By the end of the 1960s, European newspapers and magazines were full of reports from Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, sometimes Nigeria and, of course, coverage of the student protests in Western Europe. In this atmosphere, the renowned travel writer Norman Lewis published an article in the *Sunday Times*, aiming to direct public attention to the Amazon rainforest.¹ His piece unveiled atrocities against «uncontacted» natives in Brazil, caused by the intrusion of settlers and diamond prospectors. The events that Lewis labelled «genocide» affected a population of no more than a few thousand people. Even so, the headline referred to «six million victims», a number invoking the death toll of the Shoah. His report related the contemporary crisis to historical crimes: it placed photos of semi-naked indigenous individuals alongside reproductions of Theodor de Bry’s engravings from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The latter had depicted massacres committed by the Spanish *conquistadores* against the inhabitants of the «New World» – events that Bartolomé de Las Casas had denounced so forcefully in 1542.² In relating these two atrocity accounts to each other, Lewis suggested that a humanitarian catastrophe had been going on for centuries. Lewis’s article may be regarded as major factor in raising awareness of the situation of small ethnic minorities in the Western hemisphere. His report was followed by further media coverage: in late 1969, for instance, the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* reprinted the text in a series on threatened indigenous populations in the Amazon basin.³

Shortly after these revelations, several initiatives were launched to alleviate the plight of far-away populations. During the 1970s and 1980s, Survival International, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and the Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (GfbV) developed into the main European support groups for

tribal and indigenous peoples. Although these groups were founded independently, they were driven by similar motivations: they all reacted to humanitarian crises concerning populations in remote areas of the Global South, mainly in South America. Activists joined forces with established advocacy organisations such as the Minority Rights Group and the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights (formerly known as the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines’ Protection Society). What follows is a first approach to situate these groups in the historical context of the expansion of human rights activism and the spread of new social movements from the late 1960s.

In this period, the rights of «tribal» or «indigenous» populations – members of the so-called «Fourth World» – became subjects of international concern. Based on an analysis of their periodicals, one can identify three major strategies or aims among those who campaigned on behalf of indigenous populations: raising public awareness, documenting and publicising human rights violations, and the empowerment of indigenous organisations by facilitating contacts with supranational political institutions, governments and development agencies. Direct relief or project aid was an additional but less important objective. The article ends with a discussion of the pitfalls and challenges of advocacy, notably in regard to the relationship between Western organisations and the «objects» of their advocacy.

1. The Inner Circle of Indigenous Rights Advocacy

As Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn have argued convincingly, the end of colonial rule after the Second World War was a prerequisite for the development of a fundamentally new approach to human rights issues in the 1970s. In this period, human rights work became a popular form of political activism. Amnesty International, founded in 1961, paved the way for human rights organisations that could be framed in the context of new social movements, uniting a more or less broad spectrum of members with varying degrees of participation. According to Eckel, Amnesty also revolutionised the techniques of human rights work: it exerted direct pressure not only on governments but also on private corporations, using the tools of mass media and professional public relations. Like the British, American and Brazilian anti-slavery movements of the nineteenth century, human rights activism in the 1960s developed as part of a (relative) mass movement. But it did not profess revolutionary political goals as envisioned by the radical arm of the student’s movement. Instead, activists favoured concrete and practical help for individuals and specific underprivileged groups.
Interest in the situation of non-European populations had risen in Western Europe in the late 1950s following the moral outrage over French practices in Algeria. This «Third World movement» later diversified into different initiatives and shared several features with indigenous and minority advocacy groups, mainly in terms of addressing international responsibilities and structural injustices. There were, however, several differences between these movements: some Third World groups operated as local initiatives with limited organisational structures, unlike the organisations that mobilised on behalf of indigenous populations. Furthermore, some forms of «Third Worldism» mobilised on behalf of the liberation movements in Latin America whereas, by and large, the advocacy organisations for indigenous people did not actively support the practice of armed struggle.

In the late 1960s, the fate of indigenous peoples in Latin America became the subject of several expert meetings, including the 1968 sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in Geneva and the 38th International Congress of Americanists (ICA), held in Stuttgart and Munich in August 1968. Various papers at the latter event documented massacres and the forced assimilation of indigenous tribal populations in Latin America, revealing how several communities had been brought to the brink of extermination. At the Stuttgart meeting, anthropologists condemned government institutions for not preventing the exploitation of their native populations. Several participants from Nordic countries, among them Helge Kleivan, Georg Henrikson and Niels Fock, decided to leave the academic field and generate publicity for the problems of ethnic minorities. Their first meeting took place shortly after the conclusion of the ICA Congress in Copenhagen. It gave rise to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), the first European advocacy organisation dedicated to the plight of the world’s indigenous populations.

The IWGIA was not only the result of an initiative born at an international conference but also conceived as an expert organisation of social scientists who dealt with indigenous and tribal peoples in their professional lives. More than other organisations, it initially expressed a positivist belief in the persuasive power of scientific knowledge and the authority of international institutions. The newly formed body aimed «to use knowledge collected by social scientists to seek solutions to the problems arising from forced acculturation and integration in various countries throughout the world». The organisation’s founders thought that scientific infor-
mation would convince governments to work towards solutions for the problems of their indigenous minorities.

The IWGIA founders did not participate directly in the 1971 Barbados meeting of Latin American anthropologists, an initiative of the Ethnological Department of the University of Berne and the World Council of Churches. However, the event was in line with the IWGIA’s political and professional views. The participants – leading Latin American anthropologists and ethnologists – stressed the need for a «self-liberation» and «decolonisation» movement among indigenous peoples, similar to the processes that had taken place in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.\(^\text{12}\) The issues of autonomy and self-determination acquired importance in all subsequent discussions of indigenous issues. The Declaration of Barbados – according to Wright a «manifesto of anthropology’s alliance with the liberation struggles of native people»\(^\text{13}\) – was the first IWGIA publication. It was distributed among Western academics as well as indigenous activists and intellectuals.\(^\text{14}\)

The IWGIA was soon followed by other non-governmental organisations. In Great Britain, a group mainly composed of anthropologists founded the Primitive Peoples Fund, which soon took the less controversial name Survival International. Both Survival International and the Dutch Werkgroep Indianen Zuid-Amerika (WIZA) cited Lewis’s article as inspiration.\(^\text{15}\) Whereas the two working groups established in Denmark and the Netherlands adopted the more advanced concept of «indigeneity», Survival International stuck to the traditional categorisation of «tribal populations». In practice, they concentrated on groups who maintained «traditional» rural lifestyles and had not been included in national integration schemes.\(^\text{16}\) The organisation identified alien land grabbing and the intrusion of missionaries as primary threats to these communities. Survival International conducted research among such groups, reported to the public on their situation and facilitated project funds to acquire land, purchase agricultural tools, support organisational processes or educational programmes.

In West Germany, the Aktion Biafra-Hilfe – co-founded by Tilman Zülch and Klaus Guerke in June 1968 in response to the Nigerian Civil War – changed its name


\(^\text{14}\) IWGIA; Declaration of Barbados, Copenhagen 1971 (IWGIA Document no. 1).

\(^\text{15}\) B. Bentley, «The Story of Survival International 1969–1979» in: Survival International Review 4 (1979) 1, 4–7. WIZA later merged with the Stichting Werkgroep Indianen to form the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. Since 1993, the organisation has used the name «Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples».

\(^\text{16}\) «Indigeneity» refers to situations where peoples have been overcome by alien forces and are dominated by others. In contrast, the concept of «tribal populations» is linked to specific lifestyles and forms of community organisation. «Indigeneity» is a political tool and resource, while people who are regarded as «indigenous» use specific (ethnic) group names in their daily lives. See R. Niezen, The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity, Berkeley, CA. 2003.
to Gesellschaft für (Leben und Zukunft) bedrohter Völker (GfbV). This reflected its growing ambition to campaign for the rights of endangered minority peoples worldwide. While the IWGIA and Survival International limited their advocacy to «indigenous» or «tribal» people, the GfbV pursued a much wider approach with the concept of «threatened peoples» – without discussing what groups qualified as a «people».

Having initially focused on the Biafra crisis, it soon covered the conflict in South Sudan, the Kurdish minorities in the Middle East and, in the third issue of its periodical Pogrom, the «Genocide in Brazil». In the latter case, the periodical chronicled the attacks on and killings of Amazonian tribes. Subsequent issues reported on the living conditions of American Indians and Aboriginal Australians. Although the journal discussed far-away places to which most Germans had little relation, the organisation tried to bridge this affective gap by pointing at the responsibilities of German policies or companies. For instance, in 1973, the GfbV published an extensive report on the situation of the Aché in Paraguay. In this context, the author referred to the involvement of German business representatives in the South American country. As members of a semi-private committee (Comisión de Ayuda al Indígena Guayak), they were accused of being behind the resettlement programme of this indigenous group – measures that would provoke, according to the anthropologist Mark Münzel, the extermination of the Aché.

Similar to the IWGIA and Survival International, the GfBV publicised the most drastic allegations: the terms «genocide», «extermination» or «final solution» were frequently applied to the situation of the Amazonian forest dwellers, the Maya people in Guatemala, the Chittagong Hill Tract mountain tribes in Bangladesh, the Naga in India, West Papuans and other groups.

While their beginnings were characterised by modest growth and financial constraints, Survival International and the Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker expanded their membership base considerably during the 1980s. Survival International reached nearly 4000 members in 63 countries by 1987, while the GfbV grew from 250 members in 1977 to 1290 in 1981 and over 5000 in 1991.

These numbers did not only reflect membership but also active involvement. Both organisations established national sections outside their respective home grounds and also increased the number of local or regional groups, which carried out important fundraising and campaigning.

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work.\footnote{Survival International established national sections in Ireland, France, Italy, and the USA, where it also maintained a close relationship with Cultural Survival, based at Harvard University. The GfbV maintained a presence in nearly every major West German city and was also active in Austria and Switzerland.} Meanwhile, at the leadership level, the organisations were characterised by strong continuities. During the initial stage of consolidation, the core group of activists did not suffer any substantial fluctuations. Figures such as Tilman Zülch, Robin Hanbury-Tenison or Helge Kleivan personified their respective organisations and controlled their decision-making process. While Survival International and the GfbV turned into medium-sized grass-roots organisations during the 1980s, the IWGIA remained under the management of professionals, with its office still hosted by the University of Copenhagen. As a consequence, the organisation placed little emphasis on membership enrolment and fundraising campaigns. Financially, it depended on subsidies from Scandinavian foreign ministries and development agencies.\footnote{Dahl, \textit{IWGIA}, 80–81.}

There is some controversy as to the place of organisations such as the GfbV within Cold War politics. Given the initial focus on discrimination against indigenous minorities in Western societies, they obviously shared their critical attitude towards government policies and multi-national business corporations with political groups from the left. But discrimination and violence against minorities were not confined to the West. In the 1980s, the situation of (indigenous) ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union was regularly discussed in the periodicals of the different advocacy organisations. Despite describing itself as anti-ideological, the GfbV was criticised for allegedly left-leaning positions because of its support for militant liberation movements such as the American Indian Movement – yet others attacked it as reactionary for sharing positions with right-wing German associations of expellees after the Second World War.\footnote{Wüst, \textit{Menschenrechtsarbeit}, 245–252.} Like other organisations, the GfbV criticised the US and Canadian Indian Reservation policies, but also the revolutionary Sandinista government in Nicaragua for the resettlement programme of the Miskito Indians at the Atlantic Coast. While the organisation could appear radical in its support for claims to self-determination, it kept a low profile with regard to political affiliations.

\section*{2. Advocacy Groups and the Indigenous Peoples Movement}

The advocacy initiatives are tied to the broader international movement of indigenous peoples’ organisations. New types of political formations founded by indigenous peoples emerged from the 1960s onwards. Despite their considerable differences, they were all centred on the idea of collective rights of indigenous peoples which incorporated but also exceeded the established human rights pattern of individual freedoms and equality.\footnote{D. M. Johnson, «Native Rights as Collective Rights. A Question of Group Self-Preservation», in: W. Kymlicka (ed.), \textit{The Rights of Minority Cultures}, Oxford 1995, 179–201.} Their main issue was self-determination. These organisations remained at the centre of a movement that Brysk describes as a «trans-
national issue network», based on the «construction of ethnicity as specific local identities developed in a pan-indigenous worldview». Such networks, according to the classic characterisation of transnational activism by Keck and Sikkink, are bound together by shared values and dense exchanges of information and services between its members. In other words, they form a «moral community».

Although the international movement of indigenous activists expanded in the 1970s with the foundation of umbrella organisations such as the International Indian Treaty Council (1974) and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (1975), its members lacked the means of running the network with their own resources. For this reason, European and North American advocacy groups held the key to the movement’s information strategy until the communication revolution of the early 1990s led to a decentralisation of the capacity to gather and distribute information. These specialised advocacy groups were, however, not the only potential allies for indigenous organisations, as other civil society organisations also built alliances with them. Amnesty International repeatedly campaigned for the release of indigenous (political) prisoners, among them American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier and indigenous leaders Nilo Cayuqueo and Constantino Lima, who were targeted by military dictatorships in South America. In this region, religious organisations, especially the World Council of Churches with its Anti-Racism Programme, played a fundamental role in denouncing human rights violations and supporting efforts by indigenous communities. Furthermore, in some instances indigenous rights advocacy intersected with environmental or animal rights concerns, especially regarding the protection of tropical rainforests and other ecologically threatened habitats of tribal populations. As will be shown, this coalition was fragile, resulting for example in conflicts with respect to hunting and resource extraction rights.

To assess the operation and limitations of the different coalitions surrounding indigenous populations, it is worthwhile to consider their repertoires of action awareness-raising, documentation, empowerment and aid were particularly prominent features.

3. Awareness-raising Campaigns

Most advocacy organisations for indigenous rights focused their early efforts on raising awareness, primarily using letter campaigns to influence decision-makers. In doing so, they adopted campaigning techniques that had been used successfully by the likes of Amnesty International. Survival International created a network of like-minded organisations and individuals, provided them with background infor-

26 A. Brysk, From Tribal Village to Global Village: Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America, Stanford 2000, 55.
mation on specific issues, and asked them to appeal to government officials and other authorities. These initiatives were covered in newsletters so that members and followers could assess the results of these efforts. Through this strategy, Survival International established itself as the advocacy organisation most able to react to urgent issues and mount pressure in the face of threats against specific tribal populations. The downside of this strategy was the ongoing characterisation of indigenous peoples as politically weak, vulnerable and almost defenceless.\textsuperscript{30}

The IWGIA was more sceptical of the attempt to influence governments or corporations via such campaigns. It felt that lasting accomplishments required pressure at the inter-governmental level and the targeting of international institutions. Due to its limited membership, the organisation initially lobbied Nordic governments and United Nations agencies, although this proved ineffective and the lack of response created frustration. Evaluating the first ten years of advocacy practice, the IWGIA's board reached the conclusion that this strategy had failed.\textsuperscript{31} Minority issues were still regarded as internal affairs and even progressive Scandinavian governments stuck to this doctrine. The working group concentrated on issues that directly involved indigenous peoples, as in the case of Sami protests against the construction of the Alta Dam in Norway or in standing up for the Yanomami in Brazil, especially during the 1980s.\textsuperscript{32}

The Yanomami campaign was important as it created a coalition of advocacy organisations working in adjacent fields. The Brazilian government’s scheme to build the Perimetral Norte, a highway aimed at integrating the north-eastern federal states into the national territory, cut straight through the habitat of the Amazonian Yanomami people, who came to symbolise the negative side effects of modernisation. This issue led to a coordinated effort involving not only Western NGOs such as Survival International and the GfbV, but also environmental associations and local activists. They combined a protracted campaign to demarcate and protect indigenous lands with the effort to save people's lives, as they introduced a vaccination programme to protect the Yanomami from new diseases brought in by construction workers, colonists and miners.\textsuperscript{33} Indigenous rights activists and ecological groups later affirmed the link between the protection of the vulnerable tropical environment and respect for the original inhabitants of this region with the Declaration of Iquitos (1990). This document was signed by indigenous activists and over twenty Western non-governmental organisations and foundations, among them Greenpeace, Oxfam,

\textsuperscript{30} See for example the first number of \textit{Survival International News}, a periodical launched in 1983. Nearly all the 21 short reports are on acts of violence, oppression and exploitation by representatives of Western civilisation (missionaries, international corporations, drug dealers, and communists).

\textsuperscript{31} IWGIA Newsletter 19 (1978).


Survival International and the Ford Foundation. The joint effort to protect the Amazonian region, both for the sake of global environmental issues and the survival of indigenous inhabitants, united these sometimes antagonistic groups against a common enemy, namely the forces that planned to exploit the region for material benefit.\(^{34}\)

The «Fourth Russell Tribunal on the Rights of Indians in the Americas» was another example of coalition-building for the purpose of raising awareness.\(^{35}\) The event took place in Rotterdam in late 1980, focusing on crimes committed against indigenous peoples in the Western hemisphere. Staged by the Werkgroep Indianen Zuid-America in cooperation with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, the tribunal gave indigenous representatives not only an opportunity to articulate their grievances before an international audience but also a chance to recognise that their situations and problems were not unique. The realisation that local grievances related to international structures was an essential step in allowing activists from different backgrounds to join forces.\(^{36}\) Beyond managing the event and ensuring extensive media coverage, the advocacy groups took advantage of the presence of indigenous leaders in Europe at such events to organise lecture tours which in some instances attracted audiences of several thousands.\(^{37}\)

While the Amazonian campaign brought human rights activists, humanitarians and environmentalists together, the earlier controversy regarding hunting rights for indigenous communities indicates major frictions between both groups of activists. In the early 1980s, several non-governmental organisations, among them Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), were involved in the initiative to prohibit seal, whale and fur hunting, which happened to be the traditional subsistence means of indigenous populations inhabiting the Arctic Circle. A coalition of affected communities, spearheaded by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and Canadian-based Indigenous Survival International, tried to build a counter-campaign with the support of European advocacy organisations. The GfbV’s journal dedicated a special issue to the arctic peoples and invited activists to a series of public hearings to confront the arguments of animal rights campaigners, while the IWGIA concentrated on lobbying the European Parliament.\(^{38}\) As a result, the EU did not pronounce a general embargo on the fur trade while the International Whaling Commission established a quota for the hunting rights of indigenous populations who traditionally rely on hunting as a means of subsistence.

\(^{35}\) The advocacy organisations disseminated information on the tribunal; see Arbeitsgruppe Indianer/Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker. Der Völkermord geht weiter: Indianer vor dem IV. Russell-Tribunal, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1982; also Pogrom 74–75 (1980) and 78–79 (1981).
\(^{36}\) See Brysk, Tribal Village, 65 for an evaluation of the Russell Tribunal by Peruvian indigenous leader Evaristo Nugkuag.
\(^{37}\) For instance, after the 1977 NGO conference in Geneva, the GfbV organised a tour of a pan-indigenous delegation, with over 60 events in 26 German cities: see Pogrom 50 (1977), 52, 53–56 (1978).
\(^{38}\) Pogrom 119 (1985); Dahl, IWGIA, 58–60.
4. Documentation and the Publication of Reports

Beyond specific campaigns aimed at raising public awareness, advocacy organisations regarded the documentation of human rights violations and dissemination of information on such cases as their major task. They established journals and newsletters, some of which targeted their membership or the wider European public, while others disseminated information to indigenous organisations.

In-depth reports were often a prerequisite for campaigning. In this respect, the involvement of social scientists and individuals with close connections to anthropologists was a valuable asset. Initially, the contributors were mainly academics directly involved in the organisations. The IWGIA and the Minority Rights Group in particular published extensive reports by authors who had conducted field research among a specific group, outlining the group’s history and living conditions, describing the conflict or threat and proposing practical support measures for these peoples. Some reports were subsequently reprinted by other support organisations.

The other part of the publishing activities consisted of periodicals that printed stories on indigenous and minority issues. These kinds of publications primarily aimed to keep members informed of recent developments and to maintain their adherence to the cause, but they were also distributed among the media, anthropologists and human rights organisations. Even before the organisations expanded their membership, subscribers to its publications formed a solid base of support. For instance, by 1977 subscribers to the periodical Pogrom outnumbered the membership of the GfbV by a factor of three.39

Although these publications attracted supporters, they consumed valuable financial and personal resources. In 1983, Survival International replaced its member magazine Review, which appeared four times a year and had been distributed since 1972, with the shorter newsletter Survival International News. The latter normally featured one major report, several short articles relating to indigenous struggles in different parts of the world, especially Latin America, Australia and the Philippines, as well as news on specific Survival International campaigns. Similar in scope was the IWGIA’s Newsletter, which first appeared in 1968 and was published regularly from 1976 onwards.

As more and more indigenous political organisations emerged at the local, regional, national and even international level, they demanded and acquired the capacity to speak for themselves. The newsletters and membership magazines published by advocacy organisations accompanied the process of organisation-building among indigenous peoples. They documented events such as the General Assemblies of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), the two non-governmental conferences on indigenous issues sponsored by the United Nations in Geneva in

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39 For 1977, Wüst (Menschenrechtsarbeit, 240) lists 2200 subscribers, 250 active members and 430 more who only paid membership fees.
1977 and 1981 and, from 1982 onwards, the annual gatherings of indigenous representatives in the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Speeches and statements given by indigenous participants at the United Nations events were disseminated by the small Geneva-based NGO doCip, which began to monitor UN developments relevant to indigenous peoples.

DoCip’s bilingual English/Spanish newsletter *update/informativo* represented a broader trend towards a more global orientation on the part of advocacy groups’ publications and their readership. Indigenous activists themselves began to contribute to NGO publications and to report on their struggles and activities. In 1978, the GfBV dedicated an entire number of its journal *Pogrom* to articles taken from the Colombian indigenous monthly *Unidad Indígena*.

In 1981, the IWGIA decided to publish a regular newsletter in Spanish called *Boletín*, which was mainly distributed among indigenous organisations, social scientists and the media in Latin America.

Alongside these attempts to publish first-hand accounts and statements by representatives of indigenous organisations or communities, there were shifts in the coverage of particular issues and regions. While the majority of articles published in the early years focused on violence and threats to indigenous peoples, later on both the GfBV and the IWGIA paid more attention to reports of resistance struggles and organisational activities. This process was accompanied by an expansion of coverage with articles treating the situation of tribal and indigenous populations in Asia (mainly the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, and East Timor), the Soviet Union and eventually Africa.

5. Empowerment and Capacity-building

The shift in the content of the publications during the 1970s and 1980s mirrored major developments in the indigenous world. Indigenous peoples organised themselves in movements that aimed to overcome persistent histories of marginalisation and misrepresentation. The European advocacy groups were actively involved in fostering indigenous self-development. Parallel to the emergence of support organisations in Europe and North America, indigenous activists in Western countries initiated spectacular campaigns, from the occupation of Alcatraz in 1968 to the Wounded Knee stand-off in 1974, from protests against the James Bay hydro-electric scheme in Northern Canada and the Alta Dam in Norway to the sieges of parliament buildings by members of First Nations, Aboriginal and Maori communi-
ties in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These events reflected the political mobilisation of indigenous peoples and had an enormous impact on the international movement.

At the beginning of the 1980s, there was still a considerable divide between the organisational processes of indigenous peoples in North America and other regions of the world. The two United Nations conferences in Geneva in 1977 and 1981 were dominated by delegations from First Nations of Canada and the American Indians who had the financial resources to represent themselves on the international stage. From 1982 onwards, the United Nations introduced a regular forum for discussions on indigenous issues, the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP). This initiative was crucial for the development of the transnational indigenous movement: during the 1980s and 1990s, it was the one global gathering where indigenous activists and representatives could articulate their concerns on a regular basis as well as liaising with supportive organisations and development agencies. The WGIP increased the opportunities for indigenous peoples to raise human rights concerns, establishing contacts and working partnerships among each other from the local to the international level.

The United Nations introduced a unique open access-policy, allowing even non-registered civil society organisations to attend the WGIP sessions. Nonetheless, high travel costs and living expenses in Geneva made it difficult for indigenous organisations to come to the first meetings. These difficulties, along with the more geographically circumscribed concept of «indigeneity», were the main reasons why the initial conferences primarily attracted delegations from the Anglo-European indigenous world and some Latin American representatives, especially Mapuche, who had ties to the exile community in Europe during the years of military dictatorship in Chile and Argentina.

Advocacy organisations contributed in two ways to raising the concerns of indigenous groups at these meetings. First, in some instances, indigenous organisations that could not afford to send a representative for financial or political reasons authorised third parties to deliver speeches on their behalf. This task was generally assumed by the European advocacy organisations, which regularly attended the meetings and by 1982 had almost all been registered as non-governmental organisations by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and therefore acquired the privilege


to be accredited at United Nations events.\textsuperscript{45} Given the intransigence shown by most governments to indigenous claims raised at the national level, the IWGIA, Survival International or the Anti-Slavery Society regarded this externalisation via supranational institutions as crucial for advancing the rights of indigenous populations.\textsuperscript{46}

During the first sessions of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, it was common for international organisations to file reports that charged governments with violating the rights of groups living within their national borders. While they also referred to situations in countries such as Canada or Australia, these allegations were particularly controversial in the case of Asian tribal communities. From the first meeting in 1982, the Anti-Slavery Society took a specific interest in the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and in ethnic minorities in Burma and India.\textsuperscript{47} It constantly engaged in discussions with government observers from these states, who not only rejected the allegations as «baseless» but also repudiated the applicability of the concept of «indigenous peoples». They described their own countries as heterogeneous multi-ethnic societies that had emerged out of a joint decolonisation struggle, not comparable to the situation in the Americas or Australia.\textsuperscript{48}

Advocacy organisations regarded the delivery of statements in the name of indigenous communities as only a second-best option. Observers from the IWGIA, for example, never took the floor to speak on behalf of indigenous peoples.\textsuperscript{49} After all, complaints about human rights abuses acquire more credibility if they are presented by those who are directly affected. As the advocacy network strengthened its interest in UN activities, one of its first joint projects was to raise and expand the participation of indigenous representatives. In 1984 – even before the member states created their own fund to invite indigenous representatives – the Anti-Slavery Society and several other NGOs began to sponsor indigenous activists, enabling them to speak for their organisations and communities at international events. The Human Rights Fund for Indigenous Peoples, filled with subsidies collected by the different advocacy organisations, financed the attendance of UN conferences by several hundreds of indigenous activists, principally from the global South. It thus contributed substantially to the geographical expansion of the international indigenous movement.\textsuperscript{50} For instance, in 1987 the initiative brought in a delegate from the Jumma in Bangladesh to make a
statement on behalf of his people.\textsuperscript{51} A few years later, the IWGIA invited the first African indigenous delegate to attend a meeting of the Working Group.\textsuperscript{52}

6. Development and Project Aid

While lobbying activities have always been central to indigenous advocacy organisations, activists also became involved in project work and development aid. In this respect they shared objectives with charities and «Third World» groups and should be included in histories of development policies.\textsuperscript{53} In accordance with its long-term goal to enable minority groups to develop their own communication channels, the GfbV provided financial and technical means for indigenous media projects such as \textit{Unidad Indígena} in Colombia and the Mohawk Journal \textit{Akwesasne Notes}. In return, these and other indigenous newspapers supplied articles that were published in the GfbV journal \textit{Pogrom}. Meanwhile, Survival International funded primarily «action-oriented projects» in the fields of health promotion, education, land rights and self-determination in tribal communities.\textsuperscript{54} Both organisations relied on financial means acquired through membership fees and project related donations.

The IWGIA did not seek separate financial means for project aid but cooperated with official government agencies. The Scandinavian development agencies were the first to consider direct support for indigenous communities, bypassing the governments of the countries where those communities lived. As its former director Jens Dahl put it, development aid was seen by the IWGIA as «an opportunity not only to promote the rights of indigenous peoples but also to take a pro-active role in developing strong links with the Scandinavian governments, which were beginning to expand their aid policies to include foremost human rights issues».\textsuperscript{55}

In the beginning, the IWGIA served as an intermediary between indigenous communities and organisations on the one side, and international project founders on the other, especially the Norwegian development agency Norad. From 1987 onwards, funding applications were registered directly by the national aid agency and then forwarded to the IWGIA, whose staff members participated in the selection process.\textsuperscript{56} The advocacy organisation had acquired a considerable reputation as cultural brokers and experts on indigenous issues; their knowledge was highly


\textsuperscript{54} For a list of projects supported by these groups, see Wentzel, \textit{Schutz und Unterstützung}, 74–78.

\textsuperscript{55} Dahl, \textit{IWGIA} 77.

\textsuperscript{56} For Norwegian cooperation with respect to indigenous peoples, see M. Barroso Hoffmann, \textit{Fronteiras étnicas, fronteiras de Estado e imaginação da nação: um estudo sobre a cooperação internacional norueguesa junto aos povos indígenas}, Rio de Janeiro 2008.
regarded by development agencies, foundations and other institutions interested in working with indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{57}

Dahl refers to discussions at the IWGIA’s executive board regarding the advantages and disadvantages of participating in such practical relief projects. In contrast to the documentation and dissemination of information regarding human rights, development work offered the opportunity to provide immediate and practical help. Given the new international context, the acquisition of funds for specific projects with a measurable impact was far easier than seeking funds for publications or travel opportunities for indigenous activists to international conferences. The IWGIA was able to combine both approaches by involving its development project partners in publications that were distributed among international indigenous organisations.\textsuperscript{58}

7. Pitfalls and Challenges for Transnational Activism

By the end of the 1980s, the international indigenous advocacy network had established itself as a professional broker between indigenous communities and organisations on the one hand and supranational institutions, Western development agencies, charities and a global public on the other. After the initial focus on campaigning against human rights violations, the IWGIA, Survival International and other organisations increasingly provided political opportunity structures at the supranational level, and were appreciated as reliable «watchdogs» pertaining to indigenous issues.

In some cases, however, the nature of transnational advocacy can itself jeopardise the campaign’s goals. One controversy relates to the question of representation and the mandate to speak for the «other». Giving the subaltern a voice risks producing a backlash against local or national indigenous communities. When responding to activists’ allegations, government observers have often denied the substance of these claims, but have also condemned the intervention as a foreign intrusion and a potential source of social unrest. This strategy has been consistently and effectively employed to delegitimise claims made by ethnic indigenous minorities.

A related issue in the context of the mandate to speak is that indigenous organisations, above all those in Latin America, see themselves as still living in a colonial context. The radical philosophy of «Indianism» emphasises a history of centuries of tutelage and incapacitation by colonial authorities, national institutions and religious missions.\textsuperscript{59} This may involve mistrust towards individuals, among them anthropologists and ethnologists, who claim to act on behalf of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, travel grants for indigenous representatives can trigger questions as to the «legitimate» representative of an indigenous community or nation.

\textsuperscript{57} Brysk, \textit{Tribal Village}, 40.


Advocacy groups have not been exempt from internal controversies. For example, David Maybury-Lewis, the founder and director of Cultural Survival, criticised the IWGIA and GfvV campaigns that documented atrocities committed against the Aché in Paraguay. He saw no evidence of systematic government responsibility and therefore deemed the use of the term «genocide» inappropriate.\(^60\)

The involvement of anthropologists points at another challenge, especially in the early years of international advocacy for indigenous people. As in the case of the IWGIA – conceived at an academic congress of anthropologists – many would-be activists were researchers who saw their «objects» of study «vanishing», as a famous publication of the National Geographic Society suggested.\(^61\) Taking a stand for indigenous populations was no easy and uncontroversial decision. On the one hand, there were those who raised the moral dilemma of how it could be possible to conduct fieldwork and publish academic studies without addressing the multiple threats for the people they were working with. On the other hand, there were those who condemned any conflation of political involvement and academic duties. Moreover, governments could prevent politically engaged anthropologists from continuing their research and label them foreign intruders, thereby causing the anthropologists to lose contact with these groups.\(^62\)

Finally, the selection of projects and campaigns could be controversial. Recent scholarship on advocacy stresses self-interest as a characteristic of non-governmental organisations. Prakesh and Gugerty propose that solidarity organisations should be studied from an actor-centred perspective as business enterprises trying to survive in a poorly equipped market.\(^63\) This approach can be useful when considering how advocacy groups choose issues for campaigning. For organisations that rely on donations, the public appeal of their «objects of advocacy» may make a difference. They might therefore be prone to judging the success of a campaign in terms of its international repercussions and media attention.

In this context, the anthropologist Adam Kuper has advised against «the return of the native» as a retreat from the idea of human equality and a re-emergence of essentialist categories. He also readdresses the controversy surrounding the relationship between academic professionalism and political activism, referring specifically to Survival International’s campaign for the San people living in the Kalahari Game


Reserve in Botswana. The organisation portrayed the Botswana government as eager to remove a native population from its ancestral homeland because of the presumed diamond prospects in this territory. The campaign undermined the government’s international reputation and national courts eventually stopped the eviction. In this respect, the campaign was successful. But it also resulted in the stigmatisation of the San population, due to the economic backlash of the boycott on the overall population and the strengthening of internal divisions based on ethnic affiliation.

Kuper’s critique is less concerned with local communities highlighting and exploiting an ethnic indigenous identity as a political resource than with agents in the field of anthropology and international non-governmental organisations who may build their personal professional careers on «doing advocacy», and who accept that in some places the concept of indigeneity may renew old conflicts or create new divisions. Without mentioning it explicitly, the accusation of self-interested campaigning resonates with his claims. Yet even in this specific case, there is no evidence that decisions over campaigning were based on such business-minded considerations. It is likely that there have been examples in which indigenous grassroots organisations and smaller supportive groups, generally short of financial means, have competed for the same resources provided by governments, aid agencies or foundations. However, this did not provoke lasting confrontations.

8. Conclusion

This article has shown how advocacy organisations established indigenous rights as a specific issue within an evolving human rights discourse. In the West, attention to the fate of indigenous peoples was launched with a dramatic media appeal. Yet the journalist Norman Lewis was not alone in framing indigenous rights in the language of genocidal attacks and massacres – so did academics from the discipline of anthropology. The prominence of this discourse needs to be understood in the context of the end of colonialism and the emergence of a new humanitarian sensibility in the 1960s and 1970s.

With their different campaign strategies and activities, advocacy groups have supported the empowerment of formerly marginalised groups, enabling them to raise their voice and to make claims at the national and international level. As Robin Wright puts it, the commitment by activists «to combat ethnocide, combined with a relational approach to cultural diversity and to ethnicity [...] opened up a new alliance between anthropological perspectives and the emerging indigenous organisations.»


Finally, thanks to international advocacy, the concept of «indigeneity» has experienced an astonishing turnaround since the late 1960s. From being a stigma of a «backward» or «primitive» lifestyle, it has become a valuable political resource, at least in some supranational contexts. The United Nations played an important role in this process. They not only opened their doors to indigenous activists but gave legitimacy to their claims. Both the ILO Convention 169 of 1989 and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, approved in 2007 by the UN General Assembly, were negotiated with active participation from advocacy organisations. As such, they form part of an emerging international normative framework dedicated specifically to indigenous peoples.

Fourth World Activism in the First World: The Rise and Consolidation of European Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples

Against the backdrop of massive assaults and acts of violence against indigenous peoples in South America, specialised advocacy organisations emerged in several European countries from the late 1960s onwards. Embarking on the idea to inform the Western public on the plight of vulnerable and threatened ethnic minority groups, they developed different strategies of activism. This article examines the repertoires of action of organisations such as Survival International, the Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. Their activities involved information-gathering, public awareness campaigns, support of capacity-building processes, and the provision of humanitarian aid and of access to aid agencies. Moreover, specific attention is given the relationship between western advocacy and mounting indigenous activism.

Vierte-Welt-Aktivismus in der Ersten Welt: Aufstieg und Konsolidierung europäischer Solidaritätsbewegungen mit indigenen Völkern


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