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Speech (abstract) Angelina Hermanns:

### **Civil Society Groups and their political influence**

The role of civil society groups, especially NGOs, has steadily grown within the last decades. But can they really bridge the gap between societies as a whole, civil society and political and economic decision making and thus influence future development especially on a transnational level?

Yes, they can for various reasons:

- they include the diverse structures of national civil society concepts, of the multi cultural diversity also in terms of participation,
- they include regional and local actors and represent them,
- they are far better than political parties in encouraging other citizens to participate,
- they bring together expertise, independence and flexibility.

How do they make a difference?

- by intervention e.g. against an unsustainable development (example: the fight of WWF against a disastrous Spanish National Hydrological Plan, which threatened to destroy the entire Ebro delta ecological system),
- by innovation through the creation of instruments that neither politics nor the market alone can provide (example: international partnerships to fight poverty in developing countries).

How can communication strategies support NGOs ?

- NGOs must communicate to their communities to fulfil their role as indispensable translator of political development,
- they benefit from modern tools such email, blogs etc. to connect local, regional and global networks, and to respond quickly to new developments,
- they can get support from globally accepted figures and thus strengthen their credibility,
- they use virtual means, but they are based in a real world.