

Reflexive Governance Dynamics Operative Within Round One of World Religious Leaders' Dialogue With the G8 (2005-2013)

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Abstract

This case study of the World Religious Leaders' Summits illustrates reflexive governance dynamics operative within the religious summitry process from 2005 to 2013. Past research explored reflexivity within the cultural capital produced by religious leaders and delivered to G8 political leaders. Data are drawn from qualitative interviews, questionnaires, and summit presentations to further explore how reflexivity variously opens up and closes down throughout the 9-year cycle. Rather than choosing between keeping up action capacity or opening problem handling for further contextualization, reflexive governance is best understood as that which both interplays and combines variously. A coevolutionary approach to the reflexive governance of religious summitry is discussed in light of the changing dynamics associated with the upcoming transition from Millennium Development Goals to the proposed Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords

reflexivity, world religions, international relations, governance, risk

Introduction

The conditions associated with the stability of democratic governance have been a leading concern of political sociology. We have left the “statist” period where countries are the strongest arbiters of power and entered an era of globalization characterized by “governance without government” (Mayntz, 2002). Previously marginalized groups are increasingly able to influence international relations due to the “flattening” of global culture through technological innovation and globalization. Institutional authority has increasingly given way to governance via network influence as a way of respecting the legitimate interests of those affected by decisions, programs, and interventions (Beck, Giddens, & Lasch, 1994). Accountability, thus, shifts from vertical to new forms of horizontal dialogue with complex combinations of public and private agencies involved in partnerships and joined-up service delivery (Considine, 2002). Rayner and McNutt (2010) describe how networks operate around and within institutional structures via processes that must maintain credibility as they negotiate their own legitimacy at “reflexivity interfaces.” According to Feindt (2012), whether and how the plurality of diverse perspectives are taken into account and become effective “are at the heart of the quest for reflexive governance” (p. 164).

The Summits of World Religious Leaders is one of the new forms of horizontal dialogue involved in partnerships

and joined-up service delivery influencing the social construction of cosmopolitan responsibility (Steiner, 2013b). World religions coming together in dialogue to voice global ethics is historically unprecedented (Armstrong, 2007; Kung, 1991). Religious summitry where leaders of the world religions engage in serious, consistent, and persistent credible conversation with the political leaders of the world is entirely new (Steiner, 2011, 2012). Although the return of religion to international relations is increasingly recognized (e.g., Banchoff, 2008; Fox & Sandler, 2004; Haynes, 2009; Petito & Hatzopoulos, 2003; Snyder, 2011), a governance role for religion, where it might exist, is still underresearched (e.g., Halafoff, 2013; Johnston, 2003). Although some scholars have begun to identify a diplomatic role for religion in international relations (Johnston, 2003; Johnston & Sampson, 1994), social theorists have barely begun to incorporate the empirical case studies into soft power theory. Ultimately, identification of a governance role for religion in international relations is an empirical question best answered through empirical investigation (Steiner, 2013a, 2013b).

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Scholarship is critiqued for subsuming religion into nationalism rather than treating the relationship between them as variable (Gorski & Türkmen-Dervişoğlu, 2013). Although increased understanding of variable interaction between religion and politics is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition for ascertaining if there is a governance role for religious soft power in international relations. Fundamentalist communicative action, for example, works *against* the democratic process, contributing to political polarization around a master cleavage of some kind (Habermas, 2006).

According to Jürgen Habermas (2006), the key indicator for religion as governance is *reflexivity*. Legitimate and constructive faith-based dialogue in the public sphere, he says, must have “the epistemic ability to consider one’s own faith reflexively from the outside and to relate it to secular views” (Habermas, 2006, pp. 9-10). Reflexivity is an abstract concept, the operationalization of which is a complex process that inevitably involves the constructed interpretation of reality; how reflexivity is operationalized delimits the contribution that studies might make to understand the complex ways in which dialogue facilitates, or undermines, governance relations. Scholars have often reduced reflexivity to a cognitive process, variously defining reflexivity as the ability to see oneself as an object, self-critical reflection, or as thought turned in on itself, freely examining its own presuppositions and assumptions. Ahistorical and decontextualized operationalizations of reflexivity have been critiqued as overly agentic conceptions that imply a world full of more emancipatory potential than what is practicably possible within actual embedded histories (Beck, 1994, 2002; Farrugia, 2013a, 2013b; Lash, 1999). Operationalizing reflexivity as a structurally embedded process resolves most of these issues if attention is paid to avoid “methodological nationalism”—an oversocialized approach to the nation-state underpinning many social theories (Beck, 2002, p. 19). Theoretical approaches that decenter the nation-state are as important for understanding global governance as are conceptualizations that treat relations between religion and politics as variable (Beck & Grande, 2010; Sassen, 2000). A coherent understanding of reflexivity that is empirically sensitive to multiple levels of analysis, including the meso-level of social reality, can carefully explore organizational dynamics and the power hierarchies within them that influence how micro identities are shaped within the structural constraints of macro social contexts.

Halafoff (2013) uses cosmopolitan social theory to describe the historical development of the international multi-faith movement in international relations. Cosmopolitanism decenters the nation-state so that international relations are understood as marked by the complex interaction between nations entering modernity from various paths, including those marked by privilege, time compression, and the embedded structural constraints of a postcolonial history (Beck & Grande, 2010). Reflexivity, in this theory frame, is operationalized as an inner globalization manifested as the *blurring of borders*, resulting from the pluralization of

nation-states and the crisis of modernity (Beck, 2002). Reflexivity emerges as nationalistic identities give way to transnational recognitions that nation-states are interdependent and entangled with one another (Randeria, 1999). An inner globalization results from the lived experience of “glocal” boundary crossing as people reflexively socially construct what is practicably possible within the constraints of structurally embedded decision making. The global sphere of cosmopolitan responsibility is *accomplished* rather than stable in that collective identities are historically constructed imagined communities (Beck, 2002).

Previous research on the World Religious Leaders’ Summits (Steiner, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, in press) describes how religious leaders reflexively interface with the G8 leaders to negotiate the social (re)construction of norms in light of G8 moral responsibility to the poor and vulnerable of the world. Religious leaders do this by blurring boundaries that hinder international collaboration (Steiner, in press). Religious leaders offer cosmopolitan orientation to G8 leaders who gather to make decisions that affect a world put at risk by a global market that Beck describes as a new form of “organized irresponsibility” (Beck, 2002, p. 26). Religious leaders draw on their cultural capital to redefine boundaries for cosmopolitan responsibility to include the interests of the poor and vulnerable who are affected by, but excluded from, the G8 decision-making process. The Summit process began in 2005, with the U.K. ecumenical conference, and has continued in Russia (2006), Germany (2007), Japan (2008), Italy (2009), Canada (2010), France (2011), the United States (2012), and transformed into an initiative in the United Kingdom (2013). The dialogue process with the G8 is about the negotiation and redefinition of the normative framework, in which decisions have to be taken in the hegemonic “meta-power games” of the G8 Summit process (Steiner, 2013b, in press).

This work advances our understanding of reflexivity and religious soft power as global governance by focusing on the internal dynamics of reflexive governance at work within the first round of summits extending from 2005 to 2013. The Summits of World Religious Leaders represents a good case study for examining the dynamics of reflexive governance because of the 9-year history of consistent, persistent, and intentional dialogue of high-level religious leaders with the G8/G20 political leaders on matters relating to the poor and vulnerable of the world. Empirical investigation into the internal dynamics of reflexive governance within religious summitry contributes to a less stereotyped and more nuanced understanding of religious soft power as governance in international relations. Accordingly, the research question reads,

Research Question 1: To what extent can reflexive governance dynamics be observed as operating within the internal tensions and various national expressions of religious summitry in the World Religious Leaders’ Summit process from 2005 to 2013?

I use mixed methods to allow for qualitative data collection and content analysis to empirically illustrate the theoretical concepts developed. First, I describe reflexive governance and how the dynamic interplay between first- and second-order reflexivity involves shifting scales and multilevel reflexivity that variously affects the governance process in international relations. Second, I consider these dynamics as operative within the case study of religious summitry. Finally, I conclude by discussing the broader implications of these findings and suggest directions for future research.

Theoretical Development

According to Beck (2002), the pluralization of borders is the most basic indicator of reflexive modernization. When people are reflexive, borders that demarcate categories, such as national/international and society/nature “are no longer predetermined—they can be chosen (and interpreted) . . . redrawn and legitimated anew” (Beck, 2002, p. 19). For Beck, reflexivity is indicated where there is an increase in “plausible ways of drawing new borders and a growing tendency to question existing borders in all different fields (e.g., climate crisis, BSE crises, biopolitics, genetically modified food, terrorist threat)” (Beck, 2002, p. 19). Reflexivity is thus at the heart of issues associated with global governance.

Reflexive *governance* has been said to “loop learning,” according to single-loop and double-loop learning, as a way of giving citizens an active role in the decision-making process and moving the governance process forward in a postnational model of democracy (Beck & Grande, 2007). Single-loop learning is primarily reactionary, reflecting on a first-order response to the unintended consequences of actions. First-order reflexivity, characterized predominantly by single-loop learning, takes a straightforward, problem-solving approach to governance according to specialized purpose, worldview, and skill. Single-loop learning uses instrumental rationality to study aspects of modernity, such as technology impact, scientific knowledge production, legitimacy, and the effectiveness of democracy (Voß & Kemp, 2006). “Double-loop learning” adds an additional second-order reflection on the governing decisions that led to the initial actions that created the unintended consequences that require governance (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Second-order reflexivity, characterized predominantly by double-loop learning, leaves the isolation of instrumental specialization, and widens discourse across cognitive and institutional boundaries, undermining the modernist problem-solving approach (Voß & Kemp, 2006). Second-order reflexivity is forced to expand and amalgamate, rather than specialize and narrow, to get an adequate grasp of the problems that require governance. Second-order reflexivity is more open, experimental and learning oriented when compared with first-order reflexivity. Second-order reflexivity considers not only the self-induced problems, but its very

own working, conditions and effects—actively exploring the uncertainties, ambivalences and control problems associated with the confrontation of multiple rationalities embedded in diverse worldviews (Voß & Kemp, 2006). “Double-loop learning” distinguishes conceptual/political learning from instrumental/technical learning and incorporates self-conscious learning practices that question the underlying goals and values of a strategy when necessary. Reflexive governance, shaped by the dynamic interplay between these two approaches, develops a new logic of action and decision making that responds to shifting scales and multilevel decision making (e.g., Voß, Bauknecht, & Kemp, 2006). Reflexive governance involves conflict regulation as well as problem handling via rule altering politics as modernity reflects upon itself (Voß et al., 2006).

The interplay between first-order and second-order reflexivity shapes the ongoing process of reflexive governance, facilitates intentional reflection on the structures and systems that produce (and reproduce) unintended consequences, and encourages reflection on how best to improve the chances of achieving stipulated goals (Stirling, 2006). Modernist governance processes are dominated by first-order reflexivity processes. When second-order reflexivity becomes dominant, all but clearly unambiguous problem-solving processes cease in favor of integrative, unrestrained, open-ended “second order” governance processes such as goal definition, transdisciplinary research, foresight exercises, participatory decision making, cooperative policy making, and modulation of ongoing developments, and so on (Voß & Kemp, 2006). Second-order reflexivity detraditionalizes the foundations of modernity enough to enable conversations over border conflicts to be transformed into conflicts over the drawing of boundaries (Beck, Bonss, & Lau, 2003). However, when first-order reflexivity returns to dominance, the focus shifts away from integrated knowledge production toward implementation and the maximization of control in recognition that incomplete information and uncertainty remain (Voß & Kemp, 2006). As the different orders of reflexivity interplay, the process of reflexive governance becomes variously characterized by complex combinations of opening up and closing down, and is therefore, vulnerable to opportunistic behavior, power struggles, and the disproportionate domination of interaction processes by particular actors (Voß & Kemp, 2006).

Rhodes (1997, 2007) suggests that governance focused on second-order consideration of beliefs, practices, traditions, and dilemmas is more effective for a global context characterized by the decline of state power, the blurring of boundaries, and increasing economic interdependence. Without global polity, reflexive governance is constrained to steer the process of rule formation, adoption, enforcement, and evaluation increasingly through a type of network reflexivity that uses metaphors of openness, closedness, cohesion, and transparency in policy design (Rayner & McNutt, 2010). If the process closes down too soon, the quality of problem

definition and the learning about societal ends is short circuited, effectively shutting out the insights that come from social pluralism and distributed intelligence (Voß & Kemp, 2006). If the process reflects on foundational assumptions too long, the pressure to problem-solve and identify concrete solutions can create insurmountable political tensions. As Mayntz (1993) puts it, choosing effectiveness may come at the cost of democracy or even integrity; choosing democratic process may come at the cost of reducing performance levels.

Good governance is an art that engages, and works within, the tensions of value-conflicts (Trommel, 2008). Rip (2006) describes these contradictory forces inherent within reflexive governance as the *efficacy paradox of complexity*. The dynamics are paradoxical because the opening-up and closing-down processes that result from the tension are *both* necessary aspects of the governance process. Rather than choosing between *keeping up action capacity* or *opening problem handling for further contextualization*, reflexive governance is best understood as *both* that interplay and combine in a variety of ways, depending upon the content and timing of what is variously opened up or closed down.

Voß and Kemp (2005) identify four typologies describing how the interplay shapes reflexive governance: problem solving with blinders (totally closed), erosion of strategic capabilities (totally open), sequential opening and closing (taking turns), and exploring experiments (phases of opening and closing used within a diverse portfolio strategy of experiments and alternate frameworks of problem definition, goals, and options).

Voß and Kemp's (2005) first typology, problem solving with blinders, is dominated by single-loop learning where the primary pursuit is a modernist problem-solving approach to a given problem within a given problem definition that cannot be called into question. Voß and Kemp refer to this as closed with blinders because performance management within historically developed implementation cultures is characterized by lack of stakeholder involvement, blind spots for the public values underpinning the approach, and presumptuous expectations regarding the stability of the system (Trommel, 2008).

Voß and Kemp's (2006) second typology, "erosion of strategic capabilities," emerges as a "totally open" approach in polarized tension with the "totally closed" with blinders model. The governance process is opened up in all dimensions, involves diverse representation and participation of actors, identifies values and diversity of worldviews, encourages diverse definitions of the problems, and explores diverse options for response. When taken to an extreme, the capacity for collective action totally erodes due to uncertainty about problem dynamics, ambivalence about the sustainability of goals, and the diversity of options; this approach runs the risk of becoming practically irrelevant, producing pointless statements on a large number of issues. Trommel (2008) describes this as a good governance normative ideal in search of utopia

that risks political "totalitarianism" by implying that a world without evil is even possible (e.g., Achterhuis, 1998; Gray, 2007; Waltzer, 1983). Trommel (2008) suggests that the "good" of governance, if it is to avoid either irrelevance or political tyranny, needs to remain historically embodied and realistically immersed in institutional arrangements that grapple with imperfection, struggle with normative ambiguity, and recognize the limitations of what is practicably possible in given contexts. Trommel suggests vigilantly organizing a public spirit of trust in the implementation of an imperfect public project that embraces irony as a form of productive pragmatism that encourages modest realistic solutions, including identification of acceptable "possible failures," as a way of avoiding the unintended side effect of cynicism and political intolerance.

Voß and Kemp's (2006) third typology, sequential opening and closing, is a form of governance characterized by "turn taking," where strategies of problem handling (dominated by first-order reflexivity, single-loop learning, and prioritization of keeping up action capacity) sequentially alternates with strategies of problem contextualization (dominated by second-order reflexivity, double-loop learning, and prioritization of understanding the underlying assumptions, worldviews, and external contexts that frame the debate). What makes this a distinguishable typology is that, unlike the first two typologies, this form of governance embraces the ongoing struggle delimited by tension between the diverse approaches, creates space for the expression of both styles, and trusts in the ongoing project as shaped by the sequential expressions. This typology, as an adaptive strategy that can be probed and further revised, is somewhat amenable to incremental pragmatic policy advances; but it also risks the formation of camps around the two approaches, making the typology vulnerable to power struggles that undermine the governance process. Trommel (2008) suggests organizing public vigilance into the governance process as a way of planning for inevitable discontinuities so that change becomes accepted as normative.

Voß and Kemp's (2006) final typology, exploring experiments, describes a governance process characterized by both: opening up in one or more dimensions where diverse perspectives are explored *combined with* a set of closing-down strategies developed according to alternative selection criteria and priorities. Governance processes may open and close in various combinations along dimensions, such as problem definitions, goals of action, solutions to be assumed, and the degree of inclusion of diverse people in the participatory governance process itself. Unlike the sequential opening and closing "turn taking" model, this typology implements both processes simultaneously through a complex diverse portfolio of diverse experimental strategies that support learning. Rather than prioritize one consistent problem-handling framework, this governance model embraces a portfolio of strategy experiments, inducing variation that balances more or less risky approaches with the stability that comes

with diversity. An exploring experiments approach to reflexive governance remains oriented toward solving specific problems, while also remaining flexible enough to adapt to, and reflect on, the problems at hand in a manner congruent with the context and the available resources at hand. Importantly, this approach recognizes the dangers associated with closing down too soon and retains the ability to reopen the discussion, as needed, when the results of closing down are viewed as inadequate. The dilemma of reflexive governance is that the issues of *erosion of action capacities* and *erosion of problem handling for contextualization* cannot be resolved without losing out on either side. By embracing the “efficacy paradox of complexity,” this approach recognizes, rather than attempts to resolve, the paradox, and works *with it* to balance the two contradicting requirements to cultivate an adequate combination of opening up and closing down for specific governance situations. To the extent that governance partners may be considered a team, research on team reflexivity indicates that team characteristics such as trust, psychological safety among group members, a shared vision, diversity, inspirational leadership, and cooperative management of conflict enhance reflexivity; research also indicates that team reflexivity is related to a team’s output in terms of innovation, effectiveness, and creativity (Widmer, Schippers, & West, 2009).

Data and Method

This case study of the World Religious Leaders’ Summits, described here as “round one,” explores reflexive governance dynamics over the 9-year period of religious summitry from 2005 to 2013, with the 9-year span treated as a single unit. The process began as an ecumenical movement in 2005, became a multireligious summit in 2006, continued as multireligious summits from 2007 to 2012, and circuted back to the United Kingdom in 2013 as an initiative (developing a statement, for the first time, without face-to-face meetings). The data that were analyzed include summit presentations (2005-2012), summit statements (2005-2013), qualitative interviews and questionnaires (33% response rate) conducted on May 23 and 24, 2011, in France, qualitative interviews and questionnaires (45% response rate) conducted on May 17, 2012 in Washington, D.C., and qualitative interviews of summit hosts from October 2012 to January 2013 (75% response rate). I also collected information on the religious and political representation of summit participants for the 9 years and circulated the compiled information to the organizers of each summit and the international continuance committee for verification. Although my role as recorder for Canada (2010), France (2011), and the United States (2012) provided me with access to more information (presentations, questionnaires, and qualitative interviews) on those summits than on the process from 2005 to 2009, the additional information gained from firsthand participant observation of the

closed high-level religious meetings outweighed the imbalance associated with information discontinuity.

To preserve the integrity and trustworthiness of this qualitative work, I am operationalizing reflexivity during the analysis cycle, making visible my epistemological and ontological position, and my consequent methodological and theoretical framework in accordance with “best practices” models (Jackson, Backett-Milburn, & Newall, 2013; Malacrida, 2007; Mauthner, 2002; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Qualitative research such as participant observation is co-constituted where meanings are negotiated between researcher and researched within a particular social context so that “another researcher in a different relationship will unfold a different story” (Finlay, 2002, p. 531). One way of reflexively operationalizing the analysis cycle is to draw on the “voice-centred relational method of data analysis” found in the work of Brown and Gilligan (1992) and further developed by Paliadelis and Cruickshank (2008). In accordance with their typologies, I identify four interpretive voices involved in this research: (a) my own positionality toward the research; (b) the participants’ narratives—their perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and voice “before the researchers speak of them”; (c) the relationships of the participants to one another; and (d) the contexts surrounding their relationships (Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008, p. 1449; Brown & Gilligan, 1992). This method of analysis renders the role of the researcher and the various interpretive interfaces more explicit as data are used to make empirically informed judgments about the applicability of reflexive governance theory to the case study of religious summitry.

Findings

Findings are sequentially presented in accordance with the four “voices.” First, I explain my positionality as researcher. Second, I present findings from interviews of hosts, presenters, and participants. Third, I present findings from interviews focused on the relationships of the participants to one another. Fourth, I present findings focusing on the contexts surrounding those relationships that illustrate reflexive governance dynamics.

Researcher Positionality

My interest in the value of religious summitry is rooted in prior research on the coevolution of societies and environments (Steiner-Aeschliman, 1999). Studies indicate that when civilizations encounter population pressure, resource pressure, and accumulating environmental degradation, most collapse (e.g., Mayan). Adaptation, although unusual, is made more likely when institutional decision makers and citizens collaboratively make the necessary changes in tandem with one another (e.g., late Feudalism). Although it is a contingent matter, religion has historically influenced the

emergence of collaborative relationships; whether or not, in the context of globalization and accumulating environmental changes, religion might once again positively contribute to a transition to a new social order was, for Max Weber, a “factual question” (Steiner-Aeschliman, 1999, p. 195; Turner & Factor, 1984, p. 199). This past research has significantly shaped my positionality toward the research on religious summitry, and has likely influenced the Canadians’ decision to allow me access to the closed meetings serving as recorder for 2010, 2011, and 2012. Canadian leadership also encouraged participants to respond to distributed questionnaires and interview requests. From the start of my investigation into religious summitry, I have made it clear that my relationship with those being researched stems from research activity (Cohen, 2000; Roy, 1970; Ulrich, 2005). Lest “the political tail wag the empirical dog,” it merits mentioning that although social scientific research necessitates methodological involvement with the people studied, my interest is in producing accurate and balanced constructions of the religious summitry process. I have not “gone native” despite my name being publicly identified as representing the Salvation Army, which I do not, and being listed as signatory on the U.S. summit statement. Perhaps some U.S. organizers have mistaken my recognition of the value of religious summitry for participatory enthusiasm. During the U.S. summit, I recorded the events, refrained from contributing content remarks, and requested that my name not be added to the statement; subsequent requests to have my name removed from the document have not been processed. I remain detached. I interview summitry detractors as well as enthusiasts, use social scientific methods (openness to criticism, questionnaires, comparative analysis, peer review, etc.), avoid reference to nonempirical religious revelations, and ask academic questions participants might never consider using. Social science “not only excludes ideological, definitional, and evaluative concerns, it *includes* interests that extend beyond any particular case study to incorporate that which a social scientist may well believe ‘ought to be researched’” (Barker, 1995, p. 296). My position is that factors influencing the evolution of collaborative sociopolitical relations, such as religious summitry, merit research attention. Making the conditions of my partiality explicit in this manner uncovers the circumstance of my boundary judgment; such boundary critique is a methodological core principle associated with surfacing the unavoidable selectivity claims of self-critical reflective practice (Ulrich, 2005).

Participants’ Narratives

The Summits of World Religious Leaders use a leadership rotation model for hosting the ongoing process whereby each summit is significantly shaped by the religious organizations in the nation that hosts the event. Some of the hosts are religious nongovernmental organizations (RNGOs) that are global in scope, often operating on shoe-string budgets.

Others are state churches financially strengthened by state support. Each summit has a unique focus and distinctive organizational approach derived from the host country’s interests, capabilities, and the urgent needs of the world. Despite the organizational fragility of the summit process, a discernible pattern has emerged whereby the statements are developed by consensus, written to include attention to extreme poverty, care for the environment and investment in peace, and variously delivered to political leaders and media outlets prior to the G8 meetings.

The Summit process began in 2005 with the U.K. ecumenical 1-day conference that emerged out of the *Make Poverty History* civil society campaign that pressured political leaders on poverty issues:

Faith communities were asked to be part of the campaign, and it seemed sensible to organize a complementary event involving church leaders to add to the details of what that transformative change might look like in practice. If the *Make Poverty History* campaign hadn’t been taking place, it would have been much harder to have the awareness of the issues themselves (U.K. interview).

The initial summit emerged out of relationships between U.K. religious leaders and U.S. religious activists. The United Kingdom and the United States have continued to be the strongest proponents of the applied focus on “desirable outputs rather than on process” with religious summitry used as an “advocacy tool” (Reed, 2013, p. 1). The United Kingdom and the United States continue to see religious summitry “as more of an NGO way than a church way,” emphasizing the importance of involving faith-based development organizations for purposes of strengthening understanding by policy makers that “churches and faith communities are reliable and expert partners in development” (Reed, 2013, p. 5). From these early beginnings, the desired impact of religious summitry was to be practical and politically oriented toward making a difference “on the ground.” From the perspective of U.K. hosts, world religious leaders of all faiths meet on the occasion of each G8 summit:

To discuss global policy challenges and present recommendations on topics including economic and social development, nuclear disarmament, violent conflict, and climate change. Although there are other interfaith world summits where religious leaders from a diverse array of faith traditions attend, these particular meetings are unique in that they deliver collaborative statements to the G8 political leaders about the mutual responsibility faith groups and political leaders share for improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable people and species in the world. (Reed, 2013, p. 1)

By way of contrast, the Russian 2006 Summit was a state affair (including state financial support) hosted by the Interreligious Council of Russia, an affiliate with the World

Conference of Religions for Peace that is a representative body comprising representatives of Russian Orthodox, Islamic, Buddhist, and Jewish communities in Russia. The Summit was initiated by the head of Moscow Patriarchate's External Church Relations Department, Metropolitan Kirill and convened by the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow. The summit was rooted primarily in religious church traditions and planned a year in advance. Although the G8 remained the focus of who received the statement, the Russians invited representatives from all continents including Africa and Asia. Only Russian communities were involved in the planning because, at this point, there was no team of international organizers. In some ways, hosting the summit was a "coming out party" for Russia, politically and religiously. Russia was about to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), and working together to organize the religious summit raised Russia's international profile and strengthened the relationships for interreligious communities in relation to the Russian state. The contrast between the 2005 U.K. roundtable with the high-level expensive 2006 Russian event illustrates how the leadership rotation model allows for diverse expression of summitry reflecting the national particularities, national contexts, national involvement of communities, national approaches to the organizing process, and the cultural events of the regional hosts. The Russians significantly opened up the process, extending the face-to-face dialogue to 3 days, transforming the ecumenical religious representation into a diverse multifaith gathering, including religious leaders from all G8 nations, and inviting religious leaders from all countries in the world with attention to, at minimum, continental representation from Africa and Asia. More than 200 leaders of religions from 49 countries met from July 3 to 5, including the Catholic Cardinal responsible for relations with the Orthodox Church at the Vatican; chairman of the World Jewish Congress; the National Council of Churches, United States; the Chief Rabbi of Israel; leadership from the World Council of Churches; Syria's top Mufti; an Iranian Ayatollah; and Muslim, Buddhist, Catholic, and Orthodox Christian officials from China; this would be the Catholic church's greatest show of support during round one. Pope Benedict XVI greeted the gathering from St. Peter's Square in the Vatican, and Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, sent greetings. Dialogue was prioritized to the point of producing the only statement in round one to not mention the Millennium Development Goals. The Russian approach to summitry set the precedent for investing significant financial resources in face-to-face dialogue over several days and making linkages with heads of state.

The German Summit (with state support) opened the process further by refocusing summitry on civil society engagement and global governance on behalf of the world's poor along the theme of *Just Participation*. The Germans incorporated democratic process into the planning of the event; they established an international committee to help draft the

statement, circulated in advance for feedback along with the international invitations. For the first time, achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was heavily emphasized. To increase the participation of global religious leaders, the summit was organized adjacent to the well-attended "*Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag*." The summit itself was a 2-day event that culminated in a statement that was delivered to the Kirchentag press office. At this point, the language appears of an international commitment to ongoing religious summitry with consistency and persistency. German hosts recognize there are organizational questions around religious summitry that need to be addressed, but when I asked about the value of ongoing summits on global issues, the German response was

From a European perspective, I would comment that the governments learned from past summits that they have to build better links to religious organizations . . . and include them into more participatory political approaches. Beside this, the process of cooperation among the religions elaborating their positions is . . . very useful in itself. (German interview)

When it was clear, at the end of the German summit, that this process was worth replicating, the invitation to continue came from indigenous churches within Japan.

Religious summitry was gaining some momentum, and, as promised, the indigenous Japanese churches hosted the next summit in Kyoto. Religions for Peace, an international multi-faith NGO, also hosted a summit. Because they do not have a strong presence in Germany, they were not present in 2007 to offer Japanese sponsorship, but they had been involved in Russia, and because they have a significant presence in Japan, they collaborated with the Japanese council of churches to host a separate summit in Sapporo. Despite the internal power struggles, now apparent, both statements were delivered to political representatives with a unifying and distinctive theme: the importance of environmental priorities. Although neither of the Japanese summits had a breadth or depth of civil society engagement, the Japanese (with state financial sponsorship) recognized the value of the summits enough to invest significant financial resources in the sponsorship of two meetings (Kyoto as regional/indigenous and Sapporo as international/World Conference on Religions for Peace). Japan uniquely opened the dialogue to be the only summit to decenter anthropocentrism. When I asked Japanese representatives what they consider to be the most important misplaced priority of the G8 leadership, the immediate response is climate change. "We should consider the people or animals who cannot say 'please stop.' We should listen carefully to the voice of the people or animals to cooperate for the common good" (Japanese interview). When I probed further, Japanese delegates—although clearly supportive of increased democratic processes—were less likely than some of the other delegates to see increased international political representation as a solution to the crisis of modernity:

[G]oing to the United Nations is not a solution for the nonsentient . . . The issue of climate change should be the most important topic because if the other topics don't go well, it affects people; but if climate change doesn't go well, all of the earth is affected . . . all life forms. (Japanese interview)

Sapporo and Kyoto have both been incorporated into the history of religious G8 summitry, but the increasing costs associated with sponsoring summits now began to threaten the future of the process. For the next 5 years, religious summitry would need to function without an infrastructure of state church support at a time when the international economy had slowed down and already fragile religious infrastructures were cutting budgets.

Shortly before the 2009 summits were to occur, an earthquake struck L'Aquila, killing and injuring many, and destroying several churches. The religious summit was organized on short notice as a top-down state-like affair involving the Italian Episcopal Conference in partnership with the Italian conference of Catholic bishops and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They had significant foreign participation because the Italian government assisted with the transportation costs for religious leaders from Africa, Asia, India, and Indonesia. The religious leaders decided to hold their summit by standing with the victims of the earthquake. The Japanese delegation brought some financial assistance to earthquake victims, participants visited the earthquake site, and the Japanese made a presentation to the Italians on behalf of their suffering people. All delegations were given an opportunity to speak on the second day. When I asked about the shift in focus away from the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the Italian host said that

in Italy, the focus was on war because at that time we were still very much in the Afghanistan and Iran tension moments. Secondly, since the problem of the earthquake, we didn't speak about poverty at large. (Italian interview)

The experience made it clear that if the summitry process was to continue, it needed to be stabilized with some measure of international organization. On June 15, 2009, the first meeting of an International Continuance Committee was held—a group that would help organize ongoing summits and provide a place for the discussion of broad and deep interfaith issues and their global impact as they relate to ongoing religious summitry. People clarified that the leadership rotation model used by the summit process meant that national variation would affect possible hosts as well. In some countries, the Chair of the Interfaith body would have enough infrastructure to host a summit. In other countries, the host might be a senior religious leader or their representative of the major religion of the country in question. The weakness of using a leadership rotation model is that it depends on people in the G8 countries taking up the idea in

later years. The different character and size of the religious conferences mirror the different kind of readiness and means in the different countries. In looking to the future, it was suggested that the members of the International Continuance Committee meet in person once a year. Making this a reality, however, would prove to be a financially insurmountable challenge.

Canadian leadership would emerge as a primary voice continuing to champion religious summitry amid growing concerns, voiced primarily by participants from the United States and the United Kingdom. Support from the University of Winnipeg, the Canadian Council of Churches, the Interfaith Conversation, and some large religious grants combined with advance planning to enable Canada to be the first to host the summit without receiving any governmental funds. Canadians were also the hosts who most clearly envisioned religious summitry as part of global governance where religion operates as civil society, using their financial autonomy as an advantage to develop a more independent message:

There has been a tendency to see this group as the religious leaders validating everything the G8 does and not seeing this as an independent body . . . We are an independent body that wishes to be in dialogue but we are not a subsidiary giving validity . . . I find myself correcting people all of the time . . . People will say, "The G8 religious leaders . . ." I will go, "No, we are not the G8 religious leaders in the way that you mean. We are religious leaders in the G8 countries who have come together to speak to the current meeting of the G8 Summit in particular ways, but we are not a subsidiary in any way. We are a completely independent body that will say whatever it needs to say." That is *really* important. (Canada interview)

The Canadians offered a vision for religious summitry rooted more in life politics (e.g., Fischer, 2000; Giddens, 1994; McKechnie & Welsh, 2002) than in policy making, per se. They championed the Millennium Development Goals as a useful roadmap for building moral consensus on development priorities for global governance, but they put the wounded world, rather than governance on behalf of the world, as central. For example, John McArthur of *Millennium Promise* shared how MDG financing was making a difference in people's lives:

I spoke with mothers, asking "What is the problem?" "My child has a fever and it is probably malaria, so I brought them to the clinic." I saw a farmer trained as a clinic worker pull out a strip test from his pocket and he tested the child in front of me, poking and we watched in a matter of minutes the diagnosis that showed the child had malaria. The worker also had a cell phone in his pocket and he had medicine in his cabinet . . . 5 years ago, there were no rapid diagnostic tests and no cell phone coverage in that community . . . Now this community health worker was a farmer with grade 3 education, two wives, six children and 3 months of health worker training. This breakthrough is . . . quietly occurring

throughout the world because of the MDGs . . . There is a lot being said today about the MDGs and many talk as if they will be achieved or not based on the current trajectory. That is like asking in 1750 if slavery will end. It is tough until you get a breakthrough via coalitions, collaborations with people . . . who refuse to accept unethical inattention to the world's poorest who die because they lack the simplest tools that others have not seen fit to deliver. (McArthur, 2010)

Sessions included ceremonial prayers led by diverse religious traditions. A youth delegation helped shape the statement. They envisioned community-building as an important component of summitry:

The idea of a global village has been said multiple times, but the reality to establish a global family rather than just a collection of multiple nations requires understanding. We should focus on commonalities with respect toward multiple approaches. It is not dangerous and confusing, but should instead deepen our understanding of our own faith and influence a deeper understanding of community by cultivating respect. (Canada interview)

The Canadians, the only delegation ever led by a woman, challenged G8 “misplaced priorities” and closed with a presentation by Millennium Kids, a nonprofit centered on youth born in the year 2000 and calling for fulfillment of the MDGs. The ongoing inclusion of Millennium Kids in Canadian delegations is a symbolic reflection of the decentering of the political with the affirmation of life—tapping into metaphors of family and community, affirming promise-keeping to a millennial generation, and centered on the historic moment of January 1, 2000 rather than September 11, 2001. Canada was the first summit to involve a G8 research group, to host an interfaith media forum, to file, preserve, and forward all documents to the next hosting country, to maintain a website, and to develop an early release of the Statement in conjunction with a public engagement strategy for feedback. From the Canadian’s perspective, the purpose of the summits from their inception

has been to raise the voices of the faith leaders of the world in unity and in a call for justice for the vulnerable peoples of the world. The global faith leaders have gathered to remind the G8 of its responsibilities to the poor . . . the environment and the state of peace in the world and have committed themselves and their people to further effort in these *life-giving* directions. (Canadian Council of Churches, 2009, italics added)

The 2011 France summit was hosted by the Greek Orthodox and Bahá’i religious minorities. Metropolitan Emmanuel emphasized the importance of the “face to face knowing that comes with spending time by being in the presence of each other” so that people could connect at the human level, disagree, and “find a common course of action that is acceptable to us. When we connect our hearts, we will use

our heads to solve problems together and see each other through new eyes” (Emmanuel, 2011, p. 1). Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard emphasized the value of religious voices for governance:

As religious leaders, we are not financial experts. We are not even politicians. But still we are convinced that the decisions the heads of state take demand from all citizens an open mind and openness through solidarity which demands a real engagement by avoiding closing off within ourselves. We are here to avoid cynicism and fatalism that might exist in people as a consequence of globalization marked by the financial crisis. (Ricard, 2011, p. 1)

Majority/minority interfaith relations were discussed at length, with religious leaders defending the rights of *other* faith’s minority rights. What might have been lacking in local support from the dominant religion was more than made up for in quality and depth of interfaith dialogue.

As a leader among G8 nations, pressure to host a distinctive summit during a time of fiscal constraint created a difficult situation for U.S. hosts in 2012. The separation of church and state meant that hosts would need to finance the summit without state support. Galvanizing religious support for financial investment in meetings proved difficult and last minute changes in venue affected local organizers. In the end, Religions for Peace with the support of the Berkley Center at Georgetown University hosted a 1-day summit in Washington, D.C. International invitations were sent out with less than a week’s notice resulting in greatly reduced international involvement. Several U.S. NGO organizations chose not to attend given shrinking budgets and distaste for spending resources for writing a “high-level moral statement.” U.S. hosts created a 1-day event run somewhat like a business meeting:

In the American context, there is heavy emphasis to be focused on concrete things—specific policy and procedural things to be requested from the governments. There is not a strong taste for a joint worship service or a joint statement, although there is some value in that. There is a strong interest in identifying what sort of specific thing we could say that we would be willing to ask for with a particular administration like the renewal of the L’Aquila Food Security issue and that sort of thing. A lot of communities are interested in specific outputs and outcomes . . . Americans are very pragmatic . . . They were interested in the physical actions they could do together—what specific outcomes they wanted to get . . . Just coming together to come together for the sake of conversation . . . What is the specific ask? How does it change/transform anybody’s life? . . . One of the people who has been involved in the G8 process for some time and did not attend ours called the process . . . a necessary fiction, meaning that it is important and valuable for religious leaders and communities to meet together and to try to hold political leaders accountable to the standards . . . but at the same time a fiction in the sense that the people that come together, the way in which they come

together, the temporary character of it and the lack of continuity between the summits as not having any power to it. (U.S. interview)

Nevertheless, a statement was written and, for the first time, delivered to the G20, but clearly, the financial pressures would need to be addressed if religious summitry was going to have a future.

In 2013, the Anglican Church in the United Kingdom did not host a face-to-face meeting. Instead, they developed an open letter signed by 80 international religious leaders through an inclusive participatory process using email and telephone communiques. The United Kingdom also sponsored a social media twitter campaign on April 5, marking “1,000 days to go” before the Millennium Development Goals are complete as part of the “big push” toward the 2015 deadline. The U.K. Initiative connected the religious process with a new generation of social media users and adapted to fiscal constraint and organizational fragility by use of modern technologies.

Participants' Relationships

Leadership rotation in combination with uneven religious infrastructures across G8 hosts has contributed to evolution of a power struggle within leadership circles. Religions for Peace has a strong presence in some, but not all, G8 countries. As leaders in the international multifait movement, their involvement has been significant, but their weak presence in Germany, Canada, and France contributed to the evolution of reflexive leadership, as well as power struggles significant enough to manifest as two meetings in Japan. U.S. participants offer the harshest criticisms of religious summitry, some of whom have described the leadership as “fighting over who gets to control the legacy of a series of ineffectual meetings” (U.S. interview). Some delegates felt that parallel events set a bad example, demonstrating a type of competition not admissible in this type of context (Russian interview). Financial pressures on religious hosts only sharpened the division. U.S. delegates failed to see any measurable effect on global policies, and the meetings failed to consistently draw the hierarchy of world religions. When it was their turn to host, U.S. hosts gave international delegates such short notice that several who wanted to come, simply could not. Japanese delegates came despite short notice, but the 1-day event was over before they had recovered from jet lag. Defenders of summits lasting 2 or more days say that longer summits are worth the expense if only for the practical reason that there is a time gap in combination with the physical challenge of people coming from halfway around the world. U.K. delegates questioned how the summit seemed to have developed a life of its own since 2005, expanding without checks and balances “as part of the inter-faith industry,” saying “I think we have to be careful about that. We need to question what we want to achieve and if this

is the best way of operating” (U.K. interview). In 2013, the U.K. leadership led the initiative for reworking the model, “despite the success of previous encounters,” so that the financial pressure would not impede the ability of hosts to offer religious leaders “the opportunity to make a recognisable and credible impact on public and political debates ahead of the G8 Summit . . . with attention squarely focused on desirable *outputs* rather than on process” (Reed, 2013, p. 1, italics added).

Leadership hosting summits in Germany and Canada emphasized *process*. They prioritized galvanizing *civil society* to create summits that were highly collaborative, inclusive, and transparent. The level of dialogue resulted in statements that challenged G8 misplaced priorities, Western paternalism, and implicit economic imperialism embedded in the political process. Press releases were distributed to a wide variety of media personalities and outlets without concern about the risk of wider society interpretations (Canada interview).

In Russia and Italy, press releases were arranged through civil and church officials, with the summits funded and organized by the state establishment, carefully orchestrated to showcase collaboration between religion and civil society. For the most extreme critics, this was enough to dismiss the process. More collegial participants, however, recognized that governmental cosponsorship also meant that statement contents were conveyed to top levels of government thereby strengthening religious linkages with heads of state. It also often meant provision of summit translation services and involvement (through travel sponsorship) of representatives from poorer parts of the world (e.g., Ethiopia). It is unclear whether the Russians will revive the face-to-face summit in 2014, but interviewees considered past summitry expenses to have been a worthwhile investment in interreligious peace and security. “When we know that thousands of conferences are being organized in the world every year, isn’t the religious dimension just as important to humanity?” (Russian interview)

The Context of Reflexive Governance

If we consider the interpersonal dynamics in light of the *efficacy paradox of complexity* that gives rise to Voß and Kemp’s (2005) four typologies of reflexive governance, we can see how religious summitry is affected by reflexive governance dynamics throughout the period of 2005-2013. The culture and context of national hosts variously shaped the relative dominance of first- or second-order reflexivity, thus affecting the content and timing of the opening up, or closing down, of the reflexive governance process during the round of 9 consecutive years. The 2005 summit fits with Voß and Kemp’s problem-solving modernist approach, applied here to poverty reduction. Looking back on 2005, U.K. hosts in 2013 recognize that the modernist “blindness” operative at that time were problematic:

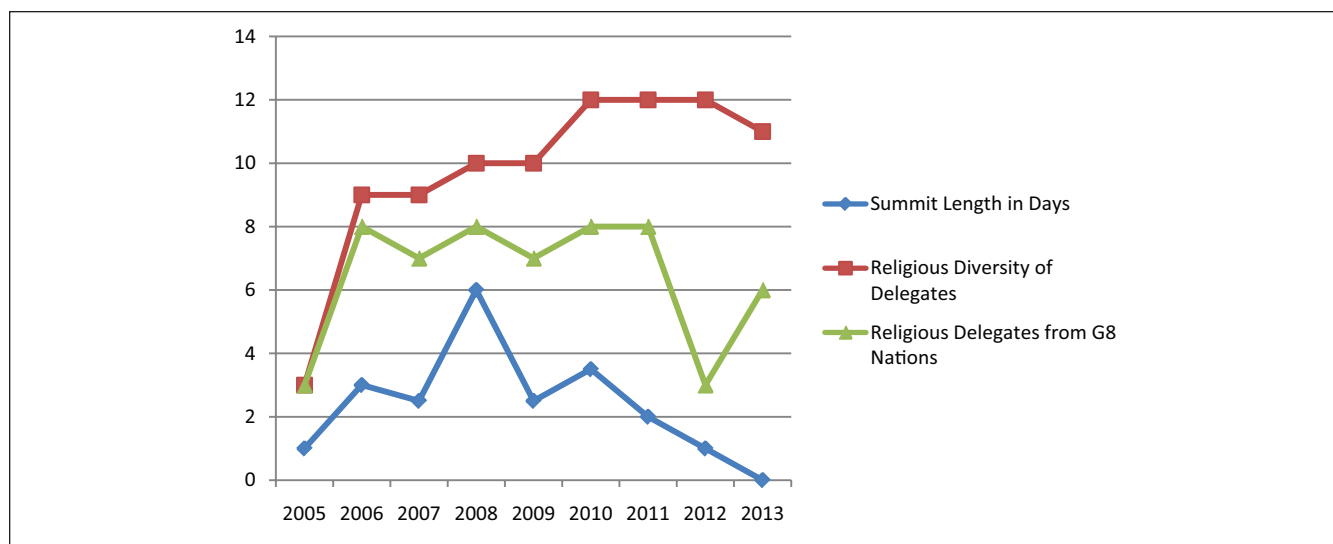


Figure 1. Summit length and participant diversity for 2005 to 2013.

By its very nature this mode of politics tends very much to exaggerate the power of the G8, almost to the point of caricature, such that at the time of the Gleneagles Summit the watching global public was encouraged to believe that the G8 could make poverty history, if it so chose, more or less as a matter of political will. To say the least, such an argument hugely oversimplified the real politics involved in approaching, let alone realising, such an ambition. (Reed, 2008, pp. 2-3)

The next 7 years of reflexive governance were characterized by Voß and Kemp's sequential opening and closing (taking turns). In 2006, the Russian summit opened up the process to involve multiple religions, religious representatives from all G8 nations, and extend dialogue over several days (see Figure 1). Action capacity, however, was diminished. The statement made no reference to specific policies and is the only statement without reference to the MDGs (World Religious Leaders' Summit Statement—Russia, 2006). The 2007 German summit emphasized process even more, through internationalizing planning, circulating the statement draft for international contributions, and using a more transparent approach to media. Summit planners increased international religious leader involvement from poor countries to further contextualize dialogue to take perspectives from marginalized parts of the world into account (German interview). The 2008 Japanese summits were paradoxical, simultaneously opening problem handling to decenter anthropocentrism and take the environment into account, while also reducing civil society involvement with state-sponsored events that included dialogue with heads of state on specific policy recommendations (World Religious Leaders' Summit Statement—Japan/Kyoto, 2008; World Religious Leaders' Summit Statement—Japan/Sapporo,

2008). One of the Japanese hosts described the religious dialogue with political leaders in Japan as “unstoppable” (Miyake, 2008) even as U.K. delegate, Charles Reed, began to publicly question the entire process (Reed, 2008). Summitry continued in 2009, but action capacity was prioritized to the point of turning inward on global issues (focusing on immigration) and responding to local earthquake victims face-to-face. The process opened up again in 2010, but Canadians emphasized process so much that, as the Canadian summit drew to a close, a pragmatically oriented U.S. delegate whispered into the ear of the U.S. delegate that had invited him, “Tell me again, why did we come here?” (U.S. interview). The Canadian statement most clearly questioned the underlying goals and values of the G8, emphasizing inclusive democratic process, and using phrases such as “inspired leadership” to challenge political leaders and question their “misplaced priorities.” Specific actions were recommended, encouraged, and actually taken, but the approach encouraged thoughtful reflection upon rule altering politics in a manner that was lost on delegates impatient toward the opening up of problem handling for further contextualization. After Canada, the process began to close down again with France, and then came close to shutting down in 2012 with international participation at its lowest ebb since the summits began in 2005 (see Figure 1). For the second time, the paradoxical aspects of the religious summit process surfaced. The U.S. host coauthored an article with a Canadian leader for publication in *G8*, a preparatory summit publication distributed at the G8/G20 Summits. Hamilton and Heckman (2012) use the imagery of an “open spiral” to describe the 2012 religious summit as “being complete” and “finished,” but “continuing” and “ongoing” (p. 220); as being “not just a closing of the eight-year cycle,” but also

“part of the open spiral, continuing to build on the parallel faith leaders’ summits that have gone before” (p. 221); as “building collaboration and unity for common witness on shared moral concerns (‘soft’ advocacy),” but also “working in specific ways to influence the policy agenda (‘hard’ advocacy)” (p. 221); and “as both an end and a new beginning” (p. 221). In 2013, the tension appears somewhat resolved with the decision to replace face-to-face summitry with use of email for statement development and use of social media to launch a twitter campaign. Reed had raised concerns about face-to-face summitry in 2008, again in 2010, and once more in 2012. By 2013, the summit had become an initiative.

Discussion

According to Beck (2002), reflexivity *includes* the *otherness of the other* by *accepting* a logic of *inclusive oppositions* and *excluding* a logic of *exclusive oppositions* that reifies differences into dualisms used to form a master cleavage along various dimensions such as religion, nature, citizenship, nationality, and so on. Reflexivity is understood as a requirement of surviving the modern world that emerges out of social experience; strategies of self-limitation are adopted through the “recognition of the legitimate interests of others and their inclusion in the calculation of one’s own interests” given a realistic experience of global risks and material interdependencies (Beck & Grande, 2010, p. 437). Reflexivity, as operationalized by Beck, is not collapsed into a cognitive process where decisions are politically polarized around a master cleavage of some kind.

In this study, I have tried to advance our understanding of the governance role of religious soft power by empirically investigating reflexivity in the case study of the World Religious Leaders’ Summits 2005-2013. I have illustrated a vulnerable process rendered even more fragile by moments of posturing, dismissal, and condemnation. I have described a group so divided that they hold summits in two cities, yet united enough to consistently include both statements in the accounts of a shared history. The religious summitry leadership, even at its highest points of tension and lowest points of process, demonstrates an approach committed to *including the otherness of the other* through the logic of *inclusive oppositions*. When the cycle looked as if it might come to an end, the process evolved and adapted to the new context creatively responsive to the historic moment of the “Big Push” for the MDGs.

This study advances prior research on the case study of the World Religious Leaders’ Summits by illustrating reflexive governance dynamics at work within religious summitry. This work presents a more complex and nuanced understanding of the interplay between first- and second-order reflexivity and describes how the ongoing governance process is shaped by the dynamic interplay of camps concerned with *keeping up action capacity* or *opening problem handling for further contextualization*. I have described how the summit

process was able to evolve and innovate a new logic of action through self-conscious learning practices that questioned the underlying goals and values of a strategy when necessary. I have also described how the religious leaders refused to choose between *keeping up action capacity* or *opening up problem handling*, and instead embraced what Rip (2006) refers to as the *efficacy paradox of complexity* so that the summit process could sequentially open and close, eventually embracing a complex portfolio of exploring experiments.

This work theoretically advances our understanding of religious soft power by clarifying the way in which reflexive governance dynamics operate within a governance stream of religious soft power in international relations. My findings offer an empirically sensitive historical description of religious reflexivity with implications that religious leaders may be important governance partners for leaders wanting to dialogue with well-organized civil society networks that are deeply rooted in local communities.

This case study describes a summitry process where religious leaders draw on their cultural capital to socially construct new boundaries for cosmopolitan responsibility to include the perspectives of the poor and vulnerable who are affected by, but excluded from, the G8 decision-making process. By influencing the normative framework in which G8 decisions have to be taken, religious soft power influences international relations to the extent that G8 leaders accept moral responsibility for the poor and vulnerable, taking their interests into account, when making the decisions which they must inevitably make.

Further research on reflexive governance will need to go beyond exploration of whether and how the plurality of perspectives offered by religious leaders are taken into account by the G8 leaders, and whether or not the social reconstruction of cosmopolitan responsibility provides G8 leaders with cosmopolitan orientation in transnational relations. The year 2015 is fast approaching, and the transition from Millennium Development Goals to adoption of, if there is adequate political will, a new set of Sustainable Development Goals marks more than international agreement upon a new set of development targets for the future. According to Jeffrey Sachs (2012) of the *Earth Institute*,

The SDGs will, necessarily, have a different feel about them. Sustainable development is eluding the entire planet. The SDGs should therefore pose goals and challenges for all countries—not what the rich should do for the poor, but what all countries together should do for the global well-being of this generation and those to come. (p. 2208)

According to Rip (2006), the modernist approach to governance—even pluralistic, more inclusive modernist approaches—tends to be marked by governance actors positioning themselves independent of the system that is being governed, as if they could remove themselves from the

system they try to govern (p. 83). Such approaches can be problematic, says Rip, when what is called for is foundational institutional adaptation in response to emergent irreversibilities in a collaborative coevolutionary response to some of the independent dynamics (such as climate change) that interact with system complexity. If reflexive governance is to avoid closing in upon itself prematurely in response to decision-making pressures to deliver, says Rip, then reflexive governance will need to shift away from doing heroic policy repair work on behalf of others. Global governance is part of the system it governs, says Rip, and this “governance of” approach should be replaced by a “governance in” reflexivity that governs with the recognition that we are all in this together because everyone is implicated. According to Rip, a coevolutionary approach to reflexive governance renders decision makers more capable of responding to the constraints, uncertainties, path dependencies, and multiactor, multilevel dynamics of mutual interdependencies that will inevitably characterize the future. Implementation studies indicate that adaptive policy making needs to be balanced with a clear understanding of what is happening on the ground. Further research, then, might well benefit if it were to explore religious summitry from the perspective of complexity theory. A coevolutionary approach to reflexive governance might render important insights into the complexity of governance dialogue as shaped by emergent change as we move beyond 2015.

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