# Global Governance Reforms, Social Movements in Asia and Education for Sustainability

**Jennifer Chan-Tiberghien**
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, France

To the extent that one cannot discuss the issue of sustainability in Asia without touching upon the current global governance structure, this brief presentation links global governance reforms and social movements in Asia from the perspective of an educator. I first look at the issue of legitimation crisis in global governance. Then, focusing on Japanese social movements, I discuss the role of NGOs in constructing norms and alternative multilateral institutions in Asia. Finally, I conclude by highlighting the importance of education in the diffusion of norms for sustainability.

## 1. Global Governance Legitimation Crisis

A coherent international economic policy framework emerged after World War II to prevent economic collapse by avoiding balance of payment problems (International Monetary Fund), promote economic development through international lending (World Bank), and facilitate international trade through tariff reduction (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) (Vines and Gilbert 2004). Many factors have, however, dramatically changed the social, economic, and political landscapes in which this postwar multilateral policy framework finds itself today: the end of a fixed exchange rate system; availability and rapid growth of international capital flows; debt and financial crises; scope and patterns of international trade; emergence of regional institutions; institutionalization of international human rights norms and transnationalization of social movements; and the cross-border and cross-sectoral nature of development issues. In response, the postwar multilateral institutions have either not evolved fast enough (in matters such as debt relief or human rights) or gone beyond their original mandates (in international lending for national institutional reforms, for example).

The multiple critiques that have been made against the inherited global governance structure can be grouped into three interrelated concerns: inefficiency and ineffectiveness (in part due to an overlap of responsibility); democratic deficits (power beyond mandates, nontransparency, and lack of participation parity); and market fundamentalism (ignoring human development, freedoms, and the environment). For James Wolfensohn, a more efficient World Bank means getting "close to the clients," "private sector solutions," "new products," "knowledge management," "performance evaluations" (World Bank 1997). For Kofi Annan, "a key reform feature is "to fashion a leadership and management structure that will result in a better focused, more coherent, more responsive, and more cost-effective United Nations (Annan 1997: 3)."

For many critics within and outside the UN system, however, the crisis in the current multilateral governance structure cannot be resolved merely by the internal structural reforms of individual institutions to make them more efficient, but a complete overhaul of the entire system along the principles of equitable representation, accountability and redress, transparency, and

subsidiarity/devolution of power (Woods 2001). Here proposals vary from creating a peoples' parliamentary assembly, in parallel to the UN General Assembly, so that people can be ultimately directly elected (Held 2004; Charter 99 2000; Childers and Urquhart 1994) to establishing a UN Economic Security Council to coordinate if not oversee the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (Commission on Global Governance 1995).

In addition to efficiency and transparency concerns, critics of the current global governance structure propose a substantially different paradigm of development based on human rights and freedoms. According to Amartyr Sen (1999: 3), development can be seen "as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Focusing on human freedoms contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product." An excellent example of this human development approach is the UN MDG project - eight Millennium Development Goals with time-bound targets (by 2015) on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development. The MDG project represents the culmination of a decade-long mainstreaming of human rights within the global development infrastructure. Together with the 2001 Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the 2002 "Monterrey Consensus" of the UN Summit on Financing for Development, the MDG signals, at least in discourse if not yet in practice, the triumph of a social democratic framework to embed the Washington Consensus.

## 2. A Dialogical Model of Recognition, the World Social Forum Process and Social Movements in Asia

From the perspectives of many transnational social movements, however, a redistribution approach represented, for example, by the World Bank Strategic Compact (1997) or the MDGs falls short of addressing the more fundamental issue of recognition in the existing global governance structure. According to Nancy Fraser, a feminist philosopher, while the redistribution paradigm focuses on economic injustices, the recognition paradigm, in contrast, targets cultural injustices rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. She proposes *a dialogical approach to recognition* based upon democratic processes of public deliberation and the full, free participation of the implicated parties (2003).

Applying a Fraserian recognition paradigm, which focuses on participation, representation, and recognition, I look at the NGO-led World Social Forum (WSF) process as an alternative multilateral undertaking. The World Social Forum began as a counter-Davos in 1999 in parallel to the annual corporate World Economic Forum. The first WSF met in January 2001 in Porto Alegre in Brazil. What marks the WSF process is the insistence that citizens, not just governments and intergovernmental organizations, "claim their democratic right to take part in the global decisions that affect our lives (Campaign for In-Depth Reform of the system of International Institutions 2000)." The aim is to reinvent democracy such that "the mode of economic production, the structures of global governance, the dissemination of scientific innovation, the organization of the media, social relations and the

relationships between society and nature, are subjected to a radical, participatory and living democratic process (Fisher and Ponniah 2003: 13)."

The fourth WSF was held in Mumbai, India in 2004, which was a galvanizing force for Indian and other Asian social movements. In addition to the annual Asian Social Forum, the regional offshoot of the WSF process, national social forums have also been held in different countries. The first Social Forum in Japan was held here in Kyoto in December 2004. More than 400 Japanese peace and alternative globalization activists converged in Kyoto University under the general banner of "another world is possible." While most Japanese activists focus on domestic issues of labor restructuring, genetically modified foods, constitutional revision, and privatization of water and other public services etc., they also emphasize the importance of regional networking in Asia, and in many cases, have already been doing networking and grassroots empowerment activities. Japan International Volunteer Center, an NGO on community development, peace exchange, emergency relief, and advocacy since 1980, have been doing projects in agriculture, water provision, forest preservation, children's education, and peace building in six Asian countries including Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Afghanistan, and North Korea. The vision of People's Plan Study Group, a researcher-activist network created since 1995, is to create alternatives in Asia, different from nation-state construction. Together with NGOs such as Focus on the Global South and the Asian Regional Exchange for Alternatives, it created the Asian Peace Alliance in 2003 to construct a people's based peace movement in Asia.

## 3. Educating for Sustainability

Scholars of international norms have mostly focused on the legal and political process of norm diffusion. As an educator, I look at the construction of an alternative global governance structure from the perspectives of participation, knowledge production, and space. NGOs are "cultural negotiators" and knowledge-producers in this process. They negotiate between global human rights frames and local cultural knowledges to translate global governance issues in accessible terms and introduce an international human rights language to the public. In the case of Japan, against each state metanarrative on deregulation, privatization, and liberalization, advocacy NGO networks construct their alternative knowledges surrounding international human rights standards such as decent work, equal treatment, food sovereignty, and access for all (Table 1) (Chan-Tiberghien, 2005a).

Table 2. Alternative Knowledges by Japanese Advocacy NGO Networks

| Issue Area | Neoliberal, Militaristic and Nationalistic Ideologies | Alternative Knowledges by Advocacy NGO networks |
|---|---|---|
| Kôzô kaikaku (Structural Reforms) | Deregulation, privatization of public services, and cut in public spending | Decent work, equal treatment, and right to public services. |
| Free Trade Agreements | Liberalization | Transparency, participation, and human rights |
| Agricultural Liberalization within the WTO | "sacrifice for the sake of the world's free trade system" | Multifunctionality of agriculture and food sovereignty |

| Service Liberalization within the WTO | Efficiency | *kôyô* zaisan (public commons) |
|---|---|---|
| Education | "a sense of love and respect of the country" | Freedom of thought and conscience, as guaranteed in the Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| Dispatch of Japanese Self Defense Forces to Iraq | Emergency Legislation and International Cooperation | World peace now; people's security |
| HIV/AIDS | Treatment access depending on immigration status | Access for all |

When the domestic space for civic participation is limited, NGO networks in Japan go abroad to utilize or create the space in solidarity meetings, counter-summits, world conferences, art exhibitions, and press conferences. One of the more successful recent international appearances of Japanese advocacy NGO networks was a petition by the No! GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms) Campaign. A few hundred Japanese consumers from the Campaign went to Canada and the United States to protest against the imminent approval of genetically modified wheat by the Canadian federal government and the North Dakota state government. The petition, signed by 414 organizations representing 1.2 million Japanese people who did not want to eat imported GM wheat, seemed to have made an impact. Two months later, Monsanto announced its suspension of all development of GM wheat. Behind this rather dramatic episode is the daily footwork that Japanese NGOs do in domestic, regional, and international networking based on ongoing conversations of human rights norms. I see it as the role of educators in providing and expanding that space for cross-border participation and conversation, as the current model of economic globalization would not be sustainable if it is not subject to democratic deliberations.

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