6. AI's structure, decision-making, and policy implementation

Because AI's organizational context is pivotal for the comprehension of AI's growing interest in issues of violence against women, this chapter details the development of AI's work and highlights some essential organizational characteristics, decision-making processes, and policy implementation practices. Chapters 7 and 8, which analyze in detail AI's work on issues related to violence against women, build on these foundations. Because the focus of my study concerns the period 1989-2010, chapter 6 concentrates first and foremost on AI's functioning during these years. The present chapter starts with a brief overview of the development of AI's work in general (section 6.1). Section 6.2 concentrates on three essential organizational characteristics. Section 6.3 describes AI's internal structure at the international level. I describe the International Secretariat, the International Executive Committee, and the International Council as the main components of the AI network at the international level. Section 6.4 details the structure of the Swiss and the German sections. Finally, section 6.5 offers details on the processes of decision-making and implementation at the international and the national levels.

6.1 Brief overview of the development of AI's work in general

Conceived as an international movement for the release of prisoners of conscience and mainly composed of volunteers in the 1960s, Amnesty International has, over the course of the following decades, changed tremendously to become a complex and highly professional international human rights NGO. Its membership has grown continually, despite some periods of stagnation,

and many new sections have emerged.[1] AI's overall work was defined by its mandate limited to civil and political rights and distinguishing between promotional and oppositional work until 2001.[2] AI only defended a limited set of civil and political rights; by promoting all human rights, it emphasized the indivisibility, the universality, and the equal importance of all human rights.[3]

During the 1990s, the changing pattern of human rights violations around the world increasingly challenged this specific focus. During this period, AI started working on abuses committed by non-governmental entities and decided to hold governments responsible for their inaction in the face of abuses by non-state actors. In addition to its work against the violation of a limited number of civil and political rights, AI also enlarged the scope of its promotional work during this decade. It began to oppose not only specific practices but also "grave violations" against certain sets of rights.[4] Consequently, while keeping its traditional individual case work for the release of prisoners of conscience, AI increasingly focused on specific groups of people subjected to mass human rights violations.[5]

In light of these changes in its mandate, AI also modified its activities. Starting in the 1980s, AI began to professionalize its lobbying work; the latter

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1   For the growth of the movement in terms of number of sections, see appendix 2.

2   AI's statute defined promotional work as "promoting awareness of and adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally recognized human rights instruments, the values enshrined in them, and the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and freedoms" (Amnesty International: Statute of Amnesty International as amended by the 22nd International Council, meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 12-20 August 1995, 1995, p.1). Its promotional work focused on the following three techniques: "human rights awareness, training and advocating the ratification of international human rights instruments" (Amnesty International, International Secretariat: Inside the mandate, December 1995, p.3). At the same time, since 1991, AI has defined its oppositional work as "campaigning to oppose grave violations of a limited number of the rights mentioned in the declaration, namely, the detention of prisoners of conscience, unfair trials for political prisoners, torture and the death penalty, and 'disappearances' and extra-judicial executions" (Amnesty International, International Secretariat: Inside the mandate, December 1995, p.3).

3   Amnesty International, International Secretariat: *Inside the mandate*, December 1995.

4   Amnesty International, International Secretariat: *Report of the Standing Committee on Mandate to the 1995 ICM*, 14.07.1995.

5   The thematic campaigns on torture, such as the 1995 campaign *Human Rights are Women's Rights*, were examples of these advocacy activities opposing mass human rights violations.

advocated for respect of the United Declaration of Human Rights in the UN and other international and intergovernmental organizations. The organization also started to engage in educational activities seeking to enhance its members' and the broader public's understanding of current human rights standards. Further, AI began to collaborate with other NGOs in the 1990s - a practice that had been a taboo for many years. As I explain later, women's rights groups were among the first organizations with which AI started to collaborate.

By abandoning its mandate and adopting the mission including civil and political, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights in 2001, the organization radically changed its objectives and adapted its working methods accordingly. From then on, beside its traditional focus on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, AI also engaged in activities promoting the respect of economic, social, and cultural rights. Further, the delegates agreed to address non-state actors' responsibility for abuses committed in the private sphere at the 2001 ICM. The following extract of Irene Khan's opening speech to the 2003 ICM illustrates the significance of the 2001 policy changes for AI:

> "Obtaining the release of a prisoner is like a shot of tequila for AI members – an exhilarating experience, directly linking our own compassion with the fate of the individual. But as we expand our work on discrimination and [economic, social and cultural rights], our exhilaration must be with the release of the prisoners of poverty, of the prisoners of prejudice, of the prisoners of powerlessness. This is a qualitatively different business!"[6]

Conscious of the need to adapt its working methods to the important overall policy change, the organization did so concurrently. At the 2001 ICM, AI abandoned the Work on Own Country policy (WOOC policy), which prohibited national sections from undertaking their own research on human rights violations in their country, giving each section the ability to do research on and oppose violations of human rights in their own country.[7]

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6   Amnesty International, International Secretariat: *Report and Decisions of the 26th International Council of Amnesty International*, 2003, p.12.

7   With this principle, AI aimed to protect its own members from being "held responsible for the passing of information by their government" (Ennals 1982, p.67). At the same time, this rule reflected one of the main features of AI's ethical culture – its commitment to international solidarity (Winston 2001, p.31).

The adoption of the mission also entailed a shift from campaigning that focused on countries and individuals to thematic campaigning. Further, AI ceased distinguishing between promotional and oppositional work after the adoption of the mission. As I detail in chapter 8, these fundamental changes also influenced AI's work on issues of VAW. However, the central principles of the organization, such as impartiality of research, financial independence, independence from governmental influences, nonviolence, and international solidarity remained unchanged.[8]

6.2   A gendered human rights NGO

Evidence shows that gender and religion[9] are important social categories that have structured AI from its beginnings. AI had traditionally been a highly gendered organization, with a majority of female activists and men dominating the organization's leadership positions. As the introduction highlights, the long-lasting male dominance of AI's leadership helps explain the gender bias inherent to AI's traditional work. Like many other Western human rights NGOs, AI had white male founding fathers.[10] In fact, AI basically attracted two distinct groups of persons in its early years. First, a number of white British men grouped around the lawyer Peter Benenson,[11] founder of AI. Benenson's peers "constitut[ed] AI's informal senior advisory groups known as the 'Godfathers'."[12] The second was a group of predominantly female volunteers who ran the organization and had little prior experience with human rights issues. Benenson only appointed men to serve as Secretary Generals and to other leadership positions in the organization's first years. The early foreign missions were carried out by men.[13]

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8   Ennals 1982; Winston 2001.

9   Here, I use the term 'religion' to refer to the prevailing religious communities in a specific geographical region.

10   Mutua 2001, p.151-153.

11   The group of like-minded friends was composed of Louis Blom-Cooper, a well-known attorney; Eric Baker, a Quaker academic who was, at the time, working for the secretary of the National Peace Council in Britain; and David Astor, editor of *The Observer* (Ennals 1982).

12   Buchanan 2002, p.589.

13   Buchanan 2002, p.590.

At the same time, women played an important but subsidiary role in AI's first years. While men predominated in the organization's leadership positions at least until the end of the 1990s, women constituted the majority of its membership and of lower-level staff within the IS and in many Western sections.[14] Most of the leading positions at the IS were held by men for many years.[15] Internal figures presented by Hopgood show that 63% of the IS staff in 2002 were women, with a disproportionate number of women in lower positions.[16] The representation of women within sections followed similar patterns. In fact, women constituted the majority of members in most of the sections in the 1980s: "AI France (but that is also the case for the majority of the sections) had an important female majority among their ranges. In total, two of three members are women!"[17] Nevertheless, they were a minority of higher-level staff within the secretariats.[18]

In addition, AI's Secretary Generals (SG) had always been male until the nomination of the first female SG and deputy SG in 2001.[19] In fact, the IEC appointed Irene Khan as SG and Kate Gilmore as deputy SG, which was related to the decision to launch a first thematic long-term global campaign on VAW. Even though reliable data on the share of women in AI's management position are lacking, internal information indicates that men's predominance began to shrink within the headquarters in the 1990s. As the following graph illustrates, there was a growing number of women at least among the IS deputy SGs from 1992 to 2001.

Graph 1 sheds light on the share of women in the members of the IEC and among the Deputy SGs[20] at the IS between 1989 and 2011. Because of the twofold structure of the study, I first focus on the period from 1989 to

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14   There exist no comprehensive data on the representation of women and men within AI as a whole. Thus, the findings are based on secondary literature and archival materials.

15   Besset 1991, p.156.
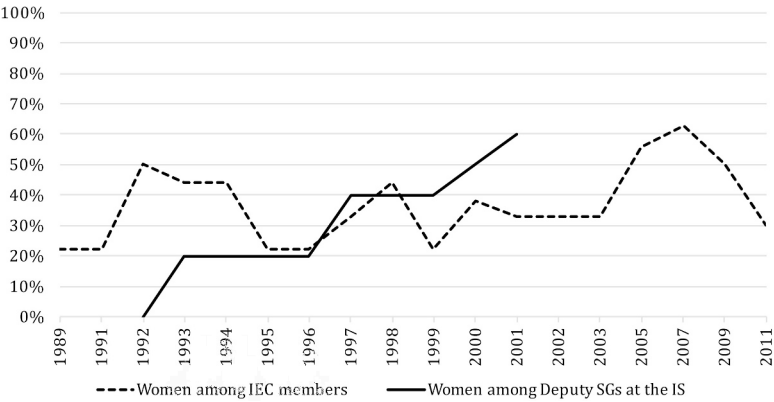
16   Hopgood 2006, p.149.

17   Besset 1991, p.155: "Amnesty-France (mais il en va de même dans la majorité des sections) comporte une majorité écrasante de femmes dans ses rangs. Au total, sur trois adhérents, deux sont des femmes !".

18   Besset 1991; Frey: *Gender Audit bei ai Deutschland - die Ergebnisse*, August 2002.

19   The male SGs were: Peter Benenson (1961-1966), Eric Baker (1966-1968), Martin Ennals (1968-1980), Thomas Hammarberg (1980-1986), Ian Martin (1986-1992), Pierre Sané (1992-2000).

20   Calculated in comparison to the total number of Deputy Secretary Generals and Finance Directors fluctuating between two and six.

Graph 1: Representation of women in the IEC 1989-2011 and among Deputy SGs, 1992-2001

Source IEC members: Minutes of IEC meetings (1992-2003), reports from the International Council Meetings (ICM) (2005, 2007, and 2009), Annual Reports (1989 and 1991). Source Deputy SGs: minutes of meetings of the IEC (December 1992-March 2001)

2001 and then on the period between 2002 and 2010. Women represented between 22% and 50% of the members of the ICMs in the 1990s. No general tendency is apparent for them during this time period. At the same time, the proportion of women in leading positions at the IS[21] increased steadily from 0% in 1992 to 60% in 2001. Given that AI's work on issues of VAW began in the late 1980 and increased during the 1990s, the increase in the proportion of women in IS management positions during this period may have contributed to the increase in AI's work on issues of VAW. However, these quantitative data do not suffice to explain AI's growing interest in issues of VAW because of their limited reliability and because such a tendency could only be observed within the IS but not among the members of the IEC. As I show later, an in-depth analysis of the transformation process focusing on officials and activists demonstrates the importance of feminist strategizing.

The proportion female IEC members in the 2000s increased and, for the first time, women represented an average of 50% of the IEC members between

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21   SG, senior directors, deputy SGs, and Finance Director.

2003 and 2009. The lack of data makes it impossible to track the share of fe-
male Deputy SGs at the IS after 2001. Aware of the limited reliability of these
data, the generally higher share female IEC members in the 2000s suggests
that AI would have been successful in making issues of VAW part of its overall
work. As I show later, even though the SVAW campaign signified a tremen-
dous step towards a more gender-sensitive human rights work, AI did not
succeed in making women's rights part of its DNA.

During many years, women were largely absent from the organization's
management positions at the IS and within sections. In contrast to their sta-
tus in the large Western sections, they have always constituted a minority in
the membership of African and Middle Eastern sections.[22] Evidence indicates
that even though the share of women in AI's leadership positions increased
during the period under scrutiny, and even though women reached the orga-
nization's highest positions – SG and Deputy SG, – the masculine working
culture within AI's headquarters persisted. In fact, a female IS staff member
described the IS culture as a masculine culture of "heroism and self-denial
and nothing touches me, and I will break at nothing. [...] I shall be right. I
shall produce. [...] And I will never show vulnerability either intellectually or
emotionally."[23] In their assessment of AI's women's rights work, Kelleher and
Bhattacharjya point to female IS staff's perception of the internal decision-
making processes as "deeply patriarchal in how they run the organization."[24]
Referring to the under-representation of women and to AI's cultural origin in
Western Europe, Hopgood (2006) described "a white and masculine working
culture."[25]

The Christian religious and cultural background of European societies has
shaped AI from the moment of its founding: "Christianity, culturally and spir-

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22   According to an AI internal document from 2004 "the most female members are to
     be found in Europe and the Americas" whereas only 30% of the members in Africa
     are women. Only 10% of the members in the Benin and the Ghana sections were
     women, and in the Senegal and the Gambian sections women represented 30% and
     36%, respectively, of the membership by the year 2000 (Amnesty International, Inter-
     national Secretariat: Women and their role in the Amnesty International movement,
     19.02.2004, p.3. Hopgood 2006; Amnesty International, International Secretariat: Fe-
     male Genital Mutilation: An evaluation of the work of AI in four West African countries,
     July 2001).
23   Hopgood 2006, p.148.
24   Kelleher and Bhattacharjya 2013, p.10.
25   Hopgood 2006, p.147.

itually, was an integral part of Amnesty's origins."[26] Hopgood (2006) located the cultural and social background of AI in the "tradition of ecumenical European Christianity"[27] and saw AI's origin as a response to the decreasing importance of the churches[28] in defining the moral values of modern Europe in the early 1960s. While AI's statute did not mention God, and many officials and activists were neither religious, nor Christian, AI's initial symbols (such as the candle), its organizational principles of nonviolence, and the operational mechanism behind AI's case work on prisoners of conscience, among others, made Hopgood define AI as a "secular Free Church."[29]

While AI's members diversified over the years as AI's work developed, the organization professionalized, and the movement grew (adding new sections and structures in the South), evidence indicates that religion and, more specifically, Christianity have continued to shape parts of the movement. In fact, this cultural specificity manifests in AI's daily work at the sectional level, as the example of AI activist groups cooperating with local parishes in the latter's activities shows. As I highlight later, the organization's closeness to the church[30] is more or less pronounced depending on the section.

6.3   Internal structure - the international level

The IS, the IEC, and the IC are the main components of the AI network at the international level. The IS, AI's headquarters and central node of the network, is based in London.[31] Led by the Secretary General and a team of Senior Directors, it is responsible for the daily business of the organization and carries out the majority of the research and campaigning work (concentrated in the IS's Research and Campaigning departments). Since the 1990s, research, campaigning, lobbying, and outreach work have been the core activities of

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26   Hopgood 2006, p.18.

27   Hopgood 2006, p.8.

28   Hopgood does not distinguish between different churches.

29   Hopgood 2006.

30   I use the term 'Church' to designate the predominant religious communities or *Landeskirchen* in Switzerland and Germany, which are the catholic and the protestant churches.

31   At the beginning of the 2010s, AI started a restructuration process throughout which many regional programs at the headquarters were delocalized to regional hubs on other continents.

the several hundred human rights professionals working at the IS. They collect and verify information and facts about human rights violations, develop reports, and plan and prepare urgent actions and campaigns that sections subsequently implement. The WOOC rule, which prohibited national sections from undertaking their own research on human rights violations in their country, gave the IS exclusive responsibility over research for many years, until it was abandoned in 2001.

As AI's executive body, the IEC - composed of nine people, all AI members from sections, except for one IS representative and a treasurer - is in charge of the leadership of the AI network worldwide and appoints the Secretary General.[32] According to AI's statute, the IEC is "responsible for the conduct of the affairs of AI and for the implementation of the decisions of the International Council (IC)."[33] Besides its pivotal role in supervising the activities of the IS, AI's statute gives the IEC the ability to submit resolutions to the ICM, AI's decision-making body where representatives of sections make decisions concerning AI's mandate/mission or its statute in the biannual meeting, organized in a different country section each semester. As I detail below, only the ICM is allowed to make decisions on AI's mission or statute.

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[32]   Four so-called standing committees advised the IEC in specific thematic domains, such as finance, mandate development, or the organization of the movement until 2001. The four standing committees were: The Standing Committee on the Mandate (SCM), The Standing Committee on Research and Action (SCRA), The Standing Committee on Organization and Development (SCOD), and the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Information and Financial Management (SCHIFM) (Amnesty International, International Executive Committee: IEC Information Bulletin No. 23, April 1998a). Later, the so-called Chairs Forum led by the Steering Committee and composed of section chairs and other delegates was appointed by sections as an intermediate structure of governance between ICMs. The Chairs Forum contributes to the development of the ISP, supervises the implementation of AI's policies and priorities, and meets annually (Amnesty International: Report and decisions of the 25th International Council of Amnesty International, 2001, p.141-142). In addition, a so-called Directors Forum composed of senior and other IS managers functioned as a management forum and also met annually (Amnesty International: Report and decisions of the 25th International Council of Amnesty International, 2001).

[33]   Amnesty International: *Statute of Amnesty International as amended by the 22nd International Council, meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 12-20 August 1995*, 1995, p.2.

6.4   Internal structure – the national levels

At the national level, AI's network is composed of country sections or so-called "structures."[34] Whereas the IS is responsible for the preparation of the case work and campaigns, sections concentrate on campaign implementation, fundraising, and membership development.[35] According to AI's statute, national sections are autonomous in the organization of their work. Most of the sections are organized as associations with a General Assembly supervising the section's activities and electing the board of directors that appoints the section's secretary generals.[36] Most AI sections are made of one Secretariat[37] and of a network of various activists groups.[38] AI groups have been key for the functioning of their respective sections for many years, as they are largely responsible for fundraising. Through their activities, groups raise funds and give them to their respective secretariat. The secretariats in turn always transfer a large amount of resources to the IS according to a defined ratio. For example, in 2010, the Swiss section gave 30% of its income to the IS.[39]

AI's human rights work has historically been based on the groups' activities fighting for the release of prisoners of conscience. Thus, activists have been key to AI's human rights work. Until the beginnings of the 1990s, groups were each assigned three verified prisoner of conscience cases: one from the West, one from a communist state, and one from the South. Although the adoption of prisoners has no longer been bound to a state's political position since the end of the Cold War, case work has continued to be key for the engagement of many activists. Evidence shows that case work on a particular prisoner has often entailed that activists develop a personal relation

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34   In contrast to sections, structures are smaller and are therefore often not economically auto-sufficient and do not financially contribute to the IS. But their work depends on the IS's and other wealthier sections' support. In contrast to AI's representations in the Northern hemisphere, most of AI's branches in the South are so-called structures.

35   Sections had been essential to fundraising as voluntary donations by section members (groups or individuals) have constituted the organization's main income.

36   Typically, the members of the board of directors are long-term AI activists exercising their functions on an honorary basis. In contrast, people working at AI's national secretariats are awarded a salary.

37   Some larger sections, such as the German section, have additional regional offices.

38   Such as local groups, thematic groups, country groups, youth groups, etc.

39   Jegher 2011, p.30.

to their prisoner of conscience. The fact that activists feel like working "for somebody, for an individual"[40] has motivated their engagement at AI. As I highlight later, many long-term activists have complained of losing this personal relation with the opening of the organization's working spectrum to economic, social, and cultural rights in the 2000s.

6.4.1   The Swiss section

This section begins with a short overview of the Swiss section's development from its origins in the 1960s to 2010, before it illustrates the section's structure and its functioning. I then briefly highlight the gendered composition of the section's membership and staff and the section's closeness to the church, and identify the section's distinctive particularities: its constructive culture of interactive debate and its general openness to policy changes.

As I have briefly mentioned before, the Swiss AI section is one of the oldest and largest AI sections member- and funding-wise. In Switzerland, the first AI groups had already formed by the 1960s, with ten local groups finally establishing the Swiss section in Zurich on 15 October 1970, nine years after AI's foundation as a global movement.[41] Group-wise, the section grew until 1993 when it comprised 93 groups.[42] That number decreased to about 80 in 2011. In the same period, the Secretariat developed a professional structure: one employee started working there part-time in 1976[43] and personnel had increased to 47 employees and 11 trainees by 2010.[44]

Since its formation, the section has been organized as an association with an Executive Committee (EC),[45] an Annual Delegates Assembly (the section's decision-making body),[46] a Secretariat headed by a Secretary General and a

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40   Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with B.V.*, 07.06.2013: "*Pour quelqu'un, pour une personne.*".

41   Chevalier: *Mémo chronologique de la création de la section suisse 1964-1975*, 26.04.2001.

42   See Appendix 2 for details.

43   From 1970 to1976, a single volunteer was in charge of the work.

44   Amnesty International: *Stellenentwicklung im Sekretariat*, 2010.

45   In 1978, the EC was reorganized and divided into two bodies: the EC and a Management board composed of senior-level staff from the Swiss secretariat.

46   At the 2007 General Assembly, the delegates voted on a new concept of membership introducing the principle of "one person / one vote" (Motion 3a) and transforming the Delegates Assembly into a General Assembly (Amnesty International: *Delegiertenversammlung 2007*, 06.05.2007).

Management Board.[47] The Secretariat's responsibilities first included campaigning, human rights education, and lobbying, and later also incorporated fundraising.[48] The secretariat prepared and coordinated the campaigns and actions coming from the IS. The groups implemented the campaigns on the ground.[49]

In the early years, AI activists mainly organized in local groups. Later, activists formed topic-, profession-, and country-specific groups called Berufs- und Zielgruppen.[50] An interviewee's testimony provides an insightful picture of the qualitative transformation of the groups over the years: "before there were completely generalist groups with young, elderly, men and women [...] with different professional backgrounds. It was a real representation of society. And later it became more fragmented. We started to found groups only for the young and the same thing for women."[51] Another informant highlighted the importance the personal identification with the victims of human rights violations held for the groups' diversification and for the activists' engagement: "Previously, the idea behind these professional groups was that they would primarily engage in single cases of victims of human rights violations in their domain, meaning students for students, lawyers for lawyers."[52]

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47   The supervision and control of the section were incumbent upon the EC elected for two years by the Annual Assembly and composed of a minimum of five and a maximum of nine members (mostly seven) from 1994 to 2000. Following a reorganization, the number of EC members was reduced to five or six by 2000 (Ganzfried: *Conversation with C.D.*, 12.08.2011; Ganzfried: *Interview with A.U.*, 10.10.2012).

48   Until the beginning of the 2000s, a group had to collect at least 3000 CHF per year for the Swiss Secretariat. Later, the fundraising was professionalized and carried out by the Secretariat.

49   The groups' main work methods consisted in urgent action letter writing, signature collections, stand actions, photo or art exhibitions, and concerts. Groups often organized their activities in collaboration with other organizations or institutions on occasion of, for example, the International Refugee Day, the International Human Rights Day, or the International Women's Day.

50   Such as women's groups or the group of lawyers, youth groups, university groups, and, later, groups like "Queeramnesty" or the "Groupe LGBT".

51   Ganzfried: *Interview with B.I.*, 07.06.2013: "*Avant c'était les groupes complètement généralistes avec des jeunes, des vieux, des hommes, des femmes. [...] toutes sortes de professions différentes. C'était vraiment une représentation de la société. Et on a morcelé. On a commencé à faire des groupes uniquement jeunes. [...] Et la même chose avec les femmes.*"

52   Ganzfried: *Interview mit B.F.*, 04.04.2012: "*Die Idee ist früher gewesen, dass die sich vor Allem für einzelne Fälle einsetzen sollen, für Opfer von Menschenrechtsverletzungen, die in ihrem Gebiet sind, also Studenten für Studenten, Juristen für Juristen.*"

Evidence shows that the growth of the secretariat was accompanied by a professionalization of the section's work and the groups' decreasing importance in the section's work on human rights in the 2000s. An interviewee explained the effects of the growing professionalization of the section's work: "the secretariat had been serving the groups. They [the secretariat] provided [the groups] the necessary material, they gave the petitions [to the groups], I think, for a long time, [the groups] had been giving impulse to the work."[53] In contrast, referring to the actual situation, the same interviewee explains that "today, I sometimes have the impression that the groups serve the secretariat."[54]

Similar to most other sections, women formed a majority of the Swiss Section's members and lower-level staff. However, as graph 2 highlights, women also occupied a majority of the section's management positions from 1992 until 1998. They became a minority of management staff in the following years. In the same period, the representation of women in the EC increased from 30% to 67% between 1990 and 2008, despite some setbacks and boosts (Graph 2).

Evidence suggests that the section or at least some of its members were close to the Church.[55] As I show later, this closeness is less pronounced in the Swiss section than in the German section. In fact, out of the 24 interviewed activists, all women over 60 referred to their proximity to the Church. One woman reported that she found something similar to the Church at AI, explaining that "I always declared: human rights are my religion."[56] Others mentioned their personal affiliation to the local parish or described outreach activities that their group had co-organized with the local parish.[57]

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53   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.L.*, 06.06.2013: "*Le Secrétariat, qui pour moi pendant des années étaient un peu au service des groupes, c'est eux qui nous fournissaient le matériel, c'est eux qui nous donnaient les pétitions, [...] je trouvais pendant très longtemps que c'était nous qui donnions un peu l'impulse aux choses, à la pratique.*"
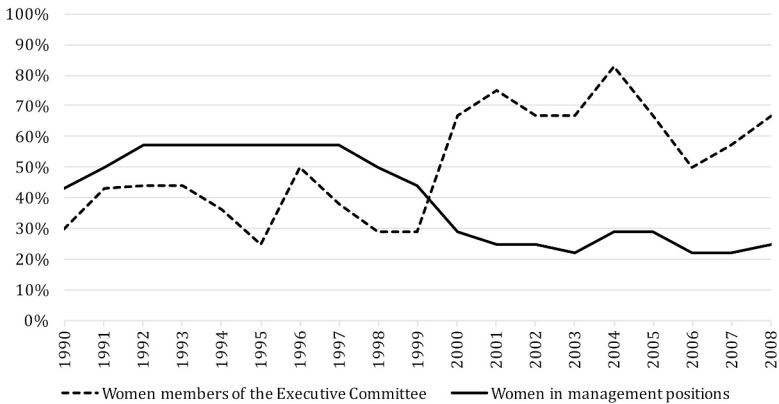
54   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.L.*, 06.06.2013: "*Maintenant [...] j'ai des fois l'impression que les groupes sont au service du Secrétariat.*"

55   The interview material does not allow me to determine which church (catholic or protestant) the activists were linked to in each case. Therefore, by the expression 'close to the church,' I mean the catholic or the protestant church.

56   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.E.*, 14.06.2013: "*J'ai essayé de retrouver parce que je suis dans la paroisse aussi, [...] moi je dis toujours ma religion c'est les droits de l'homme.*"

57   Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with B.G.*, 05.06.2013; Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with B.V.*, 07.06.2013 Ganzfried: *Interview with A.D.*, 06.06.2013; Ganzfried: *Interview with A.L.*, 06.06.2013; Ganzfried: *Interview with A.N.*, 03.06.2013; Ganzfried: *Interview with A.S.*, 15.05.2013

Graph 2: Representation of women in the Swiss section's management positions and Executive Committee, 1990-2008

Source: My own, based on an internal list provided by the document specialist of the Swiss section's Secretariat in 2011.

Evidence indicates that the Swiss section was rather open to mandate changes. Comparing the Swiss section to its German counterpart, an interviewee described the Swiss section as "much more flexible. It is just so lovely and open and always considering everything coming from the IS marvelous. [...] It has somehow been such a lovely section."[58] Further, evidence shows that a culture of constructive discussion among the membership was another particularity of the Swiss section. In fact, according to a long-term official, attendants to the Swiss Annual Assembly from other sections often expressed their astonishment with the section members' unanimous approval of budgets or reports of the EC.[59]

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58   Ganzfried: *Interview by Skype with A.T.*, 12.09.2012: "*Die Schweizer Sektion, die war ja viel geschmeidiger. Die ist einfach so lieb und offen und findet immer alles toll was vom IS kommt. [...] Das war irgendwie so eine süsse Sektion.*"

59   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.A.*, 31.05.2013: "*Ils sont tous complètement surpris de voir que quand on vote le budget ou le rapport du Comité il n'y a quasiment aucune question qui est posée et puis le budget il passe avec...cette année il a été voté à l'unanimité moins une voix.*"

6.4.2   The German section

This section begins by briefly presenting the German section's development since its foundation in parallel with the evolution of the international movement, from the 1960s until 2010. It then expounds on the structure and functioning of the section before explaining the division of labor between the Secretariat and the groups and its evolution over time. Later, I highlight the gendered composition of the section's membership and staff, and I demonstrate that in general the German section's membership can be considered rather church[60] oriented. Finally, I stress the German section's nature of a powerful, autonomous, immovable, and sometimes obstinate associate of the AI network.

The German section grew rapidly from its very beginnings and became the biggest AI section in the 1970s. It has been contributing half of the IS budget for many years and continues to be one of the most powerful sections today. The German AI section formed two months after the foundation of AI's international movement in 1961 and became the first section outside the UK.[61] The section registered an enormous growth in terms of the number of its groups, which multiplied from 7 in 1963 to 500 in 1974 and 650 in 1982. Between the 1980s and the end of the 2000s, the number of groups remained the same at 650.[62] A first secretariat was inaugurated in 1963/1964 in Bonn. The German section's secretariat grew from about 6 people in 1974 to 65 staff members, called *Hauptamtliche* (officials), in 2012.[63] AI Germany's secretariat had one office in Bonn and another one in Berlin for several years before they centralized in Berlin in the early 2010s.[64]

The German section is organized as an association with an EC, a General Assembly (GA) serving as the section's decision-making body, a Secretariat

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60   Again, I refer to the catholic or the protestant church, as the data do not allow me to distinguish between these religious communities.

61   Whereas the AI section of the Federal Republic of Germany formed as early as 1961, a new section in Eastern Germany was only founded in 1990. Both associations united in 1992.

62   See appendix 2 for details.

63   In full-time positions. The Secretariat counted 28 officials in 1990 and 43 in 1999 (Amnesty International Sektion Bundesrepublik Deutschland).

64   Other smaller regional offices existed; for example, one of them was in Munich.

headed by a Secretary General, and an Executive Secretary.[65] The Secretariat is responsible for the coordination of the section's daily business and for the implementation of the GA's decisions under the direction of the Secretary General. The supervision and control of the section's management are incumbent upon the EC, which was elected for two years and was comprised of 6 to 7 members between 1990 and 2010.[66]

Activists in the German section are organized in local, country or thematic groups. The so-called *Länder-Kogruppen* or *Fachgruppen* (approximately 60 *Kogruppen* existed in the 1990s) are composed of activists with a specific thematic or country expertise, assisting the work of local groups and serving as experts for the section's thematic work.[67] In light of their increasing number, local groups organized in so-called *Bezirke*, which "are associations of AI members and groups in one region."[68] The *Bezirke* have their own assemblies called *Bezirksversammlungen* where group members decide upon their common tasks and where they elect the *Bezirk* spokesperson (*BezirkssprecherIn*) and other thematic consultant (*FachreferentInnen*).[69]

The regional subdivision of the groups and the importance of the *Fachgruppen* for the section's topical work distinguish the German section from the Swiss section and from many other sections. As I highlight later, this specificity entails a particularly powerful membership. Given *Fachgruppen's* importance for the section's thematic and country-specific work, the Secretariat has mainly concentrated on campaigning, communication, and country-specific work over the course of many years. As an interviewee explained, the section's work was mainly country specific, and asylum was the only thematic human-rights issue the secretariat worked on until the end of the 1990s. The section started to integrate a broader range of topics into its thematic work only at the beginning of the 2000s. Despite its gradual professionalization, evidence

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65   The position of the Secretary General was created by the Executive Committee for the purpose of giving the section's human rights interventions an appearance of greater importance in politics and among the public in the 1970s (Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with B.U.*, 13.02.2015).

66   Deile et al. 2015.

67   As experts, these groups often were the first contact for media requests in their domain of expertise. They kept lobbying appointments independently from the secretariat (Ganzfried: *Interview with A.C.*, 14.04.2015).

68   Amnesty International Sektion Bundesrepublik Deutschland: "*Bezirke sind der Zusammenschluss von Mitgliedern und Gruppen eines Gebiets.*".
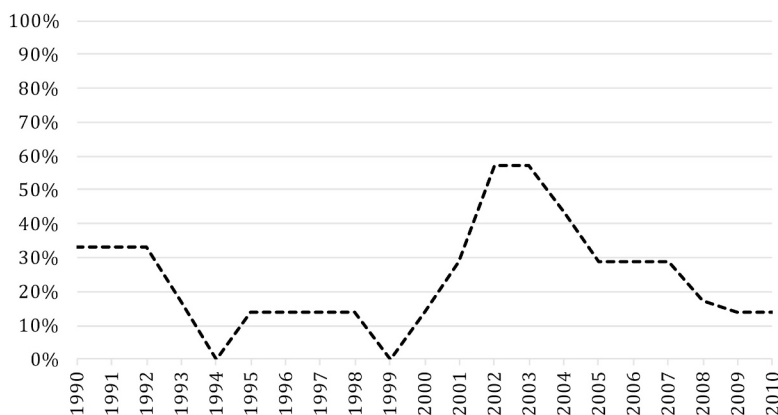
69   Amnesty International Sektion Bundesrepublik Deutschland.

indicates that the *Fachgruppen* and the *Länder-Kogruppen* continued to play a pivotal role in the section's work.

As in many other sections, women have represented a majority of all members and have been underrepresented in the EC and in the high-level positions at the German section's secretariat. Data from an internal gender audit show that in 2002, 40% of the members of 169 groups were men and 60% women. In the same year, women and men were equally represented in the *BezirkssprecherInnen*.[70] At the same time, as graph 3 illustrates, the proportion of women among the EC lay between 0 and about 30%, except for a short period of approximate parity between 2001 and 2003. The gender audit indicates that with 56-44 men-to-women ratio, women were also a minority in the section's management board in the beginning of the 2000s.[71] Female secretary generals headed the section from 1986 to 1990 and from 1999 to 2009.[72]

Graph 3: Representation of women in the Executive Committee of the German section, 1990-2010

Source: Chronik der Deutschen Sektion von Amnesty International, Deile et al. 2015.

Evidence indicates that members' closeness to the Church was more pronounced in the German section than in the Swiss section. An informant called

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70 Frey: *Gender Audit bei ai Deutschland - die Ergebnisse*, August 2002, p.17.

71 Frey: *Gender Audit bei ai Deutschland - die Ergebnisse*, August 2002.

72 Brigitte Erler, 1990-1999: Volkmar Deile; 1999-2009: Barbara Lochbihler.

my attention to the religious tendencies among the membership, saying: "You are surely aware that many German AI members are Church oriented."[73] Another interviewee further explained: "The membership is rather conservative. Conservative because AI Germany had always been closely connected to the Churches here in Germany."[74] The importance of the Christian faith for many of the German section's members becomes evident in an extract of an internal document that indicates that many members of the German section believe that human beings' life starts at the moment of conception and not at birth.[75] The connection to the Church also becomes evident in the groups' activities. In fact, the document retracing the section's history and the internal AI journal mention group activities organized with Christian institutions, such as sermons or AI's participation in the *Evangelischer Kirchentag*.[76] Further, in contrast to the Swiss section, a transregional group called *Kirchen Arbeitskreis*, whose aim has been to convince more and more Christians and members of other religious communities to stand for the respect of human rights globally through the organization of church services on AI's matters of concern, has existed since 1980.[77]

The German section had always been a rather uncomfortable member of the AI network. Together with an early formation and a dominant grassroots membership, the interviews present the section as a powerful, autonomous, immovable, and sometimes obstinate associate of the AI network. An interviewee explained that "the German section had always been different from other sections."[78] As another informant accurately explains, because of its relatively early creation, the German section had to develop on its own, without having a model on how to deal with the growing number of members, or on how to

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73   Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with A.Y.*, 09.01.2015: *"Sie wissen ja auch, dass viele Amnesty-Mitglieder kirchenorientiert sind."*

74   Ganzfried: *Interview with B.T.*, 15.04.2015: *"Die Mitgliedschaft ist eine eher konservative Mitgliedschaft, konservativ weil Amnesty Deutschland ist immer sehr stark mit den Kirchen hier in Deutschland verbunden, [...]."*

75   Amnesty International, International Secretariat: *28th International Council Meeting Circular 42 Resolution and Statute Amendment Pack*, July 2007, p.12.

76   Amnesty International Sektion Bundesrepublik Deutschland: *ai-intern*, November 2006; Deile et al. 2015.

77   Deile et al. 2015; Kirchen Arbeitskreis (AK) München und Oberbayern.

78   Ganzfried: *Interview with B.T.*, 15.04.2015: *"Die deutsche Sektion ist zu anderen komplett unterschiedlich.".*

organize its work.[79] The resulting specific group structure, which I have already described, made the German section immobile and, at the same time, lead to "a very solid basis."[80] According to the same interviewee, this particularity has influenced the section throughout the years, shaping a self-feeding structure, which can only be influenced from the outside with difficulty.[81]

Related to this, AI Germany has, for many years, used a logo that is different from the one used internationally.[82] These specific characteristics are also reflected in the section's position on the development of AI's mandate and in the implementation of activities coming from the IS. Evidence indicates that the German section has often been reluctant to open the mandate.[83] An interviewee stated: "The German section is that balky. At each mandate modification, they thought 'The mandate is already this huge, we cannot possibly change it anymore.'"[84] At the same time, as another interviewee highlights, the section has also sometimes been at the vanguard, proposing things to the IS which the latter did not want.[85] For instance, the German section was the first AI section where members started to work on the right to food in 1982, almost two decades before the movement decided to abandon the mandate. In contrast to others, the German section also ignored the WOOC rule by working on prisoners' cases in Germany,[86] and engaged for the release of any imprisoned asylum seeker, regardless of his or her political convictions.[87]

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79   Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with B.U.*, 13.02.2015.

80   Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with B.U.*, 13.02.2015: "*Die deutsche Sektion ist durch die Gruppenstruktur in gewisser Hinsicht unbeweglich gewesen, aber sie hat ein sehr solides Fundament gehabt.*".

81   Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with B.U.*, 13.02.2015: "*Meine Erklärung ist bis heute, dass daraus eine Struktur gewachsen ist, die selbst tragend war, und auf die es schwieriger ist von aussen Einfluss zu nehmen*".

82   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.C.*, 14.04.2015.

83   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.N.*, 03.06.2013; Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with A.Q.*, 27.02.2015; Ganzfried: *Interview by Skype with A.T.*, 12.09.2012.

84   Ganzfried: *Interview by Skype with A.T.*, 12.09.2012: "*Die [Die Deutsche Sektion] ist so bockig. Die fand immer bei jeder Mandatsänderung: […] das [Mandat] ist doch so gross schon, wir können das unmöglich noch ändern.*".

85   Ganzfried: *Interview by phone with B.U.*, 13.02.2015: "*Also die deutsche Sektion ist auch manchmal vorwärts stürmend gewesen und wollte was von der Internationalen Organisation was diese nicht wollte.*".

86   Deile et al. 2015.

87   Deile et al. 2015.

Consequently, the relationship between the German section and the IS has been rather conflicting.

In fact, several debates about the groups' autonomy vis-à-vis the international organization's centralism occurred between 1981 and 1986.[88] In one of the EC meetings in 1985, the minutes keeper stated: "The German section perceives the IS as a very distant instance."[89] Further, an interviewee reported that in the German section, "London" was a term filled with fear.[90] In light of the section's sometimes critical and antagonistic positions vis-à-vis the international movement, it is not astonishing that activists describe their Annual Assembly like this: "discussions are very tough, it is not at all some 'cuddle'-Amnesty."[91] The same interviewee reported guests from other sections' astonishment upon visiting the AI Germany's GA and being confronted with this manner of discussion and debate.[92]

Summing up, while the Swiss section and the German section are both among the most important AI sections members- and funding-wise, evidence points to some central differences between these two sections in several domains, other than size. First among them is the power structure between the secretariat (professional structure) and the groups (activists). In the German section, the groups play a pivotal role in the section's work, whereas in the Swiss section, the professional structure seems to be more important, as thematic work is mainly centralized in the Secretariat. In fact, whereas both sections were marked by a tendency to professionalize over the period under scrutiny, in the German section, thematic work remained in the hands of the *Länder-Kogruppen* or *Fachgruppen*. Further, as I show in section 6.5.2, the German section's membership has a particularly powerful position within the section due to its ability to participate in decision-making at both the national and the local levels.

Second is the share of women in the EC. In fact, in general terms, the proportion of female EC members was more important in the Swiss than in the German section during both periods. Third, whereas evidence shows a

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88   Deile et al. 2015.

89   Deile et al. 2015: "*Das internationale Sekretariat wird aus der Sicht der Sektion als eine sehr entfernte Instanz wahrgenommen.*".

90   Deile et al. 2015: "*Reinhard Marx schreibt zum gleichen Thema: 'London' ist ein angstbesetzter Begriff innerhalb der deutschen Sektion.*".

91   Ganzfried: *Interview by Skype with A.G.*, 26.04.2015: "*Da wird sehr hart diskutieren, das ist gar nicht so Kuschel-Amnesty.*".

92   Ganzfried: *Interview by Skype with A.G.*, 26.04.2015.

certain closeness to the Church in both sections, this proximity seems to be more pronounced in the German section. Fourth is the relationship between the section and the headquarters. The Swiss section seems to have been open to mandate changes and can be described as a rather assimilated member of the overall AI network. In contrast, AI Germany has been rather critical of mandate changes and can be characterized as a powerful, autonomous, immovable, and sometimes obstinate associate of the AI network. As I explain later, these differences help us understand how both sections integrated issues of VAW into their work from the start. They also help explain the difference in the extents to which the Swiss and the German sections managed to integrate the issue of VAW into their work in the 2000s.

6.5   Decision-making and implementation

As an organization build on democratic principles, the process of policy-making, which delineates the organization's working focus, and the implementation of its policy are key to properly understanding AI. By distinguishing between the international and the national levels, this chapter provides insights into the mechanism of decision-making and its implementation as well as the underlining power relations.

6.5.1   The international level – The IS as a powerfull central node

At the international level, only the ICM can make decisions amending the mandate/the mission or the statute defining AI's working focus.[93] AI describes the ICM as "AI's highest decision-making body and a significant element of its democracy in action."[94] Every two years, delegations from all sections and "structures" meet at the ICM to discuss AI's future direction and work. Section delegates there debate various topics in working groups and vote on resolutions submitted either by the IEC (enabling resolutions) or by sections (resolutions) in plenary sessions. Each of the sections sends a delegation to the ICM. The latter is composed of activists and officials and is proportional to its size, calculated as a function of the number of its members. In contrast, the IEC does not have the right to vote at the ICMs. As I show

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93   Amnesty International: *Statute of Amnesty International*, August 1991.
94   Amnesty International.

hereafter, even though the IS is formally excluded from decision-making at the ICM, it nevertheless influences the process indirectly. In fact, despite not having the right to vote IS members participate in the ICM.

Decisions at the ICMs require "a simple majority of the votes cast."[95] However, decisions are often taken by consensus, often involving long and intensive discussions among section representatives during the two weeks of the ICMs. Evidence shows that reaching a consensus on particular issues usually starts months or even years before a definitive decision is made. Welch (2001) has noted that "expansion of the mandate requires years of patient, worldwide lobbying of national sections."[96] Sections thus prepare their statements and inputs to the ICM in advance and seek alliances with like-minded sections on issues on the meeting's agenda, which the IEC has defined in advance.

Generally, before sections submit their resolution to the ICMs, their members decide on the submission at the section's GA. Thus, to a certain extent, the content of the resolution and, consequently, the following ICM decisions reflect the activists' opinions. The sections' role in AI's decision-making process is important, as AI's statute gives sections the exclusive right to participate in the process in two ways. Whereas sections can submit resolutions to the ICMs and have the exclusive right to vote on resolutions, as well as adopt subsequent decisions, the IEC is only given the right to submit resolutions and is excluded from voting on them. The sections and, consequently, AI's membership are thus assigned a pivotal role in the policy-making process.

Nevertheless, evidence shows that the headquarters significantly influence decision-making and policy implementation. In fact, the composition of the IS, its exclusive task of doing research for the whole movement over a long period, and its involvement in the executive affairs and in the organization of the ICMs make the IS comparatively powerful. Even though it is formally excluded from participating in the ICM, evidence indicates the ability of the IS "to control the content of the AI human rights agenda."[97] IS staff are professional human rights workers and therefore generally possess greater, specific knowledge of human rights than ordinary AI section activists do. Relatedly, as explained by an interviewee, the exclusive task of conducting research for the whole movement "gives [the IS] enormous power on the movement."[98]

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95   Amnesty International: *Statute of Amnesty International*, August 1991.
96   Welch 2001, p.92.
97   Lake and Wong 2009, p.149.
98   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.I.*, 26.09.2012: *"ça donne un pouvoir enorme sur le mouvement."*.

Further, as stressed by Welch (2001), even though the ICM "examines broad policy matters, including the mandate, and although the IEC supervises national sections, the overwhelming majority of operational decisions are made within the IS."[99] The decisions about the adoption of prisoners of conscience are based on confidential information and sources, which precludes the IS from consulting with the whole movement. As the professional expertise remains in IS staff, decisions concerning individual country work are also made within the IS.

The IS is also closely involved in the organization's executive work. In fact, as the minutes of the IEC meetings show, in addition to the regular IS representative, the SG and its deputies regularly participate in the committee's meetings. IS staff members also represent the IS within various Standing Committees, such as the Standing Committee on the Mandate (SCM), formerly called the Mandate Review Committee,[100] established to examine possible ways to modify the mandate. The resignation of the chairman of this specific committee in 1990 shows that because of the professional staff's knowledge advantage, the Secretariat's influence on executive affairs was judged highly problematic by AI members themselves. In fact, the chairman declared: "I am not opposed to the I.S. influencing the Committee. However, I am of the view that, given the number of I.S. staff at the meetings and the fact that they have more knowledge than most of us regarding the issues, their influence has been undue."[101]

Furthermore, evidence shows the close involvement of IS staff both in the organization of the ICMs and in lobbying for or against particular decisions. In fact, as Hopgood highlights, while "IS staff members undertake the organization of the ICM, [...] particular IS senior directors can be heavily involved, for example, in behind-the-scene lobbying, resolution drafting, and coalition building for IEC positions."[102] At the same time, according to Hopgood, "a

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99   Welch 2001, p.109.

100   Generally, at least one staff member and the SG as well as the deputy SGs represented the IS at the IEC. The 2003 ICM eliminated the IS representative on the IEC following an AI Israel resolution (Hopgood 2006, p.194.). According to different minutes of meetings of the SCM, the IS represented half of the SCM members from 1992 to 1996. The IS was present in the three other standing committees, as well.

101   Deile et al. 2015.

102   Hopgood 2006, p.194.

ritualistic pretense is maintained that the IS is not involved at every stage in giving serious and detailed strategic and policy advice to the IEC."[103]

Thus, while the sections and, consequently, the members officially determine AI's human rights work through their right to submit resolutions and their exclusive voting right at the ICM, "de facto the professional structure [the IS] had much more power compared to the governing structure [the ICM]."[104] As explained by an interviewee, this is because the IS cumulates the task of preparing the decisions for the ICM and the task of subsequently implementing these decisions. Hence, even though the statutes mainly limit the headquarters' role to conducting daily business, the IS has remained "the heart – and the brain – of AI."[105] As Lake and Wong (2009) and Welch (2001) highlight, we can even assume that over the years "the power of the central node increased,"[106] as "the longer an organization survives, the greater the likelihood that its permanent employees rather than its members determine the goals."[107]

6.5.2   The national level – AI sections

As I have previously highlighted, the sections participate in the decision-making process by submitting resolutions and deciding upon them at the ICMs. Sections play a key role in decision implementation. Organized as independent associations, "sections [took] no action on matters that [did] not fall within the stated object and mandate of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL"[108] until 2001. Sections are autonomous in the implementation of the campaigns and in the individual cases of prisoners developed and proposed by the IS. This has been even more so since the adoption of the mission, which changed the scope of AI "from being constrained by its statute in what it could do, to being free to do pretty much what its staff and volunteers wanted to do."[109] Member involvement happens in each section's groups, which implement the

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103   Hopgood 2006, p.194.

104   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.I.*, 26.09.2012: "*De facto la structure professionnelle a nettement plus de power que la structure de gouvernance.*".

105   Welch 2001, p.90.

106   Lake and Wong, 2009: 152.

107   Welch 2001, p.109.

108   Amnesty International: *Statute of Amnesty International as amended by the 22nd International Council, meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 12-20 August 1995*, 1995, p.5.

109   Deile et al. 2015.

campaigns and actions prepared by the IS on the ground. Thus, activists are assigned a pivotal role in the achievements of the organization's objectives.

As independent associations, sections autonomously decide upon their annual budget, their members' financial contributions, their long-term strategic and financial planning, and the election of their secretary generals. In the case of the Swiss section, activists can influence policymaking by submitting a motion or a postulate to the GA on behalf of their respective group. These instruments enable activists to demand the submission of a resolution to the ICM. Further, activists can vote on these motions or postulates at the AG and, in doing so, influence AI's decision-making process.[110]

In contrast to the Swiss section and to the majority of the other sections, the German section has given its members additional opportunities to influence decision-making at the section level. According to an interviewee, the German AI activists have more opportunities to participate in the decision-making compared to their counterparts in other sections.[111] The fact that activists can participate in decision-making at the national as well as the local levels gives the membership a particularly powerful position within the section. At the GA, delegates decide on long-term strategic planning, elect the EC, and vote on motions coming either from individual members, group(s), from a *Bezirk* or from the EC.[112] At the regional assemblies (*Bezirksversammlungen*), group members of the respective *Bezirk* decide on their common tasks and elect the regional spokesperson.[113] The latter is closely involved in EC's affairs through her or his participation in the *Bezirkssprecherinnenkonferenz*, a conference bringing all regional spokespersons together twice a year.[114]

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110   Until 2007, internal collectives, such as groups, commissions or working groups, had a collective voting right (groups voting rights were fivefold). At the 2007 GA, the delegates decided to introduce the principle of "one person / one vote." From then on, each member of the Swiss section had the right to vote, transforming the delegates' assembly into a General Assembly (Amnesty International: *Delegiertenversammlung 1997*, 27.04.1997; Amnesty International: *Delegiertenversammlung 2007*, 06.05.2007).

111   Ganzfried: *Interview with A.C.*, 14.04.2015: "*Unsere Mitglieder haben sehr viel Mitsprache- und Partizipationsrecht, wahrscheinlich mit am meisten bei Amnesty*".

112   Each group sends a delegate with the rights to vote. Since 1991, each group has had one delegate with ten votes, while individual members (who were not affiliated to one group) had the right to participate in the AG with one vote. The decisions are taken through a simple majority of the votes.

113   Amnesty International Sektion Bundesrepublik Deutschland.

114   As explained in the statutes, the EC is committed to taking the decisions of the *Bezirkssprecherinnenkonferenz* into account in their decision-making. Important section

The preceding paragraph illustrates the sections' and therefore the members' pivotal role in the process of decision-making and the subsequent implementation of the decisions. At the same time, the IS has a very powerful de facto position with regards to the definition of AI's agenda. In fact, even though it is excluded from voting at the ICMs, the IS, with its composition of human rights professionals, its exclusive role in conducting research, its involvement in the organization's executive affairs through its participation in the IEC and in the related Standings Committees, and its role as the organizer of the ICMs, has exerted consistent influence on the organization's human rights agenda. AI's democratic principle is safeguarded within the sections thanks to the general assemblies, where the members decide on their section's work. Even though activists are assigned a pivotal role in the decision-making process within sections, as the example of the Swiss and the German sections shows, the activists' importance in defining the section's work varies. Because of their importance in the section's thematic work and their involvement in decision-making at the national and the local levels, the German section's membership has a particularly powerful stance compared to that of its Swiss counterpart.

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tasks, such as long-term planning and the coordination and implementation of the section's actions, are incumbent upon both the EC and the *Bezirkssprecherinnenkonferenz* Amnesty International Sektion Bundesrepublik Deutschland.