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COP 17 and Civil Society:
The Centre did not Hold

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■ Acronyms and Abbreviations

AU	African Union
C17	Committee responsible for convening the alternative civil society space
CAN	Climate Action Network
CBO	Community-based organisation
CJN!	Climate Justice NOW!
COP 17	17th Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil society organisation
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
DLF	Democratic Left Front
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Co-operation
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
ESAFF	Eastern and Southern African small scale Farmers' Forum
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDA	Global Day of Action
GMO	Genetically modified organism
HBF	Heinrich Böll Foundation
ICC	International Convention Centre
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MEC	Minerals-energy complex
NASFAM	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi
NNFU	Namibian National Farmers Union
PACJA	Pan African Climate Justice Alliance
RWA	Rural Women's Assembly
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UN	United Nations
UNAC	União Nacional de Camponeses
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
U.S.	United States of America
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature

Introduction

The world is speeding towards a four to five degree global temperature rise in the next few decades, “a prospect which could annihilate large sections of the world’s population, particularly those most vulnerable in Africa” (Hallowes et al 2012, pg. 2). The 17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17), branded by its host, South Africa, as the ‘African COP’, needed to strike a deal that would see dramatic cuts in emissions, informed by both scientific standards and the principle of equity (Friends of the Earth International 2011), and a fundamental shift away from an extractivist, profit-oriented and consumerist development pathway that is causing climate change. Financing and the opening up of access to renewable energy technology were also critical. But instead of a deal to save the planet and its people, COP 17 struck a deal to arrange another deal, deferring agreement on the details of the Durban Platform to 2015, and delaying implementation of the agreement to 2020.

Given the stakes surrounding COP 17, following on from two previous failed summits in Cancún (2010) and Copenhagen (2009), and with high expectations for a more ‘just’ outcome, civil society in South Africa (in alliance with global civil society) was under significant pressure to generate a bold and powerful alternative vision through a civil society platform, influence the negotiations (through different tactics, one of which may have been disruptions) and contribute towards ‘movement-building’, the end point and character of which are very differently defined by diverse civil society organisations (CSOs). The contributions required of civil society were therefore fundamentally political in nature.

To what extent did South African civil society and international allies achieve this ambitious programme, and what impact did they have on the negotiated outcome? The author is not aware of a single CSO – including the international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) with chapters in South Africa – that has endorsed the deal. Most were deeply critical of the outcome. There has been qualified acceptance of certain aspects of the outcome by a few government donors of civil society, such as the Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) (associated with the German Green Party) (see Hallowes 2012), but this is a minority viewpoint. While (for accountability purposes) some organisations may point to a minor text change or two as a measure of success, at a substantive level, however, CSOs do not claim any organisational victory in the deal.

This paper aims to explore how civil society in South Africa organised to achieve an 'impact' on COP 17. Impact is defined in two ways, drawing upon the objectives of many CSOs, movements and alliances that organised towards COP 17:

- Firstly, what impact was achieved on the COP 17 negotiations?
- Secondly, how did the work support movement-building, with particular attention to organising from a 'climate justice' perspective?

South African civil society organised itself in three different ways for COP 17:

- sectorally (labour, faith, land and food etc.)
- through the national C17 (the structure responsible for convening the alternative civil society space) and
- through loose alliances such as the Climate Action Network (CAN) and, to some extent, Climate Justice NOW! (CJN) South Africa/Durban, as well as other alliances constructed during or just before COP 17 on the basis of political synergy.

All of these different ways and forms of organising for COP 17 had global links and associations.

This paper does not attempt to examine the full spectrum of organising efforts, but focuses on two 'sectoral' case studies (land and food from the perspective of rural women, and energy) and the C17. These two 'sectors' have been selected for their political significance to COP 17:

- On the one end of the continuum are rural women from Southern Africa, representing the interests of rural women in the region – likely the grouping of people most impacted by climate change globally, and with therefore the most vested interest in a 'just deal'.
- On the other extreme is the sector working on energy, the primary contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, and therefore associated with one of the most politically contested terrains in the negotiations.

The decision to examine the C17 is a fairly self-evident one, as this was the national platform identified to build a space for 'umbrella' civil society. Given the scale of the looming planetary crisis, one would imagine that what was needed was a visionary, rebellious and energetic political space and programme of mobilisation, not a stripped-down, neutral logistical vehicle. This paper

explores and offers an explanation for how the 'zero sum politics' of the C17 came to pass.

Some of the specific themes with respect to civil society organisations explored through this paper are: (a) state-civil society relations, with a specific focus on the 'space' for civil society's shaping of government's policy and negotiating positions, (b) some of the key fissures that exist within civil society, particularly relations with government and strategies for engagement (the 'insider-outsider' question), and (c) the weakness of civil society and the movements – a factor that deeply underpins some of the COP 17 organising failures.

The paper concludes with a perspective on the most inspiring civil society organising that is happening in the run-up to Rio+20 (presenting an alternative to the South African COP 17 experience¹) and draws out the most substantive final conclusions of the paper.

■ The Durban outcome – a critical analysis

What was expected from Durban depended upon whom you asked. Based on the Cochabamba Declaration in April 2010, Climate Justice NOW! demanded science-based cuts of 50 per cent of northern emissions by 2020 to keep the temperature rise below 1.5 degrees, substantial climate debt payments covering climate damage done to those who were not responsible for climate change, and a radically transformed economy, transport system and energy generation process (Norrell 2010). Others from civil society had lower ambitions, seeking a 'fair, ambitious and binding' (FAB) deal that did include economic justice or transformation values (Austin-Evelyn 2012). For the centrist South African hosts, the main objective was to maintain the Kyoto Protocol – especially its differential treatment, so that those who caused the problem made the most cuts and paid the most penalties – and to persuade enough countries to agree to a binding second Kyoto Protocol round of substantial emission cuts from 2012–2020 that would survive even the boycott of the United States of America (U.S.) and a few other major polluters. A Green Climate Fund (GCF) was to be established – with funding to reach \$100 billion/year by 2020 – along with technical reforms (Bond 2012).

Such straightforward objectives were not achieved because of the postponement of a renewed treaty and an empty-shell GCF. What was delivered is the Durban Platform which corresponded more closely to what Washington wanted. Indeed, US State Department official Trevor Houser noted that the Durban deal is "promising

because of what it did not say”, while the U.S. State Department official, Trevor Houser, remarked to the press at the 2012 World Economic Forum in Switzerland that “[t]here is no mention of historic responsibility or per capita emissions. There is no mention of economic development as the priority for developing countries. There is no mention of a difference between developed and developing country action” (Broder 2012).

The Durban Platform offered, according to Friends of the Earth International (2012):

- no progress on fair and binding action on reducing emissions
- no progress on urgently-needed climate finance
- increased likelihood of further expansion of false solutions like carbon trading
- the further locking-in of economies based on polluting fossil fuels and
- the further unravelling of the legally binding international framework to deliver climate action on the basis of science and equity.

In short, action will be delayed for a decade, the only global agreement (the Kyoto Protocol) was dramatically weakened, and carbon trading was retained as a core strategy in spite of the failing carbon market. For rural women in Africa, these shortfalls will amplify the various climate-caused crises they are already suffering, leaving an estimated nine out of ten small farmers unable to produce food by 2100, and an additional 180 million Africans dead (Bond 2012; groundWork 2012). Rural women (living in ecologically vulnerable environments and experiencing specific structural powerlessness within their families, communities, countries and the world as a whole) will be significantly represented in these numbers (RWA July 2011). The Rural Women’s Assembly’s (RWA’s) national and regional organising for COP 17, and its achievements explored in the section to follow, is therefore of great significance to a wider civil society understanding of the ‘impact’ upon COP and upon itself.

■ Rural Women’s Assembly (RWA) – *‘Women: Guardians of Seed, Life and the Earth’*²

The first regional RWA was held in the last quarter of 2009 in Limpopo, South Africa, creating a significant political space for more than 300 rural women from farmer unions, peasant movements, smallholder farmer and landless people organisations in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to share perspectives

and knowledge, find convergence and create alliance. The SADC RWA met in 2010 (on a much smaller scale) to consider the African Union (AU) Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy and the threats of food (in)security in the region. The third regional assembly coincided with COP 17 in Durban from 1–5 December 2011 and brought together over 650 rural women from nine countries in the region.

In South Africa, organising towards COP 17 prompted the emergence of a national 'chapter' of the Rural Women's Assembly, which held a coming together in Pretoria on 13–14 October, 2011, culminating in a march at the Union Buildings on International World Rural Women's Day (15 October 2011).

Why are the perspectives of rural women in Southern Africa so critical?

Feminists working with rural South African women to tackle rural poverty and inequality have long theorised that rural women carry the triple burden of race, class and geographical marginalisation; the experience of other rural women in Southern Africa is not dissimilar. Climate change (projected to have the most extreme impacts on Africa because of its vulnerable ecology and high poverty levels, negatively impacting preparedness) represents the fourth burden for poor rural women. They carry the greatest burden of climate change impacts and of the false solutions being imposed in the place of real structural solutions. The RWA believes that climate change and the solutions sought must be considered and tested from the powerful vantage point of poor rural women, for the following reasons:

Firstly, rural populations comprise the majority of the world's population of poor people, with the International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) 2011 Rural Poverty Report concluding that 3.1 billion people, or 55 per cent of the total global population, live in rural areas. Of these, 1.5 billion live on less than US\$1.25 per day. At least 79 per cent of the world's very poor people live in rural geographies, and South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa account for the bulk of the rural poor (RWA July 2011a).

Secondly, women constitute the majority of the rural poor. The IFAD roundtable discussion paper, 'Women as Agents of Change', tells us that "women own less than 2 per cent of all land, and receive only 5 per cent of extension services worldwide. It is estimated that women in Africa receive less than 10 per cent of all credit going to small farmers and a mere 1 per cent of the total credit going to the agricultural sector" (IFAD 2003: 4). In addition, the IFAD 2011 report states that, at a global level,

men's landholdings are almost three times the size of women's, and that in most developing countries, rural women's triple responsibilities of work on the farm, in household reproduction and income earning means they may work up to 16 hours a day – much longer than their male counterparts – with inadequate services, infrastructure and technologies to ease their work burden.³

Thirdly, Africa – a continent of 800 million people – is projected to experience the worst impacts of climate change. Africa has already experienced a temperature increase of 0.7 degrees during the 20th century (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC 2009)), and according to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2006: 448), Africa's "crop net revenues could fall by as much as 90 per cent by 2100". Projected climate impacts in this region include rapid desertification, water scarcity, drought and floods, heightened incidence of malaria and rising starvation (IPCC 2007). Rural women will be deeply impacted as the primary producers of food throughout the continent, and as the main reproducers of family (provisioning of safe water supplies, care of the sick etc.), and, given a weak structural location in society, will be less able to defend their natural resources from the incursions of avaricious companies, government officials and male elites as the effects of climate change bear down and the land, water sources and forests 'upon which women depend' are raided for profit.

Finally, women will carry the weight not just of climate change but of the 'green solutions' (genetically modified organisms (GMOs), biofuels, carbon trading) that developed countries, multinational institutions and corporates are posing to counteract the triple crisis of climate, finance and fuel. In all cases, these 'solutions' push the burden of responsibility for climate change mitigation onto the poorest and most marginal global citizens that have made little contribution to the climate crisis: the rural peasant farmers, most of whom are women.

Organising for COP 17 – the political agenda and key strategies

The political agenda (positions and strategy) of the Assembly was constructed over time and evolved on a consistent basis as workshops and awareness-raising work led to deeper understanding, as the context threw up new challenges and opportunities, and as government's policy-making processes took concrete forms. In July 2011, the RWA made a first statement of the objectives that would guide organising work with rural women on COP 17 as follows: (a) organising and strengthening a movement of

rural women nationally and regionally, and (b) gathering 'asks' and bringing South African and African rural women's voices and their experience of climate change to COP 17 (and other forums or processes they sought to influence) (RWA 2011b). The final memorandum of the Southern African RWA is the clearest expression of the Assembly's position on climate change and the demands of rural women for action by governments and the UN (see Appendix A).

The objectives of the RWA were advanced through a combination of strategies:

(a) Awareness-raising workshops and activities – In South Africa, four provincial cluster workshops took place in May and August 2011 with the aim of building awareness about and analysis of climate change, its impacts on rural women producers, and supporting women exchange their responses to climate change. In Zimbabwe, the Eastern and Southern African small scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) and União Nacional de Camponeses (UNAC), the peasant movement in Mozambique, organised workshops with local peasant women focused on seed saving and seed recovery as a 'real' alternative to climate change, and disseminated popular materials on climate change. The Namibian National Farmers Union (NNFU) and the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM) organised road shows, local meetings and workshops, while in Swaziland the rural women decided to use the momentum to launch a Swaziland RWA and initiate a bamboo planting project (RWA 2011c).

(b) Assemblies (National and Southern African) – From 13–15 October, 2011, the national assembly aimed to create a political platform for rural women to exchange experiences and perspectives, deepen solidarity and press government on rural women's demands in respect of climate change, land, food and rural governance. On 15 October, the participants followed the path of their sisters in 1956, marching to the Union Building to deliver a memorandum to government outlining their demands of government and its positioning towards COP 17. The RWA targeted the Presidency and five key government departments.⁴ A very junior government representative from a marginal unit (the gender unit) in one of the weakest ministries of government (the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform) was mandated by the Presidency to accept the memorandum and address the women on behalf of government. Rural women are largely disorganised, poorly represented (if at all) in major institutions of influence (business, labour, church, and indeed even government) and lacking in resources – altogether a group with little influence or power to disrupt or embarrass, and therefore probably considered quite unworthy of a fair audience.

The second regional assembly of well over 650 women in Durban had an ambitious agenda to deepen understanding about the systemic nature of the climate and food crisis, exchange experience of climate change and its impacts, share strategies for responding to climate change, strengthen local and international movements, and build a shared political platform on climate change regionally. The assembly comprised the following types of activities/ actions: exchanges (of seeds, responses to climate change etc.), speak-outs, exploratory sessions using creative techniques, actions (marches, demonstrations etc.), teach-ins, and political discussions to forge political decisions and positioning.

(c) Media and publicity work – This was specifically tied to the two assemblies and aimed to attract the interest of the media, and through this, the attention and sympathy of the wider public (in the case of the Regional Assembly, a global public) to the particular impacts of climate change on rural women, and their demands of governments and the UN.

(d) Policy research, analysis and 'engagement' of government and its policy processes⁵ – The COP 17 organising of rural women galvanised grassroots-linked policy analysis and influencing work, mainly oriented to the national climate change policy process. The Green Paper on Climate Change, released in November 2010, and the public hearings that took place in the first quarter of 2011 preceded the formation of the National RWA (interview Rashmi Mistry 05/04/2012). A discussion and analysis of the RWA's efforts to influence the Climate Change policy from May 2011 is outlined at the end of this section. The RWA and its constituting organisations participated in a very long list of European Commission, Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO) and Department of Environment Affairs (DEA) conferences, stakeholder meetings and workshops, and a few provincial meetings from May to December 2011.

In addition, representatives of some organisations making up or working with the RWA – but no grassroots women – took up an opportunity to meet with Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane on 7 December, 2011, for a South African 'civil society consultation', held at the International Convention Centre (ICC); only those accredited (mainly the big INGOs, policy think-tanks, or blue-chip national NGOs) could participate. The complaints of organisations, like the RWA, against such an exclusionary process may have helped inform government's decision to build a civil society-government platform at the City Hall on the morning of 8 December. The RWA and the faith community were invited to speak on a platform, alongside the President, the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal and the Minister of Economic Development. This 'civil society' consultation, organised on the heels of a deal already cut in

backrooms, was obviously meant to secure some level of CSO endorsement of this deal and convey to global leaders the open, democratic, consultative orientation of the South African government. The meeting was disrupted by physical attacks (sponsored by the same municipal-employed and ANC-affiliated 'green goons' that had assaulted activists on the Global Day of Action (GDA) march) against climate justice activists silently appealing to government to 'stand with Africa' (Links 2011; City Press 2011).

(e) Direct action – Over the course of the two assemblies, and discounting any local actions of which we might not be aware, the RWA participated in three marches (one impromptu and two planned) and one demonstration. The first march upon the Union Buildings was of the National Assembly and took place on 15 October. The second march, on 2 December, was an entirely spontaneous one – see the 'Anarchic People's March' on page 14. The RWA marched as a block on the GDA, and, supported by Friends of the Earth International and ActionAid International, also held a solidarity action meeting (on 4 December) with the lead negotiator for the Africa bloc, to show allegiance and solidarity to the positions this bloc was pushing in the negotiations.

(f) Networking and solidarity – The RWA made every effort to network and act in solidarity with a range of progressive formations engaged in actions and campaigns surrounding the COP. This included the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), the One Million Climate Jobs Campaign, the Democratic Left Front (DLF), the South African Waste Pickers Association and their ally Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), and La Via Campesina. This solidarity took numerous forms, including participating in joint actions (marches, pickets and demonstrations), creating linkages in political discussion across spaces (by having a representative(s) address the RWA or sending a representative or a nominated group to address another forum), and endorsing petitions and memorandums.

The 'impact' and key lessons from the RWA

The RWA, over the period of May to mid-December 2011, undertook an impressive number of workshops, awareness-raising activities, marches, demonstrations and two assemblies, and wrote no less than five different memorandums, policy submissions and a dozen letters to different government departments, but what did this all add up to in terms of 'impact'?⁶

The RWA was successful in building a national, and later a regional platform of rural women, and informing the public (nationally and internationally) and some sympathetic politicians and government negotiators at COP 17 about the experiences and demands of rural women for national and international action on climate change. Despite this profile, the Durban outcome does not, in any way, respond to the needs and interests of rural women, sentencing them instead to a future of less water, greater hunger, the threat of land loss, lowered production levels and an extremely high likelihood of premature death.

Box 1.

Linking 'the circus' and 'the street'

One of the key questions that emerges from the RWA experience, as it does from many other campaigns and organising efforts surrounding COP 17, is how to link the inside and outside, if at all. This was barely discussed in the RWA in the lead-up to COP, and was only touched on in the early 2012 RWA review of COP 17. Some of the organisations constituting and working with the RWA had seats inside the negotiations, but there was no agreed 'inside-outside' strategy and no space on the programme of the RWA until one of the last days to receive information on the negotiations inside. This flow of information from the inside to the outside is critical to inform and build awareness, and, most importantly, to break down the mythology and illusion surrounding the negotiations – in effect, to contest the public creation of these as democratic spaces of open equal negotiation, with fair representation of the interests of all global citizens. Linking the outside to the inside must therefore go beyond neutral analysis of the 'progress' of negotiations and the development of 'negotiated text' to build critical consciousness of the power interests at play, to analyse who is on the side of the poor and who is not (including exposing those NGOs who play the game of duplicity), and to illustrate the inevitability of 'for profit' and 'not for people' outcomes from the elite COP summits.

The RWA is politically diverse and some of the key fissures emerge around (a) the multilateral process and (b) state-civil society relations, no different from the tensions inside the C17 and other alliances. Some of the organisations (all I/NGOs) inside the RWA had an 'inside negotiations' presence and were typically more

confident and invested in the possibility of an inside resolution that would be 'fair' to global citizens. Their organisations had devoted substantial resources to support large negotiating teams, comprised of policy specialists and expert lobbyists flown in from across the world, hoping that reputation, scientific research and a 'shared language' would yield the needed outcome. They were wrong, so very wrong. Other organisations inside the RWA held a much more critical perspective on the multilateral process, akin to the perspective of Saul (2011a pg. 3): "[T]he first lesson from COP 17 is that sitting at the table of our adversaries only serves to legitimise them and to distract and demobilise us from the necessary struggle against Goliath."

There are also different positions in respect of state-civil society relations mapping out to different orientations to government and government-led policy and legislative processes inside the RWA. Some organisations still have a vested interest in participating in, trying to influence and, in the end, giving credibility to deeply flawed government policy and law-making processes that are, in many instances, stained and compromised by the nexus of state-party-business interests. Others hold a contrary perspective and are critical about drawing community groups into government-led processes that only lend credence to predetermined positions which have been constructed in back rooms and do not represent the interests of poor citizens. These are the elephants in the room that need to be surfaced and addressed by the RWA as it moves forward.

While the RWA organisers may not really have imagined that they would 'influence' the COP 17 negotiations, there was a small hope that they would be able to influence the national Climate Change Response Policy from the perspective of rural women. According to a member of the policy team of the RWA (interview Rashmi Mistry 05/04/2012), influencing work did result in some small text changes in the final policy outcome (the White Paper). However, the Climate Policy only contains one reference to rural women, who – clustered together with children and the aged – are identified as a 'special needs group', definitely not the transformatory orientation the RWA would have aspired to. The policy addresses agriculture from a mitigation and adaptation angle, highlights the importance of a shift to climate-resilient sustainable agriculture, and does address the needs of subsistence farmers for attention within an integrated rural development framework. However, it could have gone much further in privileging subsistence and small-scale farmers, proposing the reorientation of existing policies and programmes across government to support their needs, and addressing this sector as a budget priority for adaptation support (White Paper 2011). The failure to set an adequate emissions reduction target (required to keep temperature increases below the scientifically accepted 1.5 degree standard) will have dramatic consequences for rural women, the major subsistence and small-scale producers, and their offspring in just a decade or two. In summary,

while the RWA's interventions may have achieved a text change here or there – some small tinkering on the extreme edges of government policy – the climate change policy outcomes (when measured against the dramatic impacts that lie ahead for rural women) are not worthy of much celebration at all.

The greatest achievement of the RWA was that it did help to strengthen a movement of rural women nationally and regionally (although progress was uneven across countries) (RWA 2012a and 2012b). Thousands of rural women and representatives from organisations working alongside rural women:

- obtained more information about climate change, its origins and its impacts
- understood more about the institutional processes (policy-making and negotiations) that shape their lives in such distant but deeply profound ways
- had the opportunity to exchange concrete experiences of climate change and their responses
- shared concrete examples of alternatives (indigenous seeds, technologies, agro-ecology farming methods and techniques, traditional forms of local trading etc.) to 'false solutions' (GMOs, agrofuels, carbon trading etc.) and
- had a chance to take action (to emerge from invisibility to visibility, to talk out their demands, to test against power etc.).

The challenge going forward is to ensure that the work of building the RWA, drawing upon the insights and lessons learnt from the COP 17, is sustained.

Box 2.*The climate change policy process – a story of compromise and exclusion*

The RWA's experience of the climate change policy process is very illustrative of the many challenges poor citizens and the organisations that work in solidarity with them experience in respect of policy-making. Firstly, while the Green Paper on Climate Change was released in late November 2010, and the time frame for comments concluded on 15 February, 2011, the traditional long holiday period over December effectively reduced the real consultation time to about six weeks. Informants to this short paper indicated that this time frame was too contracted to do any 'meaningful consultations with rural and affected communities'.

Secondly, most of the organisations constituting the RWA complained that they only heard about the provincial consultation 'public' workshops (contracted out to a company called Linkd, which is closely associated with leadership of the DEA) conducted over January and February, 2011, after the fact. It is therefore unlikely that rural communities and organisations, which are generally poorly networked and informed, would have participated in these workshops. The same analysis applies to the thematic consultative workshops held at more or less the same time.

Thirdly, the initial timeline for the conclusion of the White Paper had been June 2011, but by August there was still no sign of the Paper and no clear indication from government as to when it would be released. Towards the end of August, the two big INGOs (Oxfam and ActionAid), closely associated with the RWA, met with the DEA Chief Director of Air Quality Management and Climate Change, Mr Peter Lukey (RWA e-mail exchange 08/25/2011). This meeting was followed by a 'carefully handpicked' civil society consultation on the White Paper, arranged by the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) (another INGO) shortly after that. There is a close personal relationship between a key staffer in the WWF and the mentioned senior official of the DEA, Mr Lukey. Just a few days

after that, a member organisation of the RWA – also an NGO with close international links, Gender cc – was able to appeal to a collegial connection with Mr Lukey to open up space for the RWA to give input to the White Paper (RWA e-mail exchange 08/30/2011). At this time, the White Paper had not yet been officially released. Carrying the mandate of the RWA, representatives to the latter meeting raised deep concerns about the content of the White Paper – specifically the absence of focus on women, the gendered impacts of climate change and rural women’s needs in terms of adaptation support – and complained about the long delays, poor communications and real failure to solicit input from poor rural women to the policy-making process.

In these various August encounters with Mr Lukey, he indicated that in the period February to August, 2011, the DEA had been deeply immersed in intra-governmental negotiations in respect of the White Paper, and in July 2011 had ‘talked with some stakeholders in business and civil society’. He indicated that the DEA would not be opening the White Paper up to a further round of consultation for fear it would be ‘watered down’ by business and some government departments. Cabinet was also pressing hard for the release of the White Paper in advance of COP 17. Mr Lukey opened a door for the RWA to give detailed input to the July draft of the White Paper, from a rural women’s perspective. This input drew upon the outcomes of the awareness-raising workshops and emerging policy positions of the RWA, and was submitted to the DEA in early September 2011. The White Paper, released nearly six weeks later, retained only a few of the policy change suggestions made by the RWA.

Fourth, the White Paper (as a policy proposal) was eventually gazetted in the third week of October (nearly four months past the deadline announced in November 2010), with parliamentary hearings scheduled to take place on 31 October. This was an extremely tight and unrealistic process, allowing only 14 days for consultation of members. Given the RWA’s unhappiness with the White Paper and its deep critique of the failures of the public consultation, the

RWA elected not to make a formal submission (which some RWA members felt would lend credibility to the process), but instead wrote a letter of complaint to the Minister of Environmental Affairs and the Chair of the Portfolio Committee. This letter indicated that the RWA would be exploring options for legal action to hold government accountable to legal requirements for citizen participation in public policy-making. This threat was not carried forward for lack of time and capacity.

It would be easy to default here to a formulaic liberal analysis about the constitution and its “requirement that government engage with citizens when making the decisions that affect their lives” (Parliamentary Support Programme 2001, pg. 5 and Buccus undated), but we must ask a deeper question about why this problem of the exclusion of poor citizens from participation in decisions that deeply concern every aspect of their lives now and into the future (exactly as this policy process does) repeats itself over and over again. Why are constitutional prescriptions for public participation, transparency and accountability not followed, and why do policies and laws not substantively represent the interests of the majority of citizens? These are not new questions, nor are my responses new, but they are an obligatory reminder for us not to default to individualised explanations of failure, or search for superficial solutions. For the mechanics of the failure run deep into the nature of government as an institution operating under a system of neo-liberal capitalism.

This is about power – whose power counts and whose does not. It is the voice of powerful corporations first, inextricably tied to the interests of commanding forces in the state and the ruling party, with secondary attention paid to the interests of other actors – labour, politically influential INGOs and so on – where these need to be appeased to safeguard outcomes. The RWA was able to insert itself through a ‘crack in the door’ informal hearing on the White Paper, created through the intervention of some in the ‘inner circle’ that Buccus (undated pg. 13) talks about, but as we see, even this did not

secure an outcome favourable to rural women. It is likely that DEA officials were of the view that rural women (traditionally regarded as 'non-confrontational and compliant') would not overly rock the policy boat and could therefore be accommodated. DEA officials will cry that they are trying to balance multiple interests in the policy process and that it is not possible to satisfy the interests of all 'actors', but this lies at the heart of the neo-liberal problem.

The policy and legislative process is cast as a neutral multi-stakeholder process, when this is indeed not so – while the White Paper is a great improvement on the Green Paper, its failure to align to a scientifically accepted 1.5degree global warming target, its global emissions peak post-2020, and its privileging of market-based mitigation solutions do not reflect the interests of the majority of citizens, nor the radical changes needed to reduce our high carbon emissions that will have dramatic implications for our brothers and sisters on the rest of the continent. Corporate interests and their backers in government have carried the day.

■ Mobilising to contest the Minerals Energy Complex (MEC)

COP 17 was touted as an 'African COP' and its outcome, therefore, read from the interests and perspectives of the majority of poor Africans (and rural African women more specifically), would have needed to tackle with commitment and urgency the major driver of climate change globally – fossil-fuelled energy. Instead, as discussed in section 2 above, rich, developed nations, heavily influenced by their own corporations and their own political power interests, voted against the planet and in favour of profits by failing "to commit to urgently needed deep emissions cuts, and even backtrack[ing] on past commitments to address the climate crisis" (Friends of the Earth International 2011, pg. 1).

This section of the paper begins with a brief exploration of the contributions of fossil-fuelled energy to global greenhouse gas emissions at the national level, concluding with an indication of the minimum transformations required in energy production and use, if we are to succeed in pulling back from imminent disaster. This section also touches on how the minerals-energy complex (MEC) is structured, and the challenges this poses for shifting to a decentralised renewable energy pathway. The second section addresses how the civil society energy sector (with

specific focus on the National Energy Caucus, Earthlife Africa and Greenpeace) has organised itself since 2008 to influence government's policy on emission reductions, mitigation strategies and energy planning, as well as the more recent climate change policy process. These all lay the foundation for government's COP 17 negotiating position. The section concludes with a few reflections about how C17 and civil society presumptions of sectoral political mobilisation were deeply flawed, and how opportunities for movement- and alliance-building were lost by the logistical 'tsunami' of C17.

□ The MEC and climate impacts

South Africa hosts one of the world's most polluting economies, responsible for more than 40 per cent of Africa's total greenhouse gas emissions. This status was inherited from a MEC, dating back to the De Beers diamond empire in Kimberley in the 1860s and Anglo American Corporation's founding in 1917 in Johannesburg, after which Eskom was established by the state in 1928 because private mining houses could not run their own electricity companies effectively (Fine and Rustomjee 2006; groundWork 2009; McDonald 2008). The interrelationships between coal firms, the energy-generating state monopoly and the major consumers (mining houses and smelters) tightened over subsequent decades. Ironically, although these firms were instrumental in core apartheid processes, such as the migrant labour system, the MEC was permitted to amplify its power after 1994, thanks to privatisation of the Iron and Steel Corporation (now Arcelor Mittal) and the continuation of cheap electricity deals cut during the early 1990s. Honouring these deals today requires the construction of the third and fourth largest coal-fired power plants in the world, Medupi and Kusile (now underway), for which price increases are affecting mainly low-income people, who are rioting over service delivery shortfalls. If South Africa's CO₂ emissions are measured in relative terms (its carbon intensity per capita unit of GDP output), it is among the world's highest – far worse than even the U.S. In fact, in 2000, South Africa was 20 times worse by this measure (Bond 2012). By any reasonable ethical understanding, South Africa owes Africa a vast 'climate debt' for damage done. The main sources of this pollution are two activities that reflect continuity, not change, from apartheid: the coal-burning power plants of the parastatal Eskom and the coal/gas-to-oil conversions of Sasol.

The greatest controversy surrounds the fact that the electricity produced by burning coal is cross-subsidised, so that it is the cheapest available anywhere in the world for two of the world's largest mining and metals corporations, BHP Billiton

and Anglo American Corporation. In 2010 it was revealed that these companies are paying less than US\$0.02/kilowatt hour of electricity for smelter consumption, thanks to apartheid-era, four-decades-old special pricing agreement deals. Other large corporations received electricity in 2009 at US\$0.05 – still below cost – and although prices rose dramatically on average, the lowest increases were imposed on the biggest firms. These firms, including Arcelor Mittal and Xstrata, export their profits both through illegal transfer pricing and through straight repatriation of dividends to shareholders in London and Melbourne, and the downstream consumption of their metals product is minimal, due to local overpricing (Bond 2012).

Meanwhile, millions of people are regularly disconnected from or denied access to the grid due to extreme poverty, and because of dirty household energy, the passage from HIV-positive to full-blown Aids status via respiratory-related opportunistic infections, including the raging TB epidemic, is rapid. Annual community protests against service delivery number in the thousands, many of them responding to a price rise since 2008 of more than 130 per cent to pay for the new coal-fired plants (Bond and Ngwane 2010).

Corruption is built into energy-intensive mining and industry, including controversial ruling-party deal-making in the sector (the 25 per cent stake in the local affiliate of Hitachi, which got the R40 billion contract for Eskom's coal-plant boilers and then failed to deliver these on time), Black Economic Empowerment shakedowns for well-connected tycoons, and corporate malfeasance in climate deals (as Sasol and Eskom attempt to secure United Nations Clean Development Mechanism subsidies for destructive projects) (Bond 2012).

The end of apartheid gave the MEC free reign to amplify the original contradictions between state, society, economy and ecology. Not only was this evident in the financing and pricing decisions taken to pay for Eskom power plants, but in the energy ministry's multi-decade Integrated Resource Planning (IRP2) exercise, which was run by an insider committee dominated by electricity-intensive corporations.

Energy sector organising and influencing work in the run-up to COP 17

The National Energy Caucus, a progressive umbrella body of close to two dozen NGOs, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and grassroots groups, was founded in 2003 and has been engaged in co-operative efforts to influence a confusing array of energy-related or energy-impacting policy processes, such as government's

long-term mitigation scenarios in 2007/2008, the integrated resource plans 1 and 2 (2008 and 2010), the integrated energy plan (2010) and the climate change policy (2010/2011). Earthlife Africa, a founder of the Energy Caucus, and one of its most active members, and Greenpeace South Africa (a late joiner to the Caucus) have also worked separately and in concert with others on the Caucus to influence policies.

Of particular interest is how the individual organisations and the Energy Caucus had organised ahead of COP 17, given the centrality of the energy question to both emission reductions and equity commitments. According to the director of Earthlife (interview 5/04/2012), the parameters of government's negotiating position in regard to emissions and energy had been substantively set long before COP 17 through multiple and overlapping policy processes. The policy, lobbying and organising work to be done in the six-month run-up to the conference, aside from the nuclear work, was of a limited nature. Earthlife has been working with grassroots groups, with a strong focus given to women, on energy deprivation, pollution and affordability, and supported these groups' participation in COP 17 processes where their budget and/or that of the C17 permitted. Their ability to lead intensive energy work around COP, whether at the national or global scale, was severely limited by the scale of capacity in their organisation and the deployment of significant organisational capacity to support the C17 process. Earthlife straddled the 'inside-outside', sending one staffer to observe the negotiations, with another staffer dedicated full-time to the C17.

From a Greenpeace perspective, they too (like Earthlife) were immersed in energy- and climate-related policy work from as early as 2009. Aside from inputting to the national climate change policy process, Greenpeace mobilised its members from March 2011, following government's commitment, outlined in the 2010 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), to construct new nuclear power plants. This mobilisation continued throughout 2011 with the release of research, the submission of a response to the environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the proposed plants, and an online petition opposing the

Minister's sign-off of a R1 trillion nuclear investment proposal that would soon open for tender (interview Ferrial Adam 10/04/2012). While the inside track of negotiations and the outside track (of grassroots-oriented campaigning and movement-building) were quite equally weighted for COP 17, there is now speculation that Greenpeace will be cutting back on its investments in future multilateral 'inside' negotiations work. Linked to this, their model of campaigning may also be under review, with a stronger focus on national level policy and campaigning work as the key site of struggle for global change.

Both organisations mobilised members and specialist policy capacity to influence the climate change policy process, with Earthlife making a written submission on

the Green Paper, and both organisations making submissions to the October White Paper parliamentary hearings. The informants echoed the criticisms of the RWA about the failure of government to widely publicise consultation workshops on the Green Paper, the long delays in the policy-making process, and the short time-frame (14 days) for organisations to respond to the White Paper (interview Ferrial Adam 10/04/2012 and interview Tristen Taylor 5/04/2012).

In respect of the Nuclear Energy Caucus, Ferrial Adam indicated that the work of the Caucus has not been sustained over time because of budget limitations (Ferrial Adam 10/04/2012). Financial and capacity problems have also led to a mode of operating that is responsive (to government's evolving policy positioning on energy), as opposed to one of co-ordinated proactive organising and campaigning. The Caucus' majority NGO membership feeds into a political positioning, strategy and supporting capacity that privileges research and policy work over grassroots-led campaigning on energy issues that affect communities on a day-to-day basis. It would appear that the Caucus has not been able to support and link up with some of the thousands of local service delivery protests (an overarching challenge across CSOs), many of which have been in response to government failures in the provision of energy, unaffordable pricing and cut-offs. In conclusion, the Caucus has been largely demobilised, including for COP 17, although hope was expressed that the IRP's commitment to nuclear energy and recently revived interest in this question by members may lead to a more grassroots-driven energy campaign going forward (interview Ferrial Adam 10/04/2012).

Impacts and challenges

The most obvious impact of a weak Energy Caucus was that the network that would naturally have driven public campaigning and media work on the MEC, and, equally importantly, the very necessary awareness-raising work linking to other networks, alliances and campaigns (so bridges could be built and movement encouraged) was not activated. Many of the organisations that led the Caucus are the same organisations that played a leading role in the C17, and so, for the second time, deep political impacts were felt as key activists and organisers had their energies and skills diverted away from the political challenges to the logistics of the C17.

■ The National Civil Society Process – the C17

In prior COPs and most multilateral summits held in places amenable to civil organising, national CSOs usually lead a parallel civil society summit. When COP 17 discussions began among civil society, there were hopes that the People’s Summit in South Africa could overcome some of the CSO weakness and fragmentation that characterised COP 15 and COP 16 respectively, building an organisation that “would mobilise to change the course of history” (Saul 2011a: 1).

This section of the paper explores the history of the C17 that was responsible for convening the civil society space in South Africa, and its evolution as a structure whose mandate was reduced to creating an ‘empty political shell’ for the ‘participation of civil society’. The case study will consider the implications of this decision for wider civil society organising, and the numerous lost opportunities for contestation and movement-building towards a global alternative.

In this analysis, attention will be focused on the politics of the C17, as opposed to how it conducted its logistical work under the most challenging of circumstances. This question has been the focus of its own internal review (C17 2012) and the COP 17 Earthlife review (Hallowes et al 2012). The C17 pulled off a significant feat in organising any civil society space at all with its limited resources and capacity and many internal challenges, and the analysis that follows does not aim to detract from this important achievement.

□ Removing the substance, keeping the shell

The C17 could have gone down two roads – a substantively political one, or a limited logistical one. The preconditions for a journey down the latter were established through a combination of events and developments over a six-month period in 2010. In July of that year, the HBF convened a meeting of about forty mainly environmental organisations, at which point a decision was taken to set up an ‘umbrella group of activities’ for civil society participation in and influencing of COP 17 (Hallowes et al 2012).

This was followed, in the last quarter of 2010, by a ‘broad unity’ (discussion, David Hallowes 12 April 2012) meeting of a greater range of CSOs, termed the ‘Booyens’ meeting (after the Booyens Hotel, at which it was held). This meeting included organisations from the environmental, social and labour ‘sectors’ and embraced a mix of social movements, community organisations and domestic and

international NGOs. Given the political complexity and diversity in this meeting, a 'unity outcome' was inevitable. At this meeting, the C17 committee (a committee of 17 representatives of CSOs) was elected and mandated to take the commitment forward to build an umbrella forum or set of activities for civil society. The C17 committee, while reflecting the diversity of the meeting at which it was founded, had a majority presence of representatives carrying more of the politics of what is loosely termed the 'climate justice movement'.⁷ In many respects, this early start to the C17, defined by an approach of drawing together the widest range of organisations from across sectors and spectrums – initially with the guiding involvement of a fairly mainstream 'green' funding organisation (HBF) – quite fundamentally shaped the political trajectory that it would take.

The C17 committee met in January 2011, with the perspective of some of the key people on the committee (and the one that ultimately carried the day) being that the C17 should create the platform for civil society participation but not attempt to lead it (interview Ferrial Adam 10/04/2012). The 'politics' would instead be shaped by the campaigns and activities planned by CSOs, movements, coalitions and alliances participating within the civil society space. It seems that in a later broad-based July 2011 meeting ('infamous' for a facilitator whose political strategy and messaging prioritisation methodology or "red-dot chopping tactic" stripped any last vestige of political potential out of the C17) (Bond July 2011, pg. 1, and C17 July 2011) a last attempt was made to place the building of a political platform with the C17, but this was again rejected (interview Ferrial Adam 10/04/2012). The coffin of a C17 political process was nailed down in July, with its reassertion of the need for a logistical, as opposed to a political, process. Given the diversity amongst participating CSOs, and specifically those represented on the C17, a 'common denominator' politics was the likely outcome. Having said that, pushing the politics out of the C17 meant that the opportunity for CSOs to engage in dialogue, challenge each other and possibly even move CSOs to new political positioning, in and through building a civil society process, was lost.

Implications and effects

If the position was that the 'politics' (the political positioning in respect of climate change and the negotiations) would be created and led through civil society coalitions, platforms, alliances and movements in the civil society space, to what extent did this occur? This paper has focused on two 'case studies' – the one a

'sector' (energy) and the other a campaign (the RWA, and potentially the beginning of a more broad-based popular movement) – which begins to illustrate a little about what it meant for 'agenda setting' to be diffused out to organisations and initiatives populating the space. In the case of the energy 'sector', which should ideally have offered leadership and supported popular education and consciousness-raising to organisations and movements in the run-up to COP 17, this refers to the Energy Caucus. As indicated above, although a national platform for organisations working on energy in South Africa, the Caucus was substantially demobilised. Instead of a unifying energy platform, it became more atomised and disjointed organising. The big INGOs, with more resources and capacity, lead their positions (typically at an international level and through the negotiations) with the smaller organisations, like Earthlife, who have a stronger climate justice and grassroots orientation, being completely overwhelmed by the logistics of C17 and unable to support the much-needed position-building and leadership of other initiatives on the energy question.

In the case of the energy 'sector' – which should ideally have offered leadership and supported popular education and consciousness-raising to organisations and movements in the run up to COP17 - we find that the energy caucus, a national platform of organisations working on energy in SA was substantially demobilised. Instead of a unifying energy platform, we witness a more atomised and disjointed organising with the big INGOs with more resources and capacity leading their positions (typically at an international level and through the negotiations) with smaller organisations, like Earthlife, having a stronger CJ and grassroots orientation, completely overwhelmed by the logistics of C17 and unable to support the needed position building, and leadership of other initiatives on the energy question.

Natural 'climate justice' allies (the RWA, Million Climate Jobs, DLF, Wastepickers of South Africa, La Via Campesina and PACJA) held together as best as they could with their limited resources and capacity, and late planning. But the effort was still quite inadequate, with last-minute collaboration on actions and events, rather than real efforts to build a shared political analysis and strategy in support of the alternative. The withdrawal of the Cosatu-affiliated unions (some of whom may have been allies to a climate justice front) from the civil society process into their own geographically isolated activities complicated bridge-building efforts.

Possibly the most concrete expression of the political disappointment of the C17 was the GDA on 3 December, 2011, a march which gathered between 6 500 and 8 000 marchers under the banner 'united against climate change' – an utterly bland statement that anyone, even business, could endorse (Bobby Peek public meeting 2012). Instead of using the march as a platform to delegitimise the negotiations and the political agendas being pressed inside, the march planning provided for the polite 'handing over' of the march and its thousands of supporters on a silver platter

to Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and the UNFCCC Convenor, Christiana Figueres. In a Quincy interview, Ashwin Desai (2011b:1) noted that “[the march] was a tragi-comedy. There were the skirmishes with Zuma supporters at the back end of the march and this tended to overshadow any analysis of what was going on at the front, where the big-name, spectacle NGOs dominated the content and temperature of the march. The local grassroots organisations were reduced to spectators and allowed only the occasional cameo appearance, with most often a single line: ‘Amandla [power]’. It was ironic that the word for power signified the local organisations’ bit part. It was as if the size of your funding determined your place on the truck.”

Box 3.

The ‘Anarchic People’s March’

In contrast to the compromised GDA march, on Friday 2 December, the RWA, the PACJA, DLF, the Million Climate Jobs Campaign and La Via Campesina took to the streets in a spirited and powerful impromptu march in front of the ICC. The march had no jointly agreed political platform or strategy, nor did it have a nominated leadership and speakers (all of the standard features of an organised march), but, in comparison with the final day of action, it was the one that (in its spirit, its energy and its insistence to challenge power) represented a people’s movement for climate justice.

If what was needed was a powerful vision of an alternative for climate justice and a mobilisation that would change the course of history, neither of which the C17 was capable of delivering, then an important question surfaces: Why did the progressive climate justice arm not mobilise to form a bloc within the C17, or push a broad-based national climate justice platform outside of the C17? In respect of the search for a climate justice bloc within the C17, it would seem that a combination of factors undermined the potential of this political strategy. In the first instance, key leaders of the climate justice organisations sent more junior staff to the C17, undermining the possibility for a cohesive strategy. By July, when it was clear that a more politicised C17 was lost, the C17 (now much smaller for attrition) moved into crisis mode to ‘save the civil society space’, with logistics and fund-raising eclipsing political strategy. Political differences between organisations on the C17 were pushed aside to just ‘get the job done’.

On why a broad-based climate justice platform outside of the C17 did not succeed, the following is broadly suggested from research and discussions with key stakeholders. Firstly, within the leading climate justice network, CJN!SA, there were tensions between people and organisations arising out of a combination of political and personal differences. These tensions, in part, crossed over to the C17 Gauteng structure, of which there was overlapping membership. Secondly, CJN!SA discussed COP 17 through its listserv, but only met on 22 September, 2011, most probably due to financial constraints. While elements of a political process in the run-up to COP 17 were discussed, the meeting was mired with tensions and the Gauteng group departed to catch flights before a unified national CJN!SA-led mobilising platform could be agreed on (CJN!SA 2011). Thirdly, an effort to build a common climate justice process through an alternative formation (Climate Justice Durban) fell apart in the absence of capacity (much of which was absorbed back into C17 work) and continuous leadership. By October, all possible efforts to co-ordinate a national platform had substantially failed and organisations and movements headed to Durban with some informal links across movements and campaigns, but no common political programme.

From this it can be concluded that, from the perspective of civil society in its broadest and most diverse sense or from a climate justice civil society angle, a political 'centre did not hold' for COP 17. This is deeply significant. Firstly, as already touched on, the potential to at least open a dialogue, build deeper consciousness and possibly move organisations to different political positions through a 'common denominator' politicised C17, was lost. Secondly, and more desirably from the perspective of the writer, the opportunity to strengthen and broaden the climate justice movement through political positioning and platform-building outside of C17, was also lost.

Box 4.*Some inspiration from Rio – civil society organising to Rio+20⁸*

The author has recently been inspired (Ortiz 2012) by the example of civil society organising for Rio+20, which offers hope for an alternative that must, by necessity (given the crisis confronting the planet and its citizens), be a deeply political process. The civil society organising committee there sees Rio+20 as an opportunity for different movements to come together in a unified way, bridging sectors and facing the challenge of constructing a development paradigm built upon people's solutions. This space must be free of corporates and independent of states.

Civil society started organising in 2010 for Rio+20 (to be held in June 2012). The civil society organising committee brought together different national networks over time and now have a unified platform of more than 35 networks. The major trade union confederation, CUT, is part of the civil society platform, as are organisations that form part of the World Social Forum (WSF). Through this platform, they have talked about their vision of the summit they wish to construct collectively.

While there are many different positions in regard to the Green Economy, they have located the main thread of commonality – the commodification of nature – and are ready to frame their political response as a push against dirty capitalism.

All networks and coalitions have been asked to build their discussions around four 'themes': (a) to unmask the structural realities underpinning climate change, poverty, inequality etc., (b) to expose the false solutions, (c) to define the people's solutions and (d) to identify the commonalities around which civil society can campaign. This process will link struggles against capitalism, homophobia, racism, sexism etc. Direct links to and solidarity with local struggles in Brazil will be made, and there are planned 'plenaries of convergence' between sectors and movements to build unified positions and express these through the People's Assembly to Rio, the UN and the world as a whole. In the

words of one member of the civil society organising committee, Lucia Ortiz: “Even if we do not succeed, we will have built strength to challenge the UN and our governments and hold them accountable.”

While the context and state of movements and popular struggles in South Africa and Brazil may be very different, the civil society organising towards Rio+20 does give us an insight into what is possible, and offer hope for a real alternative that will save the planet and its people.

■ Conclusion

This paper has explored the question of civil society ‘impacts’ on (a) the negotiations and (b) the building of a movement (for climate justice). It had done so by examining COP 17 organising in two different ‘sectors’ and the national level through the C17 civil society process.

The Durban outcome has been discussed and the argument made that this deeply flawed ‘deal’ does not reflect the aspirations and intent of the greater majority of South African CSOs that individually or collectively campaigned and sought to influence the negotiations process. When looked at from the perspective of Africans, and African rural women in particular, the Durban outcome seals a climate change trajectory that is already killing hundreds of thousands of Africans annually, and by current projections, hundreds of millions of citizens on this continent by the end of this century. While CSOs in South Africa and elsewhere in the world may differ on an analysis as to why multilateral processes have repeatedly failed, the author has made the argument that the vested interests of powerful governments (particularly the U.S.) and the hijacking of the UN by corporate interests has secured this annihilist deal. Fernandes and Girard (2011) in Cock, J. (2012 pg. 3) echo the same in their argument that the failure of the negotiations is “largely due to a ‘corporate capture’ of the UNFCCC process”.

In regard to the objective of movement building, the case studies and the C17 have thrown up the following conclusions:

- Of the three experiences, the RWA organising has had the most meaningful impacts. Well over a thousand rural women are more aware of climate change (and can locate their own experience of changing soil conditions,

rainfall and weather patterns, for example, against scientific evidence), have received new knowledge and been exposed to new practices, have taken political action and may have strengthened leadership, and built solidarity with other women and struggles. The work of movement-building and -strengthening from a climate justice perspective has begun and must now be sustained over time.

- Fledgling solidarity connections were built across organisations, alliances and campaigns that would identify as climate justice and should be built upon rapidly so as not to lose momentum. The conflict and competition (often of a highly individual and divisive nature) that developed between individuals and organisations in the climate justice tradition should be confronted and addressed, as these deeply weaken struggles we should be waging collectively.
- In late 2010, the C17 held the potential to forge a political platform (even of a 'common denominator' shape), but an NGO-ised unity style of operating and a combination of poor facilitation, and what seems to have been weak leadership, led to a C17 stripped down to a logistics role. The author has made the argument that a 'unity platform' C17 may not have been the most desirable, but in this current political climate, it would have presented the possibility for some meaningful dialogue, the building of awareness and the opportunity to clarify political positions of organisations. Since this outcome for the C17 was not achieved, the author then asks why the climate justice tradition did not grasp leadership of the C17 or develop a stronger unified alliance outside of the C17, eventually concluding that conflicts, distracted leadership and inadequate capacity were the main stumbling blocks.
- Even within the more unified efforts (including those of the RWA), political differences within and between organisations in terms of how to relate to government, the potential of policy-making and multilateral negotiations to effect structural or systemic change, as well as serious differences in analysis as to the source of the climate crisis (with some organisations searching for small-scale systems change within the given economic system and others adopting a clear anti-capitalist position) prevented real progress.
- In general terms, the weak contributions to movement-building were themselves rooted in the weakness of civil society and organised popular struggles, creating a reinforcing tendency.

The paper has pointed to a major challenge in state-civil society relations as they are played out on the policy-making terrain, different interpretations of which have created their own tensions between CSOs. Organisations experienced CSO consultations (that took place around the climate change policy) as exclusivist, oriented to members of privileged 'inner circles', with limited information dissemination and inadequate time-frames, and offering little opportunity and space for the communities and citizens impacted most by the policy to give their inputs and perspectives. The author concludes that the exclusion of the majority of ordinary citizens from the policy-making process is no surprise, reflecting as it does the nexus of state, ruling party and business interests and the hijacking of policy processes by elite interests.

In the end, the failings at COP 17 are deeply rooted in CSO failures (not just in South Africa, but around the world) to step out of the rarefied policy spaces and meet their ideological differences and organisational self-interest head-on, to encounter "the people in the abysses that presidents and NGOs fear" (Saul 2011, pg. 4), to undertake the "painstaking task of local grassroots movement-building" (Satgas 2011, pg. 2) and the work of constructing an alternative that must be anti-capitalist in nature. In the absence of building "national power to hold governments to account and to contest state power, the climate negotiations at all levels of the world will be stacked in favour of capital. Thus demonstrations outside the COP 17 negotiations are not going to be sufficient in themselves to open the space for alternatives inside the negotiations" (Satgas 2011, pg. 2).

In conclusion, COP 17 has come and gone, but the structural realities that underpin climate change remain in place. Through historical and more recent COP 17 mobilisations, we have obtained slightly deeper clarity among some activists and grassroots communities that governments and multinational institutions are quite incapable of offering – the vision and leadership that the planet and the 99 per cent of its citizens need. Organisations and movements that gathered in South Africa, assembled in Cochabamba and other sites of struggle and that will be gathering in Rio, have articulated a vision of an alternative, and construct this alternative on a daily basis at a small scale as they organise, farm, produce and process. The COP 17 organising in South Africa may not have yielded the outcomes needed, but the contributions to awareness-raising about the threats of climate change, the deepened organising that resulted, and the solidarity linkages created between organisations must be urgently grasped and built up into a more unified, grassroots-based (and -led) alliance against climate change and for climate justice.

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■ Interviews:

Professor Patrick Bond, Centre for Civil Society – 11 April 2012

Tristen Taylor, Earthlife Africa – 5 April 2012

Ferrial Adams, Greenpeace – 10 April 2012

Rehad Desai, Democratic Left Front – 10 April 2012

Rashmi Mistry, Oxfam South Africa – 5 April 2012

David Hallowes, independent researcher, informal discussion – 12 April 2012

The writer was unsuccessful in interviewing Dorah Lebelo (GenderCC) and Richard Worthington (WWF), but received written input from Mercia Andrews (Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE)).

■ Appendix A

□ Main memorandum of the RWA at COP 17

We, the RWA of Southern Africa, meeting in Durban on the event of the 17th Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC in Durban, stand alongside you, the South African government, as you negotiate to implement the terms of the Bamako Declaration, which lays out the minimum necessary for the survival of the people of Africa, including legally binding emission reduction targets by rich developed countries (annex 1 countries) of 40 per cent by 2017, a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol by annex 1 countries without conditions, and adequate public finance to meet Africa's mitigation and adaptation needs.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing debate about a new mandate here in Durban and ask you to stand firm in your rejection of any talk of a new mandate, as this will lock in inaction for another decade. Annex 1 countries must be held accountable and deliver on their existing promises without making new promises that they will not fulfill. If we go with inaction, this will, as you know, have devastating impacts on people, particularly rural women, in Africa. The consequences of irregular rainfall, floods and drought are lowered food production levels and increased hunger, with many knock-on effects on health and education, for example.

Rural women across Southern Africa are already reporting 20 per cent decreases in food production, and current trends tell us that if we fail to take action now, by 2020 we will have seen a 50 per cent loss in crop yields in our region. We produce 80 per cent of the food consumed by households in Africa. In the absence of support for us, we believe that local and national food security will be deeply threatened.

In addition,

1. We ask that you continue to press for a filling of the GCF with new public finance and work to keep business interests out of the GCF. Because of rural women's central role in food production, at least 50 per cent of adaptation funding in the GCF and national budgets should be reserved to support women farmers.
2. We ask that you properly recognize women's critical role in fighting climate change and protecting livelihoods and the environment. Equal rights to land and natural resources are critical to fight climate change. The RWA asks that governments implement the principle of 50/50 land to women through national programmes of land redistribution and agrarian reform.

3. Finally, we ask that, as you push for the implementation of the Bamako Declaration, you simultaneously reject the false climate solutions that are being pushed by rich developed countries. Agrofuels, GMOs and carbon markets allow rich polluting countries to escape their historical debt, pushing these obligations onto poor farmers like us to carry.

Let us stand together to stop Africa burning!

Signed on this day of 8 December 2011

Rural Women's Assembly


Endnotes


1. The author notes that the context, the depth of organising, the level of political maturity and the construction of alternatives are advanced in Brazil, in contrast to South Africa, and may not be entirely fair as a point of comparison.
2. The author was employed by ActionAid South Africa during the RWA's organising for COP 17 and this paper, with a few inputs gratefully received from some colleagues in the RWA, represents her perspective and not that of the RWA as a whole.
3. Gender disaggregated data is impossible to locate and, when found, extremely dated.
4. The Department for International Relations and Co-operation, the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, the Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries, the Department of Environmental Affairs and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.
5. This section and the in-depth examination of the climate change policy process – 'a story of compromise and exclusion' – draws heavily on an interview with Rashmi Mistry of Oxfam South Africa, but the analysis and the conclusions drawn are the author's own.
6. The RWA held two different internal self-reflections over the period February to March 2012 – the one telephonic and the second face to face – upon which this section draws.
7. Climate justice is mainly aimed at "building a mass-based popular movement bringing together "green" and "red" politics... This entails articulating not only the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also the need to transform our inherited systems of materials extraction, transport and distribution, energy-generation, production of goods and services, consumption, disposal and financing... the climate justice organizations and networks offer great potential to fuse issue-specific progressive environmental and social activists, many of which have strong roots in oppressed communities" (Bond 2012).
8. This section is drawn from an input by Lucia Ortiz, the Board Chair of the Center for Social and Environmental Support (CASA), which is a member of the Greengrants Alliance of Funds. She is also the Co-ordinator for Friends of the Earth-Brazil, and sits on the civil society steering committee for Rio+20.



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