

ANTI-APARTHEID, "NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS" AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF POLITICS

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Paper Presented at

**PERSPECTIVES ON THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-APARTHEID
STRUGGLE: SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, 31 May 2003, St
Antony's College, Oxford University**

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Introduction

Given the number of people that participated in the transnational anti-apartheid movement, as well as its geographical dispersion and its achievements, there is no doubt that it was one of the most influential social movements during the post-war era. In addition to the South African movement organisations, the transnational anti-apartheid network connected thousands of groups and organisations, including solidarity organisations, unions, churches, women's, youth and student organisations. For example, only in Britain more than 1100 organisations and groups were affiliated to the British

Anti-Apartheid Movement in 1990.¹ Further, AAM's list of international contacts includes anti-apartheid solidarity organisations in 37 countries, including Japan, Australia, Sweden, Jamaica, Britain, Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Uruguay, the Soviet Union and USA.² Existing as a transnational movement for more than four decades, its impact was not limited to the South African context, as it created transnational networks, organisations and collective action forms that made – and still makes - an impact on national as well as transnational political cultures.

Although the significance of this movement has often been recognised, little research has been done on anti-apartheid, especially from the perspective of social movement theory. Further, while one of the most crucial aspects of this movement was its construction of *transnational* networks and forms of action, most research has focused on its national aspects, looking at the Australian, American or South African anti-apartheid movement.³

In the context of international relations, Audie Klotz argues that the history of the anti-apartheid struggle refutes the realist notion of international politics as purely dominated by the self-interests of states. In an attempt to move beyond the debate on realism versus idealism, she argues for considering norms as a force of change in international politics.⁴ Although the focus of her analysis is not on the level of civil society, it nevertheless implies a strong role for the anti-apartheid movement. Through advocating *the global norm of racial equality*, initially emerging in the context of the

¹ Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Annual Report 1990, "MSS AAM 13: AAM annual reports, 1962-90, and political reports, 1992-3".

² Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, M: "Overseas anti-apartheid organisations 1963-1995".

³ On national anti-apartheid movements, see for example Jennett (1989) (Australia), Voorhes (1999), Massie (1997) (USA) or Seekings (2000) (South Africa).

⁴ This approach implies looking at norms, defined as "shared understandings of standards for behaviour and interests", as interacting with self-interest in the context of international politics and institutions. Relations between norms and interest are thus depending on the context. In the case of sanctions against South Africa, Klotz argues: "...explanations stressing structural material interests (such as realism and marxism) offer compelling reasons for many states' ties with South Africa. But since the material interest motivations for these policies remained generally constant, the shift to sanctions shows the expression of support for a norm of racial equality to be a plausible explanation for policy change.

anti-slavery movement, and through connecting this norm to demands for sanctions, the transnational anti-apartheid movement could become a powerful actor in world politics, influencing the interests and actions of states, corporations and intergovernmental institutions.⁵ Klotz also argues that the transnational anti-apartheid movement was related to, and supported by, the emergence and strengthening of issues as human rights and democratisation in a global political context during the last decades. She argues that this development is part of a process in which

...domestic jurisdiction is increasingly losing its salience. Consequently, across a wide range of issues, we no longer define survival – fundamental interests – solely in terms of territorial integrity and domestic political autonomy.⁶

This analysis might also explain the increasing interest in social movements among international relations theorists, as well as the fact that social movement theorists are turning to international relations in order to borrow theoretical concepts when formulating theories of transnational social movements.⁷ An important example in this respect is Margaret E. Keck's and Kathryn Sikkink's *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Advocacy networks are distinguished from other types of transnational networks through "the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation".⁸ In line with Klotz, Keck and Sikkink conclude from their study that transnational advocacy networks make the distinction between norms and interests, as well as between domestic and international politics, problematic:

The networks were influential within states because they helped to shape a reformulation of how national interest was understood at times when global events were calling into question traditional understandings of sovereignty and national interest.⁹

⁵ Klotz (1995) concludes that the mobilisation against apartheid "demonstrated that even within the modern state system, weak states and non-state actors can have power, a power that is ignored by analyses that focuses on military coercion and market incentives alone", p. 165.

⁶ Klotz (1995), p. 17.

⁷ See for example Cohen & Rai (eds. (2000), Della Porta & Kriesi (eds.) (1999), Tarrow (1998a), Keck & Sikkink (1998), Smith, J Chatfield, & Pagnucco (1997).

⁸ Keck & Sikkink (1998), p. 1.

⁹ Ibid., (1998), p. 119.

In the book, the authors identify the anti-apartheid struggle as one of the most successful transnational campaigns in history.¹⁰ However, it is not included as a case in their study.

Although emphasising historical predecessors in the 19th and early 20 century, such as the anti-slavery campaign and the international suffrage movement, Keck and Sikkink argue that a major change regarding the global diffusion of human rights discourse and practice took place between the late 1960s and early 1990s. Before this human rights had, with a few exceptions, been an empty declaration rather than a forceful political discourse. It was only through the emergence of transnational networks, launching successful campaigns during this period, that human rights became powerful as a discourse.

I would argue that this process started a bit earlier, in the early 60s. Important in this respect was not just the forming of Amnesty International, but also the emergence of the transnational anti-apartheid movement. In 1956 Canon John Collins formed the Treason Trial Defence Fund out of Christian Action. Later changed it changed its name to the British Defence and Aid Fund, and in 1965 the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF), was set up with the purpose of providing legal support to individuals prosecuted for violating the apartheid laws and to support the families of "apartheid prisoners".¹¹ It became one of the most important international anti-apartheid organisations. However, the broader international campaign against apartheid took off in 1959 as South African anti-apartheid organisations mad a call for an international boycott of South African goods. In response to this call, the anti-colonial Committee of African Organisations held a meeting in Holborn Hall in London. Speakers at the meeting were Julius Nyerere, president of the Tanganyika Africa National Union, and Father Trevor Huddleston. A boycott committee was formed, and soon it evolved into the independent Boycott Movement, which in 1960 changed its name to the Anti-Apartheid Movement, consisting

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

¹¹ Shepherd (1977), p. 51. Since a third aim was to "keep the conscience of the world alive to the issues at stake", IDAF also carried out substantial research and documentation on apartheid and became a key source of information for other anti-apartheid organisations as well as for journalists. IDAF had strong connections to church and Mission circles.

of South African exiles and a few of their British supporters.¹² In March 1960, the campaign was fuelled by the Sharpsville shootings, which was reported globally by the media and caused a moral outrage all over the world. In various countries anti-apartheid protests occurred, demanding that governments and the UN put pressure on the South African government to end apartheid.

Partly as a result of this emerging global mobilisation, the UN General Assembly a year later passed a resolution, explicitly referring to the demands of the “world public opinion”. It declared that the “racial policies being pursued by the Government of the Union of South Africa are a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.¹³ The British Anti-Apartheid Movement, which in 1964 decided to pay special attention to co-ordination of the transnational anti-apartheid network,¹⁴ continued to refer to apartheid as a human rights issue in its internationally distributed *AA News* in the 60s. In the Human Rights Year of 1968, AAM sent a circular letter to all organisations in the international anti-apartheid network, urging them to campaign the apartheid issue as a violation of human rights.¹⁵

This might prove a case to conceptualise the transnational anti-apartheid struggle in Keck’s and Sikkink’s terms as a human rights advocacy network. However, in this article, I will argue that such a conceptualisation is not sufficient, as the anti-apartheid struggle clearly took the shape of a *social movement*.

In this paper I analyse some of the crucial aspects of the action forms and identification processes of the anti-apartheid movement, relating it to relevant political and historical contexts. I argue that the transnational anti-apartheid struggle proves a relevant case for recent theorising and research on transnational social movements and global civil society.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part discusses the case of the anti-apartheid movement in relation to theories of “new social movements”, while the second

¹² Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement: MSS AAM 1. See also Guernsey (2000).

¹³ A/RES/1598 (XV), 13 April 1961, quoted from *The United Nations and Apartheid 1948-1994*, p. 249f.

¹⁴ Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement: MSS AAM 13.

¹⁵ Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement: MSS AAM 1306. *AA News*, no 1, vol 4, 1968.

part relates anti-apartheid to recent theories on transnationalism and globalization. The third part looks at political globalization, post-coloniality and the Cold War as defining aspects of the global context of the transnational anti-apartheid movement, while the fourth part discerns the crucial forms of organisation, mobilisation and processes of identification that constituted anti-apartheid as a transnational social movement.

I. Anti-Apartheid and “new social movements”- beyond eurocentrism

In the cases where the anti-apartheid struggle has been analysed in terms of a social movement, it has often been related to the discourse on “new social movements” (NSM). In an article on the British AAM, Stuart Hall argues that it could be seen as one of the new social movements, since it “cut across issues of class and party, and organisational allegiance”.¹⁶ In a similar mode Christine Jennett has analysed the Australian anti-apartheid movement as a new social movement, emphasising its cultural orientation.¹⁷

I agree that the anti-apartheid movement displayed many of the central features of “new social movements” as these have been defined in the context of NSM theory.¹⁸ The

¹⁶ Hall (2000), p. 52

¹⁷ Jennett (1989).

¹⁸ The literature on “new social movements” is vast and there are many different definitions of the concept. The movements most often included are green movements, solidarity movements, the “new” peace and women’s movements, urban squatter’s movements and “identity politics”, including gay and lesbian movements, as well as the cultural politics of “ethnicity”. A strong cultural orientation is by most authors regarded as a defining aspect of “new social movements”, which are often said to be carriers of “post-material values”. Their emergence is also often related to increasing individualization as well as a declining interest in party politics in favour of extra-parliamentary action, such as “symbolic political actions” as well as civil disobedience. However, different authors also emphasise different characteristics of “new movements”, as well as different explanations for their emergence. Alberto Melucci (1989 & 1997), who coined the term, emphasise that the new movements emerge in societies in which the struggle over information, symbols and knowledge is becoming increasingly important, thus building on Alain Touraine’s analysis of post-industrial society (Touraine 1981). Melucci also underlines that “complex societies” are characterised by its plurality of movements, not only existing on a “manifest” level of demonstrations and organisations, but also in the context of “invisible networks” of everyday life. Other

struggle against apartheid was as a part of the emergence of a new transnational political culture during the post-war era, that also included other solidarity movements, as well as student's, green, peace and women's movements, often conceptualised as "the new social movements". The anti-apartheid movement was able to unite an extremely broad "rainbow coalition" of organisations and groups, with extremely socially diverse support base and ideological orientation. Further, the anti-apartheid movement had a strong cultural orientation, it was highly media oriented and the production and dissemination of information was one of its central activities. Finally, although its actions often had the purpose of putting pressure on governments and political parties, it engaged in extra-parliamentary political action, such as civil disobedience and boycotts, the latter its most important form of collective action.

Nevertheless, I would like to argue that there are some problems in using the concept of "new social movement" to define the transnational anti-apartheid movement. *First*, "old social movements", predominantly labour and church movements, and their increased internationalisation during the post-war era, was an integral part of anti-apartheid, as a "movement of movements". *Second*, and more important, the case of anti-apartheid as a transnational social movement reveals some highly problematic eurocentric assumptions made in the context of NSM theory. I would like to argue that this implicit eurocentrism to a large extent is related to a lack of a theoretically developed global perspective on contemporary collective action in the theoretical literature on "new social movements". Although the global dimensions of contemporary collective action has often been pointed out, especially by Alberto Melucci, Western nation states have been the point of departure for theorising on new social movements. Theorists of new social movements have pointed to the *new* social conditions of "postindustrial", "complex" or "informational" societies as a precondition for emergence of new social movements. Consequently, where no such new conditions are clearly present, no new movements can possibly emerge.

authors emphasise that the emergence of new social movements must be seen in relation to a structural and cultural transformation producing a "new middle class", which is said to be the constituency of the new movements (c.f. Kriesi et. al. 1995) For recent overviews Della Porta and Diani (1999), p. 11ff, Cohen & Rai (2000), p. 4ff.

In spite of this, the concept of new social movements has in a few cases been applied in analyses of collective action in the South, however often without theoretical debate.¹⁹ One important exception is Slater (ed.) (1985), in which Ernesto Laclau writes:

...is it not the case that this plurality of the social and this proliferation of political spaces which lie behind the new social movements, are basically typical of advanced industrial societies, whilst the social reality of the Third World, given its lower level of differentiation, can still be apprehended in terms of the more classical categories of sociological and class analysis? The reply is that, besides the fact that this “lower level of differentiation” is a myth, Third World societies have never been comprehensible in terms of a strict class analysis. We hardly need to refer to the Eurocentrism in which the ‘universalization’ of that analysis was based.²⁰

The eurocentric and evolutionist thinking often implied in NSM theory is clearly expressed by Christine Jennett as she is applying Alain Touraine’s theory of social movements in her analysis of the Australian anti-apartheid movement. The movement organisation AAAM (Australian Anti-Apartheid Movement), consisting of predominantly middle-class Australian solidarity activists, is by Jennett defined as a “new social movement”, characterised by its orientation toward participatory grassroots democracy. The exile liberation movements, including ANC, PAC and SWAPO, are by the same author defined as “historical movements”, characterised by hierarchical forms of organisation and nationalist ideology.²¹

In a sense new social movement theory has been implicitly reproducing the eurocentric evolutionist thinking of classical modernisation theory, in which each country in its development has to pass through similar stages, and where the “underdeveloped” countries of the South are always lagging behind the developed countries of the North. This mode of thinking is also based on what has been called “methodological nationalism” in the sense that the nation state is always the basic unity of the analysis, and development/underdevelopment thus always is related to “internal factors”.²² This paradigm ignored the existence of global power relations and economic and political

¹⁹ See for example Wignaraja (ed.) (1992),

²⁰ Laclau (1985), p. 30

²¹ Jennett & Stewart (1989), p. 21, Jennett (1989), p. 136, 147.

²² Beck (2000).

interdependence. In the case of theories of post-industrial society, it was often “forgotten” that the transformation to post-industrial economies in the North presupposed moving industrial production to so called “low-wage” countries in the South.

Although few advocates of classical modernisation theory are to be heard today, many of its assumptions are still implicitly present in current social theory. As Albert Paolini has pointed out, this is the case even in recent globalization discourse, as social conditions and trends specific to countries in the North are being universalised.²³

However, recent theorising on globalization has also involved reflection on eurocentric bias in social theory. In his “Working notes for a critical theory of the informational society”, Manuel Castells, a former adept of Touraine, argues that in Touraine’s (as well as Daniel Bell’s), formulation of postindustrialism

...the new social structure is analyzed specific to dominant, Western societies. With some rare exceptions less advanced societies are considered to be external to the system. Neither the effects on post-industrial societies or those of post-industrial societies on developing societies are taken into consideration. ...In sum: a theory of the informational society that does not place global economic interdependence at its heart will be of limited value in the understanding the actual structure and processes of our societies, be they advanced, developing or stagnant.²⁴

Relating this more general criticism of sociological theories of post-industrial society to social movement theory, Peyman Vahabzadeh, in a critique of Alberto Melucci, argues that “the presence of new social movements in non – western societies (i.e., gay, women’s or ecological movements) problematizes the explanatory linkage between the postindustrial society and the new social movements”.²⁵

As I see it, this is not to say that NSM theory has not contributed with valuable insights regarding contemporary collective action. However, it has to be de-linked from its eurocentric implications. Social movement studies could thus benefit from integrating perspectives from postcolonial theory. Postcolonial studies have not only emphasised the presence of a colonial legacy in the context of the latest phase of the globalization

²³ For a criticism of an Eurocentric bias in globalization theories, see for example Paolini (1997).

²⁴ Castells (1996), p. 14f.

²⁵ Vahabzadeh (2001), p. 624.

process, but also the presence and influence of the de-colonisation process and the politics of anti-colonialism on present-day politics.²⁶

Applying this perspective to the transnational anti-apartheid movement, and relating it to the debate on “new social movements”, it is evident that this movement, displaying all the characteristics associated with so called “new social movements”, emerged out of *transnational* interactions located in the context of de-colonisation. It was initiated under strong influence not just of South African anti-apartheid organisations and exiles, but also of the broader anti-colonial struggle. The de-colonisation process clearly marked established politics as well as the emerging alternative political culture in Britain at the time when the two internationally important solidarity organisations, IDAF and AAM, were initiated. These organisations were part of what in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s was called “new politics”, as I see it an early conceptualisation of certain forms of collective action, foreshadowing the latter “new social movements”.

In 1952, the same year that Canon John Collins initiated the activities that would subsequently lead to the formation of IDAF,²⁷ the British peace movement initiated a mobilisation process influenced by the Indian anti-colonial movement. It was called “Operation Gandhi”, and organised “sit-ins” in central London. The founder of IDAF, Canon John Collins, was also the chairman of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the dominant peace movement organisation in Britain at the time. A public personality involved in the more militant civil disobedience actions that the peace movement at this time continued to stage (and which amongst other things led to the trial against Bertrand Russell, that gained media attention around the whole world) was Reverend Michael Scott. Scott had been participating in militant Indian civil disobedience actions as well as black political activism in South Africa. Banned in South Africa in 1950, Scott initiated the Africa Bureau in London in 1952, supporting African de-colonisation. Just like the Movement for Colonial Freedom, The Africa Bureau was an important part of an emerging anti-colonial political culture in Britain in late 1950s. When the Boycott Movement in 1960 changed its name to AAM, and started to reach

²⁶ See for example Young (1999).

²⁷ Herbestein, unpublished manuscript.

outside of the exile circles, it attracted individuals who were part of this political culture.²⁸

To conclude the discussion on the implications of the case of the anti-apartheid movement in relation to the debate on “new social movements”: I argue that *if* we use this concept, it must be recognised that “new social movements” in the West partly emerged out of the *global context* of de-colonisation, and that the collective experiences and action forms of the anti-colonial struggles in the South were extremely important sources of influence.

I think that the reason for this influence being largely neglected in the context of NSM theory, is partly due to the methodological nationalism which for a long time has dominated not just social movement studies but the social sciences in general. However, as has already been mentioned, recently a new interdisciplinary field of research has emerged, dealing with transnational collective action and the changing role of the nation state in the context of the increasing importance of processes of globalization.²⁹ As Keck and Sikkink have showed, this approach is not only valid in relation to the recent wave of transnational collective action, but also to historical cases.

II. Transnational collective action and the nation state

In the context of social movement theory, Donatella della Porta and Hanspeter Kriesi has argued that globalization has at least three consequences for collective action:

first of all, it produces cross-national similarities in protest mobilization via diffusion; second, it increases the relevance of the international opportunities and constraints for social movements; third, sub-national and national social movements become players in a multi-level game.³⁰

²⁸ Interview with Dorothy Robinson, who was active in the Africa Bureau in the late 50s and AAM in the early 1960s.

²⁹ The contributors to this new field of research are mainly international relations scholars and sociologists. See for example Cohen & Rai (ess. (2000), Della Porta & Kriesi (eds.) (1999), Tarrow (1998a), Keck & Sikkink (1998), Smith, J Chatfield, & Pagnucco (1997).

³⁰ Della Porta & Kriesi (1999), p. 6. The authors are following a definition of globalization formulated by Anthony Giddens. Giddens defines globalization as “the creation and intensification of processes of “worldwide social relations which links distinct localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa”, della Porta & Kriesi (1999), p. 3. See also Giddens (1990).

In Kriesi's and Della Porta's notion of an international multilevel political game, there are three types of international interactions: 1) between governments ("transgovernmental interaction") 2) between social movements in different countries (transnational mobilisation), and 3) between social movements in one country and a government in another country (cross-level mobilisation). Here, the anti-apartheid movement is mentioned as an example of a case where transnational and cross-level mobilisation took place in order to put pressure on the South African government. Della Porta and Kriesi emphasise how the mobilisation put pressure on the South African government indirectly, through influencing transgovernmental relations between Western countries and South Africa. However, I would argue that the transnational mobilization also *directly* put pressure on and South Africa through economic (consumer) and cultural boycotts and through direct support to the internal struggle.

An important form of transnational interaction in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle also took place between anti-apartheid organisations and international governmental organisations, especially the UN. According to Della Porta and Kriesi such "policy networks" are developed when national political institutions are closed to social movement activists.³¹ This has often been the case. It was obviously the case in South Africa. However, if the argument was true in all cases, any national anti-apartheid organisation would mainly have been concerned with campaigning to get their government to put pressure on South Africa, and the degree of its participation in transnational networks would have depended on the "openness" of their government to the issue. Looking at the case of Sweden, anti-apartheid organisations were in the early 60s in contact with the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid. Sydafrikakommittterna was one of the earliest international contacts of the British AAM, and Swedish anti-apartheid organisations continued to be involved in frequent transnational networking in *spite* of the Swedish government taking measures against South Africa, such as ban on new investments and a trade boycott. I think that this example shows that the political space of the nation state can not be taken as a self-evident point of departure for the analysis of transnational mobilisation.

³¹ Della Porta & Kriesi (1999), p. 17, See also Keck & Sikkink (1998), p. 12.

Emphasising their theoretical model of “political opportunity structures”, social movement theorists like Della Porta, Kriesi and Sidney Tarrow argue that changes in international contexts and the emergence of international institutions have created new opportunities for social movement to act transnationally. However, in relation to what Tarrow calls “the strong transnational thesis”, represented by for example international relations theorists Ron Pagnucco, David Atwood and James Rosenau, these social movement theorists have generally taken a more cautious or sceptical approach.³² “The strong thesis” argues that national opportunity structures, as they are giving way to transnational structures, are being less and less able to constrain social movements. With the process of globalization, the mobilisation of transnational collective action have been facilitated as actors have access to new resources, including new means for electronic communication as well as cheap air travel. According to some proponents of this strong thesis, this development has resulted in the emergence of a global civil society. Sceptical to this thesis, Tarrow, as well as Della Porta and Kriesi, emphasise that the nation state still is, and for some time will continue to be, the most important context for social movement mobilisation.

There is no doubt that national policies, national organisations as well as national political cultures played a significant role in shaping the anti-apartheid struggle in different parts of the world. *Globalization does not necessarily mean that the nation state, understood as a political space, is fading away. Rather, the nation state gains new meanings in the context of globalization, just as globalization has different meanings in different national contexts.*

However, and more important, I also think that in social movement studies focusing on opportunity structures, the relevance of a global perspective on social movement interactions, networks and contexts has been underestimated. It is not just the issues and the networks of the new movements that have become increasingly global during the post-war era. The structural processes that creates the preconditions for the emergence of new forms of collective action are transnational, rather than bound to any *specific* nation states. Further, looking at the case of anti-apartheid, the different opportunities and constraints facing anti-apartheid organisations in the context of specific nation states,

³² Tarrow (1998a) and (1998b).

were to a large extent determined by the belongings of those states to different international communities and their interests, as well as by their locations in wider global and historical contexts.

The recent theoretical discussion on transnational social movements was initiated in the late 1990s, before the “global justice movement” (sometimes called the “anti-globalization movement”) became visible in the streets of Western cities, as well as in a globalised media space.³³ In the introduction to *Social Movements in a Globalising World*, published in 1999, Della Porta and Kriesi argue that the weakness of democratic accountability of most supranational institutions protect them against protest.³⁴ After the protests against WTO, IMF, EU and G8 in Seattle 1999, Prague in 2000, and in Göteborg and Genoa in the summer of 2001, this can no longer be said to be true.

Although research on these events is yet to come, they have contributed to an increasing interest in discussing the emergence of a global civil society.³⁵ In these more recent discussions, the internet is often highlighted as something that has made the construction of an effective global civil society possible.³⁶ However, I would like to argue that more importantly, the present global civil society has historical links to the post-war, transnational political culture in which the anti-apartheid movement played a significant role.

Keck and Sikkink argues that “there is a lack of convincing studies of the sustained and specific processes through which individuals and organisations create...something resembling a global civil society”.³⁷ In a similar vein Sidney Tarrow has argued that

...it is hard to find, combined in the same movement, the conditions necessary to produce a social movement that is, at once, integrated with several societies, unified in its goals, and capable of sustained interaction with a variety of political authorities”.³⁸

³³ Anheier, Glasius & Kaldor (eds.) 2001, Starr (2000), Bond (2001).

³⁴ Della Porta & Kriesi (1999), p. 15.

³⁵ Anheier, Glasius & Kaldor (eds.) (2001).

³⁶ Naughton (2001).

³⁷ Keck & Sikkink (1998), p. 33.

³⁸ Tarrow (1998a), p. 240.

I would like to argue that the transnational anti-apartheid movement fulfils the criteria that Tarrow mentions above. In this sense the interactions of the anti-apartheid movement was part of construction of a global civil society during the post-war era.

In an attempt to go beyond the nation-state oriented analysis of social movements, Della Porta & Kriesi suggests that we should look at how international *constraints and opportunities* operate on the different levels of international politics.³⁹ However, as my focus is on transnational *political culture*, I prefer to use the concept of *context* rather than political opportunity structure. This is in order to emphasise how transnational collective action at any given time is structured, not just by the presence of formal political international institutions, but through historically instituted discursive formations and processes of identity construction on a global level.⁴⁰

III. Defining the context of anti-apartheid: political globalization, postcoloniality and the Cold War

In the widest sense the appropriate structural context for the transnational anti-apartheid movement is the process of intensified political globalization during the post-war era.⁴¹ Here, it is also relevant to make an analytical distinction between *globalization from above*, and *globalization from below*.⁴² Political globalization from above is constituted by the increasing number and importance of inter-governmental organisations (IGO:s), a highly significant process of the 20th century. In 1907, there were 37 IGO:s, while there were 260 at the time of the first democratic elections in South Africa. The process had intensified during the decades after the second world war; treaties embracing IGO:s increased from 6351 in 1945 to 14061 in 1975.⁴³

³⁹ Della Porta & Kriesi (1999), p. 19ff.

⁴⁰ For a similar approach to the struggle against apartheid from an international relations perspective, see Klotz (1995).

⁴¹ Held et. al. (1999), Thörn (2002).

⁴² Falk (1999).

⁴³ Held et. al. (1999), p. 53.

The norm that guided the foundation of the interstate system, the principle of national sovereignty, has continued to be dominant in the context of this complex interstate system, where states increasingly bind themselves to supra-national agreements. This is to a large extent confirmed when looking at how the issue of apartheid was articulated in the context of interstate relations, a case that often has been used as an example of when national sovereignty was widely questioned. As South Africa claimed that any criticism of apartheid was an intervention in its “internal affairs”, this argument was countered in 1973 in the UN General Assembly by a resolution stating that it was the liberation movements (ANC and PAC) that was the authentic representatives of the (national) people of South Africa.⁴⁴ The resolution thus confirmed the principle of national sovereignty, however altering its subject in the specific case of South Africa.

However, membership in interstate organisations also *does* mean increasing dependence on relations with other states. Depending on the relative strength of a state internationally, this could mean less autonomy and even pressure on state governments to abandon its national sovereignty, as the South African government experienced in the context of the UN and the Commonwealth.

It is important to emphasise that this increasingly complex international system is not just composed of formal institutional arrangements. It should be conceived as a conglomeration of overlapping *international communities*, understood as “sites of identity and interest”.⁴⁵ Such communities may be formed for various historical reasons, and their identities may change as a result of historical change and shifting power relations between its members. In order to understand and analyse the significance and changing roles of these communities in global politics it is thus important to locate their identities and interests in relation to wider historical contexts and changes in power relations.

When looking at the political context of the global anti-apartheid struggle, three international communities were particularly important: the OAU, the Commonwealth and, of course, the UN, being the largest and most complex of international communities

⁴⁴ *The United Nations and Apartheid 1948-1994*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ As defined by Klotz (1995), p. 27.

during the post-war era.⁴⁶ The foundation of these communities, as well as the articulation of their political identities and interests, were in turn shaped by two wider and overlapping global and historical contexts: *postcoloniality* and *the cold war*.⁴⁷

Situated in the context of *postcoloniality*, the issue of apartheid was articulated as an issue of de-colonisation, particularly by newly independent states and anti-colonial movements, and the patterns of conflicts and positions taken in the context of international communities were to a large extent conditioned by the political history of colonialism.

Situated in the context of the *Cold War*, the anti-apartheid struggle, like any significant political field during the post-war era, national as well as transnational, was divided along the conflict lines that constituted the bipolar political world order. The Cold War was a crucial factor in the circumstances that made it possible for the South African apartheid government to sustain its position internationally. It was also the Cold War that made it possible to define ANC as part of a bloc that threatened world peace and security.

Political globalization from above: OAU, the Commonwealth and the UN

Divided on many issues, especially in relation to Cold War conflicts, the African states declared unity on advocating racial equality and de-colonisation when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963. The OAU was thus founded on the

⁴⁶ Ibid., (1995).

⁴⁷ It might be argued that the cold war was a rearticulation of the colonial world order, and thus constituted a form of postcoloniality, but I will try to show that it is fruitful to make an analytical distinction between the two. Since the concept of postcoloniality is often misunderstood, it must be underlined that it does not refer to the absence of power relations and structures that was constructed during the colonial era. Quite the opposite, the concept of post-coloniality highlights the ways that the legacy of colonialism *continues* to condition global and national cultures, politics and economics during and after the de-colonisation process. However, this does not mean to state that colonialism is simply unambiguously reproduced in different ways around the world. Looking at a phenomenon from the perspective of post-colonial theory rather implies an empirical investigation and a theoretical analysis of how the legacy of colonialism in different contexts and through different practices might be rearticulated, negotiated, transformed, and indeed also transgressed. For enlightening discussions on concepts of “postcolonialism” and “postcoloniality”, see for example Young (2000) and Hall (1996).

construction of a postcolonial pan-african identity and became an important inter-state actor in the anti-apartheid struggle, which it articulated in terms of de-colonisation and national self-determination. When the UN General Assembly declared that it was the South African liberation movements (ANC and PAC) that were the authentic representatives of the (national) people of South Africa, it referred to an earlier declaration made by the OAU.⁴⁸ In 1964, OAU called for an oil embargo on South Africa. The OAU also encouraged its member states to give active support to the liberation movements and also gave a strong voice in support for the call for sanctions made by the transnational anti-apartheid movement.⁴⁹

Regarding the Commonwealth, the period of the anti-apartheid struggle might be said to be the period in which this informal organisation, based on the historical legacy and political identity of the British Empire, was transformed to a post-colonial community. This was felt both by South Africa, which in 1961 was more or less forced to withdraw its request for readmission into the Commonwealth after it had become a republic. It was also felt by Britain itself, becoming more and more constrained as the numbers of newly independent states grew, as did the commitment to issues of de-colonisation and anti-racism. The issue of apartheid caused a large battle in the Commonwealth, in which Britain resisted the overwhelming majority of nations advocating sanctions. In doing this Britain confirmed that, if it was losing its grip over its old colonies, it still had status as a world power as one of the leading members of the political community of the Western Powers and its military alliance NATO, formed in the context of the Cold War. It was only as a result of strong pressure from other European countries that Britain, under protest, in 1985 accepted the EEC policy of partial sanctions.⁵⁰

Although the Commonwealth was an organisation of heads of states, the transnational anti-apartheid movement was allowed a space for lobbying during the meetings. Under the leadership of Shridath Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretariat gave ANC accreditation to visit the meetings together with journalists, something which

⁴⁸ *The United Nations and Apartheid 1948-1994*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ Klotz (1995), chapter 5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, chapter 7.

upset the British, as ANC at this time were labelled a terrorist organisation by prime minister Margaret Thatcher. During this period the Commonwealth Secretariat also established relations with the British AAM, which also were allowed to come to meetings to lobby the heads and to distribute their literature. The meetings also provided an important opportunity for movement activists to meet journalists, as the Commonwealth meetings attracted media attention all over the world.⁵¹

However, the international community that became most important for the transnational anti-apartheid movement, in terms of providing a space for mobilisation, was the UN. In 1963, the UN Special Committee against Apartheid was formed.⁵² At this time, NGO:s did not have the kind of official recognition in the UN that they have at present. In this sense, The Special Committee against Apartheid was unique when it became, through activities to a large extent initiated by its principal secretary E. S. Reddy, a crucial node in the network of transnational anti-apartheid activism. The committee supplied anti-apartheid organisations with well-researched information material and, from the late 70s, in a few cases some financial support. The committee also sent delegations to various countries to consult with national and international NGOs.⁵³

⁵¹ Interview with Patsy Robertson, Commonwealth Secretariat, Ethel de Keyser, AAM, Mike Terry, AAM.

⁵² Its key figure was E.S Reddy, who had come to New York from India in 1946 to finish his studies, and starter to work in the UN Secretariat in 1949. Reddy was appointed principal secretary of the Special Committe in 1963, later being promoted as Director of the Centre Against Apartheid, and Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations - until he retired in 1985. E. S. Reddy has himself written extensively on the anti-apartheid struggle, see Reddy (1986) and (1987). A collection of his articles, as well as biographical data, is available at the ANC Historical Documents Archive, www.anc.org.za/un/reddy. On the role of Reddy's and The Special Committee Against Apartheid, see also Korey (1998) and Shepherd (1977).

⁵³ According to Reddy, leaders of anti-apartheid NGOs were invited to all seminars and conferences organised by the Special Committee and were given full rights of participation in the discussions. The Committee also avoided distinctions between government representatives and NGOs in the conduct of discussions, as the it elected NGO representatives as officers of Seminars. Even in major international conferences, the NGOs were given full rights in the Committee of the Whole and some were invited to speak in the Plenary. In some cases expenses for NGOs to participate in Committee-sponsored conferences,

However, the most important aspect of the activities of the committee was the organisation of conferences, where representatives from anti-apartheid organisations could come and make important contacts. According to activists, what really mattered was not so much what happened during the formal sessions, but what took place in context of the informal meetings in between them.⁵⁴ Here, information was exchanged, overall strategies were discussed, co-operation on campaigns, national as well as transnational, were co-ordinated, and friendships were made. The meetings did not only help the NGO-representatives to meet each other, but also to contact OAU and representatives of African governments.⁵⁵ These conferences might actually be seen as the predecessors of the alternative NGO-conferences that since the 1970s are regularly held “outside” of the large official UN meetings.⁵⁶

seminars and sessions were provided. However, the budget of the Committee was limited and it could only provide expenses for a few anti-apartheid groups that did not have expenses for travel. Interview with E. S. Reddy. See also Korey (1998), p. 96.

⁵⁴ This is according to activists that I have interviewed. Among the people that have stated that Reddy and the Special Committee played an extremely important role in facilitating the transnational mobilisation of the anti-apartheid movement are key activists in Britain and USA like Mike Terry (AAM), Jennifer Davis and George Houser (ACOA) as well as journalist and author Dennis Herbstein. According to Reddy, leaders of anti-apartheid NGOs were invited to all conferences and seminars organised by the Special Committee, with full rights of participation. The Committee also, according to Reddy “avoided distinctions between government representatives and NGOs in the conduct of discussions” as it elected NGO representatives as officers of its seminars and conferences. In some cases the committee formally organised international anti-apartheid events in cooperation with anti-apartheid organisations, Korey (1998), p. 96 and interview with E. S. Reddy.

⁵⁵ Note submitted by Reddy to the author 000621.

⁵⁶ As for example at the Beijing Women’s Conference in 1995, where 4000 NGO:s gathered for the alternative meeting, Dickenson (1997). For a theoretical discussion on the interaction between social movements and the UN, see also Passy (1999). Dennis Herbstein, writer and journalist that left South Africa for London, and who has done extensive research on the role of the IDAF (International Defence and Aid Fund) in the anti-apartheid struggle, even argues that it was E. S. Reddy who, through his work with the Special Committee, “invented” the alternative conference. Jennifer Davis agrees: “Reddy created a space for people to get together”, as he “pushed the limits of what people wanted to allow him to do, apparently in a very non-confrontative way”. In this sense the Special Committee was a crucial facilitator in

However, as any issue in the UN at the time, the apartheid issue was clearly defined by the tensions and conflicts of postcoloniality as well as of the cold war. Activists, particularly those in the United States, also felt this. According to Jennifer Davis, a South African exile and a leading activist in the New York based solidarity organisation American Committee of Africa (ACOA), the UN was regarded with suspicion in the US during the Cold War, "it was regarded as the creature of somebody else – either the 3rd world or the Soviet Union".⁵⁷

In the context of the UN, the activities of the Special Committee were thus also regarded with suspicion in certain camps. Defining the issue in Cold War terms, the major Western Powers opposed sanctions against South Africa in the Security Council and boycotted the Special Committee (none of the Western countries ever joined the committee). It consisted of representatives mainly from Asian, African and Latin American countries, as well as a few from Eastern Europe.⁵⁸

The apartheid issue points to the "Janus face" of the UN as a political community and a central institution of global politics. On the one hand, as an inter-state organisation, the UN is subjected to the power hierarchy of the inter-state system. The dominant state powers in the Security Council can block or manipulate decisions in accordance with their national interests, as was the case with the issue of effective sanctions against South Africa. On the other hand, the UN might also be seen as a part of a global civil society, as relatively independent UN organisations like the Special Committee interact with NGOs from various countries, bypassing the state level, and giving space for transnational social movements opposing the interests of dominant state powers. To conclude, the case of anti-apartheid shows that the UN can be perceived as political space where the processes of globalization from above and below sometimes intersect.⁵⁹

the process that, according to Davis, "mobilised civil society, even if we did not use that expression then".
Interview with Jennifer Davis.

⁵⁷ Interview with Jennifer Davis.

⁵⁸ However, this was something that according to Reddy provided a certain space for action that would not have been there in the presence of the dominant Western powers, that opposed sanctions against South Africa.

⁵⁹ For a theoretical discussion on the interaction between social movements and the UN, see also Passy (1999).

Political globalization from below: liberation movements and solidarity networks

The emergence of a global civil society during the 20th century was constituted by the increasing number of NGO:s, transnational networks and social movements organising across borders. In 1909, there were 176 NGO:s working internationally, while at the time when apartheid ended, there were 28 900.⁶⁰ Far from all of these organisations can be considered as taking part in the process of political globalization. However, particularly during the post-war era, a transnational political culture emerged through the increasing internationalisation of “old” movements, such as churches and the labour movement, as well as the emergence of “new” social movements, which addressed global issues in new ways, e.g. colonialism/imperialism, solidarity, ecology, peace and gender inequality. The transnational anti-apartheid movement was a part of this process and became, as a “movement of movements”, a space of intersection for a wide range of collective actors.

Social movement studies have emphasised the importance of previously organised networks for the mobilisation of a social movement.⁶¹ Since networks are carriers of values, previously organised networks bring a historical legacy into the formation of a new movement. In the context of the anti-apartheid movement, the churches, the labour movement and the anti-colonial movements provided such networks.

The tensions and ambiguities of postcoloniality were particularly evident in the church networks. On the one hand the presence of the European and North American churches in Southern Africa was part of cultural colonialism. On the other hand, many key activists and prominent figures of the anti-apartheid movement were based in the churches, for example Albert Luthuli of ANC, Trevor Huddleston of AAM, Canon John Collins of IDAF and George Houser of ACOA. Another relevant case is that of Gunnar Helander, who in the 1930s went to South Africa to spread the word of Swedish Protestantism. In the late 50s he came back to Europe on a completely different mission, becoming a leading anti-apartheid journalist and author in Sweden, initiating the Swedish chapter of IDAF, and later becoming its vice chairman in London.⁶² Still, old colonial

⁶⁰ McGrew (ed.) (1997).

⁶¹ Tarrow (1998b).

⁶² Together with Per Wästberg, Gunnar Helander initiated Fonden för rasförtryckets offer (Fund for the Victims of Racial Oppression in South Africa) in 1959, that served as the Swedish chapter of IDAF.

links in some cases influenced positions that were taken by Helander and his church, as for example in relation to the debate on sanctions vs. constructive involvement. Although many intense debates on the issue of isolation vs. involvement were held within the networks of the Swedish churches, and ambivalence as well as internal opposition was frequently expressed, it was only in 1986 the Swedish Church started to sell off its shares in Swedish companies with subsidiaries South Africa. In this matter, it is relevant mention the close contacts that the Swedish Church Mission had with chief Gatsha Buthelezi of KwaZulu, leader of the Inkatha organisation, which opposed ANC:s call for sanctions. This was a link going back to the late 19th century when the Mission started its South African adventure in Zululand.⁶³

Tensions of postcoloniality also defined the relations between South African exile movements and Western solidarity movements. In her Australian study, Christine Jennett emphasise that the solidarity organisations were dependent on good relations with the exile movements for their legitimacy in relation to its supporters and the general public. However, just as important, it was the other way around as well. For example, it was very difficult for ANC or PAC, being perceived as “black” and “foreign” organisations, to stage their own public meetings in Britain in the 1960s.⁶⁴ However, with AAM providing the platform through organising the meeting, ANC and PAC leaders could give public voice to their issue. I think that this interdependence between exile and solidarity organisations highlights some of the paradoxes characterising the condition of

Helander later also became vice-chairman of IDAF in London. Beginning with *Zulu Meets the White Man* in 1949, he wrote ten novels in ten years, all expressing criticism against apartheid. They were originally written in Swedish but were subsequently translated to English and eight other languages.

⁶³ When the World Council of Churches (WCC) in a meeting in Utrecht in 1972, following the UN General Assembly’s call for isolation of South Africa, adopted a policy of disinvestment some Evangelical Lutheran churches, among them the Church of Sweden, expressed a “minority position” in the final resolution. This position, that advocated a policy of “involvement” in order to improve the conditions for black workers in the foreign owned companies, was in Sweden called “the new strategy” and was formally adopted by the Swedish Ecumenical Council in 1974 (Sellström 1999). Buthelezi was several times invited to Sweden by the Swedish Church Mission. On the relations between the Swedish Church Mission and Gatsha Buthelezi, as well as the adoption of the policy of “involvement” by the Swedish Ecumenical Council in 1974, see Sellström (2002), 422ff. and 519ff.

⁶⁴ Interview with Reg September.

postcoloniality, in which colonial dependencies can be reproduced, rearticulated as well as sometimes transgressed.

Understood in its broadest sense, the international labour movement played an extremely important role in the transnational anti-apartheid struggle. However, it also brought into to the movement its historical legacy of factional divisions, which had gained a new meaning and a new significance in the context of the Cold War. Particularly the reluctance among many Western labour Unions to support ANC and its call for sanctions against South Africa must be related to Cold War divisions between Soviet Communism and Western Socialist Reformism. Especially during the 1970s, the strong “anti-communism” within the Western ICFTU (the International Confederation of Trade Unions) caused suspicion against ANC, since its main union ally at this time was SACTU (South African Confederation of Trade Unions), that was affiliated to the Communist-dominated WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions).

Thus, it was not just through its impact on interstate relations that postcolonial and Cold War tension, ambivalence and conflict conditioned the anti-apartheid struggle; these contexts were also structuring the movement’s internal organisation, its debates and action strategies.

In retrospect, transnational support to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa might appear to have been something uncontroversial in most parts of the world. And sometimes it was. For example, it was easy to get public attention for anti-apartheid organisations immediately after the Sharpsville shootings in 1960, the Soweto uprisings in 1976 or the killing of Steven Biko in 1977, events that were extensively reported by mass media all over the world. But to *sustain* support to the struggle in South Africa against apartheid through the decades from the 1950s until the 1990s, and especially to support the call for sanctions made by the ANC, was not always an easy affair.

I would argue that, at certain moments, anti-apartheid action in this context constructed what Homi Bhabha has called a *third space*, understood as “an intervention into a situation that has become extremely polarised”.⁶⁵ As a position, “third space” does not signify neutrality, rather it is a condition in which the conflicts, contradictions and

⁶⁵ On the notion of “third space”, Bhabha (1994). The particular definition of the concept used above is quoted from a lecture by Homi Bhabha, Göteborg 020919.

ambivalences of a political order is felt most strongly. This condition was undoubtedly experienced by the anti-apartheid activists who were not just occasionally participating in a boycott or a demonstration, but spent years and decades in order to sustain support to the struggle against apartheid.

In the following section, I will analyse how this space was constituted through collective action.

IV Defining Anti-Apartheid as a transnational social movement

The transnational anti-apartheid struggle in many respects seem to fit Keck's and Sikkink's definition of a transnational *human rights advocacy network*; the concept of "advocacy network" signifies communicative structures as well as political spaces in which principled and strategic actors interact, simultaneously participating in domestic and international politics.⁶⁶ Keck and Sikkink analyse the actions of these networks in terms of campaigns, thus focusing on "processes of issue construction constrained by the action context in which they are to be carried out".⁶⁷ However, although Keck and Sikkink provide a number of valuable concepts and insights for an analysis of the transnational anti-apartheid movement, a transnational advocacy network and a social movement must be distinguished from each other.⁶⁸ In relation to a transnational advocacy network, a social movement is constituted by more sustained processes of social interaction. Further, rather than being primarily oriented around single issues, social movements involve the construction of long-term action strategies in order to transform a social order. Even though social movements engage in short term single issue campaigns, this has to be seen in relation to the existence of long term strategies and an ideological commitment.

⁶⁶ Keck & Sikkink (1998), p. 3-4.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶⁸ Keck & Sikkink, p. 6ff. Discussing the similarities between transnational advocacy networks and social movements, the authors also claim that their "stress on on the role of values in networks is consistent with some arguments contained in the literature on 'new social movements'", p. 31f. For a discussion on the distinction between transnational advocacy networks and social movements, see also Tarrow (1998a), p. 189.

Would it then be accurate to conceptualise the anti-apartheid movement as a social movement for human rights? I would argue that just as “advocacy network” implies a too limited understanding of the social organisation and the forms interaction of the international anti-apartheid struggle, “human rights” does not sufficiently conceptualise the articulation of this struggle. Although the human rights discourse was an important element in the discursive repertoire of the movement throughout the anti-apartheid struggle, the issue was also articulated through discourses with different ideological implications - for example as anti-imperialism, national self-determination, decolonisation, anti-capitalism, or pan-africanist anti-racism. This discursive diversity could partly be explained by the fact that movement actors sometimes strategically adjusted their terminology to different contexts, partly by the fact that the transnational anti-apartheid movement was a “movement of movements”, consisting of an extremely broad alliance of groups and organisations involving varying ideological commitments and social identities.

What then, united the different actors struggling against apartheid? They were of course united in the common goal of ending the apartheid system in South Africa. However, a common goal is not enough for a constellation of actors to compose a social movement.⁶⁹ *What is required is a shared collective identity*, which is a fundamental aspect of the definition of a social movement that I use here. In fact, the centrality of a collective identity is a fundamental aspect of what distinguishes a social movement from an advocacy network.

I would like to argue that in the context of the *transnational* anti-apartheid movement, “solidarity” was the central identity concept. According to the activists that I have interviewed, “solidarity” was a concept that was recognised across the variety of actors in the movement. Church activists, Communists, Union activists, exiled South Africans, Liberals and, of course, solidarity activists, shared an identification with the

⁶⁹ For example, the fact that communists and fascists shared the goal of overthrowing the liberal capitalist system in Germany in the 1930s, did not make them into a unified social movement, since they did not share a collective identity. Critics of the contemporary protests against corporate globalization are completely mistaken when they argue that there exists an anti-globalization movement, composed of neo-fascist nationalists and Left wing and Green movements.

concept.⁷⁰ Whatever one was doing, whatever one was participating in, an organisation, a demonstration, a boycott, it was defined as an act of solidarity. Solidarity was thus constructed as a fundamental value that defined the collective identity of the transnational anti-apartheid movement, its ideas as well as its practices.

As Keck and Sikkink discuss the difference between solidarity networks and human rights networks they also, according to my view, point to important differences between an advocacy network and a social movement:

Individuals are endowed with rights; communities are the repositories of solidarity. Solidarity involves a substantive dimension that rights-based activism does not, that is, support based on a conviction defending a just cause... for the core activists transnational solidarity campaigns presume an ideological affinity that transnational human rights advocacy does not.⁷¹

I analytically define a social movement as form of collective action that articulates a social conflict and ultimately aims at transforming a social order; it is a process of action and interaction involving as a fundamental element the construction of a collective identity, or a sense of community, of “us”, sharing a set of values and norms, in opposition to “others”, i.e. antagonistic actors, or “enemies”. Empirically, a social movement is constituted by different forms of practices: production and dissemination of information, knowledge and symbolic practices, mobilisation of various forms of resources, including the construction of organisations and networks, and the performing of public actions of different kinds (demonstrations as well as direct actions).⁷² This means that a social movement should not be confused with an “organisation”, or an NGO (although it can include NGO:s), and that it does not consist of the sum of a number of individuals – i. e. it does not presuppose “membership”- but should rather be seen as a

⁷⁰ Most of the 47 activists that I have interviewed in this project (including activists based in churches, unions, solidarity organisations and exiled liberation movements), state that the concept of solidarity was a defining concept of the theory and practice of the struggle in which they participated. The concept of solidarity can also be found in various anti-apartheid documents and statements produced by actors with different ideological commitments.

⁷¹ Keck & Sikkink (1998), p. 94.

⁷² Thörn (1997). This definition is influenced by the “identity paradigm” of Touraine (1981), Melucci (1996), Eyerman & Jamison (1991), as well as by resource mobilisation theory, see for example McCarthy & Zald (1988). See also Thörn (1997).

space of action. Participating in a boycott against South African goods you performed an action that was a part of constituting anti-apartheid as a social movement.

Social movements are frequently referred to in current discussions on democracy and civil society – national or international.⁷³ The concept of “social movement”, in the way it is used here, does not *per se* refer to democratic processes. However, in the history of modernity there have seldom been processes of democratisation without the involvement of broad social movements. The transformation of South African society in the 80s and 90s is, of course, one of the latest examples of this.

This theme connects to the discussion on the relation between social movements and social change. The fact that social movements are defined by an orientation toward social change does of course not mean that they always achieve the changes that are struggled for. Sometimes they do, but not exactly the way it was imagined in movement discourses. Sometimes unimagined changes might come about in the form of unintended consequences of collective action – as we saw many examples of during the 20th century.

Although there are disputes as to what extent the anti-apartheid movement contributed to the end of apartheid system, it might be argued that it largely was a success story.⁷⁴ Still, present day South African society might not look the way it was imagined in the utopias of the anti-apartheid movement. However, more important, simply to assess to what extent a movement achieved the goals that were formulated in its programs might not be the most fruitful way of reaching an understanding of the impact of its collective actions.

To be able to reach a more complex analysis of the relations between social movements and social change it might be useful to introduce the notion of “learning process” as an important aspect of social movement praxis.⁷⁵ In the practices of social movements, collective experiences are constructed, that to its individual participants

⁷³ Cohen & Arato (1992), Keane (1998), Anheier, Glasius & Kaldor (eds.) (2001).

⁷⁴ Of course, most research make arguments for a combination of factors explaining the fall of the apartheid regime, although giving some more weight than others. For an example of such an analysis, see Price (1991), where two internal factors, economic decline and political violence, interacts with international pressure.

⁷⁵ Habermas (1981), Eyerman & Jamison (1991), Peterson & Thörn (1994).

constitute learning processes, which might be carried into other contexts. This approach is specifically relevant when looking at the anti-apartheid movement as a precursor to contemporary transnational social movements.

To what extent learning processes of social movements actually contribute to significant social change is of course open to careful empirical investigation in any given case. In any case this is not an easy task to assess, since it really cannot be measured. To find out about the number of participants is of course not unimportant to be able to assess the impact of a movement. But the main task for the approach that I am suggesting is to find out about the *quality of action*. What were the important forms of action and interaction and what did they mean in the different contexts in which they were performed? This implies mainly focusing the analysis on the complex process of interaction through which the strategies and collective identities of a social movement are constructed. This is a process that not only involves consensus building but also tensions and conflicts. Although social movements may appear as homogenous phenomena in public space, they must be conceived as action spaces constituted by heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory constellations of actions.⁷⁶

I would even like to argue that tension and conflict are constitutive of dynamic social movement processes. An adequate analysis of a social movement, including its relations to the social and historical context in which it acts, must therefore not only focus on conflicts between a movement and its adversaries, but on the *internal* conflicts through which the strategies and identities of the movement are articulated. Such an approach is particularly relevant in the case of movements like anti-apartheid, being a “movement of movements”, consisting of an extremely broad alliance between liberation movements and solidarity movements, the latter composed of different “blocs” - churches, unions, political parties (predominantly liberals and social democrats), student movements and solidarity organisations. I would argue that the different names given to the struggle, that was mentioned above, should not just be seen as a mere reflection of this diversity, but also as competing ideological articulations in a struggle for hegemony *within* the movement.

⁷⁶ Melucci (1996).

To construct and sustain a sense of collective identity, while at the same time allow for this kind of discursive diversity, is a challenge that to an increasing extent has been facing social movement activists during the last decades, as movements stretch across borders, uniting groups and individuals based in extremely wide ranges of cultural, social and political contexts. In terms of collective identity, sustained transnational anti-apartheid action across borders was made possible through the construction of *an imagined community of solidarity activists*. I think it is particularly useful to use Benedict Anderson's influential concept here, since it emphasises the possibility of a shared sense of community among people dispersed over large geographical distances, not the least with the help of communication media. To borrow an expression from John B Thompson, the transnational anti-apartheid movement was constituted by "action at a distance". According to Thompson, this is a form of action that, through the use of various forms of communication media, "enables individuals to act for others who are dispersed in space and time, as well as enabling individuals to act in response to actions and events taking place in distant locales".⁷⁷ However, as we shall see in the next section, not just media, but also mobility – or travel – played a crucial role in the organisation, mobilisation and articulation of anti-apartheid across borders.

Forms of transnational action: mobilisation, organisation, media and mobility

I would like to argue that the central aspects of the construction of a movement space for transnational anti-apartheid action, as part of a much wider process of political globalization from below, can be analysed through the following interrelated themes: organisation, mobilisation, media and mobility (travel).

1. Transnational organisation and mobilisation. As in the case of most social movements, a crucial aspect of anti-apartheid mobilisation was done through movement organisations. Some of them were national, like the British AAM, some of them were international, like the IDAF, and some of them consisted of networks of local groups, like the South Africa Committees like the South Africa Committees in Sweden. These organisations were all part of a transnational solidarity network, in which The British AAM and the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid were two important nodes. The

⁷⁷ Thompson (1995), p. 82

anti-apartheid struggle also involved alliances between states and actors in global civil society, as states in a few cases funded, and exchanged information with, movement organisations across national borders. For example, the Swedish government supported the British Defence and Aid Fund, which was in strong opposition to the policy of the British government.

The British AAM was started in 1959 under the name of The Boycott Movement, and *I would argue that the boycott was the most important form of mobilisation* in the context of the anti-apartheid movement. The ultimate aim of the economic, cultural and sports boycotts was of course to put pressure on the South African government through isolating the country culturally and hurting it economically. However, as several activists that I have interviewed have pointed out, the anti-apartheid organisations also viewed the boycott as an important tool for mobilisation and “consciousness raising” of large numbers of people. Through the launching of boycott campaigns, the organisations offered people an opportunity for “everyday” participation in solidarity action. It was argued that in the long run such active participation would generally raise public consciousness about the issue, and eventually increase the pressure on national governments and international organisations, like UN or EEC, to impose sanctions. From this point of view, to participate in a boycott could also be seen as “voting” for sanctions (the British AAM called boycott action “people’s sanctions”). It could also be argued that participating in a boycott could be seen as a form of expressive action that was a fundamental aspect of the construction of the collective identity of the movement. It was an act through which the individual subject could feel that s/he became a part of an imagined global community of solidarity activists. In this sense, the boycott was a form of “identification at a distance” through local action. From this point of view the boycott also *emotionally* connected grass-roots activists in different parts of the world.

2. *Transnational media space.* Media and information work was a crucial part of anti-apartheid activism. The rise of the transnational anti-apartheid movement parallels with *the growth of a transnational media space*, which can be seen as a part of the process of globalization.⁷⁸ This is not only a space for the immediate transmission of news across

⁷⁸ For example, in his influential book *Media and Democracy*, John Keane is emphasising the role of media in the “slow and delicate growth of an international civil society”, Keane (1991), p. 143.

the globe, but also a site of political struggle, where different actors are trying to influence public opinions.⁷⁹

Since the 1960s new social movements are increasingly staging media oriented public manifestations addressing a global audience.⁸⁰ At the same time movement mobilisations are sometimes shaped in *response* to events that are globally reported by the media; movement intellectuals and groups are taking part in the struggle over the interpretation of the political implications of these events. Sometimes political mobilisations have taken place simultaneously around the world in an immediate response to events reported globally by the media. This was for example the case with the reports on the shots in Sharpsville in 1960, which lead to an intensified mobilisation against apartheid in different parts of the world.

However, media attention related to dramatic events in South Africa was short-lived. In between these events, anti-apartheid activists experienced difficulties to get a voice in public space. In response to this, an active approach to media was developed. This included *the two interrelated strategies of trying to influence established media, and to develop alternative media.*

The strategy of developing alternative media consisted in producing and distributing information through self-controlled channels. News bulletins, magazines as well as films and videos were produced and distributed to members and sold publicly. The materials of bulletins like AA News in Britain (that was also read by activists in other countries) or *Afrikabulletinen* in Sweden often relied on sources within the movement's transnational information networks. Here, contacts in South Africa established by activists played an important role.

Building up archives of well-researched information material and photographs, as was the case with for example IDAF in London or ISAK in Stockholm, was also a base for attracting established media. There were also activists that worked as free lance journalists, publishing articles in alternative as well as established media, a few of them leaving the movement for a journalist career. Established media was approached in a number of ways; through producing information material designed for journalists,

⁷⁹ Related to apartheid/anti-apartheid, see Saunders (2000).

⁸⁰ Gitlin (1980), Peterson & Thörn (1994) and (1997), Zoonen (1992).

through letters to the editor, often signed by prominent members, and through developing contacts with journalists that was perceived as standing close to the movement.⁸¹ A different way of getting a message across was the dramatised approach to political communication, performed through the staging of "events" in public space. For example AAM in Britain in 1970, on Sharpsville day, "recreated" the shootings as activists dressed as policemen were "shooting" at protesters in Trafalgar Square.⁸²

3. *Mobility: travel and exile.* The "action at a distance" that constituted anti-apartheid as a transnational movement was not only facilitated by the media but also by mobility, i. e. temporary travel, student visits facilitated by scholarships as well as "exile journeys". This made face-to-face interaction possible between individual activists that were based in different parts of the world or were coming from different places of origin. Of course, far from all of the people who participated in the movement travelled, but among those who did were key activists, who could be understood as "spiders" in the webs of global anti-apartheid activism.⁸³ They were people who through individual moves and movements were connecting places, organisations and networks.

Travel, or mobility, had different functions within the movement. *First, conferences played an important role* as a space for networking, discussions and co-ordination of national as well as transnational campaigns. *Second, the exile South Africans played an important role as organisers and mobilisers*, travelling extensively around the world, making speeches at solidarity meetings representing "the authentic voice" of the struggle.

⁸¹ As for example Victoria Brittain in Britain or Lars Herneklint in Sweden. In between movements and established media, there were a few individuals that played the role of public opinionmakers, often both authors and journalists by profession. They were often standing close to the movement, sometimes being part of it, but still saw themselves (and were seen) as independent. This was the case with for example Anthony Sampson and Colin Legum in Britain and Per Wästberg and Gunnar Helander in Sweden. Even though they were often appearing publicly in a national context, their "professional activism" was to a large extent transnational, as their books were translated to different languages, and as they travelled extensively.

⁸² Interview with Ethel de Keyser.

⁸³ In a movement that included the participation of millions of people, the key activists were of course substantial.

Third, according to accounts of solidarity activists, *travel was related to an emotional aspect of solidarity activism*, crucial for the individual's motivation to engage in, as well as to sustain, solidarity action through the years. For some activists journeys to Southern Africa meant making direct experiences of the apartheid system that became a starting point for a commitment to the struggle. More important, travel facilitated personal encounters between South African activists and solidarity activists, sometimes developing into friendships. Some activists mention temporary visits by South Africans, for example by the UDF in the 80s, as an important source of inspiration for the everyday routines of solidarity activism. It seems however, that it was the presence of exile South Africans that was the most important aspect in the process of giving "the other" a face on the level of personal relations in the context of the solidarity movement. Hence, through making identification with "distant others" something concrete for grassroots activists, travel seemed to have been a crucial element in making anti-apartheid solidarity possible.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have defined collective action against apartheid as a transnational social movement, which was part of a process of political globalization during the post-war era, and emerged under strong influence from the anti-colonial movements. This process was facilitated by the emergence of various transnational media, which created new possibilities for political communication over large distances, as well as by face-to-face interaction made possible by the increased possibilities of travel during the period.

The transnational anti-apartheid movement was part of an emerging process of globalization from below, constituted by transnational activist networks, INGO:s and NGO:s working across national borders, as well as the construction of transnational imagined communities. However, I have also showed how this process, in the case of anti-apartheid action, intersected with political globalisation from above, constituted by an increasing number of international communities, as well as the rise and consolidation of new "global" documents and institutions, predominantly Human Rights and the UN.

Organisationally, the anti-apartheid movement consisted of a network of local, national and transnational groups and organisations, being simultaneously active in

national and international politics. It approached, interacted, and in a few cases closely co-operated with, national governments, such as the Swedish, as well as intergovernmental organisations and communities, such as the OAU, the Commonwealth and the UN. Particularly important was the UN Special Committee against apartheid, which provided a space of interaction for various anti-apartheid groups and organisations, including solidarity movements as well as liberation movements. To use Kriesi's and Della Porta's notion of an international multilevel political game, the struggle against apartheid thus included three types of international interaction - transgovernmental interaction, transnational mobilisation, and cross-level mobilisation. However, it is also important to emphasise that the case of anti-apartheid shows that the analysis of transnational politics can not take the nation state as a self-evident point of departure. Although the issue of anti-apartheid was related to the politics of the South African state, the anti-apartheid struggle not only became a transnational process of mobilisation; this process also emerged out of global contexts.

To conclude, I argue that the history of the anti-apartheid struggle provides an important historical case for the analysis of present-day global politics.

In my research, it has become evident that the present mobilisation of a "global civil society" in relation to economic globalization and supra-national political institutions like WTO, IMF and the World Bank, has historical links to the post-war, transnational political culture that the anti-apartheid movement was part of. Movement organisations, networks and individuals that took part in the anti-apartheid struggle are present in this context. For, example, as I was doing my first interviews for this project in Stockholm in September 1999, two veteran anti-apartheid activists told me that they were busy interacting with NGO:s in various parts of the world, preparing a protest against the WTO meeting in Seattle in December. "It is going to be big", they told me. Their organisation Diakonia, earlier member of the Swedish anti-apartheid coalition ISAK, was one of the 1448 organisations that signed the "Appeal from the international civil society" that was published on the internet during the protests in Seattle.

Six months later, I interviewed former anti-apartheid "media activist" Danny Schecter, today working with "Globalvision", an alternative media organisation, and Mediawatch – The Global Media and Democracy Supersite, a project that aims at

supporting media critique and media activism, and to which 444 groups and organisations from all over the world were connected at the time of the interview. As an example of the fact that different individuals can carry the learning processes of the anti-apartheid movement into very different contexts, he showed me Ben Cashdan's documentary "The two Trevors go to Washington". It follows two South Africans, Trevor Manuel and Trevor Ngwane, both of them former anti-apartheid activists, on their journey to the IMF/World Bank meeting in Washington in 2000. Trevor Manuel visits the meeting as South Africa's Minister of Finance and as the chairman of the boards of governors of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Trevor Ngwane is a grassroots activist from Soweto that goes to Washington to protest against the global policies of the IMF and the World Bank. In the film, there is also a short interview with an activist participating in a demonstration in Washington, Dennis Brutus, a well known anti-apartheid activist.⁸⁴ The example thus not only shows that there are links between the anti-apartheid movement and contemporary global movements, but also that transnational movements sometimes even provide global politics with new elites.

Comment [HT1]:

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⁸⁴ Brutus came London from South Africa in the 1967, after spending 22 months on Robben Island. Here he worked with IDAF and started SANROC (The South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee), that led the international campaign for a sports boycott on South Africa. A few years later he left for USA.

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INTERVIEWS

 (47 interviews have been carried out for the research project on which this article is

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