Agatha, Major Group for Children and Youth, interview, 30 January 2016)

While George was sensitive to Member States' requests and shared with Major Group representatives their feeling, the interview presented earlier with Agatha takes the case to yet another level. A Member State delegate voiced his concern personally to a representative and instilled censorship of sorts to control what was being said. For someone who speaks in favour of civil society, to draw such a reaction comes across as a challenge.

Getting closer to the final ratification

As the process was nearing the end and UNISDR was reaching the ultimate deadline for delivering a text, negotiations intensified; informal/informal meetings – where few delegates meet in a small and intimate setting away from co-chairs and civil society – were multiplying, working around the clock became a given and the heart of the text – disaster risk reduction – was being overturned by salient political issues which neither UNISDR nor Major Groups seemed able to influence. Concretely speaking, the last two days of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai saw a climax of high intensity fostering avid discussions during lengthy hours. While these sessions helped Member States find the correct wording and language leading to an agreement on the text, it disserved the Major Groups' purpose as they were superseded in their very presence at the event.

When sticky points take over

In the final days, disaster risk reduction issues were overrun by recurrent contentious issues found in all negotiation processes in international fora. The contentions related to international cooperation, namely technology transfer, CBDR, capacity building, as well as political stances such as conflict situation (that is, 'people living under the occupation'). Member States drifted from UNISDR's initial drive to produce a comprehensive framework on how to manage disaster risks and instead focused on financial implications such as 'Who will finance the implementation of the Sendai Framework in my country?'

In the fieldnotes presented hereafter we read the answers the Finnish co-chair gave Ellen (Women's Major Group) at a briefing meeting between the co-chairs and the Major Groups in Sendai.

- Ellen: I was just wondering if you could clarify a little bit the most contentious issues. You said 'technology transfer' and 'CBDR' but I think there are a few others, like 'occupied territories' ...
- Finish co-chair: Global targets, let's start on that! The basis for indicator work. As we told you yesterday, there's quite significant progress. Out of seven global proposals, six have been agreed already. When the work on indicators will continue? And if the issues that you mention will be reflected in future work? I'm not in a position to judge at that stage. But the basis is there for future work already. (Observation notes, co-chair session for Major Groups, 16 March 2015)

Negotiation games emerged from issues disaster risk reduction demanded to address politically. In this vein, when a country coalition pushes for one thing, an opposing coalition pushes for another. For instance, in the January negotiations Arab states were aiming to include ‘people living under the occupation’ as vulnerable people, while the European Union, the United States, Canada and Israel were threatening to integrate ‘people living under dictatorship, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) or terror victims’.

Stephanie: There are issues that come across everywhere like the Palestinian issue. Or the issue on gay rights. They come up everywhere. I’m telling you.

Leah: Even in Sendai?

Stephanie: Oh my god, people were trying to push it in. It was going *into the details of who ‘people’ are*; men, disabled, sexual orientation ...WHAT? Get off it man! Be serious! It doesn’t matter. *If there’s a disaster. It doesn’t matter who you sleep with or who you think is cute.* That doesn’t matter! (Stephanie, representative of Kenya, interview, 7 April 2017)

Sticky points are, as we see, part and parcel of negotiations, where the very point of promoting disaster risk reduction is put aside and neglected so to say. What is consensual, *promoting resilience*, is overthrown by political considerations which systematically reappear in other settings and other negotiations. The internationally unresolved issues thus again become the centre of attention, thereby dismissing other debates.

Limits due to time constraints

In the final days the most salient issues were those relating to the implementation phase, which call for financial resources. Disaster related issues, pushed by Major Groups, were put on the backburner either because they had already been discussed, agreed on or rejected, or because the pressure to get contentious issues out of the way was more urgent than promoting civil society’s interest. With hindsight, backed up with textual analyses, for Major Groups to maximize chances to see their ideas and prerogatives integrated in the text, their efforts have to be noticed in the first phases of the process (the first two preparatory committees and the consultative meetings scheduled in between both committees). However, in order to create partnership with Member States, governments need to consult with their ‘capitals’ – a word delegates use to refer to their government located in their country’s capital – and negotiate; this can take days, weeks or even months.

Stephanie (Kenyan delegation) explains that negotiations can stop for hours or even days because a Member State representative needs to consult with its

capital located in a different time zone. ‘When we can consult the Japanese are like “Oh people haven’t even woken up in our country! You need to give us some time for them to get to the office and read the document and get back to us”’ (Stephanie, representative of Kenya, 7 April 2017). The challenge is to find the right partner early in the process, otherwise time pressure takes over and Major Groups remain with little means to advocate for their concerns.

Checking with capitals

Consulting with capitals adds a burden on government delegates; this can be rough especially when it comes to the ‘spirit of compromise’. While delegates are in the decision-making momentum and want to compromise on various issues within a negotiation, they constantly need to double-check with their capital to ensure that they are not infringing on national laws. In this context, Major Groups have nothing to contribute and can only remain spectators in a negotiation, which is barely understandable for actors unfamiliar with the importance of commas and specific wording in legal documents.

And I think that this is one of the lessons to be learned for the Major Groups. They need to understand the process and reach out to like-minded or the Member States that are going to promote their positions in advance. Most Member States – with the exception of a few who don’t come there with specific guidance from their capitals – go through the process of developing their positions weeks, sometimes months ahead. *So if you want to get Member States to push a position, then you want to make sure you contact them way in advance.* (Tatiana, representative of the United States, interview, 13 December 2016)

Negotiators take the lead: delegation experts become quiet

When negotiators hit a negotiation climax, another dimension – alongside sticky points, time constraints, injunctions from capitals – arises; delegates whose work was to ensure consistency along the process, many of whom were dedicated experts in the disaster field, give up their seat to professional negotiators. The negotiation room in Sendai, as an example, was filled with new faces, such as ambassadors, represented up until then by experts or different members of countries’ foreign ministries. “‘At the end of the day it’s just a game!” said Adam from WHO as we were walking out at 2:15 am from the Palais. He said it about the negotiations. *Some are just professional negotiators; they need a toilet; water and they can go on all night*’ (observation notes, negotiations, 15 January 2015).

In this context, the challenge for Major Groups is to not lose the privileged contacts they tied with the Member State representatives all along the process. As the final negotiations approach, new actors – professional negotiators – show up at meetings. Their essential role is to favour country legislation over agreeing on how to globally address disaster risk reduction. In this way, regardless of all the advocacy efforts and all the strategies Major Group representatives developed to maximize their chances to see their ideas integrated into the text, they face challenges due to the nature of the UN as an international organization.

Here, based on participatory observations, semi-structured interviews and drawing on textual analyses detailed in [Chapter 6](#), I argue that Major Groups' voice is most heard and considered in the early stages of the elaboration of an international text and that its importance gradually disappears to the point of being all together rejected the closer one gets to the final stages of a text ratification.

Looking back on dynamics

In this empirical chapter, the aim was to shed light on the dynamics that animated the Sendai process in an effort to unveil civil society's time of inclusion and exclusion. The UN's apparatus constituted by individuals, practices, routines, software tools, schedules, meeting rooms, allows a text to come to light at the end of a negotiation process. In other words, I described the cement, the *how*, which enables everything to come into play, namely the *what* – the text – and the *who* – the people.

Using the sociology of organizations building on Weick's 'organizing' becomes all the more relevant because it calls for an analysis of discourse, narrative and challenges the actors face. It enables the analyses of an organization as a process 'continually produced, recreated in interaction, constituted and constitutive of interpersonal processes, power dependencies and contextual constraint' (Weick, 1993, p 645). In the same way that Diane Vaughn's analyses (1996) of NASA's Challenger launch decision from an 'organizing' perspective allowed to unveil NASA's organization and functioning, analysing UNISDR in the lead up to the Sendai framework – especially with the intergovernmental negotiations it set up – sheds light on UNISDR's dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in relations to civil society. To do so, I once again relied on the Women's Major Group specifically to unravel the resources the members develop and build to ensure their interests appear in the text. In doing so, I highlighted the various settings UNISDR organizes for different meetings and the codes civil society needs to acquire to integrate each one of them. This helped put forth the extent to which Major Group representatives were allowed in as observers, or allowed to take the floor, what behaviour and what language they needed to use and

the rhythm they had to adapt to. It is clear. Major Groups are convened and only invited to take the floor in policy arenas, thus carrying out front-stage advocacy strategies. While they get access to one of the three decision venues, we can safely consider civil society to be excluded from international decision-making processes.

However to overcome this exclusion, I showed the backstage strategies Major Group members develop to maximize their chances to influence the text. I here argue that, on the one hand, they rely on front-stage practices, expected strategies for particular settings (ensuring consistent attendance), also used by Member States (taking the floor). On the other, they develop additional strategies, backstage, such as networking, seeking guidance from UNISDR or getting others to speak in their interest, within the accepted norms and practices of the UN's apparatus. If we look back at the many ways Major Groups interact with UNISDR staff and Member State representatives, we will come to the conclusion that many decisions are not taken in formal meetings, but rather over coffee breaks or lunch. In two instances, the government of Japan, as the host country in the ratification of the text, provided dinner, one evening during the January negotiations and in Sendai for the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. This enables me to affirm that civil society members follow suit in using advocacy strategies similar to those of Member States as the process moves along. Whether backstage practices have direct impact is yet to be analysed, but we can hope some elements are sometimes retained.

With Birgit we started lobbying for paragraph 4 – ‘The political declaration’. We had to move fast because they were at paragraph 2. She talked to Stephanie from Kenya and she agreed to add ‘leadership for women requires to be addressed’. *I then ran to the EU and asked Laura, the EU representative if she would include ‘women’s leadership is required’*. She answered she really liked it and would support it, but that I had to go and suggest it to Sweden because they had an arrangement. *Sweden was to make the upcoming statement on behalf of the EU*. I smiled at her and went back down the aisle from where I came, crouched in a way so as not to have my head up too high in the rows, and quickly made my way over to Sweden. The man whispered he would integrate it and had already planned to mention it. *For proof, he showed me the printed political declaration and the handwritten scribble which read ‘women’s leadership’*. I thanked him and went back to Birgit. (Observation notes, negotiations, 16 January 2015)

Even if civil society does its best to follow the pace of Member States and the codes of the UN, taking into account the dimension of time and schedules and its impact on the process, Member States always seem to have the upper

hand even if it leads to dire consequences. As an example of dire consequences is the time when, on the last day, school children from Fukushima who had been invited to sing on stage to celebrate the framework's new text, were sent home by UNISDR without having performed, after having waited patiently in the hall for many hours. Member States were still in the process of negotiating and had not yet come up with a text. Although nothing that is discussed at the UN has direct impact on the citizens of the world, playing around with flexible time can deeply affect people (in this case children, who were eager to pay a tribute to their community on an international stage). While I argue that informality sets the pace for formality, I also imply that Major Groups need to adapt to the rhythm set by Member States and supported by the co-chairs. This evidently raises the question of civil society's actual leeway despite the strategies it develops.

At the end of this chapter dedicated to describing Major Groups' various strategies, we can conclude that the UN integrates civil society to perform front-stage and in this way reaffirms its mantra for inclusiveness. It is by analysing the sessions and the UN's apparatus more in-depth that we can witness civil society's social exclusion; it seems not to be an actor sufficiently worthy to consult for ultimate decision-making.

The Text Before All Things

'In it all things hold together'

Analysing the inclusion of civil society at the United Nations (UN) must be done by looking closely into who constitutes 'civil society' (institutional inclusion), how the individuals participate (social inclusion), but cannot be fully understood if we do not look at the fundamental reason why the latter forms of inclusion are relevant. Indeed, I argue that to fully analyse civil society's inclusion at the UN, scholars must also look at the text to see what claims were retained. The title of the chapter, 'The Text Before All Things', is a shortened version of an edited quote from the bible, '[The text] is before all things and in [it] all things hold together'. In line with my argument, inserting *The Text* rather than *God* expresses the importance of the written form. Indeed '[The text] is before all things' because we could not talk about civil society inclusion at the UN if there were not any negotiations, nor conferences, at the heart of which lies a written text. More specifically, reports – the *what* – are known as the cornerstones of bureaucracies in that 'the management of the modern office is based upon written documents' (Riles, 1998, p 378). In this context, a document puts Member States, civil society and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) to work according to rhythms, patterns, timelines and expectations, holding everything together and becoming a witness to civil society's *substantive* inclusion.

To date scholars have delved into statistics (Cussó and Gobin, 2008), reports (Gayon, 2009; Rauch, 2018) and visuals to reveal the information, norms and values they disseminate. 'It is barely an exaggeration to say that the sole "product" of IOs such as the ILO [or IOs for that matter] are documents' (Hertz, 2010). Others have turned to these productions to analyse what it takes to make an international document, looking 'behind the scenes' – so to speak – into the dynamics revolving around the production of documents, surveys and position papers. Each production is the product of countless others (Riles, 1999). Anthropologist Annelise Riles' work on the UN,

known for her book *The Network Inside Out* (2001), suggests analysing UN documents in light of a network which she qualifies as ‘a set of institutions, knowledge practices and artifacts thereof that internally generate the effects of their own reality by reflecting on themselves’ (Riles, 2000, p 3).

A document is not only a concrete object; it carries a set of social practices, routines, norms, ‘aesthetic of thought and action’ (Riles, 1999, p 814) and is a reflection of a collection of people, with highly variable degrees of presence, competence and effort (Hertz, 2010). In other words, it is a summary report which acts as the expression of a collective which not only has an opinion on everything but has the particularity of having multiple meanings, nuances and oppositions, which stem from different actors’ inputs (Gayon, 2009).

The work of this conference begins with government statements and then turns to the delegates’ formal proposals of amendments to the text. These amendments are then incorporated into a single text in bracketed form and then negotiators go behind closed doors to consolidate their texts and resolve what ‘brackets’ they can. As the text is negotiated, a secretariat works overnight to make the necessary changes and produce physical copies of the amended draft by the following day for further review. Meanwhile, negotiators draft and redraft until they recognize that they can make no more progress in the time allowed. Delegates call these tasks technical work: It is a work of cutting and pasting, of organizing and collating. (Riles, 1999, p 812)

I build on these perspectives to analyse the inclusion process of the Women’s Major Group (WMG) through the prism of the creation of the Sendai Framework. This perspective enables us to analyse the substantive apparatus by focusing on the creation of a text, more specifically on the words and the way they are shuffled around, voiced and instrumentalized. I show how the text is a result of the interdependence among the actors who created it, the words that constitute it together with the material used to build it.

In this vein, to give the text agency, we see how words in a text enact vague principles, tailorable to each body, while showing the limitations of its implementation by presenting concrete examples of the way words are used and crafted around negotiations.

For the sake of overarching research questions, we zoom into the WMG’s contributions and stances on gender and disasters to address civil society’s inclusion in the Sendai Framework before giving a fine-grained analysis of the gender gains and losses over a period of 21 years, beginning with Yokohama and ending with Sendai. I argue that words are tools that help civil society members express their positions and push for their stances to be included. In this way, the final text bears witness to the WMG’s substantive inclusion insofar as it contains the group’s preference.

Hence, analysing what is debated points to UNISDR's frame and thus its agenda-setting presented in [Chapter 3](#), and also to the WMG's ideas. I can therefore show what mobilization does to a text, namely push framed words into a text in the context of a broader meaning of mobilization, such as who is mobilized ([Chapter 4](#)) and how it mobilizes ([Chapter 5](#)).

The women, 'women' and the text

By taking a close look into the WMG, I track not only their official statements made at preparatory committees, but also the ones made at consultative meetings, statements which are unavailable to the public and not published on the website. With intermediary documents at hand, we will examine the evolution of the text leading to the Sendai Framework, with respect to input the Women's Group gave. Moreover, I suggest mirroring what the Women's Group says on gender and disaster risk reduction (DRR) with what is said by governments, by relying on statements made in English and French. Hereafter, is an extract of the first WMG statement that set the tone for the discussions to follow.

First, the WMG confirms that the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction should *embody a vision of resilience, diversity, human rights, protection and sustainability* while keeping in mind the different capacities of communities. Building on the vision of the Hyogo Framework for Action to integrate a gender perspective, *women must be involved in decision-making and planning processes about disaster risk reduction at all levels*. It is also important that women have access to the resources needed to face disasters since they are among the most vulnerable, in particular, due to gender roles and expectations. Second, the Framework must link to the larger Sustainable Development agenda, including the sustainable development goals. A key component is a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's and girls' rights and empowerment. However, to achieve gender equality and sustainable development, *gender must be integrated throughout the SDGs and sex-disaggregated data must be collected related to all the remaining development goals* (including education, climate change, rule of law, and water, among others). The Women's Major Group for Sustainable Development, along with many others, is aiming to transform structures, institutions, and societies to achieve justice, equality, and the realization of human rights for all. All this must also happen through HFA2. ... Third, it is essential that strategies and actions for disaster risk reduction recognize and address gender inequality and also incorporate women's skills, perspectives, and ideas, as well as the wide experience of women's organizations and associations, to guide robust action. (Extract from WMG statement delivered by Sayaka at PrepCom1, 14 July 2014)

In order to better grasp the various reasons why the WMG advocated for a specific kind of language, let us draw on the scientific literature on gender and disasters to give some background information. The initial motive for the WMG's involvement in the Sendai process was to – like other interest groups – fill the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) gaps. Disaster researchers consistently find that women's experiences differ in ways that matter (Enarson and Fordham, 2001). More specifically in terms of gender, over the past two decades there has been an increased interest in ensuring a gender perspective in post-disaster response efforts and more recently in mainstreaming gender into DRR initiatives. Sarah Bradshaw (2015), also member of the WMG during the process, goes further by saying that the HFA, which provided the first global framework for DRR, is a good example of how this has been approached. In the HFA opening section, it states that a gender perspective should be 'integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management and education and training' (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2022, p 10). Her analysis, as a scholar in the field of gender and disaster, shows that while it has been suggested that this provides a 'most explicit reference to gender of any other international policy frameworks for DRR' (see United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2022, p 10), it is not without limitations. Integrating gender into all areas of DRR did not result in gender being integrated and mainstreamed in the HFA itself. In fact, in the remainder of the document, gender and women are mentioned only twice: once when presenting early warning systems and once when addressing the need to ensure equal access to appropriate training and educational opportunities. 'This suggests a lack of real commitment to adopting a gender perspective by the international agencies responsible for DRR' (Bradshaw, 2015, p S55). Among those who define gender equality, there is a general consensus that it refers to the recognition that women and men have different needs and priorities and that women and men should 'experience equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from national, political, economic, social and cultural development' (Moser and Moser, 2005, p 12). This is what sets the basis of the WMG's claims and statements.

The Sendai process thus became a channel for a more comprehensive integration of gender perspectives in the international framework on DRR because 'disasters are gendered events' (Bradshaw, 2015).

Hereafter, I trace the evolution of the official statements throughout the process. I retrieved the available documents on the UNISDR website, that is, those of the present Member States and the WMG. These coincide with the three major milestones; PrepCom1, PrepCom2, World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR). I undertook a systematic keyword

search on a corpus containing official statements available online, namely wom*n, girl*. I selected the corpus according to the languages I have a command of, meaning that I retained official statements delivered in English and in French.

From pre-zero draft to first statements in PrepCom1

To start with, the pre-zero draft was released by UNISDR's secretariat on 8 August 2014 as a first official document a month after the first preparatory committee (PrepCom) took place on 14 and 15 August. In this document it is stated that 'gender considerations are to inform all policies and practices' and 'women's leadership needs to be promoted'. Mention of other persons also appear, such as children and youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples, an observation in line with how the text evolved in the Sendai Framework; the roles of stakeholders and civil society increased with various references in the text. They all are to be fully engaged in the determination and implementation of policies. An emphasis is put on women as a critical actor in order to increase disaster risk management. UNISDR also suggested the need for disaggregated data according to sex, age and disability in order to systemically record and account for all disaster losses.

On one occasion during PrepCom1, the co-chairs granted the WMG the floor to deliver a statement. In that vein, the group put forward the role of women as essential stakeholders for decision making and the need to grant them access to training and education. Furthermore the WMG highlighted the necessity to empower women and girls, to foster gender equality and encourage women's leadership. The group also acknowledged that sexual abuse and violence against women is higher in times of disasters; the higher risk being linked to evacuation and shelters.

At that time, Member States put forth some points regarding women, gender and other persons. Some referred to the need to promote women's leadership (Japan, New Zealand) and women's participation in decision-making processes (Japan, Nigeria, New Zealand, Algeria). Some talked about the added value of empowering women (Finland, Philippines, Gambia) as well as other vulnerable groups. While a few consider vulnerable groups to include children, the elderly, and persons with disability (Philippines, France, Norway, Australia, Bulgaria) others consider women to be part of that category (Uganda, Tonga). There were Member States which asked for a gender equality inclusion (Finland, Benin, Fiji, Gambia, Canada, Burundi, Australia), and women and children's social protection (Bangladesh). Disaggregated data (Norway) also seemed to be put on the table during the first formal plenary meeting.

What we retain after PrepCom1 are the common axes expressed both by Member States and the WMG that need to be fostered as such: women's

Figure 6.1: Screenshot excerpt of pre-zero draft, UNISDR

C. Guiding principles

12. The principles contained in the Yokohama Strategy and the HFA general considerations retain their full relevance and are complemented as follows to guide implementation.

- a) Each State has the primary responsibility to holistically manage disaster risk, including through cooperation.
- b) Managing the risk of disasters should also be aimed at protecting persons, their livelihoods and property, while respecting their human rights.
- c) Disaster risk management is an essential component of governance at local, national, regional and global levels, and requires the full engagement of all state institutions or executive and legislative nature at local and central levels.
- d) Disaster risk management requires an all-of-society engagement and empowerment, equality, and an inclusive and non-discriminatory participation. Gender considerations are to inform all policies and practices, and women's leadership is to be promoted. Children and youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples are to be fully engaged in the determination and implementation of policies.
- e) While the causes and consequences of risk may be national, transboundary or global in scope, disaster risks have local and specific characteristics and their management requires the full leadership and empowerment of local communities and administrators.
- f) A clear recognition, articulation and alignment of responsibilities across public and private stakeholders, including volunteers, are essential to ensure implementation and accountability in disaster risk management.

participation in decision making, women's leadership, women's empowerment and gender equality. In addition, the WMG added the need to train and educate women in the context of DRR as well as mentioning the risk of sexual abuse and violence endured by women in times of disasters. Furthermore, Member States suggested three points which were carried through neither in the pre-zero draft nor in the WMG statements, namely the urge to 'gender mainstream' – meaning to ensure gender considerations are well-accepted by most actors; the urge to foster the rights of women and children; and, third, data disaggregation.

From first statements in PrepCom1 to the zero draft

Four months later, after four consultative meetings had taken place in Geneva to which UNISDR convened the Major Groups and Member States, it presented the so-called zero draft as a basis for discussion at the second

preparatory meeting (PrepCom2). Many changes occurred. Women and gender were addressed differently and in a more exhaustive way seemingly resulting from statements made in July. The idea of women's participation put forth by the WMG and some Member States was now included and widened to all stakeholders – namely women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons specifically – in the design and implementation of policies and programmes. At this point the text included the need to strengthen assistance to the poor and at-risk groups, such as older persons, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, migrants and other populations exposed to disasters, a bigger list encompassing more than had been presented in PrepCom1 and consultative meetings.

Two new sentences pertaining to gender, age and persons with disabilities were written up. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective was to be integrated into disaster risk management and persons with disabilities considered as critical in the assessment of risk and design and implementation of plans.

The idea, pushed by UNISDR, of having a gender-responsive disaster risk management, policies, plans and programmes remained unchanged from the pre-zero to the zero draft.

Statements in PrepCom2

The WMG was most coordinated and active in the days leading to the second preparatory meeting on 17–18 November 2014. By the third week of October the zero draft had been released to all stakeholders. That version served as a basis for the next round of negotiations. During PrepCom2, women involved in the WMG worked together for long hours. Ellen was in charge of coordinating statements and communicating information stemming from UNISDR to all members of the group. As organizing partner representing the New York-based non-governmental organization, she was the intermediary between members of civil society and the UN programme although she was working remotely from New York.

With the latest document in hand, she addressed the following email to the mailing list: *'The next step will be to review it to see how it has improved from the pre-zero draft, which of our suggestions have been incorporated and which have not and then to develop and implement a strategy to ensure we make our recommendations visible to the Member States'* (Ellen, email to WMG, 20 October 2014). In that context, Ellen sent out a Google document entitled 'WMG Key Messages and Specific Recommendations' into which women from the mailing list could add their input. The basis for discussion were the following: women's leadership; disaggregated data; participatory decision-making implementation, evaluation and monitoring processes; rights-based and not only people-centred; accountability and transparency.

At PrepCom2, the WMG stated similar points to the ones heard in PrepCom1. In fact, women's empowerment, gender equality and women's leadership reappear in the statement. However, another point was added, the one asking that women be active contributors to DRR processes. This last contribution echoed the one UNISDR had proposed in the pre-zero and zero draft. Indeed, already in July there was mention of women being critical in effectively managing disaster risk.

In line with the WMG's statement in PrepCom2, Member States put on the table similar ideas to the ones made in their first PrepCom. We notice women's participation (Sweden), disaggregated data (Norway). Yet they also widened the scope of people by addressing specific groups: engage with different ethnic and cultural groups, women, children, the elderly and those with chronic illnesses or disabilities, indigenous, local communities (New Zealand, Guyana), displaced persons and ethnic minorities (Norway). Member States underlined the need to include special groups such as women, persons with disabilities, older persons and youth (Fiji) as well as the need to recognize the latter groups (Germany). A Member State emphasized the need to create gender-responsive DRR policies, programmes and plans (Sweden) as suggested in the pre-zero and zero draft by the UNISDR.

Intermediary draft in the run-up to the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

In late January 2015, a new text had been distributed to all Member States and Major Groups as a result of the intermediary negotiations held in Geneva at the beginning of that year. At that point, some paragraphs had been accepted and ratified, meaning all Member States in the room at the time of the negotiations had agreed to accept the paragraph in the future Framework.

In the text, governments were encouraged to engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons, both in the design and the implementation of policies and programmes. Although the list of stakeholders already included women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in the pre-zero draft, the intermediary document added *poor people, migrants, volunteers, the community of practitioners*, thus broadening the list of stakeholders. Empowerment and participation were addressed to refer to all people, especially those disproportionately affected by disasters, namely the poorest.

Women's leadership from the pre-zero draft was kept; youth leadership was added. Gender, age and disability as well as a cultural perspective suggested in the zero draft prevailed.

In the intermediary text, while women's empowerment was addressed in the preparedness phase, because 'women are critical to effectively managing

disaster risk' (seen in pre-zero and zero draft) a new element came into play, that of empowering women and persons with disabilities to promote gender equality in the response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. Participation is key and encouraged to focus in particular on women. Persons with disabilities and their organizations are viewed as critical in the assessment of disaster risk (seen in zero draft).

Statements made at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

In the last statement the WMG could make at the conference, the group put forth many elements that had been previously suggested either by UNISDR in its text or by official statements delivered by Member States. They expressed, for instance, the need to achieve women's human rights and human rights, as some Member States had already pointed out in PrepCom1. Member States had highlighted the need to involve women in every phase of DRR during PrepCom2 and that was again pointed out by WMG during the Third WCDRR. The WMG underscored the need for diverse participation, addressing women and all people in their diversity in a gender-responsive framework.

In the final run-up to the ratified text, Member States reiterated some key points: to empower women, to ensure their rights. They also added new elements such as: acknowledging violence based on gender, sexual abuse (Haïti) as was suggested by the WMG during PrepCom1. Some pushed for gender equality and sexual and reproductive health inclusion (Macedonia). Others reiterated the need for disaggregated data as well as the need to take into account different perspectives.

Final Sendai Framework text

The final ratified text – the Sendai Framework – mentions that governments should engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons and that gender, age, disability and cultural perspective need to be taken into account in policies and practices. The text does not only focus on women, children and youth and persons with disabilities reflected in the nine institutionalized UN civil society groups, but also poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons who do not have a particular interest group in their name.

The text refers to women and youth leadership and to women's empowerment as well as that of persons with disabilities. Furthermore there is the acknowledgement that women are critical in effectively managing disaster risk and implementing gender-responsive DRR policies. Disaggregated

data, by sex, age and disability was introduced from the start and kept in the final text.

In [Table 6.1](#), we sketch out UNISDR’s contributions before each session, the basis of which negotiations were held and the main contribution throughout the process, divided according to the WMG’s input, the Member States’ input and present. We thus observe that both the WMG (see [Table 6.2](#)), as well as Member States (see [Table 6.3](#)), promote gender equality, women’s rights and women’s empowerment.

While the WMG’s statements at PrepCom1 and PrepCom2 frame their arguments around the need to recognize ‘women’ as an essential component in DRR, for their participation and empowerment, its discourse changes at the last stage of the process. Indeed the banner ‘women’, under which each woman should be represented, is contested. At the World Conference, the WMG calls for recognizing ‘women’ in their diversity. In other words, if the

Table 6.1: Summary of contributions from PrepCom1 to WCDRR: UNISDR

PrepCom1	PrepCom2	WCDRR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept Note: Many groups have coalesced around the needs and abilities of women, youth, persons living with disabilities and indigenous people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender considerations are to inform all policies and practices • Women’s leadership is to be promoted • Children and youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples are to be fully engaged in the determination and implementation of policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective integrated into disaster risk management. • DRR requires transparent risk-informed decision-making based on open and gender-specific/sex/age/ disability-disaggregated data • Women are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-responsive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes • Ensure the participation of women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons in the design and implementation

UNISDR

Table 6.2: Summary of contributions from PrepCom1 to WCDRR: Women's Major Group

PrepCom1	PrepCom2	WCDRR
Women's Major Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of women as essential stakeholders for decision making • Training and education • Empower women and girls, to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Foster gender equality and – Encourage women's leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reiterated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Women's empowerment – Gender equality – Women's leadership • New: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Women as active contributors to DRR processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's human rights • Involve women in every phase of DRR • Diverse participation • Addressing women and people in their diversity

Table 6.3: Summary of contributions from PrepCom1 to WCDRR: Member States

PrepCom1	PrepCom2	WCDRR
Member States <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower women and vulnerable groups • Gender equality inclusion • Social protection for women and children • Gender mainstream • Foster the rights of women and children • Disaggregated data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engage with different ethnic and cultural groups, women, children, the elderly and those with chronic illnesses or disabilities, indigenous, local communities, displaced persons and ethnic minorities – Include special groups such as women, persons with disabilities, older persons and youth • Reiterated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Need to create gender-responsive DRR policies, programmes and plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Acknowledging violence based on gender – Sexual abuse • Reiterated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Empower women, to ensure rights – Disaggregated data

first part of the process, the WMG pushed for the recognition of 'women', in the last stage, it framed its claim differently. Rather it called for diversity within the term 'women', wishing to represent more faithfully the realities and complexities of the world. Framing is hence not only about the content of the policy issue, but also about the scope of policy intervention (Littoz-Monnet, 2012). We can assume this nuance comes from the fact that the

draft leading to the final ratification integrated the earlier claims, giving the WMG room to be bolder and strive for more.

This having been said, the question of gender equality or women's human rights was a constant, reiterated throughout the events, though in vain, as it never made it to the final text.

Using specific language and reiterating it along the process may seem redundant. Yet according to the WMG, certain Member States, and backed up by research, promoting women's leadership, women's rights and empowerment is crucial in international frameworks, because DRR is only effective if gender equality is guaranteed. Bypassing it overlooks the root cause of women's vulnerabilities and only touches on the outcomes of these vulnerabilities (Bradshaw, 2015). If not addressed, it will remain unchanged. 'It is inequities in the everyday and not just in times of disaster, that create greater risk and reduce life chances for women and girls' (Bradshaw, 2015, p S70).

So why do words matter?

The attempt to conceptualize and make sense of internationally created documents has been marked by French sociologist and anthropologists of international organizations (Pierre, 2004; Gayon, 2009; Gobin and Deroubaix, 2010). Some claim the texts are the result of politics which fit an ideal type with inherent regularities (Gobin and Deroubaix, 2010), or by its soporific written form derived from administrative style (Pierre, 2004). Regardless, the institutional text is the result of a co-writing process and the way negotiations come about (Gayon, 2009).

These documents contain an array of moral principles, such as the fight against poverty, famine and diseases, and promote engagement for emancipation and equality (Müller, 2013). These principles make socio-jurists sceptical with respect to the rules presented in textbooks, especially in light of what happens on the ground, namely their implementation. Pirie (2010) underlines this scepticism because these principles shape laws – by definition a system of rules – which are enacted and enforced by governments as a foundation for social order. In this way, we here reflect on words and their importance in the context of international organizations, in part because words are used in language to represent the world (Ambroise, 2015), but also in part because they ultimately constitute the ratified document, the expression of an institution (Gayon, 2009).

While this research takes on the perspective of sociology rather than a linguistics approach, we aim to understand the importance of words from a sociological perspective while drawing from literature on law. Goffman – known for the 'framing theory' (1974) – is resourceful in understanding why words may matter. Even if we have so far defended the idea that words

portray vagueness and are in fact even instrumentalized, the framing theory enables us to say that words allow to guide an audience in a certain direction. Framing ‘disaster issues’ equals relying on a storyline that emphasizes one specific aspect of the issue. Goetz (2008) argues that the way in which a problem is defined can influence its appearance on the public agenda in the first place. Goetz’s research on urban housing shows that referring to the same concept using the phrase *lifecycle housing* rather than *affordable housing* attempts to manipulate perceptions about programme beneficiaries, making the term *lifecycle housing* less contentious than its counterpart. In our case, DRR is portrayed as a promise to reduce life loss and material and economic damages. It thus uses useful concepts and broadens the debate beyond the Member States.

In this subchapter, we show with concrete examples, drawn from empirical data throughout the creation of the text and its negotiations, that one word may have different interpretations, and that words may be vehicles for consensus building. Finally, we show how words are fundamental for recognition and legitimization. We here go into more detail.

And that happened quite a few times when the question came as to ‘*Why on earth do they want to put these very concrete little details in a framework like this?*’ and you realize that this is an important instrument for them in their own national context. Because if it’s mentioned in this international framework it means *they can make it an important part of their national policy* or law and they can get attention to something that otherwise doesn’t get attention. (Margareta Wahlström, interview, 20 December 2017)

One word: a world of interpretations

The Sendai Framework, as we saw, is dedicated to a programme on ‘disaster risk reduction’. Even if this term seems to be basic and well-approved by the community addressing disasters, it was not a given. In fact ‘disaster risk management’ was the term used in the introduction of a document published in 2014. While DRR was presented as such in the first meeting of the Sendai Framework process, the debate around using one or the other came into negotiations in December 2014 and was raised by Germany. We give an account of the debates that emerged around the topic.

Germany instigated the initial debate on disaster risk *management* and disaster risk *reduction*, aiming to gain consensus around trading *reduction* with *management*, the latter being – in its government’s view – more inclusive. Germany’s argument for the reasons why it is advocating for a change in terms is presented here:

Germany: ‘*Disaster Risk Management is more inclusive, more comprehensive. It is a threefold goal. Disaster Risk Management is focused on expected outcomes and goals, it encompasses a holistic approach. In Hyogo Framework for Action, the program was based on reducing Disaster Risk. It was focused on preventing risk and strengthening preparedness. We now need a more inclusive more comprehensive terminology. Since 2009, other international institutions have used Disaster Risk Management. It is a more ambitious term. This is why we propose it as a term.*’ (Observation notes, negotiations, 9 December 2014)

The attempt to convince the majority of governments to align their positions with their own gave rise to arguments defending either position; for or against the change. Few countries, such as Moldova, shared Germany’s point of view, arguing that ‘management’ implies a broader definition of the ways to cope with disaster risk.

This having been said, a larger number of governments defended UNISDR’s initial proposal, namely *DRR*. The arguments relied on the understanding that *reduction* was greater and broader than *management*: ‘Reduction is not limited in scope. Management is!’ (Bangladesh) or ‘Reduction comes with mitigating risk, preparedness, assessing severity and magnitude, evacuation and reconstruction’ (India). Japan, defining itself as a hazardous country, said it paid attention to managing risk, but first and foremost wished to reduce it, the goal being to reduce and not only manage disaster risk. Japan sees *reduction* as a more holistic term. Spain depicted the source of the contention while taking the floor and stating the following:

Spain: ‘I understand that there are two different things. Reduction is just an objective, it’s a final and unique goal. Management is active, with programmes, activities, partnerships, etc. Those are two different focuses on this concept. Reduction is perfect because of the unique objective while management can change the focus, approach, and how to get that goal done.’ (Observation notes, negotiations, 9 December 2014)

Since the UN relies on consensus building, the majority of countries were in favour of keeping the initial proposal made by UNISDR. Germany accepted the arguments and never raised the issue again. Framing the argument with *reduction* as a more holistic approach satisfied the Member States.

Words: vehicles for consensus building

While words such as *reduction* and *management* can raise sparks due to different understandings, other words can come as ‘saviours’ to enable consensus

building, without one party having to give up its initial position. Earlier we saw that words can be harmful to consensus building, but they may also at times solve issues.

For example, in the final negotiations held at the world conference in March 2015, contentious issues were still at stake and hindered smooth text ratification. Hereafter, we read first-hand the hurdles UNISDR faced with Member States, with an extract of the observation notes I took from a Major Group meeting with the co-chair in the 48 hours prior to the end of the conference.

The second point is on the contentious issues. If you had to look at the text which we are working on, if you look at the bracketed text you will see that the bracketed text probably represents 18 per cent of the text in total. Of that 18 per cent probably half relate to means of implementation. And of that *'means of implementation'* we are talking about *'financing'*, *'technological transfer'* and *'capacity building'*. *'Capacity building'* is not much of an issue, *but the means of implementation in terms of financing, and how to conduct or promote technological transfer, are the bracketed texts as you can see yourself.* So those are the predominant issues that are bracketed. These are therefore the issues that need to be cleared up. This is going on upstairs as we speak. Other than that of course, there are other issues, like *'conflict situations'*. That remains bracketed. And we still have the issue of CBDR, which is also bracketed as you know. Those are the main issues, but *we are hoping of course that once these issues are out, it will help to move forward with the remaining brackets.* Thank you very much. (PrepCom2, co-chair session, 16 March 2015, Sendai)

In this section, we show how UNISDR with the support of governments managed to finally overcome the most contentious issues: by changing a word in a paragraph, abandoning words, adding words, abandoning paragraphs, adding options for simplification purposes or reformulating. We present these various alternatives by analysing the intermediary text – entitled the streamlined text – as it was negotiated on 16 January 2015 by 6pm. At that time, the document contained 46 paragraphs, 31 of which were still in the process of being discussed. The final Framework comprised of 50 paragraphs some of which contained sub-paragraphs.

The document fits standardized UN documents with regard to chapters, headings, subheading from the 'Preamble' to the 'Global Framework' (Riles, 1998): Preamble (15§), Expected Outcomes (3§), Guiding Principles (1§), Priorities for Action (3§) of which derive four priorities (each comprising three §), Role of Stakeholders (3§) and International Cooperation (13§).

Table 6.4: Examples of changing words

Before	After
- Weak governance	- Weak institutional arrangements
- Limited access to technology	- Limited availability to technology

A change of word

To remediate contentious, disagreed terms, a change of word encompassing the same principles can sometimes yield wonders. To illustrate this change I identified a modification that appears in Article 6 of the Preamble where the term *weak governance* was replaced with *weak institutional arrangements* and further adopted in the PrepCom3 negotiations of Sendai. The latter expression was integrated in a list of actions the international community needs to undergo to reduce exposure and vulnerability which could lead to the creation of new disasters, such as more dedicated actions to tackle underlying disaster risk drivers, such as poverty and inequality. While *governance* was deemed too strong for Member States, giving them too much responsibility, *institutional arrangements* was more appropriate in their eyes.

Changing words in contentious issues is a way to remediate the situation. In January 2015, the ‘Preamble’ incorporated a sentence in which there was a reference to the issue of ‘technology transfer’. It was understood as *limited access to technology* or as *limited availability of technology*. By changing the word *access* to *availability* (see Table 6.4), governments, especially the United States, were willing to adopt the paragraph in Sendai 2015. Availability did not imply that governments needed to provide access indisputably, but rather needed to value what was available for use.

Abandoning words

About the principle of *international cooperation*, the ‘Guiding Principles’ included the following sentence adopted in March 2015: ‘National disaster risk reduction policies and measures in the context of their respective circumstances and capabilities can be further enhanced *through the provision of sustainable international cooperation*’ (Guiding Principles 19a, Sendai Framework). The initial proposal stemming from the January 2015 negotiations integrated the provision of sustained and predictable means of implementation from developed countries through international cooperation. It was accepted once developed countries were not tied to providing implementation measures to developing countries at any cost. Abandoning the specifics was thus accepted.

Table 6.5: Example of abandoning words

Before	After
- ... from developed countries through international cooperation	- ... through the provision of sustainable international cooperation
- ... technology transfer as mutually agreed ...	- ... technology transfer ...

Moreover, in ‘Guiding Principles’, the issue of technology transfer was yet again an issue. The initial suggestion read as follows:

Developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and African countries, as well as middle-income and other countries facing specific disaster risk challenges, need adequate, sustainable and timely provision of support, including through finance, *technology transfer* and capacity building from developed countries and partners tailored to their needs and priorities, as identified by them. (Observation notes, negotiations on ‘Guiding Principle’, Geneva, 14 January 2015)

This issue was later seen in Priorities for Action (25.c) when in January the United States wanted to integrate *as mutually agreed* to tackle the issue of international cooperation because in their national legal system *technology transfer* infringes on the breach of trust. ‘To promote and enhance, through international cooperation, including technology transfer as *mutually agreed*, access to and the sharing and use of non-sensitive data and information, as appropriate, communications and geospatial and space-based technologies and related services’ (Priorities for Action, art. 25.c, in Priority 1 Global & Regional Levels). Australia supported the United States, but Iran judged it to be against the spirit of compromise and was supported by Kenya. After lengthy discussions, the whole section was accepted as such and did not include the United States’ suggestion (see [Table 6.5](#)).

Adding words

So long as it is still within the window of opportunity, negotiations to suggest integrating new words will go on until the very last moment. In March 2015, during the Third WCDRR negotiations, the term *food security and nutrition* was added to the paragraph dedicated to Priority 3, entitled ‘Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience’, in the section devoted to national and local levels (see [Table 6.6](#)).

Table 6.6: Example of adding words

Before	After
-	- ... food security and nutrition

To strengthen the design and implementation of inclusive policies and social safety-net mechanisms, including through community involvement, integrated with livelihood enhancement programmes and access to basic health-care services, including maternal, newborn and child health, sexual and reproductive health, food security and nutrition, housing and education, towards the eradication of poverty, to find durable solutions in the post-disaster phase and to empower and assist people disproportionately affected by disasters. (Art. 30c)

Although it could have been accepted as such, framing the discourse by adding specific terms made it easier to be ratified.

Adding options, then simplifying

At times ideas seem too vague and Member States demand more precision. They then integrate a ‘collective patterning of intention’ (Riles, 1998) all put in brackets at dictation speed by UNISDR’s secretariat to, in the end, eliminate alternative formulations. In the January 2015 negotiations, there was an attempt to create coherence with other ongoing processes linked to the Sustainable Development Goals together with the desire to see international organizations take on responsibility as an active actor in DRR. The version was the following in Priority 3, ‘Investing in DRR for Resilience at Global and Regional Levels’:

Promote coherence across sustainable development (*and multilateral environments agreements*) (*climate change, biodiversity, (ecosystems) (and combating desertification)*) and disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes (*across systems, sectors and organizations, through the United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*) (*The World Trade Organization*), international financial institutions and other relevant institutions and processes (*taking into account mandates and level of international commitments and obligations adopted by countries as appropriate*).

During the negotiations held in Sendai, many new suggestions, in bold, appeared in the drafted text to refer specifically to the impacts of climate

Table 6.7: Example of adding and then removing words

Before	After
(and multilateral environments agreements) (climate change, biodiversity (ecosystems) (and combating desertification)) and disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes (across systems, sectors and organizations, through the United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) (The World Trade Organization), international financial institutions and other relevant institutions and processes (taking into account mandates and level of international commitments and obligations adopted by countries as appropriate)	To promote coherence across systems, sectors and organizations related to sustainable development and to disaster risk reduction in their policies, plans, programmes and processes

change, as well as the accountability of organizations within the UN system and countries.

Yet the addition complexified the paragraph, making it too tedious to negotiate; in the end, it was cut out by the Japanese government during the last minutes of the conference, because the ‘arguments happened within the brackets’ turning them into a ‘point of potentially infinite internal expansion’ (Riles, 1998) (see Table 6.7). ‘To promote coherence across systems, sectors and organizations related to sustainable development and to disaster risk reduction in their policies, plans, programmes and processes.’ It appears that removing may help contentious issues because it sticks to the essentials.

Reformulating

In some cases, to make it more appealing for governments to accept, a reformulation is necessary to retain the essence of the sentence and its meaning. In Article 36 vi, the section dedicated to the ‘Role of Stakeholders’, the document released in January after a week of negotiations in Geneva in January 2015, mentioned ‘migrants and displaced persons [who] place a key role in facilitating the circulation of resources, knowledge and practices and contribute to the wellbeing and resilience of their communities and societies of origin and destination and should be included in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction’.

In March 2015, the focus on migrants and displaced persons was no longer equally addressed; rather, there was mention of migrants, independently of displaced persons, and thereafter the mention of displaced persons. The former was addressed first then followed by ‘displaced persons’.

Migrants contribute to the resilience of communities and societies and their knowledge, skills and capacities can be useful in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction. Persons displaced by disasters may contribute to the resilience of communities and societies and may be consulted in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction. (Excerpt of the final Sendai Framework)

While the first version seemed to put the emphasis on both groups, the last and final versions only pointed out *migrants* for their definite contribution to resilience in societies and communities thanks to their knowledge, skills and capacities while they should be integrated in the design and implementation of DRR (see Table 6.8). The difference laid in affirming something about migrants, but only hypothetically giving credit to *displaced persons*.

Abandoning paragraphs

Another alternative is that of abandoning entire paragraphs. We present another example which has to do with international cooperation. In January 2015, Article 44 (e) focused on resources needed to implement DRR. It addressed the financial resources, technology transfer, many parts of which were in brackets. By March 2015, the whole paragraph had disappeared.

Call upon States to integrate disaster risk reduction in their work and (provide/consider) new and additional /mobilize and effective use of all sources of finance, technology transfer on favorable terms, including on confessional and preferential terms, (as mutually agreed,) (financing mechanisms) for the implementation of this framework and financing of technology transfer (on mutually agreed terms) to

Table 6.8: Example of reformulations

Before	After
<p>- ... migrants and displaced persons [who] place a key role in facilitating the circulation of resources, knowledge and practices and contribute to the wellbeing and resilience of their communities and societies of origin and destination and should be included in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction.</p>	<p>- Migrants contribute to the resilience of communities and societies and their knowledge, skills and capacities can be useful in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction. Persons displaced by disasters may contribute to the resilience of communities and societies and may be consulted in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction</p>

developing countries in their policy, planning and programming at all levels. (16 January 2015, streamlined text, post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction)

With these various methods at hand and the differences we pointed out with illustrative changes which occurred throughout the process, we notice a subtle dynamic between UNISDR and its stakeholders. On the one hand, UNISDR proposes certain language and addresses certain issues, giving its direction, while on the other hand, giving leeway to governments, such as accepting to water down the initial stronger claim in order to ensure the ratification and publication of its UN text (see [Table 6.9](#)). ‘It is a task of reduction as much as addition’ (Riles, 1998, p 378). In this way, no matter the various textual changes, the means justify the end, the end being the release of the one and only document. Delivering a ratified document attests to UNISDR’s success in setting the initial impetus and framing the overall issue and its acceptance as a vector to analyse inclusion.

Words: recognition and legitimization tools

While the question remains as to why words matter, in addition to allowing myriad interpretation and being vehicles for consensus building, it is also used for recognition and legitimization. This argument leads me to include principles from law as a research discipline. Rosalind Thomas (1995) looks back at the inscriptions of Greek law and the switch from oral law to written law. The impetus, she argues, stems from popular pressure that customary law be stabilized and freed from arbitrary interpretation by the aristocracy even if written law is not inherently democratic or egalitarian (1995). She claims written law still needs interpretation (Thomas, 1995). Writing in stone

Table 6.9: Example of abandoning paragraphs

Before	After
<p>Call upon States to integrate disaster risk reduction in their work and ((provide/consider) new and additional /mobilize and effective use of all sources of finance, technology transfer on favourable terms, including on confessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed,) (financing mechanisms) for the implementation of this framework and financing of technology transfer (on mutually agreed terms) to developing countries in their policy, planning and programming at all levels.</p>	

ascertained character and was intended to fix the law. ‘Even if most people could not read them, the inscriptions could at least be seen in a public place and if officials had to read them out, their content could be widely known’ (Thomas, 1995, p 69). Written law in the Ancient Greek Empire was thus established to prevent a few elders from creating arbitrary judgement and inconsistency (Thomas, 1995).

In the context of the creation of an international framework, even if paragraphs are not a succession of law articles, nor a legally binding document, what is written gains value in that it has been accepted and becomes a reference to which people turn.

Interestingly, but also trivially, when words are written and released in the final publication, the principles gain value. The dynamics and negotiation process in the room are silenced and neglected. The example of a silenced sticky point was ‘people living under the occupation’ mentioned in negotiation rooms by Algeria and Egypt in the January negotiations. It never made it to the streamlined versions, nor was its retaliation concept – LGBTQIA+ – from developed countries such as Israel, Canada and the United States. ‘Arab states want to talk about vulnerable groups and include “people living under the occupation” and EU, USA, Canada and Israel are threatening the others by saying that they would want to add people living under dictatorships, or LGBT or victims of terror!!!’ (observation notes, negotiations, 16 January 2015, Geneva).

While a text serves as the recognition of consensus, it also has a legitimization value. In response to [Chapter 2](#) where we highlighted the growing importance of civil society and stakeholders, the Sendai Framework dedicates a whole heading to the ‘Role of Stakeholders’ in DRR. It contains three articles, the first of which introduces the important role of non-state stakeholders as players in supporting the state for the implementation of the Sendai Framework thanks to commitment, goodwill, knowledge, experiences and resources.

While States have the overall responsibility for reducing disaster risk, it is a shared responsibility between Governments and relevant stakeholders. In particular, non-State stakeholders play an important role as enablers in providing support to States, in accordance with national policies, laws and regulations, in the implementation of the present Framework at local, national, regional and global levels. Their commitment, goodwill, knowledge, experience and resources will be required. (Art. 35)

In fact, the mention of stakeholders in the Framework can be understood as a ‘sympathetic law’, developed by [Goodale \(2002\)](#) as a social reformist project. He explains that it is supposed to have concrete and positive effects

for marginalized groups who use it as opposed to dominant law, which advances ‘indiscernible interests as justice and the good’ (Goodale, 2002). This having been said, it undeniably contributes to recognizing civil society in the Sendai Framework.

Words matter because they constitute reports with politically correct language (Rist, 2007; Siroux, 2008). They reveal the ‘constructed technicality’ and ‘neutralization’ which mask the inherent political character of the documents’ content. The vocabulary used thus covers the conflicting power dynamics that underpin reports drafted by international organizations giving recognition and legitimization to principles and groups depending on the organizational framing.

The substantive apparatus thus calls civil society, Member States and the UN to express vague statements, and play with words – if not ‘on’ words – and paragraphs while promoting non-operationalizable concepts.

Gender gains and losses in disaster risk reduction

This last subchapter addresses the fundamental question of this research, asking if civil society was included at the UN after having been given the characteristics of the substantive apparatus. If we go back to the definition of *apparatus* such as a ‘heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws’, the substantive apparatus focuses primarily on the discourses at play revolving around the text. If we rely on the definition of inclusion given earlier, not only does the WMG need to comply with the UN’s apparatus and adapt to it with its capabilities, but it also needs to attain the objective of the given apparatus, meaning that of civil society actors, and also those of Member States. While we can safely say that the WMG played by the rules of the game, we are yet to see whether the text met its objectives.

I carry out the analysis based on the WMG input in reference to ‘The Women, “Women” and The Text’ and account for its preference attainment.

From Yokohama 1994 to Sendai 2015

If we go back to the document released in Yokohama in 1994, during the time of the International Decade on Disaster Reduction, we observe that within two decades the gender perspective has gained progressive ground in international frameworks delivered by the UN most likely mirroring the gender gains in developed countries. Overall, UN staff members, Member State representatives together with civil society members have progressively tackled gender in a more holistic approach. In Yokohama, the main aim was to empower women in order to stimulate community involvement in the context of DRR.

According to the 2009 report (*The Disaster Risk Reduction Process: A Gender Perspective*) facilitated by UNISDR in Geneva and with inputs from the Gender and Disaster Network in preparation for the second World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan in January 2005, the Platform on Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction (held in Hawaii in 2004) requested all nations represented at the World Conference to consider gender mainstreaming in five areas by:

1. mainstreaming gender perspectives into all disaster management initiatives;
2. building capacity in women's groups and community-based organizations;
3. ensuring gender mainstreaming into communications, training and education;
4. ensuring opportunities for women in science and technology; and
5. ensuring gender mainstreaming into programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation (see [Table 6.10](#)).

Most definitions of gender mainstreaming across institutions adhere closely to those set out by the UN Economic and Social Council (1997, p 28) as follows:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. ([United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1997, p 28](#))

The HFA does not account much in the areas that were pushed in 2004, but still integrates a greater gender approach in comparison to the Yokohama Agreement. It encourages the integration of a gender perspective and the need to recognize vulnerable groups.

In 2015, the Sendai Framework takes a substantial stance to integrate women and gender issues in the text. Not only is there a push for women's leadership and women's empowerment; there also seems to be a recognition that women need to be fully engaged and part of the decision-making process for DRR policies. The breakthrough in Sendai is marked by the fact that women are not addressed solely. They are integrated to lists containing children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older

persons. While it could be perceived as drowning the gender concern, the mention appears more frequently throughout the document.

In fact the Sendai Framework gives more space to gender and women's issues. Governments are called upon to engage with women. Women's empowerment is new, as well as the recognition that women are critical for effectively managing disasters as well as implementing gender-responsive DRR policies. In addition, governments have accepted to adopt measurement tools to evaluate the success of gender mainstreaming by developing disaggregated data collection.

This goes to show that the Sendai Framework is not an isolated case where women and gender and more generally civil society is being acknowledged and uplifted. Other international agreements witness the same evolution (for example, Sustainable Development Goals versus Millennium Goals).

Table 6.10 shows how the text evolved from Yokohama in 1994 all the way to Sendai in 2015 in terms of gender.

Challenging 'women'

Throughout the process the challenge was to go beyond clustering women, children, persons with disability and vulnerable groups. In fact, the WMG was adamant about including the variety of women giving a more fine-grained analysis of who was included in the term 'women'. Towards the end of the process, discussions rose within the WMG to think more broadly about the intersectionality of vulnerability. We can well imagine that the next step for UNISDR is to still look deeper into this matter.

Indeed intersectionality arose as a concept in 1989, when Kimberle Crenshaw, a critical race scholar, coined the term to criticize the single-axis analysis of race. Her work on discrimination against Black women argues that focusing on either race or sex fails to consider women's marginalization with respect to both discriminations. In her view, studying either women or race erases the experiences of Black women overall (Dhamoon, 2011). Meanwhile, Deborah King adds the notion of class whereby vulnerability should be understood as 'racism multiplied by sexism, multiplied by classism' (King, 1988, p 46). Basically, over recent decades, the study of multiple, co-constituted, differences has taken a strong hold in strands of feminism under the rubric of intersectionality. Intersectionality, as Ange-Marie Hancock (2007, p 63) recently noted, is not simply a normative-theoretical argument, it is also a research paradigm. Rather than limiting intersectionality research to 'a content specialization in populations with intersecting marginalized identities' (Hancock, 2007, p 64), this paradigm can be widely applied to the study of social groups, relations and contexts, to go beyond the conventional scope of non-White women (Dhamoon, 2011). The mainstreaming of intersectionality benefits political science and other social sciences because it

Table 6.10: Text evolution from Yokohama to Sendai

Yokohama	Hyogo	Pre-zero Sendai draft	Zero draft	Sendai Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower ‘women and other socially disadvantaged groups’ to stimulate community involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate a gender perspective • Mention of gender, women, youth and children • Individuals are divided into potentially vulnerable categories; the poor, the elderly, the disabled, children, women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender considerations are to inform all policies and practices • Women’s leadership is to be promoted • Children and youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples are to be fully engaged in the determination and implementation of policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s empowerment • Women’s leadership • Disaggregated data, gender specific, sex-age-disability • Special attention to at risk groups in line with human rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments engage with stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons. • Women and youth leadership • Women’s empowerment as well as that of persons with disabilities • Women are critical to effectively managing disaster risk • Women are critical and effective in implementing gender-responsive disaster risk reduction policies • Disaggregated data, by sex, age and disability.
Text				

expands and deepens the tools available to conduct, catalogue and interpret research (Dhamoon, 2011).

If we go by the Sendai Framework, groups are clustered into categories and do not encompass a deeper understanding of the multiple discriminations individuals, especially women, come across. Looking towards the next Framework might mean looking towards intersectionality where women of different races, different ages and different socioeconomic backgrounds can be addressed in all their diversity.

The final exclusion

In the text at the end of this chapter, we are in a position to take a stance on women's inclusion, reflecting both the inclusion of the WMG's endeavour and the inscribed gender issue and showing what has been included.

Drawing from Table 6.12 the Sendai Framework only partially incorporated the narrative behind the statements the WMG made in PrepCom1 and PrepCom2 and totally neglected the written input made to UNISDR's zero draft in late November 2014 as well as the statement delivered in PrepCom3. More specifically, only women's leadership, women's empowerment and disaggregated data by sex-age-disability were inscribed in the ratified final, text. The suggested language and input around gender equality made in the early days of the process, human rights and people in their diversity delivered orally in the last stage of the process at the WCDRR, for instance, were not included.

This finding points to the importance of formality, whereby civil society's increased chances to see retained what it advocates for is delivered in formal settings, in particular in plenaries (policy arenas) at an early stage of the process.

Furthermore, claims in line with addressing *women in their diversity* to highlight the intersectionality of women – rather than considering them as a monolithic group – can be read as disaggregated data by sex, age and disability. However, disaggregated data in the Sendai Framework only breaks down data according to three dimensions (sex, age and disability) while women in their diversity have more dimensions such as class, ethnicity, education, and so on. While the entire spectrum of women in their diversity is not fully included in the Sendai Framework, I argue that this has to do with the silos, the assigned identity group, to which the WMG is subjected in the Sendai process. Although we could question whether this is a result of a claim made at a late stage of the process, I defend the idea that additional dimensions to 'women' would be too political an issue for UNISDR and Member States to accept, address and especially implement.

Nevertheless, if we count the items claimed by the WMG and check the items that were retained, three out of seven made it into the ratified text (see Table 6.11).

Table 6.11: Items claimed and not retained

Claimed	Not retained
- Women's empowerment	- Women as essential in decision making
- Women's leadership	- Women in their diversity
- Women as active contributors to DRR	- Gender equality
- Women as essential in decision making	
- Women in their diversity	
- Gender equality	
- Women's human rights	

We could argue in favour of a substantive inclusion since almost half of the agenda items pushed were retained, gaining preference attainment.

The gender gains, from Yokohama to Sendai, reflect what appeared globally in the international framework in the past 20 years. Relying solely on women's contributions cannot be taken at face value, but fits into a broader scope of women's incentive for overall inclusion in the UN context. While we might like to give the WMG members full credit for its success, thanks to its members' hard work and commitment in the process of the text creation, we cannot leave out of context certain elements. For instance, the issue of women's inclusion appears as a cross-cutting issue in the spirit of the time around the period of the Sendai Framework. As an example, the High-level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report released in 2015 and convened by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, carried out by the Independent HIPPO undertook a thorough review of the current UN peace operations and the emerging needs of the future. The report, unlike its predecessor – the Brahimi report (2000) – called for more women's inclusion and abuse acknowledgement in peacekeeping principles. The sense of satisfaction expressed by the WMG could be analysed as an ode to international progress when addressing 'women'. This having been said, with a more thorough analysis, and taking a step back from the process I was embedding in, I argue that substantive inclusion has less to do with the number of items that were retained than it has with the significance and weight behind each item. Claiming that the WMG's advocacy items and thus 'women' were included can sound absurd given that the agenda item on *gender equality* was systematically reiterated but never retained. I would even go a step further and argue that 'women' for which the women advocated are excluded, excluding *de facto* the women in the substantive apparatus.

Promoting *women's leadership* seems easier and more comfortable for it calls to mobilize qualities, skills and expertise which are potentially already available in DRR contexts. As for *women's empowerment*, nobody loses by enjoining a whole fragment of society to be considered less vulnerable.

Table 6.12: The evolution of UNISDR documents versus the Women’s Major Group’s input up to the Sendai Agreements

Women’s input	UNISDR’s pre-zero draft	WMG official statement: PrepCom1	UNISDR’s zero draft	WMG official statement: PrepCom2	WMG written comments on UNISDR’s zero draft	WMG official statement: PrepCom3	Sendai Framework outcome
Acknowledgement of ‘gender’	Gender considerations		Women as critical for managing disasters	Women as active contributors to DRR			Women are critical to effectively managing disaster risk; engage with stakeholders; including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons
Women’s empowerment	Women’s empowerment	Women’s empowerment	Women’s empowerment			Women’s empowerment as well as that of persons with disabilities	Women and youth leadership
Women’s leadership	Women’s leadership	Women’s leadership	Women’s leadership	Women’s leadership			
Disaggregated data	Disaggregated data	Disaggregated data by sex-age	Gender specific data with sex-age-disability				Disaggregated data, by sex, age and disability
Diversity					Diversity perspective	Women and people in their diversity	
Gender equality		Gender equality		Gender equality	Gender equality		Women are critical and effective in implementing gender-responsive disaster risk reduction policies
Human rights			Special attention to at risk groups in line with human rights		Women’s human rights	Women’s human rights	
Other						Women’s sexual and reproductive health needs	

But stripping women of their right to being equal annihilates the fight on gender and disasters, because DRR will only be effective if gender equality is guaranteed. Bypassing it overlooks the root cause of women's vulnerabilities and only touches on the outcomes of these vulnerabilities (Bradshaw, 2015).

Conclusion

Inclusion in Light of Exclusion

At the beginning of the book I asked several questions, namely what civil society inclusion meant at the United Nations (UN), what the instruments that allow for 'inclusion' are, who this 'civil society' is and how 'inclusion' was experienced by its members. Building on the state of the art and the theoretical framework, I developed a definition which I put to the test in the three empirical chapters: 'We the Peoples'; 'Disentangling the Social'; 'The Text Before All Things'. Civil society inclusion at the UN needs to be understood as the capability of individuals to overcome trials encountered in each of the three apparatus and the capacity to attain the inherent objectives in each one of them. This research thus provides a theory of inclusion that helps us think of civil society's position in intergovernmental negotiation processes by combining the sociology of organizations and the theory pertaining to interest groups.

In this concluding chapter, I look back on what I proposed theoretically and suggested empirically with data generated while embedded in the Women's Major Group. First, I summarize the characteristics of each apparatus and emphasize the trials civil society members need to overcome. This allows me to answer whether civil society has been included in every apparatus and subsequently included overall. Second, I discuss more thoroughly the articulation among the three types of 'inclusive' apparatus, before, third, pointing at the power relations with and among the actors I have talked about least, namely the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and Member States. Drawing from empirical cues allows me to complement my analyses and depict a broader picture of inclusion at the UN. Fourth, I suggest brief scenarios for potential inclusion changes before concluding, fifth, with a more general reflection on the impact the inclusion of civil society has at the UN.

Trials in United Nations apparatus

As laid out, I presented a comprehensive understanding of civil society's inclusion in UN agreement processes by unpacking the various types of apparatus. The state of the art pointed to three dimensions of inclusion. First, the institutional inclusion which calls for accreditation. Second, the social inclusion which highlights particular participation forms once accredited. Third, the substantive inclusion which looks into the text and the words that are retained after lobbying actions.

Drawing on the sociology of organizations, I go a step further by analysing the three dimensions of inclusion found in three types of apparatus, each co-constitutive of the UN's greater apparatus (Foucault, 1984). This opens the way to look at civil society's objectives, resources, constraints and strategies (Crozier and Friedberg, 1980) and sheds light on the trials individuals are subjected to. As a reminder, trials must be understood as moments of confrontation between different logics, not necessarily institutionalized, nor controlled, codified or regulated (Bourguignon and Chiapello, 2005), involving peoples, discourses, types of knowledge (Tremblay and Gendron, 2011) and action. Trials therefore shine through in Crozier and Friedberg's strategic analysis when we map out issues, objectives, resource constraints and strategies of different actors. More specifically, trials come to light when confronting the objectives and the constraints. I consider that civil society is included if it overcame the trials – that is, the confrontation – with adequate means to attain the objective of the given apparatus.

Institutional apparatus

The trials in the institutional apparatus consist of gaining access even if civil society members may struggle to find entry points and, more so, are not able or allowed to be present (see Table 7.1).

With collective action theory (Kriesi, 1995; Giugni, 1998; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004) and interactionist sociology (Becker, 1963), I point to a 'practice turn' in social movement theory. In that way, I take the opportunity to decipher UN's civil society members' careers, how they mobilize and organize themselves by unveiling the resources and identity at play concerning UN's requirements. I hence propose to analyse the Major Groups with its pillars, long-distance and sporadic members. While the literature points to a set of diversely skilled persons working together on a complex task over a limited time period (Goodman and Goodman, 1976, p 494), we observe that temporary organizations, in the context of the UN's Major Groups, tend to be formed by similarly skilled persons who not only participate but also shape the UN's civil society inclusion (Keck and Sikkink, 1999).

Table 7.1: Institutional inclusion with respect to the three United Nations

	UNISDR	Member States	Women's Major Group members	
Issue	Legitimizing its role	×	Participation as actor in the process	
Objective	Inclusive to non-state actors' voices	×	Remaining present throughout the process	
Institutional inclusion	Resources	Major Group system (accreditation; organizing partners)	UN's civil society career: disaster risk reduction experience + convictions/ working professionally for disaster risk reduction/ complying to Major Group structure/ integrating a predefined identity-based group	
	Constraints	Limits to funding non-state actors Member States	×	UN's civil society career: not always allowed/able to be present/attend
	Strategies	Self-organized groups	×	Identifying gatekeeper/ organizing partner towards accreditation

Institutional inclusion, the aim of which is accreditation, is fully realized when a civil society actor fulfils its career, paced by milestones the UN imposes with specific procedures towards accreditation and involvement in the Sendai process. One is included institutionally once all milestones are fulfilled, which provides the organization with the opportunity to legitimize its role as an inclusive actor in intergovernmental negotiations. Its building blocks determine who may engage in a civil society career, and how, and thus be present, not only as a pillar, but also as a long-distance or sporadic member.

If I were to answer whether the institutional apparatus is inclusive of civil society, I would have to affirm that the UN does not seem to exclude persons with limited funding who are unable to maintain a regular presence (long-distance and sporadic members). It is inclusive of individuals with particular resources (experience and convictions, command of English, funds and knowledge of the organization), who are willing to comply with a particular siloed organization (that is, Major Group for UNISDR), with a pre-established identity (that is, Women's Major Group). *A priori*, it excludes all other 'careers'.

While this research does not allow us to identify individuals who were excluded, it definitely sheds light on the way UNISDR manages to control who gets in, in an effort to reinforce its claim and vision of the world. The

UN organizes ‘*We [but not all] the Peoples*’ according to its values, which, we saw, shines through a basic feminist understanding reflected in the Women’s Major Group structure as silos (see [Chapter 4](#)).

Social apparatus

The trials in the social apparatus are the dynamics encountered around the urge to participate throughout the whole Sendai process despite being excluded from decision-making venues.

To illustrate the ways in which civil society members overcome exclusion, I borrowed [Goffman’s \(1959\)](#) front-stage/backstage concepts to unravel the times of formal inclusion and exclusion and the times of informal inclusion and their resources to integrate various settings.

Civil society members voiced their feelings in the Sendai process. They claim that concerns and contributions stemming from their knowledge and expertise are deemed insufficient and are not valued. Linda (Non-Governmental Organization Major Group), William (Women’s Major Group) and Katherine (Women’s Major Group) talk about feeling ‘used’ in their position as civil society members. On the one hand, ‘they use civil society organizations when they need them and when they don’t need them the communication is cut’ (William) and, on the other hand, they seem to be viewed as peripheral players. What prevails is the feeling that civil society is not taken as seriously as Major Group representatives would hope, hence their – at times – bold strategies.

In this way, Major Groups develop resources and express having particular leverage because under the banner of ‘civil society’, they can act in their own right, defying, for instance, politically accepted terms. Unlike governments who need to consult with their capital on a regular basis and UN staff who are scrutinized by Member States, civil society members can work in what they deem is the right direction void of diplomatic constraints. They scorn the UN, which tells them what to do and how to act. They hold dear the freedom they have to organize themselves, navigate the system as they please and network accordingly.

This is to say that civil society’s main issue in the UN’s apparatus is to be recognized, talked about and consulted for the content of the final text throughout the settings. Major Groups are convened and only invited to take the floor in policy arenas, in the form of front-stage advocacy strategies. While they get access to one of the three decision venues, I can safely consider that civil society is excluded from international decision-making processes. To overcome its exclusion, backstage strategies such as networking, seeking guidance from the focal point, learning positive Globish, organizing access to integrate are carried out regardless of their exclusion within the accepted norms and practices of the UN’s apparatus (see [Table 7.1](#)).

Substantive apparatus

The trials in the substantive apparatus are the relations around wanting to see preference attainment in the text while having to cope with limited access to advocate for specific language. To substantiate the changes in the text, I haphazardly combined existing literature in sociology and anthropology to look at the content and the wording of the text.

Through the prism of Major Groups, we understand that each aims to push its own interest. The Women's Major Group aimed at gendering disaster risk reduction, while the Major Group for Children and Youth was working towards integrating children and youth as fundamental elements for disaster risk reduction processes. Their objective relies on the desire to see high preference attainment appear in the final text. While their only true resource is to find unconditional partners in the Member States, they remain realistic as to how much they can do to get governments to speak on their behalf. Actually, civil society members know governments do not owe them anything in negotiation contexts and they thus work their way around being accepted and well-received. Abel (Major Group for Children and Youth) puts it in the following way: 'We're not an equal stakeholder, no one is obliged to listen to us. Nobody is mandated to listen to us.'

This having been said, when it comes to the Women's Major Group, I am compelled to say that it has been substantively excluded even if the group attained some preferences. While *women's leadership* and *women's empowerment* were included, exclusion accounts for the rejection of *gender equality*, a fundamental recognition to ensure disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, the full spectrum of women in their diversity is not fully included in the Sendai Framework. I put it on account of having been presented at a late stage, far too late to be integrated. However, I am quite convinced that it has little to do with that, but rather with being too political an issue for UNISDR and Member States to accept and implement.

On a more optimistic note, we can recognize an improvement in the last two decades which echoes general international trends and fits a broader scope of women's incentive for overall inclusion in the UN context.

In this context, we can discuss the dialectic between *inclusion*, calling for a rather passive presence, or instrumental presence for both the First and Second UN, versus *integration*, pointing to a rather active stance on civil society members' part. In other words, the social apparatus is the only one out of the three, that allows civil society to manoeuvre – integrating itself – in the interstices of UN's prerogatives for institutional inclusion with constraints stemming from Member States and UNISDR as well as the constraints on substantive inclusion. Social inclusion therefore relies on civil society's willingness to integrate the UN's apparatus based on skills tied to informal settings, namely soft skills like the ability to learn UN language, integrate its

Table 7.2: Social inclusion with respect to the three United Nations

	UNISDR	Member States	Women's Major Group
Issue	Legitimizing its role	Defend national interest	Being recognized and talked about
Objective	Ensure civil society members participate in policy arenas and have access to decision-making venues	Use civil society members' claims (when aligned) to support and justify national interest	Maximize presence
Social inclusion	Resources	Setting up open-ended informal consultative meetings/appoint a focal point	Host receptions, finance programmes, fund UNISDR
	Constraints	Unable to integrate civil society members in informal/informal settings and bypassing bureaucratic protocols	Avoid being over-solicited by civil society members
	Strategies	Gatekeeping	Funding, languages, knowledge on navigating the system, integrating UN codes, defying politically accepted terms
		Create alliances with civil society members	Exclusion from decision-making venues
			Lobbying

codes and develop acquaintances. Social inclusion highlights the artfulness Major Group members develop in light of their exclusion (see [Table 7.2](#)).

Apparatus: an interdependence

Analysing the inclusion of civil society at the UN needs to be understood as a constant interdependence among the three apparatus each member experiences and plays an active role in. In light of the neo-pluralist approach demanding that the influence of production be analysed as a process, I argue that each UN's civil society inclusion must be regarded as a milestone in interaction with the previous and the next. Grasping substantive inclusion cannot come without analysing institutional and social inclusion; in the same way, understanding social inclusion cannot come without taking into account institutional inclusion.

Dynamics in the social apparatus, for instance, are a result of institutional inclusion. Entering the social apparatus highlights the need both the UN and the organizing partner have in accrediting persons who have the skills

and resources to find their way around the UN's apparatus in order to be substantively included. Having the required resources in the institutional apparatus, namely the career and showing abilities to acquire resources needed in the social apparatus, gives the UN and the Major Group's organizing partner higher hope for civil society to be substantively included.

Drawing on the fieldwork, we also see that the substantive dimension directly speaks to the institutional one. More specifically, even though the UN does not seem to be involved in the content regarding the Women's Major Group's gender convictions, siloing individuals into a Women's Group indirectly dictates what is possible to advocate for (that is, a focus on women only). Silos in the institutional apparatus have an impact on the substantive apparatus, skipping per se the social one. In this vein, while Women's Major Group members take the floor or get Member States to speak as part of the social apparatus, they have an impact on the substantive apparatus, namely the text. Through knowledge and experience, Major Group members directly, in providing specific language, or indirectly, by way of informal discussions, contribute to developing statements with the aim of them appearing in the final text.

This having been said, while I implied that the institutional-social-substantive process undergoes one cycle throughout the process, I clarify here that the networks within the various apparatus need to be seen as being in constant connection with one another. The institutional-social-substantive process – through which the *inclusion* dimension flows – has value in that it points not only to a process, but also provides an opportunity to look at the specific challenges in each apparatus leading to unveiling the power dynamics at play. While the interest group theory shows the process, it fails at providing an in-depth look at each apparatus and the dynamics being played out. Likewise, the sociology of organizations does not integrate the processual perspective in light of the creation of a text. Combining both theories allows us to analyse simultaneously a process and the powers for which civil society's *inclusion* is put to trial.

Was I to answer which apparatus is most inclusive, I would say that the substantive one is probably more inclusive, for if we look at the evolution of the text, the Sendai Framework has gained considerable words tied to *gender* (from one in Yokohama to six in Sendai).

However, answering whether the institutional and social dimensions are inclusive is more delicate. Can we say of the institutional apparatus that it is inclusive if we lack information as to who was excluded, not only for financial reasons but also because an organizing partner did perhaps not respond to an email requesting an accreditation? In that vein, can we talk about an inclusive social dimension if decision-making venues de facto exclude civil society members?

These questions underpin a broader one, namely, what is the alternative to inclusion? If we look at what happens at the intersection between the

actor and the system, *inclusion* seems to be civil society's ultimate aim. Yet the UN's apparatus do not seem to offer an alternative to *inclusion* other than *exclusion*. Even technology may not counter exclusion mechanisms. The UN wants to know who is institutionally included, even virtually.

Power relations among the three United Nations

While each empirical chapter hints at the conditions of civil society's inclusion in each apparatus, we can take it a step further and look at its inclusion by directing the spotlight on the role of the First and Second UN. This allows to highlight in turn who has the power to include or exclude because we understand that power derives from relations (see [Chapter 2](#)).

I go over each apparatus to point out the views regarding civil society's presence, but most importantly to emphasize the diverging objectives of each set of actors.

Institutional inclusion: performing legitimacy

On its website UNISDR prides itself on engaging with various partners such as civil society. Peter, a UNISDR staff member, in an interview reflecting on UNISDR's position vis-à-vis civil society, shared with me the resistance the organization faced with respect to governments in 2006 and 2007 when the idea emerged to integrate civil society at the global level. According to him, no other organization in the UN system was adamant in welcoming civil society members to the room alongside Member States. Based on Margareta Wahlström's interview, the Special Representative to the Secretary-General in charge of Disaster Risk Reduction at the head of UNISDR, it took time for Member States to get comfortable with the idea of having to speak in the presence of civil society but is now – at the time of the Sendai process – well accepted.

Wanting to integrate civil society is the first step to working with it. Margareta Wahlström explains that UNISDR opted to work with the Major Group structure when she was looking at ways the UN engaged with civil society. She openly said to Major Groups 'You are needed! We need you!'. Margareta Wahlström and George (the Major Groups' focal point) – both front liners for direct interaction with Major Groups – individually confided that it is easiest to work with organized Major Groups thanks to the organizing partner (here Ellen) who transfers information to its Major Group. In the Sendai Framework process, for example, UNISDR did not succeed in finding a representative and organizing partner for the Farmers' group and thus could not work with their interests in mind. However, it identified the Children and Youth Major Group and the disability caucus as 'strong self-organizing groups'.

From UNISDR's perspective, to legitimize its role as a key actor in disaster risk reduction global governance and meet individuals' needs worldwide, the organization ensures to be inclusive to civil society organizations in the institutional apparatus (see [Table 7.1](#)).

In the institutional apparatus, Member States do not play an active role in including civil society members. While the Major Group structure and its procedures for accreditation were established in 1992, the first inclusion stage relies on UNISDR, borrowing UN's guidelines and civil society members. The power relations are most prominent between civil society members and UNISDR, where UNISDR has the power to include individuals.

Social inclusion: a question of 'give and take'

In the social apparatus, UNISDR works towards having civil society members participate in policy arenas and getting access to decision-making venues even if it is de facto excluded from informal meetings held strictly for Member States. To do so it sets up specific meetings to have Member States and civil society interact and appoints a focal point to ease communication between the three UNs. In this way UNISDR positions itself as a coordinating body and takes on the role of a referee; it plays a subtle 'give and take' game to ensure Major Groups meet their objectives (being present everywhere all the time, being perceived as a key player) while putting out feelers to assess Member States' priority (see [Table 7.2](#)).

As the referee, it spells out the rules of the game throughout the process in informal sessions with Major Groups; civil society members are invited to certain sessions providing they understand and respect that the authority remains in the hands of the Member States. UNISDR makes sure Member States feel in control of the process and are not being threatened by civil society (for their ideas and relentless lobbying strategies). As a result, UNISDR – through the focal point (George) whose job it is to maintain relations with Major Groups – guides civil society members to integrate specific settings while enjoining them to 'back off' where needed and setting a distance when they may want to be pushier.

In the social apparatus, despite contributing to a supranational body, Member States continue to defend national interests. They do not shy away from using civil society's claims and expertise when it supports and justifies their national interests. They host receptions during negotiations (Japan did so in Geneva in January 2015), finance programmes and fund UNISDR, but in return do not want to be bothered by civil society members. The interaction and help provision can only take place when they deem the time is right and the contributions are in line with their political agenda, namely in line with that of their capital. Member States hence do their 'shopping'. They look at what is available within Major Groups' interests and pick what

they find appropriate, what could best fit their national agenda. Member State representatives remind both themselves and Major Group members that governments are at the heart of multilateral agreements.

Substantive inclusion: proving legitimacy

Understanding the text as a tool for UNISDR's legitimization and sustainability and as a vehicle for inclusion enables us to highlight the inherent political process the text undergoes with its crosscutting struggles and sticky points for which the organization needs to find right tuning in agreement with its stakeholders (see [Table 7.3](#)). While UNISDR points to wanting a bold text according to the latest norms and values, aligned with

Table 7.3: Substantive inclusion with respect to the three United Nations

	UNISDR	Member States	Women's Major Group
Issue	Legitimizing its role by delivering a text that promotes forward-looking values	Defend national interest for disaster risk reduction governance	Gendering disaster risk reduction
Objective	Ratify the Sendai Framework as a bold text according to the newest norms and values	Meet state's needs within the text	High preference attainment in final text: integrating women's crucial role in disaster risk management
Substantive inclusion	Resources	Positioned as disaster risk reduction expert within the UN system, using non-consensual rhetoric about disaster risk reduction	Contribute with national expertise and experience in their response to disaster risk reduction
	Constraints	Disagreements among Member States, institutional process for inclusion (silos)	Adapt words other states to needs of
	Strategies	Organizing the Sendai Framework process and convene civil society members	Exclusion from decision-making venues
		Build a strong group of Member States whose political decisions are similar	Creating statements, getting others to speak

current scientific studies, it finds limitations in the need to meet Member States' requirements as well as civil society's institutional process for inclusion, namely channelling it through silos. Substantive inclusion must also be understood as UNISDR's successful agenda-setting in using its power to include rhetoric all stakeholders can relate to (natural disasters as an apolitical issue at first glance).

At the same time, Member States keep a constant stance throughout the types of apparatus, namely to defend first and foremost national interests in light of disaster risk reduction governance. They have to meet their state's needs in the substantive dimension, in the text. They do so by relying on their national experience and expertise to respond to disasters successfully. While their wording may at times be contentious for other states, they build alliances with Member States whose political decisions are similar (see [Table 7.2](#)).

In some cases Member States have trouble with civil society members' presence. Both the US and EU representatives disliked certain interventions Major Group members made during the Sendai Framework process. They took on a transgressive role, imposing their presence knowing it was not the ideal time to interact with Member States. In an interview carried out in the months following the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Tatiana (US representative) shared the feeling that Major Groups were ad hoc, to the extent that she questioned whether Major Groups understood the milestones within the process. Tatiana's take on Major Groups' behaviour during the process translated in irritation and therefore unpleasant reactions stemming from Member State representatives.

According to McKeon, 'the question of who has the authority to establish the interface mechanism is closely related to that of which actors are actually involved in interfacing' (2009, p 154). In some cases, the interaction is essentially between Major Groups and the secretariat, especially in the institutional apparatus, while in the social apparatus government representatives are also involved.

Building on the 'strategic analysis model' by [Crozier and Friedberg \(1980\)](#) allows us to depict in a clearer fashion the power relations among the three UNs. However, if the four emergent powers that include and exclude civil society rely on (1) expert power which builds on the 'know-how', (2) marginal power which points to how actors manoeuvre between two or more worlds, (3) switchman power which provides information and (4) hierarchy, then we can say that civil society actors are excluded only because of the fourth element, namely 'hierarchy'. While civil society members have all other elements of power at hand, the formal UN structure and its mandate with respect to Member States is decisive in excluding all other characteristics of power they have.

These analyses could make a case in favour of the realist paradigm in international relations considering the weight of Member States, in particular

in the social and substantive apparatus. However my argument relates more to a constructivist approach – and more so even to the practice turn – which tends to look into the constant renegotiation of power relations in practice. In *International Pecking Orders*, Pouliot (2016) studies international hierarchy in practice, as it emerges out of the multilateral diplomatic processes. While his argument relies on a micro analysis stemming from diplomats’ practices, I offer a similar approach, an analysis of the negotiated power relations among actors within intergovernmental negotiation processes, but from the standpoint of civil society.

Towards ‘more’ inclusion?

With three scenarios, I present what is at stake when touching upon the UN’s apparatus with respect to civil society inclusion in intergovernmental negotiation processes. Imagining ‘more inclusion’ or ‘less inclusion’, or even presenting the status quo for further intergovernmental negotiations, gives cues in how to think of the future of such practices.

Status quo

Keeping civil society inclusion as is, a de facto status quo, consists of the UN using the Major Group structure to channel civil society engagement in international agreements. That allows the international organization to unremorsefully pursue claiming its inclusive narrative. It can do so because civil society gets accreditation and performs front-stage in its apparatus and in addition produces inclusive outcomes in the text. It can maintain its role as referee between Member States who want to avoid being over-solicited by civil society and Major Groups who develop strategies to overcome their exclusion from decision-making venues. In this way, Major Group members can continue working towards being included as key actors in the process, doing their best to convince the UN and Member States that they voice the concerns of rural communities and raise issues collected from disaster-prone areas to international level. Their feeling of rejection and not having enough leverage in negotiations would remain a constant. There is nothing in their hands they can do to change the apparatus while it is in the works. Adopting an attitude of resignation would be the most likely outcome.

More inclusion?

More civil society inclusion would imply having to work carefully on each apparatus. UNISDR, acting as both the referee and host, must address the institutional and social apparatus, taking into account its inherent limitations resulting from the mandate and reliance on states to fulfil its mandate.

Additionally, the Member States themselves form a crucial resource for UNISDR's operations. In order to meet its expectations of delivering a text that promotes forward-looking values, it could reconsider channelling civil society members into predefined silos. That could allow for a more intersectional discourse on behalf of civil society members.

Opting out from the Major Group structure would revert to accrediting Economic and Social Council-accredited non-governmental organizations, which may ultimately be less inclusive of individuals. It would not consider individuals in their own right, but only non-governmental organization-accredited representatives. This scenario stresses the dilemma between being inclusive with respect to individuals who can attend the process through the Major Group channel without having Economic and Social Council status and inclusiveness with respect to organizations, especially non-governmental organizations. Yet counterbalancing civil society's exclusion from decision-making venues would imply having to rethink the role of the state in global governance. While nation states would have to give up the privilege of being the voices in global governance, it would also question the legitimacy of civil society's voice. Whose voice? For whom?

Less inclusion?

Less inclusion is by any means the least invasive change. By not convening civil society to its process, UNISDR would not have to appoint a focal point, nor would it have to play the role of the referee between powerful actors and actors full of creativity and artfulness. While Major Group members know the ins and outs of the Sendai Framework process and its content, they would most likely become informal informants in the wake of the next framework for disaster risk reduction. UNISDR would lose its 'inclusive' card and Major Group members feel rejected altogether. They would remain powerless and have no one to discuss the unfairness of the situation with.

Inclusion and beyond ...

The research carried out here addressed the issue of civil society inclusion at the UN by taking a close look at the Women's Major Group inclusion in the Sendai process led by the UNISDR. It essentially analysed the assertion the UN makes regarding the inclusion of civil society because anybody can claim UN's inclusiveness. Yet some substantiation is needed. In this way, embedding the Women's Major Group provided me with elements of proof that shed light on civil society's inclusion: at macro level in the way UNISDR engaged with civil society; at meso level analysing the Women's Major Group and its activities; and at micro level focusing on individuals'

backgrounds and careers. In sum, it allowed to nuance the claim around the inclusion of civil society.

The research allowed to fill the gap in the literature. First, it gave a more fine-grained analysis of the groups that constitute ‘UN’s civil society’. Second, it enabled to shed light on the process of inclusion. Third, it allowed to propose a theory which tackles civil society inclusion by using both interest group theory and the sociology of organizations.

While civil society is often referred to and thought of as non-governmental organizations in international organizations, what we do observe is that it has less to do with civil society organizations than it has with the individuals within these. Those who actually lie behind the banner of civil society at the UN are individuals who set themselves up to overcome challenges – more specifically ‘trials’ borrowing Boltanski and Thévenot’s terms (1991) – with the objective of having influence on a text. The UN’s incentive to accredit organizations is overturned by the system’s need to convene individuals deprived of organizational support and enjoining them to rely on personal strength and worth. This undeniably points to the responsibility weighing on the individuals. Civil society inclusion process in fact resembles an obstacle race – with three types of obstacles referring to the three types of apparatus – which not necessarily align in a linear manner but fit into a constellation of apparatus where power dynamics unfold. Even if this book takes a strong stance on disputing the so-called inclusion of civil society at the UN based on UNISDR’s inclusion and exclusion mechanisms with respect to the Women’s Major Group, it calls for an attempt to generalize the analyses from the specific case study. On the one hand, what holds true for the Women’s Major Group is in large part true for other groups, in particular the Major Group for Children and Youth, the members of which I grew closer to throughout the process. My analyses resonate not only with the appreciation of their effort in the process on a personal level, especially those of Kristen and Abel, it was also acknowledged on a scientific level by an article published in the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, a peer-reviewed international journal. The article depicted more precisely the participation, namely our institutional inclusion, social inclusion and preference attainment, that is our substantive inclusion, which was qualified as satisfactory in the same way the Women’s Major Group expressed satisfaction of its outcome (Cumiskey et al, 2015).

On the other hand, the attempt to generalize beyond the Sendai Framework process is all the more feasible because this case study seems to be emblematic of the way the UN engages with civil society in the context of recent intergovernmental negotiations. For instance, civil society experienced similar mechanisms during the Sustainable Development Goals process, whose text was ratified in 2015. It does not require much effort to identify the three types of inclusion/exclusion apparatus for civil society

developed in this thesis and transpose them to Svenja Rauch's PhD thesis (2018) in which she traces the elaboration of the Millennium Development Goals and the processes that led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in a multistakeholder approach.

Furthermore it may not be too far-fetched to say that the UN includes symbolically thanks to good marketing strategies, while at the same time, only including what fits its political agenda. My failed political embeddedness with UNISDR might be anecdotal but actually points to the UN's inability to take any risk damaging its reputation. The solution adopted must be understood as keeping researchers at arm's length, when in fact a plurality of dissident voices could create an equilibrium and portray the UN and international organizations more generally in positive, less controversial light. We can therefore question whether the UN really embraces democratic principles.

Finally research could draw from the theory of inclusion presented here and address civil society inclusion in the implementation phase of the Sendai Framework to analyse the apparatus of inclusion in the months and years after the ratification of the text. What kind of new obstacles will show up? This theory could also look more broadly at what happens at the UN headquarters in New York or in other UN hubs such as Nairobi or Bangkok and analyse the apparatus around inclusion when no text is ratified. In other words, we could question how the inclusion of civil society and the UN's apparatus unfolds in contexts which are not dependent on the ratification of an international framework. While the apparatus in UNISDR's context is dichotomous, either including or excluding civil society, it would be interesting to delve into different UN situations to see whether there could be alternatives to the binary dynamics.

APPENDIX I

Women's Major Group Statement

Consultative Meeting, 18 September 2014

Good morning co-chairs and distinguished colleagues. The Women's Major Group is working together to respond to the pre-zero draft and make specific recommendations. In this intervention today – the first session to discuss Section D – we will share some general ideas about the focus and tone of Section D as well as make more specific comments about the sections up to 21.

First, we welcome the reference to gender-specific and sex/age/disability disaggregated data when accounting for disaster loss and social impact in (a) of Section 14 on understanding disaster risk in all its dimensions.

Overall, we feel it is important to ensure the document is people-centred and explicitly places people at the centre of all policies, with their safety and improved wellbeing as the main aim. Within this, it is important to understand vulnerability in relation to the disaster risk management capacity of the area and people, not just as a product of hazard.

In such a people-centred approach, gender should be more fully and explicitly discussed within all areas of policy. This includes the recognition of gender inequality as a root cause of vulnerability and the recognition of actions to promote gender equality as key to building resilience. Women's policy-making capability should be recognized and their active participation in policy formulation and implementation supported.

We welcome the call for data to be disaggregated by sex/age/disability in 14a (on understanding disaster risk in all its dimensions and accounting for disaster loss and social impact at local/national level), but we stress this needs to be explicitly mentioned throughout the document. There are a number of areas where this is particularly important (namely 15b on monitoring and 18a on methodologies for risk assessment, monitoring, etc at global/regional level).

Recognizing the ‘gender specific’ nature of the data (14a) is also a welcome addition and could be more explicitly defined. In particular, the document should include the need to recognize women’s sexual and reproductive health rights and the right to live free from violence as two areas that should be monitored pre, during and post-event.

Once again we note the need to ensure all three aspects of sustainability are included, not just economic and social, but also environmental (eg 14a and 15a, 16 preamble and d).

When discussing expertise it is important to recognize all knowledge and not just that of scientists and academics nor just quantitative empirical research, to respect and learn from women’s situated knowledge and that of indigenous peoples (applicable to 14 f and h, and 17 i and k). Further, it is important to recognize the value of qualitative knowledge for providing insight and depth of understanding (16f).

A focus on community-based training (CBT) as first responders but more specific attention needs to be paid to the approach to be taken – that CBT is bottom-up. A focus on education is also essential (14) but the content needs explicit consideration and include the anatomy of disaster as well as coping techniques.

Language throughout the document must be inclusive – stressing consideration and participation of ALL persons (14b) and of all ages, but also recognizing differences and the differential impact (eg 14c) of disasters based on multiple, intersection factors. The document expressly uses the term ‘vulnerable’ but it should also incorporate consistent and specific mention of marginalized (eg in 16a) in addition to vulnerable because they are not synonymous and vulnerable is often a condition of being marginalized.

This inclusive approach is particularly important when discussing governance (15). Inclusive governance, for example, means ensuring the information in local languages (15b) and that the focus is not just on communities but individuals and households also (15d) and promoting not just local leadership, but gender-balanced leadership (15f).

Accountability and transparency within governance is absent, but explicit discussion of it needs to be addressed as a key to good and inclusive governance. The role an active civil society can play in ensuring this also needs to be highlighted, with further explicit mention of support to CSOs [civil society organizations], including gender CSOs. CSOs and especially women and gender CSOs should also be recognized as an important source of local knowledge (17i and k) and local capacity.

Rather than a consensus-based approach as indicated in 17m, there should be a rights-based approach.

The governance section should also have a more clearly articulated rights focus (eg include in 15g) and policies should explicitly protect rights during crisis, including protecting the right of women and girls to live free from

violence (15b, 17d). A rights ethos should also inform the social safety nets approach (17a). There should be explicit mention of land and tenure rights, recognizing this as key to sustainable land use for all (17i).

The focus throughout should be on the ultimate aim – reduce human life lost and improving the wellbeing of people and this needs to be made central (eg 16b strengthening early warning should be to ensure full and equitable access to these).

Point 16 with regards to early warning – evidence shows that women need to be an explicit target and if not and by default men are the targets, then information may not reach women and/or they may not feel able to act on this without the agreement of a male. Studies show that when women are targets of warnings they act on it, if they are recognized in the community and household as having authority to do so and when they act on warnings this saves lives. Actions should be taken to make women more visible in DRR [disaster risk reduction] and early warning to ensure they have the recognized authority to act independently in their households and communities and in this way and save lives.

Examples of language changes that could be made:

16a ‘of all social groups’ – add ‘particularly women and girls ...’

16b ‘equitable coverage – with a specific focus on women and girls ...’

16c ‘access – for all – to essential food ...’

When discussing risk, the risk to women post-event may be more human-induced than induced by natural hazards. It should be recognized that programmes for displaced persons do not only expose people to natural hazards but also other risks – especially the risk of gender-based violence for women and girls. As such 17d should be reworded to ‘vulnerability to – natural – hazards and that such programs seek to actively mitigate against the risk of gender based violence’.

APPENDIX II

Embedding a UN Intergovernmental Negotiation Process

What a better way to talk about inclusion than introducing a researcher's challenge in integrating the intergovernmental negotiation to collect relevant data? [Appendix II](#) supplements the monograph in detailing the generation of data and hence inscribes itself in current scholarly interests and injunctions to remain methodologically reflexive when carrying out research on international organizations ([Badache et al, 2023](#)).

It is therefore in immersing myself in a United Nations (UN) intergovernmental negotiation process and reflecting on my autoethnography, that I here unpack the ways in which I generated data in an effort to answer the questions raised throughout the manuscript, namely, was the Women's Major Group included in the Sendai process? This allows to take part in the current debates revolving around researchers' access to organizations, and, ironically, to unveil in a double-mirroring effect – as a *mise en abîme* – civil society's inclusion through the reflexive endeavour undergone by a PhD student in her quest for inclusion at the UN.

Due to major transformations in terms of goods and services, deployed both on local and global levels ([Czarniawska-Joerges and Sévon, 2005](#); [Bourrier, 2013](#)), organization sociologists and anthropologists struggle to approach organizations. Much is at stake; the way ideas and objects travel, the way decision-making processes take place, the type of technologies at play ([Marcus, 1995, 1998](#); [Bourrier, 2013](#)). They have had to develop creative and innovative paths. In that sense, it has become impossible to address organizations in a circumscribed and delimited fashion even though walls and barbed wires remain because sociologists are always faced with the possibility of being turned down and shoved aside. To overcome those risks, researchers at times opt for mandated research in organizations which gives them a legitimate role and allows them to overcome these hurdles ([Bourrier,](#)

2013). This holds true for international organizations. To carry out research, doctoral students have sought innovative ways, such as being hired as interns (Maertens, 2016), integrating a national delegation (De Pryck, 2018) and working in civil society groups (Rauch, 2018).

In this Appendix we explore the conditions in which I carried out a study in an intergovernmental negotiation process headed by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). This allows me to argue that embedding a Major Group is key to seizing inclusion and exclusion dynamics of civil society.

Embeddedness in international organizations

Ethnography emerged over a decade ago and is now a well-established method for the study of international organizations (Badache et al, 2023; Kimber and Maertens, 2023). It allows to open the machinery of world politics (Müller, 2013; Maertens, 2016). Entering international organization perimeters enables organization researchers to understand the powerful bureaucracies' and organizations' mechanics in ways other than through common sense or 'official' perspectives. It allows seizing their everyday enactment, and the power dynamics that structure relationships inside and outside the organization. Furthermore, it allows them to grasp the 'dark side' of organizations, observing and analysing activities, some of which are secretly and strategically hidden from public view (Broadhead and Rist, 1976).

In this context, studying the UN from within comes with a set of challenges since these safeguarded organizations have a hard time opening their doors to organizational sociologists. They operate away from public scrutiny in a controlled and controlling environment (Bourrier, 2017). However, analysing data collection through the lens of a researcher's fieldwork gives an account of the organization and the way it functions (Bourrier, 2017).

I explore with the benefit of hindsight my own embeddedness in intergovernmental negotiations, both the physical access to the organization, the institutional inclusion – or *political embeddedness* – and the ways in which I participated, the social inclusion.

Defining embeddedness

In the US context, embeddedness was first developed to describe journalistic practices, in particular in salient contexts where the host organization is torn between both giving space to media in light of free speech and the need to retain information for security purposes to meet the Constitution's First Amendment (Zeide, 2005, p 1310). A law expert builds on the case of the US war in Iraq to illustrate the tension between the military's need to integrate journalists and journalists' need to refrain from sharing too

much. According to the author, embeddedness reveals the conditions in which journalists gain access to the field – in this case to military activities in Iraq – to share the same living and working conditions and ultimately get to ‘see’ just like the actors. In exchange, journalists must agree to follow the organization’s rules (Bizeul, 1998; Bourrier, 2010).

Based on this article, ‘In bed with the military: First Amendment implications of embedded journalism’, where embedded journalists must respect the fine line between revealing all they witness and keeping information for security purposes, Bourrier translates the concept to the sociology of organizations to explore and accurately describe the conditions of sociologists and anthropologists in the field (Bourrier, 2010). For her, it enables to depict the bargain struck between the sociologist and the organization, pointing directly to the negotiated access and the contract agreed upon. In other words, the explicit agreement ought to be the only way to enter an organization for it procures the sociologist a legitimate role to ‘see’. We could go as far as to say that Bourrier’s concept of embeddedness is a strong political stance which derives from the conviction that sociologists must gain access to organizations for research purposes, especially those attached to institutions which have lasting impact on society at large.

This statement is contested by Fournier et al (2016), who argue that collective ethnography, and ‘bricolage’, may overcome the limitations set by formal or informal contracts. Some sociologists thus contest this way of doing research because a contract of embeddedness sets guidelines which are potentially far too rigid when taking into account the conditions of fieldwork and the concerns about censorship that can arise.

Even though the concept of *political embeddedness* in sociology may be recent, its practical consequences are associated with that of immersion, be it for direct (De Pryck and Rauch, 2023) or participant (Kimber and Maertens, 2023) observation. We acknowledge here that distinct social science disciplines use different terms to describe similar practices. Anthropologists carry out ethnographies, the pioneer being Malinowski (1922), while sociologists engage in participant observation, a good example being Whyte (1943), also understood as ‘going native’ (Cassell, 1980). In other words, the consequence of embeddedness is no different than traditional immersion in which the researcher aspires to adopt the way of life of the people they study; they live with them, eat their food with them, talk their language and share their lives (Cassell, 1980)

Concretely speaking the process involves undergoing scrupulous description – ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973, 2008) and ‘obliges its practitioners to experience, at a bodily as well as intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation’ (Geertz, 1973, 2008). It requires arduous language learning, some degree of direct involvement and conversation and often a derangement of personal and cultural expectations (Clifford, 1983).

Immersed, doing participant observation and ethnography thus implies more than direct observation. It goes beyond ‘I know, I was there, I was’. It actually means ‘I settled, stayed long, learned the language, participated in ordinary life, shared the secrets of the organization, the belief system, I saw the head of the organization at play’ (Peneff, 2009, p 2002; my translation; Peneff and Becker, 2020).

Gaining access: resilience! My ‘golden thread’

UN buildings are highly secured; the premises are well defined with walls and barbed wire (Figure II.1). Entrance gates are rigorously controlled with security measures such as metal detectors, cameras and security guards who check identification, badges, bags and objects coming into the defined zone. Entering international organizations is not a given. Researchers have documented their experience of gained access or have reported their declined access. Scholars have carried out fieldwork from within international organizations, as researchers at the World Trade Organization (Abélès, 2011), as staff members at the World Bank (Goldman, 2005; Weaver, 2008), as journalists at the World Trade Organization (Velthuis, 2006), as civil society members at the World Health Organization (Eckl, 2017). Others have had to carry out research from a distance performing interviews (Bourrier, 2017; Albaret, 2022). As a PhD candidate initially interested in analysing the concept of resilience in the making of a UN programme, I had to overcome many hurdles. It not only implied being granted access, it also meant finding ways and networks willing to convey information. I followed a concept within an international organization because nowadays it is easier to follow objects and artefacts than people (Czarniawska, 2007). Resilience became my golden thread.

The UNISDR claims to be first agency to have taken on resilience in its world programme – the Hyogo Framework for Action – ratified in 2005. Interested in the concept of resilience, I chose to focus on the way the UN conceptualized the term (Kimber, 2019). In 2014 UNISDR convened Member State representatives and civil society members to begin a process that would lead to the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. The website informed about the dates and the location. The first meeting, preparatory committee (PrepCom1), was held on 14–15 July 2014 at the Palais de Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Based at the University of Geneva and having the event take place in such proximity encouraged me to attempt to integrate the process. The aim was to see from within how resilience was tackled and addressed. But how was I going to join the negotiators?

Well aware of the difficulty to enter the UN building without identification, a badge or an invitation, I addressed a letter to UNISDR on 15 May 2014 – via two email addresses that were available on their website (<http://www.wcdrr.org/preparatory/openmeetings>) – hoping that as a PhD student this

Figure II.1: Pregny Gate, Geneva, 26 January 2015

Source: Leah R. Kimber

request would suffice to allow me to integrate the process. A few hours later, I received what I considered a negative response (see [Figure II.3](#)). I would have to be affiliated to an organization and the organization recognized and accredited by the UN's Economic and Social Council. The alternative was to sign up via an organization through the 'Major Group' system. At that point I had no idea what that term meant and what solution it could offer me. I pursued my endeavours. I wrote to all Major Groups, on 22 May 2014 (see [Figure II.2](#)) following UNISDR's advice. I addressed each

group according to the name of the person who was sitting at the head of the group, the organizing partners. I waited for answers. I was hopeful some groups might accredit me.

From then on, I knew I would have to be crafty and innovative – a norm to enter organizations – to gain access. I was up against a (UN) brick wall. My political embeddedness had been rejected by UNISDR in the sense that they did not take me in as a sociologist wanting to ‘see’. However, they pointed me to the *back door*, referring to accreditation through civil society.

Seeking a gatekeeper

As mentioned earlier, on 22 May 2014, I sent out the letters to all nine Major Groups explaining my situation and my motivation to take part in the Sendai Framework negotiations. The same day a person from the Children and Youth Major Group replied. She was based in Guyana and suggested I take advantage of my geographic location and the possible ties between the University of Geneva and the UN in Geneva to get accreditation through the university. The formal channel of the University of Geneva’s section dealing with the UN relations emailed me back on 10 June 2014 informing that the university did not have consultative status and thus could not support me. Exploring that channel proved to be unfruitful.

While I had been examining formal channels and was still waiting for concrete solutions at the end of May 2014, I started looking for alternatives. The clock was ticking. Negative responses or the lack of replies was not going to affect my determination. I turned to informal channels. I contacted acquaintances and family friends who worked at the UN; these led me to persons they thought could help. The literature confirms it; more often than not, it is easier to gain access thanks to personal contacts (Reeves, 2010). Through the informal channel, a former UN official and friend, now retired, directed me to two ex-colleagues. The first one answered on 10 June 2014, copying the UNISDR staff, confirming that I needed accreditation through a recognized organization. The person suggested UNISDR would be able to guide me in the procedure. Unfortunately, no UNISDR staff member ever cared to respond.

The deadline for registration indicated on the website was 30 June 2014. We were now nearing the deadline and nobody from the Children and Youth Group, nor anybody else from the ‘Major Groups’ had followed-up on my request. Getting through the Pregny Gate on avenue de la Paix, to access the UN building in Geneva, began to feel very remote and more and more difficult to attain.

The second informal person I contacted was a negotiator for UNICEF who on 18 June 2014 apologized in an email for his late response and informed me that their organization only had two seats, and both had already been assigned internally.

Figure II.2: Letter seeking accreditation



Leah KIMBER

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Women's Major Group
Focal point

Geneva, 22 May 2014

Dear Madam,

I am a Ph.D. candidate and teaching assistant in Sociology at the University of Geneva - under the supervision of Professor Mathilde Bourrier - working on issues pertaining to risk and natural hazards. The concept of resilience has been my field of interest in the past several years and I am eager to study it more in-depth.

I am familiar with the programs UNISDR has set up worldwide and would evidently benefit from its expertise. Indeed, the organization has managed to turn *resilience* into a focal point in its *Making Cities Resilient: My City is Getting Ready* program. I wish to better understand how UNISDR manages to implement programs which encourage resilience in cities worldwide.

While studying its website it came to my attention that UNISDR is organizing three major events leading up to the end of the decade on resilience, two of which will be held at the United Nations in Geneva, the first one in July, the second in November of this year. These events seem to be milestones in the worldwide process of enhancing resilience. However, one may only attend the conference with accreditations.

Your name and contact on the UNISDR website come up as representative of a major Women group and organizing partner. What would it take for me, as an academic student, to join your group and attend the conferences organized by UNISDR?

Should you wish further details and information, please do not hesitate to contact me or Prof. Mathilde Bourrier.

I look forward to receiving your news.

Yours sincerely,

Leah Kimber

Figure II.3: Email response from UNISDR for UNIGE accreditation

Dear Leah Kimber,

Preparatory Committees in July and November 2014 in Geneva are processes leading to WCDRR in Sendai in March 2015. In order to participate in the First Preparatory Committee your organization (UNIGE) should be accredited or have Consultative status with ECOSOC. As special accreditation is only granted during meetings of the Preparatory Committee, non-accredited organizations are encouraged to join their major group, or other, delegations, in order to attend the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee. Deadline for application for special accreditation: 15th May, 2014. You may contact major group to request to be included in their delegation under their name. More information on Major groups is at <http://www.wcdrr.org/majorgroups>.

Sincerely
A...
WCDRR Team
The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Figure II.4: Email response from Ellen

Hi Leah,

If you don't have ECOSOC status, it will be through [the New York-based NGO] as the Organizing Partner. I'll send out an email to various listservs within the next few days with a few more details on the process overall. At the moment I'm waiting for confirmation on the process, but in the meantime, you can fill out and send me the attached form for your accreditation and I think that should be enough.

One final point, this would be for accreditation to the event, but you are responsible for all costs associated with your travel/participation.

Looking forward to meeting you.

Best, Ellen

The breakthrough came on 11 June 2014 when the head of the Women's Major Group wrote back to me. I remember the jolt of happiness I felt while sitting at my desk in the university office when I received her message. She was willing to give me accreditation through her New York based non-governmental organization. She clearly stated that I would be responsible for covering all costs incurred for travel and accommodation tied to this mission.

Ellen sent my information to UNISDR requesting that my affiliation be processed and on 26 June 2014 I received an email confirming my registration (see [Figure II.6](#)). I was finally in! This meant that I could attend the conference and meet with persons implicated in the process

as soon as I had collected my badge. This is how, thanks to Ellen who took me in as a researcher, I was embedded and met the conditions for political embeddedness.

Ellen was my gatekeeper. The literature takes stock of the central role gatekeepers play in deciding the fate of the researcher in the organization, what she is exposed to and the data she can collect (Broadhead and Rist, 1976). Gatekeepers can be internal or external to the organization (Reeves, 2010), but also formal and informal, linked to the institution or to individuals within the institution, to the researcher or to the 'gated'. With little to no knowledge of her position at that time, I felt grateful that she transferred the information to UNISDR, which thereafter sent me what I assume is a standard email all participants receive. I was given a personal reference number – which would be my number for all further communication – and brief information about visa requirements to enter Switzerland as well as the badging process upon arrival at the UN gate in Geneva.

As a follow-up Ellen and I exchanged emails regarding her upcoming trip to Geneva. It was arranged that I would pick her up from the airport and take her out for brunch after which we would drop off her bags at the hotel.

I was now accredited through the Women's Major Group thanks to the 'goodwill' of a person residing in the New York City area who was willing to take on the role of gatekeeper on my behalf. I was granted access to the UN building in Geneva and was institutionally included. I was embedded as a PhD student interested in resilience with the aim of attending conferences. That was the bargain struck. In addition, I was integrated in the flow of information. UNISDR incorporated my email address to its list, and I began receiving all documents pertaining to the conference – the programme, the text, official letters from the chairs, and so on – either directly from the Women's Major Group or through the UNISDR's channel.

Gatekeepers are fundamental in embeddedness because they are expected to appear and need to appear to establish a researcher's integration. However, the political embeddedness only reveals the first bargain struck – access – because it may evolve during the time of the organizational immersion. During my time at the UN as a member of civil society, I felt the urge to reciprocate Ellen's favour. She had accredited me through her organization with no other condition than asking that I find my way to the Geneva conferences by my own means. The feeling of needing to 'pay back' drove my political embeddedness into a constant 'embedding' in my quest to negotiate a role I had the urge to legitimize.

From embeddedness to *embedding*

The first time I entered the UN premises with a research incentive was when I attended the first preparatory meeting (PrepCom1). It felt vastly different

from the tours one can take as a tourist visiting the UN in Geneva. I stood in line at the Pregny Gate, on avenue de la Paix in Geneva, on 14 July 2014.

Security staff instructed us to put bags, jackets and coats on the black electronic rolling carpet before going through an electronic gate and a metal detector. *The experience is the same as at airport security checks.* It feels no different. Although the outcome does. Instead of flying over different regions and countries, being at the UN gives a sense of being in all countries at once, all regions in a single perimeter. I followed the crowd after going through the metal detector. I stood in line waiting to be called to the desk. I needed to collect my badge. A security person waved at me. I was the next in line. *I showed my passport.* The employee – wearing a blue UN uniform – looked for my name in the computer system. I was registered for UNISDR’s PrepCom. He gave me a two-day badge which I attached to my blouse as instructed in order for it to be visible at all times. Thereafter my labyrinthine experience started. I began looking for the room where the first meeting was going to take place. (Observation notes, 14 July 2014)

The first meeting convened all Member States. The opening speech took place at 9:15 am. Not knowing what I was looking for, I took notes of what I was hearing, what I was seeing. I was quickly struck by the way people took the floor, how they expressed themselves and the jargon they used. Regardless of my native fluency in English, what seemed to be ‘UN English’ struck me as being different, atypical, strange and at times hard to grasp.

In the late morning on the first day, the Women’s Major Group meeting took place, after which Ellen, together with the other participants, defined the roles of each partaker for the upcoming hours. Some attended workshops while others met with Member State representatives. I stood up and suggested that I take notes during plenary in an effort to identify the governments which mention gender in their official statement.

At the end of the two-day conference, too much was going on to run the risk of being barred from continuing to attend the process. The condition of my political embeddedness was unclear. I needed to think of a way to remain in the field. I learned that the process was to continue in Geneva throughout the second half of the year and the first trimester of 2015. Ellen had been generous in accrediting me through her organization. In exchange I welcomed her to Geneva and helped the Women’s Major Group identify the pro-gender countries. I had met the principle of reciprocity for that time. However, this was in my view hardly enough as a prerogative to remain in the process. The challenge now was to find a way to become more indispensable. Ellen and I decided to go to dinner on 15 July 2014. It was the moment to debrief on the past days’ sessions and discuss future involvement.

I told Ellen I was interested in the process essentially due to the concept of resilience. With the knowledge that she was based in New York and would be unable to join each meeting, I offered to be her physical representative in Geneva. I put forward my adaptability and willingness to participate. My contract at the university ensured a stable income and I was not expecting to be paid for the work I was offering to do as a civil society member. She responded positively but gave me no clear guidelines as to how to proceed. Questions arose: What role was I going to play from now on alone in Geneva? I had little expertise in disaster and none in gender, I was not comfortable with the language used at the UN and I had a limited knowledge of what the Women's Major Group was advocating for. How was I going to fit into this process? I started reading the emails that came through UNISDR and attended all the conference calls Ellen was organizing with Women's Major Group members; I suggested doing text analyses to compare the progression of the negotiated text, I coordinated meetings when women from the group came to Geneva. Consequently, I offered my inherent skills, above all organizational and social, as well as my knowledge of Geneva and its surroundings to ease and simplify their visits whenever possible. Having a good written and oral command of English and French were of course of great help.

In the months that followed the first conference in July, I became the Geneva-based Women's Major Group representative. I often was the only member of the Women's Group in informal and formal meetings, advocating for gender equality, women's rights, women's empowerment and leadership. I would deliver oral statements, written by Ellen hours and sometimes minutes before I entered the UN's premises. I was matching my schedule to fit the one of UNISDR's meetings.

My political embeddedness, the initial bargain which gave me a badge and the possibility to carry out direct observation, evolved. From being an observer and taking notes for myself, I became the Geneva-based Women's Major Group representative, finding myself at the heart of circulating information. It took little time, about two months, for my *embedding* to become 'high'. I had a highly informant gatekeeper. Ellen was guiding me throughout the process and was sharing broader context information, for example, how the members of the Women's Major Group met prior to the Sendai process, her experience working in other UN intergovernmental processes, the challenging issues to raise during negotiations. In that respect, I fully took on the actors' side to carry out the job I was assigned to do, namely that of advocating for gender and women's rights in the text on disaster risk reduction. My engagement gave me an insider's view of the playing field (Pouliot and Cornut, 2015).

In that role I was able to separate the 'facts from the fictions, the extraordinary from the common and the general from the specific' because

I was accomplishing ‘lengthy, continuous, firsthand involvement in the organizational setting under study’ (Van Maanen, 1979).

Grasping the narrative: beyond access

Going back to Zeide’s illustration about investigative journalism in Iraq, the levels of *embedding* vary: ‘depending on the discretion of officers who were more or less media friendly’ (Zeide, 2005, p 1315). In other words, the more discreet and less engaging the officer, the lower the level of *embedding* and, vice versa, the more sharing and engaging, the higher the level of *embedding*. I would go a step further and argue that some journalists were thus more or less *embedding* according to the officer’s willingness to share and engage. As a result, the researcher comes across restrictions placed on the time span, depth and scope of investigation (Broadhead and Rist, 1976). In a higher level of *embedding* the gatekeepers serve as resource points, where the researcher can rely on their competence and credentials and willingness to engage to find out more information.

Yet gaining a high level of *embedding* is not a given. While it depends in part on the gatekeeper, it also inextricably relies on the narrative the researcher gets hold of from gatekeepers and other actors in the organization. I define the organization narrative – or the ‘story’ in Bizeul’s words (1998) – as the cement that consolidates the relation among the actors and the researcher and provides the actors with a feeling that the researcher is ‘one of us’ and vice versa. Grasping the narrative allows to access a kind of bubble through which information transits and within which actors share common values and goals. Sharing the narrative allows the researcher to be ‘accepted as one of them’ and hence earn a high *embedding*. In this way, being on the actors’ side is eased in highly embedded situations, thanks to the narrative. This usually relies primarily on the researcher. The researcher needs to play by the rules of the game and be on the actors’ side, which entails developing an affection towards the people whom the researcher deals with. And when organization actors share an organization’s narrative with researchers, they take them in completely to the point of assigning them a specific role within the organization. They strive to include the researcher on the team with the same objectives in mind; during that process they share daily activities which consequently lead to the exchange of stories and anecdotes. While the researcher takes part in the flow of information that navigates within and outside the organization (Table II.1), they gain a privileged position.

However, grasping the narrative can be tedious. Actors in the field may refrain from providing the narrative for various reasons: power struggles such as not wanting to comply with the hierarchy’s wish to cooperate; lacking trust such as not wanting to share too much in fear of ruining individuals’ or the organization’s reputation. The inability to grasp the narrative evidently

Table II.1: Levels of embeddedness

Embeddedness	Access to the narrative	No access to the narrative
Engaging gatekeeper	High level of embeddedness: 'going native'	×××
Non-engaging gatekeeper	×××	Lower level of embeddedness: 'shadowing'

places the researcher in a lower *embedding*. It is well possible for researchers to integrate an organization after having negotiated the conditions of engagement, but they can also be put at a distance by the actors. This was the case of a research intern immersed at the World Health Organization who struggled to 'get a sense' of what the organization dealt with, beyond what she saw and was exposed to (Bourrier, 2024). 'The intern sometimes found closed doors. A few times, meetings had been cancelled or postponed without her being informed. This did not allow her to follow the knack of things' (Bourrier, 2017; my translation). Although she was granted official access to the organization's premises (badge, identification), her political embeddedness having been realized, her gatekeeper was nowhere to be found, not engaging, and the organization actors were not inviting her to participate in their daily activities. She was *embedding* – in the sense that the conditions of access had been negotiated, she was formally convened to 'live as the actors' – and yet she was put at a distance. In this case, the intern had limited access to the organization's narrative because the actors were not taking her in and thus did not provide her with the cement that allows to contribute to the organization's story.

When the narrative takes over

While highly *embedding* as the Geneva-based Women's Major Group representative, I began losing interest in my original topic of resilience. Resilience, though addressed, was drowned in other considerations and concerns. In retrospect, I followed Becker's advice; start with no preconceived ideas and let things arise (Becker, 2003).

My position as a civil society member allowed me to see many phenomena: Member States were hardly present at informal consultation meetings; the same civil society members were consistently present; the selection for funding was taking place via email, the group was holding teleconferences and working on Google Docs on Google Drive for the Women's Major Group (see Figure II.5). I became attentive and sensitive to the Women's Major Group's position with respect to UNISDR and Member States. With the Women's Major Group's narrative at hand, I was curious to find out who my civil society colleagues were and how they came about being involved in the process. I also questioned 'our' position as civil society

Figure II.5: Screenshot Google Drive work in progress, details**DRAFT****WMG Key Messages and Specific Recommendations**

Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction–Second Preparatory Committee
November 17–18, 2014

Process for providing inputs:

- Please identify yourself and add edits below in a new color.
- Indicate your name in any comment boxes.
- Do not delete any language. Suggest deletion by writing [delete: *text to be deleted*] or via a comment box.
- Reference where any quoted language comes from in parentheses

Rosemary
JWNDRR
Karen
Frances
Stuti

Women's Leadership

- Women's unique perspectives, skills and knowledge make them critical for both planning for disasters and creating risk reduction strategies
- Promoting women's leadership is a fundamental necessity to achieving gender equality and it is vitally important that explicit reference is made to it in the HFA2. We were highly disappointed to note that the direct reference to women's leadership which was included in Guiding Principle 12 d) of the Pre-Zero Draft on the post 2015 framework had been deleted in the Zero Draft.

with respect to the UN and its Member States. I knew I would be able to give a better account of who civil society is and what civil society does at the UN given my privileged integration in the process.

I gradually changed my research interest from analysing resilience to that of civil society inclusion in UNISDR's framework context.

This transition is not surprising given the literature pertaining to ethnographic research. Immersion requires a commitment to understand the reality such as it is experienced by the actors. In this endeavour, researchers find themselves in a situation of empathy in which they feel what the others feel, and which leads to them never being quite the same afterward. This undertaking creates a kind of disorientation. Some researchers may experience a 'culture shock' from which can arise ambivalent feelings and cause them to navigate between the need to identify with and, at the same time, the urge to remain distant from the process under study (Sanday, 1979).

Seizing the United Nations' exclusion mechanisms

As we now know, highly *embedding* as a member of the Women's Major Group, I was part of an organization in which various documents and

information were shared. As a researcher I had gained privileged access and was at the heart of circulating information. The data I generated over a two-year period came from different sources and venues, through various channels be it informal discussions, formal meetings, email exchanges, Skype calls. I here show what *embedding* has allowed me to do, its benefits, and discuss the discomfort and limits of such fieldwork.

Pros to highly embedding the Women's Major Group

Highly embedded in the Women's Major Group, living like my 'colleagues', led me to collect data over the course of 53 days, spanning ten months, paced by the rhythm of the Women's Major Group and the UNISDR. I followed the process from within, took part in the meetings civil society organized and convened, I integrated formal and informal settings, joined in for coffee breaks and meandered through various hallways in Geneva and Sendai. In short, I had become a native! And this was made possible because I took on a specific role as a member of the Women's Major Group.

My position in the group provided me the skills, contacts and codes to use online data and reach out to various individuals. The position enabled me to seek diverse channels to produce data and cross-check results obtained from observation or recorded in field notes (Sanday, 1979).

Seizing inclusion/exclusion via coordination tools

On 22 August 2014, Ellen created a Google Group she named 'wmg3wcdrr'. It was used as a mailing list for all members she had integrated in the group. The Google tool allowed her to send emails to all the persons in the list. She communicated information concerning the whole process; accreditation, drafts from UNISDR, Women's Major Group statement drafts. If we consider computer-mediated language to represent the fourth medium of communication – the three first ones being spoken, written and sign language, in the history of human race (Sittig, 2003) – then we must include data sources such as emails and online working tools as a category in their own right. Using these coordinating tools as data is crucial to retrieve information that circulates online especially in an organization such as the UN where people are scattered around the planet (Riles, 1999). This holds all the more truth when emails constitute the sole mode of communication. Identifying what was communicated to and within the Women's Major Group serves as a gateway to analyse the times of inclusion and the times of exclusion.

In that vein I saved and downloaded documents from Google Drive that had been worked on. Google Docs allowed the Women's Group to comment on drafts in real time from all places around the world (Figure II.5).

Seizing inclusion/exclusion via interviews

To deepen the analysis of inclusion and exclusion and to get a sense of the way it was experienced and perceived by the various actors in the process, interviews are gold. They capture participants' experiences in their own words and reveal the context and meaning of their actions (Seitz, 2016). Establishing a good research partnership between the researcher and participant is crucial to achieving a successful, detailed, qualitative interview (Seitz, 2016). Yet in the aftermath of the Sendai conference, I would remain alone in Geneva. If I wanted to organize interviews, I would have to find a solution. I found two.

The first was to continue fieldwork and attend conferences and meetings organized by UNISDR in the follow-up to the World Conference. That allowed me to set face-to-face meetings to perform interviews as such events bring together various actors (civil society members and Member State representatives). When a post-Sendai event was coming up (that is, technical workshops on terminology, targets and indicators), I either contacted the persons I knew would be present in Geneva or opted to do spontaneous interviews during session breaks. I had been witnessing the process long enough to understand that people fly to Geneva for a few hours and line up meetings, either private ones or in sessions. It is unreasonable to ask a person to dedicate one hour for an interview in the midst of an already frantic schedule.

The second solution was to give up on the face-to-face 'Gold standard' interview (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014) and to favour online or phone communication. Researchers such as myself have had to come up with viable alternatives to minimize the impact of time, space and access (Janghorban et al, 2014; Kimber, 2023b). Software, such as Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp and Zoom have appeared as the millennial solution – with the democratization of high-speed Internet access – to overcome travel costs, travel time and to open the scope to include participants in various locations, with various schedules. A growing literature addresses the methodological obstacles, benefits and disadvantages of their use. Even though some aspects of Skype calls are the same as in face-to-face interviews – such as ethical considerations for recordings – scholars have also pointed out the downsides; call disruptions, pauses, inability to read body language and loss of intimacy, image blurriness, communication delay (Seitz, 2016), the possibility to withdraw from the conversation by clicking a button (Janghorban et al, 2014) and faking a disruption. Some members of civil society I had worked with in the lead-up to the Sendai Framework did not make it back to Geneva. I wrote to them and proposed that we meet on Skype. I suggested Skype to avoid time and financial constraints. I assumed that by proposing a Skype meeting I could show that I was flexible and keen to dedicate time and

energy to exchanging with them and I trusted that this would lead to an increase in participation (Janghorban et al, 2014). These interviews indeed turned out to be the most fruitful (Kimber, 2023b).

After having conducted as many interviews as possible based on the contacts I had within the Major Group members, I later opened the scope to include UNISDR and Member States. The goal was to shift the outlook on the process and give voice to most established bodies of the UN system (the UN and its Member States). Even if the point of the research is to shed light on the less regarded body of the UN, I had to include other actors of the system to give a better account of the issues at stake. The challenges were different. The issue of distance was less prevalent. UNISDR's headquarters and Member State missions are based in Geneva. However, others emerged. The UN is portrayed to the outside world as one homogeneous body that among other things delivers world programmes and adheres to certain values and ideals (Dairon and Badache, 2021). Some exceptions in the media refer to a specific speech delivered by an official delegate or the head of government (president) in plenary, for example. This may illustrate the diverse voices that exist within the system. But as a researcher interested in analysing the UN and its different voices, I needed to be able to meet with UNISDR staff.

However, no name is posted on the website, no nominal email is available to the curious layman searching the internet. Without a doubt, this is emblematic of the UN brick wall! How was I to overcome this obstacle? Seeing UNISDR staff in meetings gave me no name and thus no entry point. PrepComs allowed no time to interact with them, I witnessed how they were running around and were stressed, always busy and in a hurry. I finally turned to an anthropologist, Sandrine Revet, who had dedicated past research to analysing the governance of disasters and had addressed UNISDR as an actor in disaster conceptualization (2018, 2020). She gave me the contact of a person she had been in touch with during her field research. I quickly managed to set up a meeting with Steve. A snowball effect worked wonders and enabled me to line up several interviews with UNISDR staff. Not all employees had experience in negotiations and only a few had dealt with civil society engagement and relations. I thus got insight into their day-to-day tasks and duties.

Interviewing Member State representatives was a different ball game. I selected the representatives according to the ties I had created in the negotiation rooms, as well as the regions. To have the point of view of a European Union Member State I interviewed a delegate from France and continued with a Swiss representative, a representative from the United States, as well as two Member State representatives belonging to the UN's G77 group in New York, namely a delegate from Kenya and one from Ecuador. I had befriended Gabriel, the French delegate, during the week-long January 2015 negotiations. Negotiations had lasted well into

the night; I had anticipated the long hours ahead and had brought along some snacks, chocolate, nuts, raisins. In the late hours of the evening, I heard the delegates in the row to my left complaining that they were hungry. I offered them some food which prompted Gabriel and me to start chatting. We became friends, which led me to being able to integrate several meetings from the perspective of Member States where I, as a civil society member, would not have had access to. Following Sendai, Gabriel had temporarily stopped working for the delegation. I asked him during a Skype interview to share some of his experiences. Hans, a delegate in the Swiss team whom I had not met before, agreed to an interview during events that followed Sendai. He had only rarely been in the negotiation rooms. I walked up to him as he was sitting behind the Swiss flag before the start of a session at the Palais des Nations. Noticing that he was from the Swiss-German part of the country, I quickly switched to speaking Swiss-German and introduced myself and stated the purpose of my interview request. He gave me his business card with a phone number I dialled in the following days. Tatiana, who was from the United States, had consistently been present throughout the process as well as after the Conference. I had kept her business card after the Women's Major Group had engaged with her on gender-related issues. I emailed her after I had decided to open the interviews to Member States. Thanks to an upcoming trip to Geneva, she suggested that on arrival in Geneva we should meet in the lobby of her hotel. She kindly made time to answer my questions before attending meetings unrelated to the Sendai process. Interviewing Stephanie from Kenya did not pose a problem. We had shared some laughs, lunches and long hours in negotiation rooms during our time in Sendai. She had also been receptive of the Women's Major Group's claims when the group was looking for allies in the room. We ended up exchanging numbers and WhatsApping each other from time to time. Based in Geneva herself, she was happy to have me over to her office to talk about my research. At the end of the interview, she suggested I reach out to Maria, the Ecuadoran representative who had been at the forefront of the process. I emailed Maria hours after meeting with Stephanie. She suggested that we sit together between sessions she was attending that week at the International Conference Center of Geneva – Centre International de Conférences de Genève on rue de Varembeé.

Cons to highly embedding the Women's Major Group

While highly *embedding* a Major Group to explore the inclusion and exclusion process of civil society seems to offer rich data, some limits exist. First, it reduces the amount of circulation among the Major Groups, not to mention among the three UNs during the process. Assigned a role which provided

such powerful insight hindered me from joining other Major Groups for comparison purposes. I felt devoted to a cause and loyal to a team.

Second, it raises the issue around ethics. Just like shadowing, a lower *embedding* does not *a priori* raise ethical considerations. The ‘bargain was struck’ (Bondy, 2013), the terms of fieldwork were set and neither the gatekeepers nor the researcher’s role within the organization was ambiguous. However, a high *embedding* addresses ethics in that the researcher takes on various roles and puts on different hats. In my case, I developed a privileged relation with the gatekeepers and was granted ‘more’ information than expected. With access to the narrative thanks to my assigned role within the Women’s Major Group, I was able to pursue my own study at the same time. The issue as to how much material an *embedding* researcher can collect and use for their own research while simultaneously working for an organization is posed. The ethical questions arise because the *embedded* organizational sociologists come across rich data and are provided with extensive material they can in turn mobilize for their own research. Although it can be considered as a ‘give and take’ situation, it raises the question as to ‘how much’ they can actually use in their own interest. Yet being granted the narrative or having a privileged relation with gatekeepers shifts the importance of ethical considerations towards the actors’ willingness to share information. Thus *embedding* at the highest level in an organization does not only imply being present in an organization and gaining access, but suggests becoming one of them and contributing to the organizational life. It also implies that the actors have integrated and taken the researcher into their fold.

Ethical considerations were at the heart of my own inner tensions concerning my organizational immersion. To produce good data and triangulate analyses, I knew I would have to conduct interviews. The awkward and ambivalent feelings towards the field – now highly *embedding* for a cause while focusing on my own research – explains why I took a break after the final negotiations. I had to wait before carrying out interviews. I needed to make sense of the fieldwork and my own experience, embedded within the Women’s Major Group. I had started out as a researcher interested in *resilience*, and then slowly shifted my focus on the group’s focus, a cause and a narrative I had ended up embracing myself. During the eight-month process of the Sendai Framework negotiation, I had made the most of the Women’s Major Group’s narrative contributing to the group, sharing at times frivolous gossip about individuals at the UN and at times existential discussions about the role of women in disasters. However I was eager to deepen my research and generate further information by interviewing my gatekeeper and other actors. The ‘sensemaking’ (Weick, 1993) of my fieldwork occurred to me after some months when my research intuitions and the data I was analysing from the process geared me towards results I deemed of interest for the UN’s civil society community.

Figure II.6: UNISDR's official email confirming the researcher's participation

Dear Leah Kimber,

Thank you for your interest in the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 14 to 15 July 2014, on behalf of your organization Women's Environment and Development Organization. This message serves as your official confirmation of participation.

Your personal reference number is 365297. Please keep this number as a reference for any future communication.

If you need an official confirmation letter for the event, you can download a copy by clicking on the following link.

[http://esango.un.org/irene/index.html?page=directRepLogin&n-r=23283&rep=365297 &code=MTg4NTMwMzczMDM2NTI5NzIzMjgz](http://esango.un.org/irene/index.html?page=directRepLogin&n-r=23283&rep=365297&code=MTg4NTMwMzczMDM2NTI5NzIzMjgz)

Pre-travel: Please note that your organization will need to make arrangements to cover the cost of your travel to and from Geneva, as well as your accommodations during the meeting. Please also ensure that you have the necessary visa for entry into Switzerland through your local Swiss embassy or consulate. Note that Switzerland is a member of the Schengen area. Representatives requiring a visa to enter the Schengen area are advised to apply as early as possible in case any time is needed for special clearances by the relevant authorities and ensure that the visa is received in time for travel. Past practice shows that when applying for a Schengen visa, it is recommended that NGOs and other representatives of major groups bring copies of the UN confirmation letter, as well as a letter prepared by their own NGO, at the time of their appointment with the relevant Consulate or Embassy. The NGO letter should include detailed information on the visa applicant (e.g., position, number of years working for the NGO and number of applicants that the NGO is sending to the event).

Admission of non-United Nations personnel: Pre-registered participants will need to obtain a grounds pass for the Palais des Nations at the Pregny gate, 14 avenue de la Paix. After presenting this confirmation letter and a valid ID passport you will be able to enter the UN premises. More information will be forthcoming in due course.

For your reference, up to date information is posted at: <http://www.wcdr.org>. Please feel free to refer to the website for latest documents and agendas.

Should you have any further questions, please direct your queries to wcdrr2015@un.org.

We look forward to your participation!

UNISDR - The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

In line with the narrative, having made the Women's Major Group story my own, I thought that if I could give a scientific account of its role and importance in the system, it would have an impact on the legitimacy of my *embedding*. By the time I started the interview phase, I was at ease, mature and comfortable about where I was heading in terms of my academic arguments and hence secure as to how to present my research endeavours. I explained in a consistent manner – to UN staff, Major Group members and state representatives – that I was carrying out a doctoral thesis on the involvement and role, the inclusion and exclusion of civil society in UN

intergovernmental negotiations and took the Sendai process as a case study since I had been part of the process.

In sum, despite institutional pressure stemming from university constraints which encourages to finalize a doctoral thesis in ‘less time’ rather than ‘more time’, taking a step back and reflecting on my experience helped immensely. On the one hand, it luckily allowed me to make peace with my initial intuitions, my fieldwork and the shift in the focus of my academic research and led me to carry out 39 successful interviews over the course of a year. On the other, and much to my relief, my colleagues in the Major Groups, UN staff and state delegates all – unequivocally– lauded my initiative encouraging me to deliver an astute analysis of the fundamental issue, namely the inclusion of civil society in intergovernmental negotiation at the UN.

Conclusion

To conclude, coining *embedding* for sociological research sheds a renewed light on the analyses of organizational fieldwork. While embeddedness focuses on the access to the field, and the way a researcher negotiates their position within an organization, I suggest to take *embedding* a step further in order to shed light on the process that derives from the initial bargain.

Drawing from my experience, while first embedded as a PhD student interested in resilience, I deepen the analysis and relevance of embeddedness by pointing to its process rather than remaining strictly focused on the initial bargain strike. I hence point not only to the conditions of access, but also to my own position among the actors, to show the context in which I generated data and analysed the inclusion and exclusion of civil society in intergovernmental negotiation processes. I develop the concept of embedding, understood as organizational immersion.

First, I argue that *embedding* as a concept is fruitful because it allows to encompass an array of challenges specific to international organizations and in particular to address the intimate relations the researcher creates with their field (Bourrier, 2013). Embedding can vary. In a lower level of *embedding* a researcher may struggle to produce data, whereas in a higher level of *embedding* a researcher is assigned a specific role which enables them to gather a greater amount of data. The nature of involvement may go as far as gearing the researcher to new scholarly questions. However, the level of *embedding* (un)fortunately, and most likely, rarely depends on the researcher alone, but is dependent on the actors in the field and perhaps also on sheer luck in being in the right place at the right time and obtaining a spot as intern or researcher. While the literature usually focuses on ethnographic studies with a spotlight on the researcher and their ability to enter the field, the argument in this appendix underlines that the researcher can be put at a distance by the actors themselves, a process they have little control over.

Second, I identify the level of *embedding* according to two parameters: the role of the gatekeeper and the access to an organization's narrative. Both impact the level of *embedding*. With, on the one hand, a thoughtful, guiding and engaging gatekeeper providing input, combined with the organizational narrative thanks to an organizational role on the other hand, this is tantamount to high *embedding*. Seizing the organization's narrative acts as the cement that consolidates the relation among the actors and the researcher and provides the actors with a feeling that the researcher is 'one of us' and vice versa.

Third, concretely speaking, my high level of *embedding* allowed me to sustain my position as a researcher throughout the process. With a badge in hand, I was permanently accredited and easily managed security checks at the main entrance. This allowed me to produce valuable data to analyse inclusion and exclusion mechanisms. The downside, however, of my successful *embedding* within the Women's Major Group was that it suspended any opportunity to navigate among the various other Major Groups given the particular role I had embodied and the high level of *embedding* I earned from my civil society 'colleagues'. Loyalty to a particular cause and a defined group kept me from looking at the process from a different vantage point.

Fourth, I highlighted the risks tied to ethical considerations. With an initial bargaining with actors, a lower level of *embedding* most likely does not raise the question of ethics in research. However, a higher level of *embedding* can be subject to an intellectual and ethical debate due to the amount of information a researcher is exposed to. In spite of this potential debate, I reiterate the nuances evoked by Bourrier (2024), which affirms that a researcher is never solely covert or solely declared, while emphasizing the paramount condition of revealing and sharing our intentions and analysis with our informants.

Finally, I offer an innovative look into the way a researcher – in Marcus' terms (Marcus, 1995) – can follow a plot or a story of allegory (in this case the concept of resilience). It shows how thanks to guiding, helpful gatekeepers and a strong narrative, a high level of *embedding* can influence the way we visualize an initial research question to the point, in my case, of analysing the subtle mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

APPENDIX III

List of Interviews and Observations

List of interviews

Date	Duration in minutes	Name	Organization	Major Group	Event topic	- Type of com.	Interview type	Place	City	Country
29.07.2015	38	Abel	University in USA, PhD student	Children and Youth	Sustainable Development Goals negotiations	Face to face	Spontaneous	Cafeteria, UN	New York	USA
18.01.2017	32	Adam	UN organization	None		Skype	Planned	His home	Gex	France
26.06.2017	66	Adriana	Fiji-based NGO	Women		Skype	Planned	Her office	Suva	Fiji
30.01.2016	75	Agatha	University in the Netherlands, PhD student	Children and Youth	Post-Science and Tech UNISDR Conference	Face to face	Planned	Starbucks station	Geneva	Switzerland
10.02.2016	64	Alice	International Federation for Medical Student Association (IFMSA), medical student, Sweden	Children and Youth		Skype	Planned	Her home	Stockholm	Sweden
29.01.2016	35	Alyssa	UN organization	Children and Youth	Science and Tech UNISDR Conference	Face to face	Planned	Centre International de Conférences Genève	Geneva	Switzerland
5.02.2016	41	Andre	Bachelor student, biochemistry, in university, USA	Children and Youth		Skype	Planned	His home	Boston	USA

CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS

Date	Duration in minutes	Name	Organization	Major Group	Event topic	- Type of com.	Interview type	Place	City	Country
25.02.2016	60	Ashley	US-based development organization	Women		Skype	Planned	Her home	Hawaii	USA
08.11.2016	39	Bella	UNISDR,	None		Face to face	Planned	UNISDR offices	Geneva	Switzerland
28.01.2016	53	Birgit	UN organization	None	Science and Tech UNISDR Conference	Face to face	Planned	Centre International de Conférences Genève	Geneva	Switzerland
11.02.2017	119	Cassandra	University in USA, professor	Women		Skype	Planned	Her home	Wellington	New Zealand
04.02.2016	50	Daria	UN organization	none		Phone	Planned	Her office	Paris	France
22.07.2015	40	Doris	Independent legal advisor	Women	Sustainable Development Goals Negotiations	Face to face	Spontaneous	Terrasse, UN	New York	USA
08.11.2016	49	Ellen	New York-based NGO	Women		Phone	Planned	Her home	Stamford, CT	USA
11.02.2016	41	Emily	UK-based NGO	NGOs	Targets and Indicator UNISDR meeting	Face to face	Spontaneous	Cafeteria, UN	Geneva	Switzerland
9.02.2016	45	Florence	UNISDR	None	Targets and Indicator UNISDR meeting	Face to face	Spontaneous	Cafeteria, UN	Geneva	Switzerland

Date	Duration in minutes	Name	Organization	Major Group	Event topic	- Type of com.	Interview type	Place	City	Country
11.02.2016	38	Frances	University in the UK, professor	Women	Target and Indicator UNISDR meeting	Face to face	Planned	Cafeteria, UN	Geneva	Switzerland
30.11.2016	45	Gabriel	Delegation of France	None		Skype	Planned	His home	Jeju	South Korea
18.10.2016	50	George	UNISDR	none		Phone	Planned	His office	New York	USA
07.07.2017	40	Gladys	Kenya-based NGO	Women		Skype	Planned	Her home	Nairobi	Kenya
23.11.2016	45	Hans	Delegation of Switzerland	None		Phone	Planned	His office	Bern	Switzerland
18.10.2016	28	Henri		Retiree: ex-organizing partner, based in New York		Skype	Planned	His home	Oslo	Norway
01.11.2016	79	Henri		Retiree: ex-organizing partner, based in New York		Skype	Planned	His home	Oslo	Norway
08.02.2016	80	Katherin	University in the UK, professor	Women		Skype	Planned	Her home	Northumbria	England
14.02.2016	158	Kristen	International Federation for Medical Student Association (IFMSA), medical student, Sweden	Children and Youth		Skype	Planned	University library	Stockholm	Sweden

CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS

Date	Duration in minutes	Name	Organization	Major Group	Event topic	- Type of com.	Interview type	Place	City	Country
23.06.2017	35	Kristen	IFMSA, medical student, Sweden	Children and Youth		Face to face	Spontaneous	My home	Geneva	Switzerland
17.10.2016	74	Linda	UK-based NGO	NGOs		Skype	Spontaneous	Her office	London	England
05.02.2016	75	Lya	IFMSA, medical student, Croatia	Children and Youth		Skype	Planned	Her home	Zagreb	Croatia
10.04.2017	42	Maria	Delegation of Ecuador	None	Negotiations on Human Rights	Face to face	Planned	Centre International de Conférences Genève	Geneva	Switzerland
30.09.2016	55	Marius	UNISDR	None		Face to face	Planned	Centre International de Conférences Genève	Geneva	Switzerland
17.02.2016	44	Micheal	UN organization	Disability caucus		Face to face	Planned	Pizzeria next to UNHCR	Geneva	Switzerland
04.10.2016	50	Peter	UNISDR	None		Face to face	Planned	Cafeteria, UN	Geneva	Switzerland
16.1.2018	61	Rosemary	Sri Lanka-based NGO	Women		Skype	Planned	Her office	Kolombo	Sri Lanka
07.04.2017	74	Stephanie	Delegation of Kenya	none		Skype	Planned	Keryan Mission	Geneva	Switzerland
16.09.2016	113	Steve	UNISDR,	None		Face to face	Planned	UNISDR Offices	Geneva	Switzerland
27.09.2016	71	Sven	UNISDR	None		Face to face	Planned	UNISDR Offices	Geneva	Switzerland

Date	Duration in minutes	Name	Organization	Major Group	Event topic	- Type of com.	Interview type	Place	City	Country
13.12.2016	32	Tatiana	Delegation of USA	None	Meetings and negotiations with various bodies	Face to face	Planned	Hotel Jade, lobby	Geneva	Switzerland
24.01.2018	35	Timon	Ambassador of Thailand - co-chair	None		Skype	Planned	His office	Bangkok	Thailand
10.10.2017	62	Vickie	University in Japan, professor	Women		Skype	Planned	Her home	Tokyo	Japan
28.01.2016	66	William	UK government organization	Science and Technology, Women	Science and Tech UNISDR Conference	Face to face	Spontaneous	Centre International de Conférences Genève	Geneva	Switzerland
20.12.2017	55	Margretha Wahlström	Special Representative to the Secretary General UNISDR	None		Skype	Planned	Her home	Stockholm	Sweden
28.12.2017	61	Margretha Wahlström	SRSG - UNISDR	None		Phone	Planned	Her Geneva- based home	Geneva	Switzerland

List of observations

Date	Type of data	Individual/organization/ Major Group	Event/occasion	Place	City	Country
14.07.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Preparatory Committee 1 (PrepCom1)	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
15.07.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Preparatory Committee 1 (PrepCom1)	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
15.07.2014	Notes post-meeting	Ellen (WEDO)	Evening dinner - postPrepCom1	Restaurant Bollywood - Pâquis	Geneva	Switzerland
18.09.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Consultation meeting	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
19.09.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Consultation meeting	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
02.10.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Consultation meeting	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
09.10.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Consultation meeting	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
28.10.2014	Email exchanges	WMG members	Ranking and Selection for Women funding for PrepCom2			
16.11.2014	Observations	UNISDR and MG	Pre-PrepCom2		Geneva	Switzerland
17.11.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Preparatory Committee 2 (PrepCom2)	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
18.11.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Preparatory Committee 2 (PrepCom2)	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
01.12.2014	Email exchanges	George (UNISDR) and MG	Funding and civil society speakers			

Date	Type of data	Individual/organization/ Major Group	Event/occasion	Place	City	Country
09.12.2014	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Negotiations	World Meteorological Organization Offices	Geneva	Switzerland
24.12.2014	Email exchanges	Ellen and WMG	Updates on process to WMG			
31.12.2014	Email exchanges	Ellen and WMG	Funding and Women speakers			
12.01.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Open-ended negotiations	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
13.01.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Open-ended negotiations	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
14.01.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Open-ended negotiations	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
15.01.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Open-ended negotiations	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
16.01.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Open-ended negotiations	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
26.01.2015	Observations	MS, UNISDR, CSO	Negotiations	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
27.02.2015	Observations	UNISDR & MS	Negotiations	Palais des Nations	Geneva	Switzerland
13.03.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	Preparatory Committee 3 (PrepCom3)	Sendai Conference Center	Sendai	Japan
14.03.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDDR)	Sendai Conference Center	Sendai	Japan
15.03.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDDR)	Sendai Conference Center	Sendai	Japan
16.03.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDDR)	Sendai Conference Center	Sendai	Japan
17.03.2015	Observations	UN-MG	Sendai, Side-Event, CSO's role	University of Sendai	Sendai	Japan
17.03.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDDR)	Sendai Conference Center	Sendai	Japan

Date	Type of data	Individual/organization/ Major Group	Event/occasion	Place	City	Country
18.03.2015	Observations	UNISDR, MS, CSO	World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR)	Sendai Conference Center	Sendai	Japan
20.03.2015	Observations	WMG members	Trip to north of Japan			Japan
15.06.2015	Observations	Kristen (MGCY)	Spontaneous visit to UNISDR	UNISDR building, rue Varembe	Geneva	Switzerland
01.07.2015	Observations	UNISDR & MS	Finance Conference	Centre International de Conférence de Genève (CICG)	Geneva	Switzerland

Summary

- 41 observations of meetings
- email exchanges
- Notes of four full days of negotiations

Notes

Chapter 1

¹ <https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-ch/experiences/headquarters-of-the-un-in-europe/>

Chapter 2

¹ Unless otherwise noted, italic emphasis in all quoted material has been added by the author.

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