

Americas summits report that they made worthwhile and lasting contacts among the NGOs; members of the Mexico and Inter-American Division expressed particularly thoughtful and willing interest in expanding these relationships in preparing for the coming summit in Canada. Officials also report that NGOs had some (modest) influence on the language of summit agreements—on indigenous peoples in the Americas, for instance, and on the importance of promoting “civil society” itself.

NGO activists—those at least who succeeded in meeting officials or ministers—report similar achievements. Those active in APEC affairs recognized that they learned a lot about APEC’s rather intricate political dynamics, and admit they had a lot to learn. Some of them believe that a few DFAIT officials did a little learning of their own, growing less reluctant to enlarge APEC’s agenda beyond commerce.

Still, there remain real divisions—between some organizations increasingly eager for their first access to the policy process, others (like the Canadian Labour Congress) for whom access is not nearly enough and who look to influence policy, and some who oppose any collaboration that might carry a whiff of co-optation. Nowhere is the division more evident than in the phenomenon of the “people’s summit,” a raucous coming together of oppositional and co-operative organizations in a spirited appeal to media attention. Nobody in the department or in Canadian NGOs believes the people’s summits in Vancouver or Santiago had significant influence on Canadian policy or summit outcomes; in that sense they represented a dysfunctional (and perhaps hypocritical) non-participation in the policy process. Even so, people’s summits may have served to build solidarity among NGOs in Asia-Pacific and the Americas, and so strengthen the forces of democratization. The other objective behind people’s summits is television coverage, and