

People's Summit network excluded business associations from their category of professional groups, mainly because APEC already gave business leaders special access to the decision-making process while other civil society groups were largely excluded from participation in official APEC meetings. The Canadian government underscored this perception in a promotional brochure stating that, "APEC has been business-driven from the start, a feature that sets it apart from many other regional and trade bodies," actively embracing the expression coined by the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) that "APEC Means Business."⁶

This tension between People's Summit/civil society objectives on the one hand and government or business objectives for APEC on the other (described as "two solitudes" by one journalist⁷) underlines a central challenge for Canadian society and the APEC process beyond 1997. A similar dichotomy has also been a major theme of many other multilateral fora involving NGOs or civil society groups. However, at most UN, and more recently APEC, meetings a substantial contingent of NGOs have partially bridged the divide between peoples and governments. NGOs have rallied in public protests and held press conferences to stress the shortcomings of government policies and industry, but NGOs have also worked within the system to change it. Recent UN meetings have provided structures and mechanisms allowing some NGOs or civil society representatives observer status and participation on national delegations at individual countries' discretion. NGOs have been representatives on official government delegations, and prepared policy interventions to influence the tone and content of the official debates and negotiated texts. The result has argueably been more participatory, socially, and ecologically more progressive international policy frameworks.⁸

⁶ From a brochure titled "APEC: Opening Doors for Canadian Business" p. 4. published by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, (n.d.)

⁷ Chris Wood, "APEC's two solitudes," Maclean's 1 (December 1997), pp 30-31.

⁸ For good background overviews see especially Paul Wapner, Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics (Albany: State University of New York, 1996); Thomas Princen and Matthias Finger, Eds., Environmental NGOs in World Politics (London: Routledge, 1994); and Felix Dodds, The Way Forward: Beyond Agenda 21 (London: Earthscan Publications, 1997).