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# Global Civil Society Shifting Powers in a Shifting World



Edited by Heidi Moksnes and Mia Melin

Global Civil  
Society:  
**Shifting  
Powers in a  
Shifting World**

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# Contents

Preface	1
Global civil society - beyond the “good” and the “bad” Håkan Thörn and Heidi Moksnes	3
Transactional activism and global social change Jackie Smith	9
Civil society – new power in aid and development? Tony Tujan	27
Shifting global influence on civil society: Times for reflection Jude Howell	43
Civil Society and the United Nations James A Paul	63
What rouses global civil society? Clifford Bob	83
Implementation of the Nordic+ conclusions on civil society support – the case of Zambia Karin Fällman	91
New donors or global civil society? Lisa Sjöblom	107
<b>Social movements in a neo-liberal era: Ethnographies of local activists in transnational networks</b>	
Introduction Eva-Maria Hardtmann	113

Civil society and the social movements in Eastern Europe <b>Grzegorz Piotrowski</b>	118
Collective action and absent civil society organisations in the Maputo suburbs <b>Maj-Lis Follér and Kajsa Johansson</b>	124
Connected citizens and networked resistance <b>Johanna Stenersen</b>	131
Transnational activism and the Dalit women's movement in India <b>Upasana Mahanta</b>	140
 <b>The implications of the growing clout of emerging powers for civil society</b>	
Introduction <b>Johan Lagerkvist</b>	151
Nascent civil society in Lao PDR in the shadow of China's economic presence <b>Gretchen Kunze</b>	154
Principles for civil society engagement with multilateralism <b>Heather MacKenzie</b>	159
African civil society in a new era of international trade relations <b>Herbert Moseki</b>	167
 <b>Diaspora, transnational engagement and the national regimes</b>	
Introduction <b>Erik Olsson</b>	177

Diaspora as an instance of global governance: The case of Kurds in Sweden <b>Khayati Khalid</b>	181
Transnational migration, social activism and the formation of new subjectivities <b>Seo Seonyoung</b>	186
<b>Globalisation and trade union internationalism</b>	
Introduction <b>Nora Räthzel</b>	195
Rainforest communities and climate change in the Brazilian Amazon <b>João Paulo Veiga and Scott Martin</b>	202
Labour and the globalisation of local resistance: The case of Arcelor Mittal <b>Jacklyn Cock</b>	208
Transnational solidarity and microenterprises: Home-based workers in Ahmedabad, India <b>Marie Larsson</b>	212
Asymmetric governance, labour standards and migrants' rights <b>Branka Likic and Carl-Ulrik Schierup</b>	220
Participants List	231



# Preface

This volume is based on the conference *Global Civil Society. Shifting Powers in a Shifting World*, held in Uppsala, Sweden, April 12-13, 2011. The conference was the second in a series of four yearly conferences, aiming to explore the formation of civil society internationally and its relation to democratisation and development. As such, it forms part of the project *Outlook on Civil Society*, which is a cooperation between Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.<sup>1</sup>

Over the past decades, civil society has been considered increasingly important to socio-economic development and in political mobilisation, perhaps especially so in developing countries. This is partly an effect of neo-liberal reforms that have decreased state responsibility in certain economic as well as political issues, instead increasing the role of not only private actors but also non-governmental organisations. Furthermore, the democracy reforms of the last decades and the heightened focus on human rights have strengthened the political agency of civil movements and organisations, which often have turned into driving critics of precisely the lack of democracy in governance. In an era of globalisation, non-governmental organisations, social movements, and other forms of civil organisations have extended their contacts across national borders, in a process promoting the creation of transnational civil networks. Many are the hopes that this vitalisation of civil society will strengthen societal development in a democratic direction, with increased popular participation.

*Outlook on Civil Society* aims at advancing the Swedish research front on civil society in developing countries, and at strengthening research-based knowledge about civil society among Swedish actors within international development cooperation. Furthermore, the project strives to



be a bridge-builder between these two different spheres of expertise, and provide real possibilities for mutual exchange.

This second conference in our series focused on the power relations within civil society itself – between large international civil society organisations and smaller, national CSOs; between organisations in the global North and the global South; between different kinds of organisations within the global South – and between civil society and society at large, which finds itself in a situation where powers are shifting in a sometimes quite radical way, for example as China and the BRICS play an increasingly dominating role on the global political arena

The two-day conference attracted about one hundred participants from all continents – researchers, development practitioners, policy makers, activists, and students – who gave rich and comparative perspectives on the conference theme in presentations and discussions.

The articles in this volume are edited versions of keynote presentations at the conference, of introductory presentations held in discussion sessions, as well as short versions of most papers presented in the paper-based sessions, each of which are introduced by the session chair. We are very pleased to be able to offer to our readers an exciting book with knowledgeable and challenging articles, discussing tensions and difficulties, and showing civil society's capacity to rise to the occasion in worldwide cooperation.

Uppsala, December 2011

*Mia Melin and Heidi Moksnes, editors and project co-ordinators*

#### **Note**

1. The project is based at Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development at Uppsala University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. It is funded by Sida between 2009 and 2013. The formal project name is *Civil Society in International Development: Research and Practice*.

# Global civil society – beyond the “good” and the “bad”

Håkan Thörn and Heidi Moksnes

What is global civil society? And what is the meaning of global civil society? A few years ago, there was a debate on whether a global civil society existed or not. Today, few people doubt the existence of a global political space, and research on “global civil society” has emerged as a sub-field of study in the broader context of globalisation theory and research. The London School of Economics has published the Global Civil Society Yearbook since 2001, and quite a few books and articles have engaged theoretically as well as empirically with the subject. There are, however, a number of different and conflicting perspectives on what global civil society is, and what role, or which roles, it plays in world politics. Further, whether you look at public or academic debates, you will most certainly find that the concept has quite strong normative connotations.

Let us just provide two contrasting contemporary images. First, when googling on “global civil society” and “Egypt,” we found the following text, published on a number of websites on 3 February 2011:

## **EGYPT: Global civil society condemns abuses, calls for democratic reform and election**

*A Joint Statement by global civil society actors, 1 February, 2011*

We, civil society organizations from across the world, strongly urge all governments, as well as regional and international organizations, to clearly and unequivocally denounce the ongoing violent crackdown against the public protests and demands for democratic reform and government accountability that have been occurring across Egypt since the 25th of January.

Second, at about the same time, we saw an article in *Southern Africa* (Södra Afrika), a magazine published by the Africa Groups of Sweden, one of Sweden's most important solidarity movement organisations, with the title "Civil society is evil." It was written by a South African human rights activist, who argued that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are part of the neo-colonial, socio-political process in Africa.

Contrasting perceptions of the "good" versus the "bad" global civil society have also been present in academic debates. On the one hand, the more celebratory works link global civil society to global democratisation. According to this perspective, the emerging global civil society represents a forceful and promising response to the "democratic deficit," which is one of the most problematic aspects of the globalisation process. Global civil society is here conceived as grassroots self-organisation of transnational social spaces. Civic actors are seen as potential carriers of democratic learning processes, widening the meaning and practice of democracy beyond the nation state; they further initiate public debates – through which marginalised issues and social groups are made visible globally – and function as guardians of human rights in relation to states and other powerful organisations, such as transnational corporations.

There is indeed evidence to support such an argument; the recent revolutions in Northern Africa being the most obvious at the moment. You may object that these are *national* mobilisations, but I think that those who have argued that the crucial role of transnational political communication via the Internet, for the speed and intensity with which these protests have diffused, do have an important point.

On the other hand, there is in academic debates also a critique of the growing importance of civil society actors globally, often coming from the perspective of the global South. It is argued that global civil society actors are instruments in a neo-colonial exercise of power over countries and peoples in the global South. The most striking examples put forth are related to the aid industry, where NGOs channel private or government funding, which arrives with particular conditions that impose certain Western values, or serves certain Northern economic or political interests. There is indeed substantial support also for such a view, considering that

institutions such as the World Bank, aid agencies, "development NGOs," and private foundations use "civil society" as part of a reformulation of North/South power relations in the context of development aid.

A way to get beyond these rather polarised academic and public debates is to conceptualise global civil society in *analytical* terms as a political space, in which a diversity of political experiences, action strategies, identities, values and norms are articulated and contested; a space of struggle and conflict over the values, norms and rules that govern global social space(s) – and ultimately over the control of material resources and institutions. Whether global civil society means increasing democratisation or colonisation then becomes empirical questions, to which the answers largely depend on the context.

In this volume, we provide a rich range of analyses of social movements and various forms of civil associations in the context of contemporary globalisation. The key focus is on relations of power and influence within global civil society, and vis-à-vis states and international institutions. Of particular importance is, of course, the global North/South divide, but also other power hierarchies stand out.

In her article, Jackie Smith describes the ongoing process whereby civil society actors across the world engage on global arenas to share experiences and formulate global norms, as well as developing the means for transnational collaboration. Thereby, she argues, transnational activism has influenced the governance of international institutions, pushing norms and policies towards greater protection of for example human rights. This global exchange has also influenced local level politics. The articles of three thematic sections of the volume address how social movements, trade unions, and diasporic communities, respectively, find political leverage by using transnational networks for support, enabling them to exert increased pressure on governments and corporations. The authors also show how transnational connections within civil society channel experiences and political influence, sometimes transforming relations of power in respective countries.

However, the unequal access to power and resources between different social organisations make local organisations – engaged in struggles in dire

need for outside support – highly dependent on the priorities of more resourceful counterparts. This dilemma is particularly addressed in the article by Clifford Bob, where he explores what local organisations receive support – political or economic – and by whom. And just as important, he asks, who is not supported – and why?

A significant topic in the volume concerns the relations between global civil society and large multilateral institutions such as the UN. These shifting relations display the tensions between on the one hand neo-liberal celebrations of the role of civil society, such as for example in World Bank documents, and on the other hand more radical expressions of civil society activism. Both Jackie Smith and James Paul describe how the intense exchange between civil society organizations and the UN, culminating in the 1990s in the various global UN conferences, today has drastically diminished. The UN has closed various doors for NGO participation, while many social movements, in turn, prefer more autonomous spaces, such as the World Social Forums.

Another issue is the role of civil society within the "aid industry"; international development cooperation. Tony Tujan describes how civil society organisations engaged in this sphere struggle to promote human rights and the concerns for the people targeted in the programs. Dealing with the highly unequal relationship between donors and developing countries, and with the conditionalities tied to the aid, civil society organisations strive to address, and even counter, this imbalance. As shown in the articles by Karin Fällman and Lisa Sjöblom, there are unequal relations of power also between civil society organisations involved in development cooperation, for example within the context of the Paris Declaration. These differences are found between international NGOs and national organisations, or between urban, professionalised NGOs and small, community-based organisations. Although the "stronger" counterparts can offer means to voice and influence, the imbalance in power affects who sets the term for cooperation.

Of outmost importance, of course, is how states, international institutions, and market actors affect the space on which civil society organisations can act. The present dominance of Western liberal and neoliberal modes of governance has created a specific kind of framework for civil

society. In her article, Jude Howell describes how this framework changed with the War on Terror, which sometimes drastically limits the operational space and autonomy of civil society organisations. Furthermore, Howell argues, the scene will be affected by the rise of China, as one of the BRICS countries; Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. China particularly, she holds, has different conceptions of the role of civil society, and is unlikely to support the presence of outspoken and independent social organisations. The emerging influence of the BRICS is also addressed by the articles in one thematic section in the volume, providing empiric examples of the changing scenery.

Importantly, however, the rise of the BRICS also implies an interesting challenge to present Western dominance in the relations between states as well as between civil society organisations. In Brazil, India and South Africa, there is a vibrant multitude of actors within civil society, that already voice criticism against the agenda-setting of the Global North. If these continue to gain force while protecting their independence, global civil society may in the future look quite different from today.

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# Transnational activism and global social change

Jackie Smith

Scholarship on transnational activism has documented important relationships between transnational activism and changes in the normative and institutional arrangements that shape world politics. To summarize the key lessons from this work, we have seen that transnational activists have affected the development of our global polity by: 1) articulating and advancing global norms such as opposition to war and militarism and the prohibition of slavery; 2) domesticating international norms by pressing states to comply with international laws and standards; 3) transforming international institutions by protesting normative contradictions, such as those between global human rights norms and practices of international financial institutions; and 4) developing autonomous spaces where activists can experiment with alternatives to dominant economic and social models and develop networks for advancing new forms of global cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

Transnational activism has thus been essential to explaining existing forms of global governance, and understanding its dynamics will help analysts and practitioners appreciate its role in the ongoing transformation of global institutions. Examining patterns of transnational activism over time, we can see a shift in emphasis among transnational activists from the work of articulating and disseminating norms towards efforts to transform flaws in multilateral institutional arrangements, and to develop alternatives to inter-state arenas as the main drivers of world politics. This paper surveys developments in the realm of transnational activism and organization over the past few decades, offering ideas about likely future trajectories.

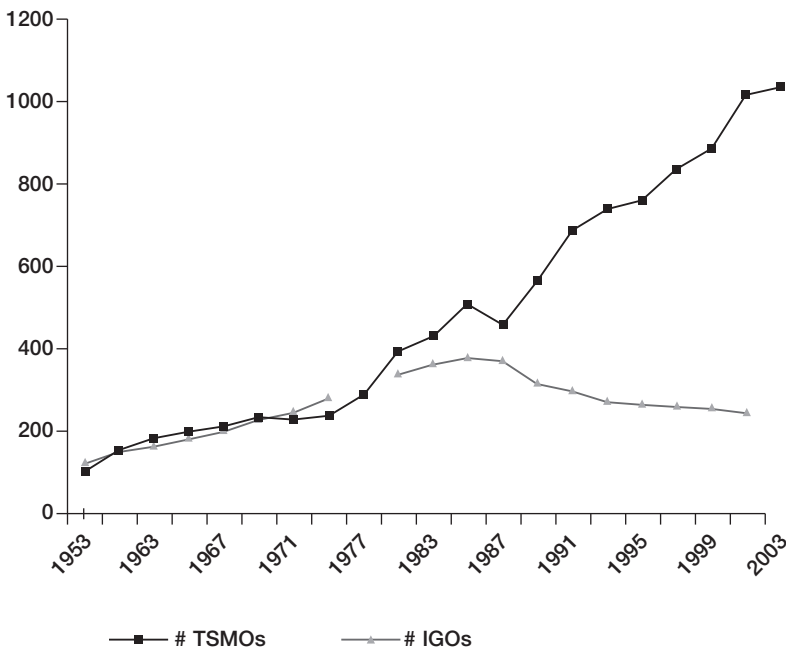
## Historical developments in transnational activism

Although they are absent from many historical accounts of global institutional formation, transnational activist groups have always been active



in promoting and advocating for multilateral norms and standards as a protection against government abuses. For instance, Finnemore (1996) documents the role of citizens' groups in the development of the Geneva Convention on the Laws of War, and Chatfield (1997) shows how anti-war advocates played vital roles in helping establish the League of Nations and later the United Nations. Analysts of human rights also demonstrate the essential role that civil society advocates played in pressing often reluctant states to accept curbs on their sovereign rights (eg, Gaer 1996; Shestack 1978; Tolley 1989). Figure 1 shows the growth in the numbers of transnational non-governmental organizations working to advance social change<sup>2</sup> and in the numbers of inter-governmental organizations<sup>3</sup> over the past several decades.

**Figure 1.** Changes in numbers of transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) and inter-governmental organisations (IGOs)



*(Adapted from Chatfield 1997, p 21)*

We see from this figure that the numbers of transnational social change organizations and the numbers of inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) grew in tandem between the early years of the United Nations and the mid-1980s. After that, however, the number of IGOs has remained fairly steady, perhaps reaching a saturation point. The number of transnational social movement organizations, however, has continued to grow at a rather rapid pace, with sharp increases in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The period of the 1990s was particularly important in offering numerous openings for transnational mobilization in the form of multiple and closely-linked United Nations global conferences. These conferences focused on critical global problems such as the environment, inequality and development, and human rights. They also came at a time when the end of the Cold War created new opportunities for efforts to challenge dominant political alignments and expand international agendas.

Officials within the United Nations often used global conferences to mobilize popular groups from a diverse array of countries around conference themes. They did so out of recognition of the important role civil society actors had long played in supporting international norms of peace, human rights, and equity. They also sought civil society support to advance new multilateral initiatives and to build global constituencies. Efforts to support popular engagement with global conferences by both UN and some national government officials included the provision of resources to encourage transnational civil society cooperation and in particular the mobilization of activists in poor countries. They also included the organization of regional conferences to help activists develop better understandings of the regional impacts of global problems and of the diverse interests and perspectives of groups within the region.

In addition to UN global conferences, popular groups found other spaces to meet and learn each others' perspectives at the sites of inter-governmental meetings around key global issues such as trade, labor, security, and food (see, eg, O'Brien et al 2000; Evangelista 1995; McKeon 2009; Porter 2005; Atwood 1997). Inter-governmental meetings to discuss and strengthen international treaties or to identify emerging problems were settings where civil society groups could come together to protest government policy, advance new ideas for multi-lateral

cooperation, and meet with other civil society groups to share ideas and compare experiences. Over time, these transnational spaces of civil society engagement became more important for activists, who attended international conferences more to meet other activists and build networks than to influence government policies (Krut 1997; Alvarez 1998). Thus, in addition to civil society meetings held alongside official government conferences, activist groups organized their own conferences of civil society groups to reflect on their work and develop new strategies and networks (Pianta 2001; Pianta and Silva 2003; Hill 2004).

The growing influence of global financial institutions in the 1990s, and the predominance of neo-liberal ideology as a guide to policies of global integration and governance, made many activists increasingly skeptical of the United Nations' potential for addressing some basic global problems (see Smith 2008: chapter 9). They began to develop new strategies for advancing social change outside official venues. The protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999 marked a turning point for many movements and activists, signaling the need to target economic policies and institutions as a means of addressing other problems such as persistent inequality, poverty, environmental degradation, and militarism. Following Seattle, more activist networks began framing their struggles in terms of global economic justice, and they focused more attention on global financial institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and WTO than they had in the past. In the meantime, the United Nations had scaled back the global conferences, closing off this space for transnational mobilization and dialogue. While some groups remained engaged with the institution and focused on monitoring and advocating around particular treaty negotiations, many within the growing network of transnational activist groups began focusing more attention outside the UN (Hill 2004).

In 2001, activists that were coming together around an increasingly coherent global justice movement organized the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. That gathering launched what has become known as the World Social Forum *process*, which is now a series of bi-annual global gatherings supplemented by self-organized local, national, and regional Social Forums. These Forums have attracted the attention of a growing number of transnational groups as well as nation-ally organized

and grassroots activists and organizations. Its organizers view it as an “open space” for the articulation of visions of alternatives to neo-liberal globalization and for the development of strategies and networks capable of advancing concrete efforts for global social change (Fisher and Ponniah 2003; Santos 2006; Smith et al 2007).

The World Social Forums have in many ways displaced UN- sponsored forums as sites where people can come together to envision themselves as part of a global political community and where they actively engage in discussions about how the world’s major problems can be addressed. They are sites where global identities and organizing networks are being forged, and where ideas about alternative economic and social models are being developed, refined, and disseminated (Juris 2008; Smith et al 2011). While many activists continue to monitor and target political processes within the UN system, they increasingly do so in conjunction with efforts to advance transnational activist networks and strategies in movement-centered spaces such as the World Social Forums. For instance, climate justice activists have been very active in the WSFs, helping activists understand and follow developments in official negotiations. They bring into the larger WSF discussions an awareness and appreciation of climate justice-related politics within and outside the UN, including, for instance, the 2010 World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, which was hosted by the government of Bolivia and attended by government representatives and civil society groups.

Thus, while the dominant emphasis in early transnational activism was to articulate and establish a set of global norms that transcend national boundaries – such as opposition to slavery, commitments to universal human rights, and recognition of the need to protect the global environment – more effort is now being devoted to addressing contradictions in multilateral institutions and to creating civil society-based solutions to the crises our world now faces.

This brief historical overview helps illustrate the importance of understanding the politics of NGOs and transnational civil society as *ongoing, developing processes* that are being shaped by numerous forces, including large-scale geopolitical and economic factors and multilateral

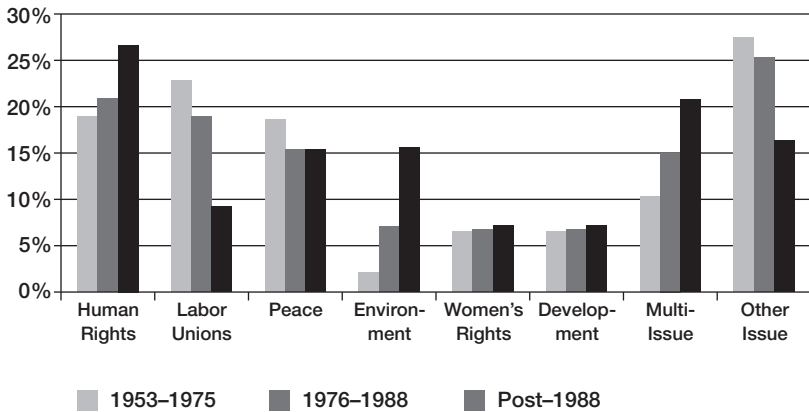
politics and institutions (Fisher 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith and Wiest, forthcoming). These processes are also being shaped by interactions among civil society actors themselves. As activists engage with their counterparts from a growing array of other countries, and as they try to influence (often with limited, if any success) multilateral negotiations and policies, they learn new ways of thinking about global problems, and they develop skills and resources for transnational collaboration. Dialogue among activists has thus become an important source of learning and strategizing about global change (see, eg, Rothman and Oliver 2002; Hertel 2006; Brooks 2007; Waterman 2005).

### **Effects of engaging with IGOs on transnational civil society groups**

The United Nations conferences and other processes related to multilateral politics encouraged civil society actors to come together in UN- or UN-supported arenas to discuss global problems and consider how to relate to UN agendas and policies. This played a role in shaping the issues around which citizens mobilized, and indeed it encouraged people to organize transnationally in order to engage in multilateral advocacy work (Smith 2008; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Figure 2 illustrates how issue agendas of transnational social movement organizations changed between the 1950s and the 2000s.

Over recent decades, we have seen increases in the percentages of human rights and environmental organizations active in a rapidly growing population of organizations. The most rapid growth was seen among environmental groups during the post-Cold War period. Also, among the newer human rights groups are growing numbers of organizations focused on promoting respect for economic and social rights in addition to civil and political rights. Another very important trend is the growing proportion of multi-issue organizations, which should be seen as an outcome of the learning that resulted from global conference processes. Conferences provided opportunities for activists working on diverse issues from different national and cultural backgrounds to come together in new ways and to develop their analyses of global problems.

**Figure 2.** Percentage of transnational social movements organizations in the population by issue-focus\*



\* For all groups except labor unions, the categories depicted above are not mutually exclusive. Figures are based on the number of organizations active in each issue area as a percentage of all organizations active at any time during the period. The denominator includes every occurrence of an organization during each of the years covered in the time period.

After human rights, multi-issue organizations make up the largest percentage of all transnational social movement organizations active in the post-1988 time period. At the same time, we see notable declines in transnational labor organizations, coinciding with neo-liberal policies and systematic efforts to reduce labor’s power (Harvey 2005). Over time we also see a larger percentage of groups falling into clearly defined issue-groupings, suggesting a convergence of organizational strategies and analyses over time. This is a likely response to the increased institutionalization of the global political environment (see, eg Meyer et al 1997; Boli and Thomas 1999).

The UN’s mission of expanding cooperation among the world’s governments, and its norms supporting principles of democracy and equity in global politics, encouraged groups trying to exert influence in UN politics to expand their geographic reach and representation. The United Nations itself also provided some limited resources and technical support to enhance participation from activist groups in the global South, particularly in conjunction with global conferences. Table 1 summarizes

some of the changes in the geographic makeup of transnational social movement organizations.

**Table 1.** Geographic variation in participation: North/South\*

Headquarters Location	1953–1977	Post-1988	% Change
Western Europe	77%	56%	-21
U.S. Canada	10%	15%	+ 5
Africa	2%	6%	+ 4
Asia	3%	8%	+ 5
Eastern Europe	4%	4%	–
Latin America	1%	5%	+ 4
Global North	88%	75%	-13
Global South	12%	25%	+13
Total number of observations	1993	3240	
Total number unique organizations	294	482	

\*This table does not include transnational labor unions.

(Source: Smith and West forthcoming)

Although there is over-representation from groups in the global North in this population, over time we see reduced inequality in North-South participation. This table shows changes in the locations of headquarters of transnational social change groups, and we can see that while most groups are based in the global North, the percentage of groups with Northern headquarters has declined over time. Their numbers are being replaced with new groups based in countries of the global South. The growth in Southern participation is reflected not only in the growing numbers of transnational social movement organization headquarters, but also in more extensive Southern memberships in these organizations.<sup>4</sup> What is rather surprising is that the end of the Cold War did not bring, at least in the short- to medium-term, substantial increases in proportion of transnational social movement groups based in Eastern Europe, although growth in the region did keep pace with the overall population of organizations (see Smith and Wiest forthcoming).

As was suggested in the discussion above, the changes in the geographic makeup and other features of transnational social change groups have been affected by the larger global political arena, and in particular by the UN global conferences. Illustrating the importance of these global arenas for advancing transnational organizing and movement development, Morgan summarizes how global conferences affected indigenous activists, effects which can be generalized to the larger population of activist groups:

Their effects were twofold: first, they reinforced the understanding that indigenous peoples' problems were shared, therefore strengthening an emerging indigenous identity based on common experiences of historical and ongoing colonialism, and, second, they brought into play a promising arena for the pursuit of goals, one in which norms of human rights influence the behavior of states and assertions of sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction must compete with ideas based on principles (2007, p 278).

Illustrating the important effects conferences had on transnational activist groups, Table 2 compares environmental and women's groups formed in the five-year intervals surrounding major UN conferences with those formed in other years.

**Table 2.** Comparing women's and environmental groups formed in UN conference vs non-conference years

	Environmental Groups		Women's groups	
	Formed in Conference Years	Formed in Non-Conference Years	Formed in Conference Years	Formed in Non-Conference Years
Southern Headquarters	<b>28%</b>	22%	<b>43%</b>	27%
Ratio of Southern to Northern members	2.2:1	1.9:1	3.3:1	2.3:1
NGO ties (average)	5.0	4.2	4.0	3.9
IGO ties	1.9	1.7	<b>1.2</b>	2.7

**Bold** = mean difference is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ )



Table 2 shows that UN conferences did indeed encourage mobilization in the global South. Environmental and women's groups formed in years surrounding global conferences were substantially more likely to have their headquarters in the global South and to have more members in the global South. This pattern held for other issue areas as well (see Smith and Wiest forthcoming).

Two other patterns we see in Table 2 relate to questions about how transnational social movement organizations are relating with other organizations in their environment. Overall, transnational social movement organizations reported more ties to both IGOs and to other international non-governmental organizations (INGOs).<sup>5</sup> Between the 1950s and the post-Cold War period the average number of ties transnational social movement groups reported to IGOs nearly doubled, and ties to INGOs grew five-fold. But the pattern is a bit different for groups formed in conference intervals. UN global conferences likely contributed to the growth of connections to INGOs, as environmental and women's groups (as well as others) formed around global conferences reported more ties to INGOs. This is not surprising, given that global conferences provided important opportunities for face-to-face meetings among organizers, allowing activists to forge initial connections and outline their plans for how to work together.

Many analysts have emphasized how global institutions and other powerful actors (such as states and corporations) can serve to co-opt civil society groups. They question the ability of non-governmental groups to remain representative of civil society interests and transformative agendas in a context of immense North-South inequality and of intense pressure to engage in multilateral "partnerships" with global institutions, including, for instance, the World Bank or the UN Global Compact (Edwards 2008; Bebbington et al 2008; Hammack and Heydemann 2009). The lack of resources of most civil society groups makes corporate and institutional partnerships an attractive source of revenue, and these partnerships have contributed to what some have called the "neo-liberalization of civil society" (Goldman 2005; Ferguson 2006).

What was rather surprising in our study, then, is that groups formed during conferences, with the exception of environmental groups,<sup>6</sup>

tended to report fewer ties to IGOs than their counterparts formed outside conference years. While we expected groups formed at times of conferences to be more attuned to UN activities and agendas, this was not reflected in groups' reports about their formal ties to international agencies. This tendency might reflect a shift in how activists view their strategic options in the global arena, and a growing skepticism about the possibilities for addressing the world's most pressing global issues within the UN framework. It also challenges the idea that engagement with global conferences and other activities of institutions necessarily leads to the co-optation of activist groups.

This shift away from global institutional engagement is likely being fueled by the growing tendency among some transnational activist groups to frame their goals in more complex, multi-issue ways which do not neatly coincide with many multilateral negotiation settings. It is clear from much of the case study work that civil society groups' participation in UN global conferences and their engagement with counterparts from different parts of the world led them to adopt more structural and complex analyses of global problems and their solutions (Rothman and Oliver 2002; Waterman 2005; Morgan 2007).

### **Changing patterns of transnational activism**

This analysis of transnational activism and changes over time suggests that activist strategies in the global arena are changing over time, as groups develop their networks and expand models and structures for citizen engagement with global politics. The earliest transnational activism took the form of advocacy for international laws and standards (ie, the abolition of the slave trade and laws of war), and later expanded into what Keck and Sikkink (1998) called the "boomerang" model. The boomerang model was a strategy for bringing state practices into alignment with international norms. When states violate international norms or sensibilities, and when groups are blocked from making demands directly on states, activists look outside state borders to bring outside pressure on that government to change its practices. The contradictions between international norms and national practices encouraged this form of claimsmaking.

Once citizen's groups began engaging more routinely in international settings, for instance through consultative arrangements and UN conference processes, they became more familiar with the opportunities and resources available in global arenas, including the treaty bodies and agencies regulating human rights and other issues. They also came into contact with other activist groups working on similar issues. This contributed to the expansion of connections between transnational social movement groups and international agencies as well as to more dense networks among civil society groups.

Ongoing engagement with global institutional processes such as conferences, as well as enhanced communications with other international activist groups, encouraged more exchanges between the global North and South, and this is reflected in the population of transnational social movement organizations. This mixing of activists from rich and poor countries, within the context of global conferences and other spaces, contributed to new analyses and ideas about global problems, their causes, and their possible solutions. Thus, over time, we saw a significant shift to more complex, systemic, multi-issue frames in the population of transnational movement groups.

By the early 1990s, as the post-Cold War period opened up space for more international negotiation around global problems, there was a shift in official aid from direct bilateral aid to the non-governmental sector. This led to a proliferation of groups seeking official aid money, and can be seen to have distorted the work of "autonomous" civil society by making it subject to government agendas and control. Thus, among groups more engaged in intergovernmental organizations and conferences, we would expect to find some co-optation of civil society groups, where NGOs end up supporting (knowingly or not) the goals of neo-liberalism over public goods.

But many groups remained wary of accepting government aid, or their organizational aims were more explicitly critical of the top-down approaches to governance and/or the privileging of neo-liberal economic models. These groups resisted succumbing to the "iron cage" of the interstate arena. They were supported in doing so by a growing network of transnational groups – and the expanding participation from the global South – who defended and reinforced an increasingly coherent critical

analysis of the global economic order. These groups learned new ways to frame their critiques to appeal to diverse sectors of civil society and to expand their global reach.

Thus, in the population of transnational activist groups, Smith and Wiest (forthcoming) observed a notable increase, particularly in the post-Cold War period, of groups articulating what we call a critical human rights frame. These groups see human rights violations as linked to the larger world-economy rather than as the unscrupulous behaviors of deviant governments. Most are pressing for an understanding of economic and political human rights as indivisible, arguing, for instance, for greater recognition in international agreements of the “right to development,” and for “food sovereignty.”

These critical elements of civil society helped found the World Social Forum process, which in turn has provided additional fuel and support for the development of autonomous spaces and projects that challenge the hegemony of neo-liberalism. The rise of the World Social Forum process to a place of prominence in the global activism scene provides additional evidence of a radical shift in transnational activism. As the United Nations proved unable to address pressing environmental and economic problems, activists have sought to expand the autonomous spaces in which they could define agendas and consider options for addressing problems outside the constraints of inter-state frameworks. More importantly, social change advocates have sought spaces where they could identify alternatives to dominant policy agendas that run counter to corporate if not state interests.

While these critical groups are working increasingly in autonomous transnational civil society spaces, many remain engaged with UN and other multilateral processes. Discussions within the World Social Forums, for instance, have focused on developing analyses and strategies for addressing UN conferences on climate change and anti-racism, for instance. An important difference between the conference-focused activism of the 1990s and today seems to be that a consistent and substantial amount of organizing energy and attention has gone to the development of movement-based networks and to sustaining spaces like the World Social Forums, where activists can discuss issues outside the constraints of government-defined agendas.

Thus, while activists do engage with UN conferences, this is not their only and probably not their main form of action. It is as if a lesson from the 1990s conferences is that activist groups must work more consciously to strengthen a *global civil society* as a first step towards advancing better multilateral policies. In the past, close attention to shaping the language of conference declarations and to holding governments accountable to international commitments sapped enormous amounts of energy while providing limited results. While World Social Forum activists are generally skeptical of representative politics, and by and large treat electoral politics as a secondary or tertiary priority, they remain active in national and global institutionalized politics, bringing increasingly coherent and well-defended claims from a denser and more integrated set of transnational activist networks (see eg Smith et al 2011).

### Conclusion

This analysis of changes in the population of transnational groups working for social change reveals a dynamic and growing popular movement which is shifting popular attention and energies to civil-society-centered global spaces that are more autonomous from inter-state arenas than in the past. There is growing attention to the exploration of alternatives and visions of how the world might be organized that lie outside the inter-state system.

Within alternative spaces like the World Social Forums, we see the emergence of particular civil society practices that, should they continue, may contribute a great deal to the articulation of new models of transnational cooperation and action that can better address human needs. These include: constant innovation and reflexivity on challenges of enacting participatory forms of democracy at transnational and global levels; innovation aimed at expanding democratic character of civil society; emphasis on relationships and multi-sector alliances over particular campaigns or policy goals; use or tolerance of both insider and outsider tactics; learning from past struggles and avoiding factionalism of earlier movements (see eg Smith et al 2011). These practices both reflect and contribute to the growing power potential of civil society.

## Notes

1. These modes of transnational activism are explained further in Smith (2008), and they draw from a rich body of empirical research on transnational activism, including works by Keck and Sikkink (1998); Riles (2001); Foster and Anand (1999); Hertel (2006); Khagram (2004); Della Porta, Kriesi and Rucht (1999); and Willetts (1996) among others.
2. The data on transnational social movement organizations were collected from the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (Union of International Associations) for alternate years between 1953 and 2003. The population includes non-governmental organizations with members in three or more countries with an explicit purpose of advancing social change. For more details about the dataset and data collection methods, see Smith and Wiest (forthcoming, chapter 2).
3. Inter-governmental organizations are formal organizations created by agreements among two or more states.
4. Organizational entries in the *Yearbook of International Associations* include the names of countries in which the group claims to have members. We have coded these country memberships for each year the organization is active.
5. INGOs is a larger category of organizations than the one examined in this dataset, since it includes both groups working on social change and those working on other issues such as to advance professional interests, promote recreation, or facilitate cultural or educational exchange.
6. The pattern among environmental groups may be affected by the creation at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which provides an ongoing arena for environmental advocates to work on specific problems and to help shape discussions about environmental treaties. There is no comparable body in other issue areas.

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# Civil society – new power in aid and development?

Antonio Tujan Jr

Global civil society engagement in intergovernmental and multilateral processes, whether global or regional, fulfills various objectives and serves different purposes, but all contribute to the interplay of power dynamics in international relations. Development cooperation and official development assistance (ODA) is one area where this interplay is particularly significant and sustained.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) focus their concerns and interventions mainly on the impact of development cooperation on the people, and on the promotion of a human rights agenda. Prominent examples of this work have concerned the structural adjustment conditionalities that were first attached to ODA loans by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and that led development partners to implement such conditionalities. There are also many examples of this kind of work in ODA assisted infrastructure projects with an immediate negative impact on people's livelihoods and in the creation of displaced communities .

Donor behaviour is of particular concern to CSOs, not just because of the already problematic unbalanced aid relationship, but more so because of the various impositions, conditionalities and unwritten commitments that are tied to aid and that benefit donor country interests, to the detriment of the developing country and its people. Development assistance has long been used by industrialised countries as a tool to ensure access to natural resources, as well as trade and investment opportunities and privileges in and from developing countries. Thus, CSOs are keen to contribute to negotiations and to engage in a dialogue on aid modalities, generally and specifically. Opportunities for this have just recently opened up and are still largely limited.

CSOs have the advantage of addressing issues of donor interests. Acting as independent citizen contributors to the development dialogue and process, CSOs often speak and act unfettered of various limitations or “considerations” in official aid relationships. In the context of multilateral development dialogue, CSOs are able to strengthen developing country positions vis-à-vis their development partners, not only where people’s interests are directly affected but also when donor demands become too ponderous. This support in the rebalancing of power in the aid relationship is valuable, not only concerning conditionality and tied aid, or the unwritten impositions and linked commitments (which donors seek their very best to take out of the policy dialogue agenda), but also when it comes to donor reticence to implement aid effectiveness reforms in full.

At the turn of the millenium, CSOs developed what became the international “Make Poverty History” campaign, pressuring member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to live up to commitments made in the 70’s for ODA volumes equivalent to 0.7% of gross national income.

In recent years, civil society engagement – especially in the area of aid quality reform – advanced tremendously in the development of the aid effectiveness agenda, starting with the High Level Forum (HLF) on Harmonisation and Aid Effectiveness in Rome in 2002. Since then, civil society engagement evolved into full membership since 2009 in the intergovernmental Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF), an *ad hoc* but formal organisation that is driving and managing the aid effectiveness program and is attached to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD.

Membership by civil society such as this – in an intergovernmental body that is initiating, overseeing, managing, and supporting governmental processes in reforming aid policy and administration, and redefining aid architecture – is exceptional and rare even in UN processes and institutions. It was achieved through a multi-stakeholder process that conducted in-depth research, consultations and conferences on civil society organisations’ role in development and the aid effectiveness process through the Advisory Group on CSOs and Aid Effectiveness.

It was coupled with very effective global CSO engagement in the Accra High Level Forum-3 in 2008 (AG 2008).

The HLF-3 in 2008 was influenced tremendously by CSOs' multiple engagements and contributions (Wood and Valot 2009, p 14). The outcome document, the *Accra Agenda for Action* (AAA), included several hallmark pronouncements and commitments, including the recognition of CSOs as independent development actors in their own right – not simply as interlocutors of government agencies, watchdogs of aid processes, or as service providers (OECD 2008).

This experience may serve as a good laboratory in power roles that CSOs are able to play and are actually playing in global intergovernmental bodies. This article, then, is a practitioner's account and reflection on developments since 2007– from when preparations were made for the Accra HLF-3 to the current preparations for the November 2011 Busan HLF-4.

#### **A new official concept for CSOs in development**

Under paragraph 20 of the section on “Building more inclusive and effective partnerships for development”, the AAA commits:

We will deepen our engagement with CSOs as independent development actors in their own right whose efforts complement those of governments and the private sector. We [donors and governments] share an interest in ensuring that CSO contributions to development reach their full potential.

The term “independent development actors in their own right” has several new implications defined in the Advisory Group's *Synthesis Report on CSOs and Aid Effectiveness* (AG 2008). Besides stressing their independence from governments, the new concept of CSOs as development actors in their own right distinguishes CSOs from donors and from being simply interlocutors of the state. It recognises their own role as private actors, in solidarity with the people, especially the poor, to ensure that people are able to claim their rights.

Previously, the assumption was that CSOs, as development actors, should simply sign and implement the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effective-*

ness. However, CSOs explained in years of debate towards the Accra HLF-3 that they could not sign and implement the Paris declaration, which was developed for governments. This resulted in a more enlightened resolution in the AAA, stated in §20a, to “invite CSOs to reflect on how they can apply the Paris principles of aid effectiveness *from a CSO perspective*.”

Further, the AAA §20b states:

We welcome the CSOs’ proposal to engage with them in a CSO-led multistakeholder process to promote CSO development effectiveness. As part of that process, we will seek to i) improve co-ordination of CSO efforts with government programmes, ii) enhance CSO accountability for results, and iii) improve information on CSO activities.

The implication of this paragraph is simply the standardisation at global level of accountability mechanisms that were already in existence in various forms since the past few years. However, what makes this commitment and development significant is that the framework of CSO accountability is based on the CSO’s own and independent process, and on the CSO decision that this should be in the framework of *development* effectiveness rather than *aid* effectiveness, which is limited to efficiency in aid management and delivery. Many important political breakthroughs and innovations in this process were the product of the Advisory Group and have been taken forward in implementation by the CSO Open Forum on CSOs and Development Effectiveness, also known as the OF process ([www.cso-effectiveness.org](http://www.cso-effectiveness.org)).

Another important political achievement is the commitment by donors and governments to “work with CSOs to provide an enabling environment that maximizes their contributions to development” (AAA §20c). An enabling environment for CSOs are a “set of interrelated conditions – such as legal, bureaucratic, fiscal, informational, political, and cultural – that impact on the capacity of development actors to engage in development processes in a sustained and effective manner” (OF 2010, p 43).

The enabling conditions for CSO development effectiveness are multi-dimensional and include conditions that relate to the general character

and state of governance in a country. The complex set of conditions include:

- a) mechanisms to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights to expression, peaceful assembly and association, and access to information;
- b) CSO-specific policies, such as CSO protection and promotion through legislation and regulations including charitable status provisions;
- c) regulations and norms to promote CSO transparency and accountability to their constituencies;
- d) the general legal and judicial system and related mechanisms through which CSOs or their constituencies can seek legal recourse;
- e) the degree to which multi-stakeholder dialogue is encouraged and practiced; and
- f) measures to promote philanthropy and corporate social responsibility.

In general, these enabling conditions may be grouped under: recognition through voluntary registration; legislation; access and participation; financial regulation; government support mechanisms; CSO partnerships; CSO networking; and donor support (IBON 2010, p 32).

### **Constituency – the source of CSO power, legitimacy and influence**

In the aid system, CSOs are often misunderstood and their roles simply reduced to the obvious functions that they play. Thus, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), like Oxfam or Care International, are construed as private donors, while other CSOs are either considered programme implementers or watchdogs. When governments relate to them according to these perceptions, opportunity for a more fruitful and strategically productive engagement – based on a nuanced understanding of their significance and implications of their participation – are missed.

The role of CSOs as development actors in their own right, as well as CSO legitimacy and representation, may better be understood by looking at CSO existence and action in general. However, to discover the commonality of CSOs in the highly diversified, and diversifying, field of

civil society requires interrogation into the core objective and impulses of the CSO phenomenon.

Civil society organisations exist as products of people's exercise of their rights to association, and to expression of collective solidarity for the purpose of enabling people's exercise and realisation of their rights – whether as members of the organisation or as constituents whom the organisation works with and supports (IBON 2010; AG 2008).

Thus, CSOs embody multiple layers of legitimacy, and different layers have different implications on their influence and power. Firstly, each and every CSO is *inherently legitimate as an expression of the exercise of citizens of their civil liberties*. This legitimacy presumes independent exercise by citizens of their rights, and consequently independence for the CSO. Legitimacy is diminished or lost when a CSO is actually an adjunct of the government or private sector by reasons of establishment and operations, such as direction, financing, etc.

Further, CSOs embody *a moral or ethical legitimacy* by their objective of acting in solidarity with people, and especially with the poor and marginalised, whether within their own countries or with those in other countries. By such a fundamental mandate, CSOs are often recognised or proclaim themselves as representing the people, or a group of people, which comprises their constituency. This representation is a claim on rights and interests of their constituency and as such different from the more formal representation to Parliament by elected representatives.

CSOs also embody *a relative legitimacy* – ie how well an organisation acts in solidarity with its constituency, in representing their interests, in acting for their welfare, in being enablers for the people to claim their rights. CSOs' legitimacy can be compromised by their lack of independence from government or from private sector, especially if they are not transparent about their genesis and objectives. As independent entities, CSOs must also exercise effective transparency and accountability through mechanisms that are independent and therefore voluntary. As a particular CSO's constituency expands in scope (nationally or internationally) and its power and influence increases, so do the requirements and demands for transparency and accountability as an expression of the dynamic of its constituency.

Even though CSOs naturally perform differently in fulfilling the requisites of relative legitimacy, CSOs remain fundamentally legitimate. Therefore, deficits in such performance do not prevent the exercise by a CSO of its rights and duties. However, it does create certain considerations as regards appropriateness of purpose and representation. Overall, representativeness cannot be ascribed to a single CSO and, oftentimes, is created through a set of CSOs brought together as a network or national platform (Tujan 2009).

Even then, such networks and platforms rapidly become exclusive. Thus, representativeness of CSOs or of citizens is best achieved by establishing or institutionalising spaces for engagement. Instead of a discrete set of organisations forming a network, a system is created by which any organisation may participate through an open call of various activities of engagement on any issue, such as for example aid monitoring. This space is managed by a network of CSOs, who have proven themselves knowledgeable and committed to engage, participate and perform specific tasks consistently, and to working with official counterparts, managing the official process (IBON 2010).

Though many global and other international or national processes already involve networks of CSOs managing such engagement at times, the nature of their operations on a day-to-day basis does not embody being an open network. In the long run, they are unable to assure that any CSO can hop on or off the platform of engagement at any time (IBON 2010).

Part of the success of CSOs in engaging in the aid effectiveness reform at global level and at country level is the building of networks as the core of open platforms that have been set up since Accra. BetterAid ([www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org)) is the CSO open platform that was set up as the successor to the International Steering Group at Accra. At the core of BetterAid are some 34 global and national networks and organisations that manage and operationalise the platform.

BetterAid is able to achieve global legitimacy through the balance of self-selected representation. The combination of various constituencies at global level, such as aid and development finance advocacy (Reality of Aid, Social Watch and Alliance 2015); development and civil society



(Civicus, LDC Watch); sectors (global trade unions, women and rural sectoral organisations); interest groups (transparency, faith-based organisations) combined with key INGOs on the one hand, and national CSO networks from the North and South with a geographical distribution on the other, allow for better representativeness and ensure the ventilation of various perspectives and interests on a global platform.

The Open Forum, in its turn, was organised as an inclusive process to develop the principles and mechanisms for CSO development effectiveness accountability. It is meant to be more encompassing than BetterAid, which focuses more on CSOs engaged in aid and development advocacy, as it seeks to develop broad country level voluntary accountability frameworks on the one hand, and government and development partner promotion of enabling environments for CSOs on the other.

Following the Accra commitments on CSOs, BetterAid was set up in order to create not only an effective CSO engagement as an official, equal member of the intergovernmental Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF), but also as a truly inclusive process of membership to implement and further develop the concepts expounded in the Synthesis Report of the Advisory Group. CSOs have volunteered time and resources to engage in the coordination group of BetterAid (BACG), which has become a respected and esteemed but also very productive member of the Working Party.

BetterAid has also continued to push for more open CSO participation. In the course of time, it has become accepted that an increased CSO participation in the Working Party does not need the elaborate rules of the UN for such participation to be self-restrained (to avoid swamping official Working Party processes with a limited set of concerns), and yet not reducing CSO voices beyond what is necessary. Further, government officials see that increased CSO voices are welcome and provide productive and even technical inputs into the proceedings, far beyond what is normally expected to be concerns of CSOs.

### **Nature of CSO power in the aid system**

As development actors, CSO influence within the aid system is different compared to that of other actors. Thus, the nature of the power they

exercise is different from that of developing country governments, where the executive branch represents state role and responsibility; likewise, it is different from that of development agencies – multilateral or bilateral – from donor countries, who act as development partners.

CSO influence should not be interpreted as a third pole in a donor-recipient country balance. In recent years, with the evolution of the reform agenda in the aid system, the simplistic donor-recipient dichotomy is no longer appropriate. It does not reflect the nuances of today's development cooperation, but may instead imply negative aid power relationships, or even the negative connotations of neo-colonial aid relationships, which are now the object of reform.

Players have also diversified in the aid system that CSOs seek to influence. The increase in number and variety of bilateral and multilateral development agencies as development partners has made the “donor” category increasingly complex and the typology of “development partners” wider. Besides the OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee) members, often described as traditional donors, there are a variety of emerging bilateral partners categorised as South-South partners, ranging from giants like China and Saudi Arabia, semi-giants like Brazil and small partners like Thailand, or some developing country providing partnership support to its regional neighbours.

So, as legitimate actors in the aid system, shall CSOs in donor countries be considered part of official development partners, since they provide services and assistance to developing country CSOs? This development assistance comes from resources fundraised from their own citizens, or received as additional resources channeled from their government's development agency. However, they cannot simply be construed as donors, nor lumped together with their government as development partners, since they are not government agencies but rather non-state actors.

Developing country governments raise even greater concerns regarding INGOs, whom they feel act even more like donors and provide assistance that is comparable in size or even bigger than some bilateral development partners. These INGOs are not similar to the multilateral agencies or global funds, even though they have common sources of funding and act as development partners to governments and CSOs. Multilateral agencies

and global funds provide assistance mostly in the context of management and distribution of global public goods, which they manage on behalf of the international community or as an intergovernmental function. INGOs remain non-state actors, though operating trans-nationally.

Furthermore, developing countries are represented in international cooperation by the executive branch of government, while a whole-of-government approach that ensures involvement of functioning parliaments, local governments, and other institutions is necessary to achieve aid effectiveness, even though the executive is the principal actor in official development cooperation. While the executive branch is principally responsible for development planning and implementation, it has become obvious in the context of aid reform that the lack of participation of the legislature, local governments and the judiciary, not to mention civil society and other private actors, has resulted in non-accountable, inefficient and ineffectual development.

Within the executive, several government offices – such as different line ministries, local governments as well as supreme audit institutions – have to act as one in delivering services, conducting planning and budgeting, and conducting monitoring and evaluation. Where appropriate and necessary, these institutional activities in the executive branch and the local government must work with civil society, media and other private actors, through participatory mechanisms, to bring in citizens directly to the different development processes, in order to make for an actively accountable and participatory government-led development process. Furthermore, where appropriate, these processes must include the critical function of parliaments in combination with civil society in such junctures as formulation of development policies and strategies, oversight of development plans and budgets, oversight of foreign aid and loans, and so on.

A full exposition of the development process and the role of development cooperation in this framework would include the multiplicity of actors, each contributing particular aspects and advantages into a multisided development cooperation framework, which contributes to an even more complex country development process.

### **Normative role of the “new power broker”**

With the entry of CSOs, formally represented by BetterAid as member of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, CSOs have been participating as regular members in various official aid effectiveness reform working bodies, most of them sub-groups of the WP-EFF, but also in other groupings under the OECD DAC, as well as the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum (UN DCF), managed under the UN Economic Social Council (ECOSOC). Especially after the Accra HLF-3, such practice regarding standard CSO membership and participation has become the norm, resulting in distinct shifts in thinking and attitudes among governments and multilateral institutional members.

Official working group processes have become open and “transparent” as a result, since CSO participants have initiated wider, and often open, dissemination of working documents outside official circles. While respecting rules regarding the extent of dissemination of information and documents, any document – whether in draft or final form – that goes to CSO perusal for input, is distributed not just to the regular participants of the group, designated as lead persons rather than representatives, but also to the immediate coordination group of BetterAid. When wider distribution is possible, the document is sent out to a number of listserves, which are generally open and can be accessed for membership through the web.

CSOs have also consciously implemented a policy of open participation – whereby a seat reserved for CSOs does not limit the participation to one designated person or CSO but to the whole platform, with the number of participants changing as needed. Likewise, CSOs who represent the platform in whatever body are required to report back and disseminate materials for decision-making to the coordinating group or the whole open platform, as the case may be.

In effect, CSO participation has resulted in a more participatory framework of operation for the different official working bodies, besides allowing a wider set of CSOs a peek into the proceedings through expanded transparency mechanisms. Donors and government officials are generally aware of this, and since the Working Party processes are more informal, they are able to easily accept the new modalities of working and become more conscious of a wider public looking into the work.

Alongside this major shift in working methods, the discussions are often enriched by CSO analysis, and by positions and proposals emanating from a strategic and ethical perspective on development and the role of development cooperation. Being aware of the overall critique regarding problems in development policy and programmes, and constantly refreshed with results from the ground in various countries, CSO representatives are able to ensure that discussions are based on consideration of development impact on the people. CSOs collectively develop their analysis and proposals on ways to advance implementation of aid effectiveness reforms, based on commitments in Paris and Accra and strengthened by democratic ownership towards improving development results.

Some donors and some working groups are highly technical and have less space and patience for the more normative interventions of CSOs. Nevertheless, these interventions provide a grounding and important backdrop to otherwise technical discussions, and many CSOs are able to participate further in these discussions and provide proposals for innovative approaches.

Many government officials, whether from developing or developed OECD countries, as well as officials from multilateral organisations, have remarked on the distinct changes that have occurred in the processes and content of discussions in the Working Party post-Accra, now that CSOs have become official members and participants. As an African official noted, the constructive contributions by CSOs are quite distinct and welcome. A leader of the WP in fact jokingly introduces some CSO representatives with the appellation “normative” before her or his name, such as “normative Arthur”.

These developments have been achieved because the BetterAid platform, when participating as a member of the WP, is conscious of the normative role of CSOs. When necessary, it reminds everyone, of strategic and moral goals of development cooperation and aid, rather than acting simply as an observer or just any member of an exclusive club of donors and development officials. Working in solidarity with the people, the premise of CSOs as it were, provides the basis for them often to be identified as normative actors and indeed to act out their

normative roles for the promotion of people's claim to their rights. Thus, CSO power and influence in the aid system lies within the framework of this normative role.

### **Enhancing transformational goals**

Thus, CSO participation in the aid effectiveness reform process has had several implications, such as opening up the dialogue, focusing on normative and strategic issues of development, acting as a form of beacon for democracy and human rights in development in official processes and policy dialogue, as well as acting as an agent for active transparency and accountability in policy and operational processes, and so on. These activities, as discussed above, constitute a transformational element in terms of promoting participatory democracy in development cooperation and partnership, enhancing the process of achieving transparency and accountability and deepening the aid reform processes towards a more progressive discourse.

However, further to these implications, CSOs through BetterAid have initiated an ambitious agenda for the transformation of the aid system to encompass a broader human rights-based agenda of development effectiveness, likewise advancing other reforms that address issues in past development debates, such as policy coherence for development, aid architecture, and democratic state institutions. The opportunity is provided by High Level Forum-4, as the Paris Declaration ended in 2010 and a new compact is being developed. This is a rare opportunity for CSOs ever since 2007, whereby a broader agenda for transformation of the development cooperation system beyond the aid effectiveness reform of aid management and delivery can be introduced.

Emphasising that *aid* effectiveness reforms under the Paris Declaration were insufficient both for aid management and delivery (the aid effectiveness agenda), and even more so in ensuring rights-based results for development effectiveness, in Accra CSOs pushed for a deepening of the understanding of aid effectiveness principles and thoroughgoing reform, such as the abolition of policy conditionality and tied aid (IBON 2007). They achieved a number of successes, such as in the interpretation of ownership as inclusive and democratic.

Towards the HLF-4 in Busan, South Korea, CSOs are pushing for the expansion of the reform framework towards *development* effectiveness. Focus lies on rights-based results for the poor, besides contributions to the discourse on policy coherence for development, the building of a horizontal and inclusive aid architecture, the strengthening of horizontal development cooperation (such as that demonstrated by some forms of South-South cooperation), and better management of development finance towards aid exit, and so on.

Actually achieving such transformational goals have been heartening, but the process has been difficult as a whole. CSOs working in the aid effectiveness reform agenda are also aware of the limitations of this agenda. Development cooperation is a small aspect of the whole process of international relations, and official development assistance is a small part of the whole range of development finance as well. However, the present process can open new avenues for CSOs to play their normative roles and to advance transformational goals, providing clear instruments and opportunities to advance these goals at global, regional as well as country level.

Furthermore, governments belatedly have come to realise that many CSOs do provide valuable support by strengthening the bargaining position of governments in matters of aid management and delivery, especially by encouraging development partners to be more ambitious in implementing aid effectiveness commitments. Prominent examples are lack of alignment to country systems, such as public financial management, and the tendency of donors to impose more fiduciary conditionalities to reduce risk.

## **Conclusion**

CSOs have historically stood behind a progressive agenda in development cooperation and aid, promoting human rights as the objective of the development community and the goal for the aid system. CSOs advocate for these rights in various ways and, in particular, work directly with their constituents to enable the people, especially the poor and marginalised, to claim their rights. This is reflected in the diverse specific roles that CSOs play, whether they engage in such activities as service delivery, and fund-

raising for individual citizen contributions in response to humanitarian crises, or various levels and aspects of policy work, different dimensions and issues in advocacy work, and the mobilisation of local communities in various development and consultation activities, and so on.

The aid effectiveness reform process may be limited, as official development assistance is limited as a development finance resource, but the opportunities that have been provided to CSOs to participate effectively and creatively are by themselves a realisation of the concept of democratic aid reform. Further, it is an opportunity for CSOs to push for more dramatic reforms in international cooperation, and this is significant and exceptional.

Through their participation in official processes as regular members/participants, CSOs are able to better wield normative influence to officials, such as developing country governments and parliamentarians. Their bilateral and multilateral development partners are enabled to hasten the aid reform process and the reconstruction of the development cooperation architecture. In this manner, CSOs achieve more by changing not only the traditional OECD donors but also the multilateral development banks and global funds, as well as the UN system itself.

Within the processes of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF), and now also influencing the processes of the UN ECOSOC's Development Cooperation Forum, this unusual CSO participation as fully recognised members have made CSOs even more prominent as proxy voices for the peoples, especially the poor and marginalised, who are the subjects of development. Already, they have initiated changes in behaviour by officials both from developing countries and development partner agencies. Interestingly, they have provided the initiative and major influence for many policies and recommendations towards the Busan High Level Forum-4.

Though most rapid at international level, the process has been initiated also at regional levels, and has begun in earnest at country level as well. In several countries, reforms are being implemented towards the institution of participatory processes on development policy dialogue. CSOs are developing stronger frameworks for participation in processes at country level with far broader and deeper implications for country



democratic development than the aid effectiveness policy reform process internationally.

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# Shifting global influences on civil society: Times for reflection

Jude Howell

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was a watershed in global politics in the late twentieth century. The end of the Cold War heralded not only the rise of a new governance agenda that assumed the indisputable triumph of liberal democracy and market economics, but also the rapid expansion on a global scale of civil society. Governments, multilateral institutions and international development agencies enthusiastically embraced the idea of civil society, conceptualising it as a partner in democracy promotion, social change and poverty reduction. Practically, they supported civil society strengthening programmes, sought to build the capacity of non-governmental organisations to participate in co-producing social services, and invited different civil society actors into processes of policy-making. Indeed the 1990s can be described as the “golden era” of civil society.

At the turn of the millennium, there were already signs that governments, bilateral and multilateral development institutions were starting to re-assess their relationship with civil society organisations. By 2000, they had accumulated over a decade or more of experience in engaging and contracting with parts of civil society. The numbers of organisations lobbying the UN and other multilateral bodies was raising issues of legitimacy and representativeness. Moreover, governments and donors observed that civil society organisations could vary considerably in their degree of effectiveness, their probity, their proximity to the grassroots, and their scale. They recognised that there were limits to how much civil society organisations could contribute to processes of social, political and economic change and how useful they could be in achieving government objectives.

In the last decade there have been several new global challenges to the context in which civil society groups operate. These include not least the global economic recession from 2007 onwards, climate change,<sup>1</sup> increasing pollution, the launch of the “War on Terror” and the rise of new emerging economies, often referred to as the BRICS.<sup>2</sup> This article concerns itself with the effects and implications of two of these challenges: the “War on Terror” launched by President Bush in September 2001, and the rise of one particular BRICS country, namely, China. The case of China is taken for several reasons: first, it is now the second largest economy in the world, hence its policies have knock-on effects across the world; second, it is the second largest trader with Africa and an increasingly significant aid donor to the continent; third, it is the only one of the BRICS to still have an authoritarian government, albeit somewhat liberalised over the last three decades.<sup>3</sup>

The first section traces some of the most significant effects of the post-9/11 global security regime on civil society, drawing on research carried out between 2006 and 2010 in Afghanistan, India, Kenya, USA, Denmark, and the UK.<sup>4</sup> The second section is more speculative in that it considers what might be the likely effects of China’s growing economic and political prowess on the idea and practice of civil society, drawing on an overview of China’s current emerging civil society and its relations to the state, and China’s engagement in international aid. In the third part I reflect on the implications of these two global challenges for civil society, both theoretically and practically.

### **Ten years on from the War on Terror**

Writing this chapter a decade on from President Bush’s launch of the War on Terror in September 2001, it is appropriate, if not imperative, to consider the effects on civil society, both as an idea and as a practical enterprise. The 1990s were in many ways the “golden era” of civil society, a period when liberal democratic governments celebrated the virtues of civil society, and civil society actors achieved inroads into influencing policy processes. It was in this decade that liberal democratic governments and civil society actors stopped viewing each other predominantly with suspicion and circumspection, and entered into partnerships and

alliances to achieve common ends and to forge a new type of politics and governance, in particular one that was to give greater room to impetus “from below”. These new governance relationships led on the one hand to greater sub-contracting of social services to voluntary sector organisations in the UK or to non-profits in the USA, and on the other hand to increased channelling of bilateral aid through NGOs. Social policy and international development were two of the main policy terrains where this new government-civil society symbiosis was acted out.

By the turn of the millennium, governments, multilateral institutions and bilateral development agencies had amassed considerable experience in relating to certain parts of civil society. There was already concern about the limits of scaling up NGO projects and about the legitimacy, transparency and probity of many civil society organisations (Wallace and Lewis 2000; Edwards and Hulme 1997). Aware of the transaction costs of working with a myriad of small organisations, they were also beginning to consider ways of engaging them more efficiently. All this was taking place within the context of a much broader re-assessment of aid architecture, and growing concerns about the duplication, transparency and inefficiencies of development assistance (Howell and Lind 2009a).

#### *Securitisation of civil society*

The launch of the War on Terror in September 2001 by President Bush marked a juncture, when these various threads of concern were to come together and set a very different stage for civil society. In particular, the post-2001 decade became the decade of a deepening securitisation of civil society. By the securitisation of civil society we refer to the processes whereby civil society becomes viewed on the one hand as potentially functional to achieving global and national security goals, and on the other hand as potentially threatening to the security of liberal democratic states – processes that are particularly visible in the policy domains of social policy and international development. This securitisation did not emerge out of the blue; rather, it built upon processes that were already underway during the golden era of civil society, as well as on practices that had been rehearsed for different purposes during the Cold War.

Drawing on the experiences of the US and the UK, two of the key protagonists of the War on Terror, let us illustrate how this deepening securitisation of civil society occurs. First, civil society has to be framed politically as a matter of security interest. This is often reflected in authoritative statements by political leaders, casting certain civil society groups as posing a (potential) threat to national security. In the UK, for example, Gordon Brown, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated in October 2006 that charities were one of three “most dangerous sources of terrorist finance.” His position of authority lent this statement about charities particular weight, changing media and public perceptions, particularly concerning Muslim charities or those operating in Muslim countries. Illustrative of the functional depiction of civil society as potentially useful to pursuing security objectives was the statement of Colin Powell, then Secretary of State, who in October 2011 described NGOs as “force multipliers” that were “an important part of our combat team.” Indeed this depiction was to be repeated again almost ten years later by Daniel Benjamin, State Department co-ordinator for counter-terrorism, who stated in January 2010 that “there is probably no success in this area [violent extremism] that can happen without civil society.” The media plays a crucial role in circulating this framing and giving it wider credence.

Whilst authoritative statements by national leaders can re-draw frames of reference, the integument of these authoritative claims is rooted deeper through new legislation, regulations and policies that make possible the contradictory processes of containment and engagement. For example, the introduction of Special Recommendation VIII by the Financial Action Taskforce (FATF) required all charities to tighten up their financial arrangements for transferring money across borders, and for banks to run checks for money-laundering on charities. In the USA, the Treasury issued in November 2002 new Voluntary Guidelines for Non-Profits, placing pressure on them to reduce their vulnerability to abuse from terrorist groups through improved transparency and checks on partners. In the UK, the publication of a Home Office and Treasury Report in 2007 on Charities and Terrorism not only gave greater credence to the authoritative claims of political leaders about charities but also put forward steps for greater control over the voluntary sector (Home Office and HM Treasury 2007).

The layers of securitisation become more firmly embedded when government departments take action through projects and initiatives to put laws and policies into practice. For example, the USAID required all recipients of its funds, including partner organisations, to sign an Anti-Terrorism Certification that stated that they had no links with terrorist groups. Similarly, the US government put pressure on foundations such as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation to include in their grant agreements a clause, stating that the recipient of funding had no association with terrorist organisations (Billica 2006). Initiatives are not only of a controlling nature but also aim to deploy civil society groups in preventing terrorism. In the UK, for example, the Department of Communities and Local Government committed £6 million in 2007 to anti-radicalisation projects in towns where there were substantial Muslim populations. This kind of “soft tactics” became more prominent after the July 7 bombings in 2006, after which then Prime Minister Tony Blair made clear that the War on Terror could not be fought on military grounds alone.<sup>5</sup> In the war theatre of Afghanistan, militaries drew civil society increasingly into their strategies, one of the most visible signs of this being the Provincial Reconstruction Teams that combined military and civil forces to secure occupied areas (Perito 2005, 2007).

Thus, from the authoritative pronouncements of influential political leaders down to on-the-ground community projects and military tactics, civil society becomes increasingly drawn into the scope of security. These different “stages” of securitisation do not unfold in a neat linear way, but overlap and reinforce each other, thickening the seams of securitisation. This is not to say that civil society organisations become wholly repressed in this pursuit of national security, but that the idea and practice of civil society become enmeshed in complex and uneven ways within the framework of national security goals.

#### *Securitisation effects on civil society groups*

How then do these processes of securitisation that seek to both control and deploy civil society affect the activities of civil society groups? First, following the launch of the War on Terror more groups have been added to terrorist watch-lists, including several charities. In the USA, the only

charities to be designated and closed down under the Patriot Act have been Muslim organisations, such as the Holy Land Foundation (OMB Watch/Grantmakers without Borders 2008). In general, most non-profits and most voluntary sector groups have not been particularly affected by the changing legislative and regulatory context. However, certain parts of civil society, particularly Muslim organisations such as Islamic charities, mosques, Muslim community centres, or international NGOs and foundations operating in Muslim majority areas or in conflict situations have felt more the brunt of the post-9/11 global security regime, as President Obama acknowledged in his June 2009 Cairo speech. The Special Recommendation VIII of the Financial Action Taskforce, placing new financial transparency requirements on charities, has particularly affected those working internationally. The Anti-Terrorist Certification as well as the Partner Vetting System piloted by the USAID in the West Bank have undermined relations of trust between US non-profit organisations and their partner organisations, particularly in the Middle East and conflict situations. US non-profits working overseas have complained about the additional administrative burden placed on them in complying with the new security regulations (Howell and Lind 2009a; Guinane and Sazawal 2010). The legal ambiguity surrounding the provision 18 U.S.C. §2339B on material support in the Patriot Act has created uncertainty amongst international NGOs as to what kind of training or support might risk them being accused of promoting terrorism.<sup>6</sup> The US Supreme Court upheld the law in the case of *Holder vs Humanitarian Law Project* – whereby a US NGO was accused of assisting terrorism because of providing legal advice to proscribed groups for the purpose of negotiating peace settlement – has caused considerable concern amongst civil liberties lawyers and international NGOs.

Second, the preventative dimension of the UK's national security strategy has attempted to bring community organisations into the goal of preventing radicalisation and extremism. The anti-radicalisation initiatives administered by the Department of Communities and Local Government has created new opportunities for Muslim organisations to access government funds to meet needs that were previously unrecog-

nised. For example, Muslim women's groups have received support under this scheme to set up a hotline and provide various specialised services. However, a review of the scheme in 2010 highlighted various concerns, including that Muslim communities were suspicious of the initiative being essentially an operation aimed at gathering intelligence, thereby undermining previous efforts by the police to foster positive community relations.

Third, international humanitarian and relief organisations have become increasingly alarmed at militaries' intervention in the field of development, and the attempts to engage them in joint development work as part of a broader military strategy to secure occupied territory. These concerns were already being expressed from the 1990s onwards, when the role of UN peace-keepers in post-conflict contexts began to broaden out into humanitarian and development activities (Howell and Lind 2009a). The creation of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), first in Afghanistan and later in Iraq, marked a further extension of military soft tactics. Although some of these tactics echoed practices deployed in Malaysia in the 1950s and Vietnam in the 1960s, what was different was both the proliferation of non-governmental humanitarian actors and the degree of fusion implied in the PRTs. In Afghanistan, for example, many international NGOs have refused to participate in the PRTs on the grounds that this will lead to a blurring of boundaries between the civil and the military. They have criticised the military for using civilian vehicles to carry out humanitarian operations, leading to confusion amongst the local populace as to the difference between non-governmental, governmental and military agencies (McHugh and Gostelow 2004). From their perspective, this has heightened the risks involved in conducting humanitarian operations and led to an increasing number of attacks on humanitarian aid workers, who are not viewed by insurgents as independent, neutral or impartial actors (Howell and Lind 2009b).

Finally, it is important to draw attention to the effects of "normalising the exceptional" on civil society groups and spaces. The introduction of "extra-ordinary" measures to deal with terrorist threats has encroached on everyday life, affecting domains and actors that have no direct relation to terrorism. In particular in the UK, there have been several instances over the last decade where ordinary citizen protest – such as demonstrating



against the arms trade fair – has been dealt with through counter-terrorist measures; or where ordinary activities – such as taking photographs of tourist sites or heckling politicians at party conferences – have been handled through counter-terrorist legislation. The use of stop and search orders under UK counter-terrorist legislation has disproportionately affected Asians, who according to figures released in May 2011 were 42 times more likely to be stopped than other ethnic groups at ports and airports (Dodd 2011). Indeed, at a more global level, some governments have been quick to re-cast perceived political threats as security threats so as to clamp down on dissidents, political opponents and troublesome secessionist movements, Uzbekistan, China and India being cases in point (Stevens and Jailobaeva 2010; Howell and Lind 2010). In contexts where law enforcement is weak and subject to corruption, vulnerable groups have often been at the sharp end of counter-terrorist legislation, as occurred with tribals and Dalits in India (Howell 2010; Gonsalves 2004).

In brief, the post-9/11 security regime has marked a new era in government–civil society relations. The “golden era” of the 1990s is now over. Though governments, development agencies and multilateral institutions were already beginning to re-assess the purposes and modalities of engaging with civil society at the turn of the millennium, the War on Terror sealed this mood of re-assessment, casting a veil of suspicion over civil society. The counter-terrorist framework introduced post-9/11 in the USA and the UK has set out to not only control and surveil certain elements of civil society, but also to engage certain parts of civil society in defending national security. This has led to both new opportunities to access government funding and influence, and to a tighter regulatory framework governing civil society.

Whilst this section has surveyed the impact over the past decade of a changed global security regime on civil society, the next part looks ahead to the future at the potential of the growing economic giant of China on civil society.

#### **From the past to the future: China’s potential effects on civil society**

Surveying the effects of the War on Terror is a more tangible enterprise than speculating on the likely impact of China’s expanding economy on

the idea and practice of civil society beyond its borders. One looks to the past and the other to the future. The one can draw on a growing body of evidence to support certain propositions, whilst the other draws on extrapolations from the Chinese context and slivers of evidence of how the government deals with the external. A starting-point for considering the implications of China's growing economic and political power for civil societies is to look at how the Party/state deals with civil society in China, how it engages with international NGOs in China, and how it relates to civil society in aid-recipient countries. We thus begin by briefly examining the nature of government–civil society relations in China, including that of foreign non-governmental groups. We then consider the implications of China's international aid and external economic activities on civil societies outside its borders.

Comparing pre-reform China with China in the early twenty-first century, it must be recognised that there has been a gradual expansion of more civil-society type organisations, that is, associations with some independence from the Party/state around shared interests and concerns. In the pre-reform period, the main pillars of state–society intermediation were the workplace unit, the rural communes and the various mass organisations such as the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) and the Communist Youth League (CYL). Following the introduction of fundamental economic reforms in late 1978, the new Dengist Party/state began to let professions and academics organise themselves into independent associations, so as to create a more liberal, intellectual environment that would be conducive to rapid technological change. The social significance of the workplace unit gradually declined, and the mass organisations underwent varying degrees of reform. Over thirty years have passed since the initial reform package, and though there have at various points been tighter restrictions placed on the registration of social organisations, there has nevertheless been a substantial increase in more independent organising. By July 2010 there were over 440,000 registered social organisations in China, 2,600 foundations, and over 3 million independently organised groups that were not legally registered ([www.beijingreview.com](http://www.beijingreview.com), accessed Sept 1, 2011; Wang and Sun 2010).

China remains an authoritarian state, albeit a more liberalised one than in 1978. A particular type of civil society formation has developed in urban China, one where the registration processes are onerous and where individuals skirt around the edges, contesting the boundaries, to organise around shared concerns. The Party/state has been the main factor shaping the development of civil society, seeking both to control social organisations through regulation, prohibition and co-option, and also to encourage the development of groups providing welfare services. The uncertainty and ambivalence amongst Party leaders as to how much independent citizen organising they are prepared to tolerate, for what purpose, and how to best manage this has contributed to the cycles of organisational expansion and contraction that have characterised the development of China's civil society.

*Phases in Chinese civil society development*

We can identify four main phases in the development of civil society during the reform period in China. The *first* phase during the 1980s saw the gradual expansion of social organisations, predominantly trade associations, business associations, academic societies and professional associations, all of which from the perspective of the reformers could play a role in furthering economic reform. With the rise of the democracy movement in 1988-1989 and the emergence of genuinely independent student organisations and trades unions, the political regime came under threat. Party leaders responded by clamping down on the movement in June 1989, arresting its organisers and tightening up the regulatory system for setting up independent organisations in the autumn of 1989.

The *second* phase of civil society development was thus between summer 1989 and the early 1990s. This was marked by an overhaul of the regulatory system governing China's non-governmental organisations and a tightening up of the space for independent organising. The new regulations tried to impose a corporatist system of interest representation, where the state controlled civil society by giving one organisation per interest a monopoly of representation. Thus, in any one place there could only be one trade union, or one forest protection society, or one women's law society. This new regulatory environment resulted in a contraction of

registered social organisations, as some groups were prohibited and others found it difficult to secure a sponsoring government agency as required under the new regulations. Whilst groups deemed as politically threatening were shut down after 1989, those that were considered harmless or useful to the state were allowed to register under the new registration regime.

As the economic reforms deepened in the 1990s and the social effects of rapid economic change were becoming more visible, such as widening inequalities and enterprise lay-offs, a new layer of non-governmental organising emerged that focussed on those that were marginalised in the reform process. This marked the *third* phase of civil society development. Thus in the 1990s, organisations addressing the needs of migrant workers, women workers, people living with HIV/AIDs, and so on began to emerge (Howell 2007). The hosting of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing catalysed the formation of numerous more independent women's organisations across the country, and further reform within the All-China Women's Federation. Furthermore, the government was becoming increasingly aware that the decline of the state production unit that had traditionally provided social welfare and social security called for systemic reform and a greater role for non-governmental service provision.

However, most of these new organisations found the conditions of registration – such as identifying a government agency that would agree to be responsible for them, or amassing the bank requisite deposit – to be too onerous, and chose instead to either not register at all or to register as a business with the Bureau of Industry and Commerce. Though there was a proliferation of more independent organisations during the 1990s, many of these were not registered. A further review and adjustment of the regulatory framework in 1998 required all organisations to re-register, marking a downturn in this cycle and leading to a drop in the number of registered organisations, from 220,000 in 1998 to 136,841 in 2000, well below the 181,060 registered groups of 1993 (Howell 2007).

In the first decade of the new millennium, several factors facilitated the further opening up of spaces for non-governmental groups and marked the beginning of the *fourth* phase. China's entry into the WTO in 2002 and the government's push to "go global" engendered a more open intellectual environment that favoured a more relaxed approach to civil society orga-

ning. Government efforts to overhaul the social welfare system and foster the development of social policy as an academic and professional field encouraged the formation of community-based and non-governmental organisations engaged in service provision. This gained further impetus under the Hu-Wen leadership from 2003 onwards, which paid greater attention to the widening income gap and socio-economic inequalities. Furthermore, events such as the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, when volunteers and Chinese NGOs provided additional relief, served to soften some Party leaders' approach to civil society (Teets 2009).

*Continuing ambivalence*

However, the Chinese government still has an ambivalent approach towards civil society, unsure as to where to relax the boundaries and how best to manage dissent and conflict. Thus, this further relaxation takes place alongside the continuing repression of dissenters, critical journalists and social activists, as was well illustrated during China's hosting of the Olympics in 2008. In the wake of the Wenchuan earthquake, for example, those self-organising groups that criticised the government over corruption in the construction industry that lay behind the collapse of schools in the earthquake region encountered government repression rather than sympathy and understanding. Similarly, secessionist activists in Tibet and Xinjiang continue to be met with repression.

The Chinese government's treatment of civil society is thus ambiguous and uneven, with government leaders vacillating between responding with repression, when it perceives groups as potentially threatening to the regime, and encouraging, when it is clear about the functional benefits to the economy and stability. This vacillation has thus led to a pattern over the last thirty years of cycles of contraction and incremental expansion in civil society (Howell 2011). These patterns are fuelled not only by the Party/state but also by pressure from society to preserve the spaces for independent organising. At times there are periods of truce, when the boundaries marking what kind of civil society organising is acceptable are settled, until new issues, political conjunctures and social pressures open up spaces for contestation again.

There is thus a constant wrestling over the boundaries between society and Party/state. Part of this vacillation is to do with a lack of clarity within the Party for political, ideological and administrative reasons as to how best to manage this expanding citizen organising. Over the past thirty years the direction in which the Party/state would ideally steer civil society has gradually become somewhat clearer, namely one that is more tolerant and at times encouraging of non-governmental organisations that can provide social and other services that are functional to reform, but intolerant and repressive towards any groups deemed threatening to political stability. In September 2008, the Shenzhen government, for example, began to experiment with allowing social organisations to directly register with the Department of Civil Affairs, pointing to a further relaxation of spaces for independent organising (Beijingreview.com.cn , accessed Sept 1, 2011). Similarly, the announcement in July 2011 that the Ministry of Civil Affairs would agree to act as supervisory agency for certain types of civil society organisations, primarily those engaged in service-delivery, also points to a softening of the Party/state's approach to civil society. However, there remain still some very clear boundaries, such as the Party's continuing refusal to allow the formation of a second trade union, democratic political parties or the nationwide joining up of any social organisation that could potentially then become a force to contend with.

*Relations to international civil society, inside and outside of China*

Another approach to understanding China's potential impact on other civil societies is to examine how the Party/state deals with international NGOs and foreign foundations. Given the character of civil society formation in urban China, we might extrapolate that the Party/state will view foreign civil society organisations with suspicion. Moreover, given that many registered social organisations are government-organised NGOs, functioning as an extension of the government, it is understandable that Chinese officials will view international NGOs receiving government funding as similarly working on behalf of their governments. The presence of international NGOs and foundations in China has increased since the early 1990s, with the expansion of development aid to China. There has been no unified system for registering international NGOs

and foundations, and as a result they have received authorisation from different ministries to operate. In recent years some foundations have not had their presence officially authorised and exist in limbo, able to operate but aware that their activities could be halted at a whim. A few international NGOs have attempted to localise their organisation, but none has yet succeeded with this.

Though international NGOs and foundations have been generally welcomed as they can supplement state service provision, introduce new techniques, and bring additional funds, the Party/state became increasingly suspicious about their intentions following the Colour Revolutions in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia (Howell 2011). Chinese government leaders heeded assertions made by President Putin that the USA had been funding civil society groups in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia through its democracy promotion programmes, with the intention of disrupting those regimes. Following this, the Party/state began to quietly investigate the activities of foreign NGOs and foundations. Its expulsion in 2007 of Nick Young, the founder of the China Development Brief, an information and resource organisation on development issues, reflected some of the ambivalence towards international organisations as well as the fragmented behaviour of the state, whereby the local security bureau responded unnecessarily harshly to an organisation that was viewed by other parts of the state as harmless. The twitchy behaviour of local Party/state leaders to foreign non-governmental organisations and foundations can also be seen in unwillingness on occasions to approve international conferences on certain topics, such as labour issues.

If we look beyond the walls of China to the external context of Chinese aid, one of the key differences between China and other aid donors is the very limited number of international Chinese NGOs. Unlike other donors, Chinese aid does not focus on governance issues, and so China does not have any particular programmes to support or strengthen civil society organisations. The Chinese government does not channel significant amounts of aid money through NGOs as occurs with several Western donors. There are a few international Chinese NGOs operating in Africa, such as the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association, which is a government-sponsored NGO. In 2010, two Chinese NGOs

began to extend their operations into Africa. The China Youth Development Foundation of the Communist Youth League and the World Eminent Chinese Business Association established a China-Africa Project Hope, which planned to set up schools in Africa. The Chinese Red Cross similarly planned to set up hospitals in Africa. However, both these organisations became embroiled in scandals (Tan 2011; Chan 2011). Apart from these, China has sent medical teams to Africa for well over forty years, but this has been organised through government channels, rather than being an independent initiative of a Chinese charity.

Furthermore, the Chinese government does not share the typical Western liberal expectations of civil society organisations to act as “watch dogs” over state behaviour.

It is likely that Chinese government officials would be perplexed by any criticisms made against Chinese aid by African civil society organisations, especially since many African political leaders welcome the additional funds brought through Chinese investment, trade and aid. At the World Social Summit held in Nairobi in 2008, there was reportedly a heated clash between African NGO critics of Chinese aid and the representative of the Chinese government-organised NGO present at the event. It is likely that Chinese officials would find it puzzling that other governments do not seek to control more strictly those civil society groups that challenge national policies. However, the Chinese government adheres ostensibly to a foreign policy of non-interference and as such, would seek to keep a distance from the internal politics of other countries and expect other countries to behave similarly towards it. This principle is repeatedly drawn upon when China comes under fire for human rights violations, and China usually approaches inter-governmental human rights dialogues fully armed with reports of human rights violations in the other country.

As a final remark, it should also be noted that many foreign governments, multilateral institutions and foreign civil society actors are unfamiliar with China, and even less acquainted with Chinese civil society groups. This can present its own set of challenges when seeking alliances around common issues. Of particular relevance here is the response of the International Trade Union Congress that has for several decades now



hesitated about recognising the All-China Federation of Trades Unions on the grounds that China does not permit workers to freely associate and establish their own trade unions.

### **Concluding reflections**

This article has examined the effects and potential implications of two major contemporary challenges to civil society, namely, the War on Terror and the rise of China. Whilst there is over a decade of evidence concerning the impact of the War on Terror on civil society that can be drawn upon, in the case of China the article has extrapolated on the Chinese government's handling of non-governmental organising and its engagement with external NGOs, both on its own territory and in the aid context. In this concluding section, I consider more broadly the theoretical and practical implications of these two challenges.

Taking the post-9/11 security regime first, there are several issues that warrant reflection. First, the relative quiescence in the early years of mainly service-oriented civil society organisations in the UK and the USA in relation to the new counter-terrorist measures and their particular stigmatisation of Muslim charities, organisations and communities raises questions about the impact of government funding on civil society. In what ways has this lessened their willingness to criticise government and to propose alternatives at moments of crisis? Second, it has also highlighted the divisions within civil society that a neo-liberal account of civil society tends to mask over. In particular, it has demonstrated how certain parts of civil society have not been recognised, either by government or by other civil society groups, as belonging to civil society. Third, there are issues around the deployment of civil society organisations by governments and military actors as part of broader security agendas. In conflict situations in particular, this raises crucial issues around the autonomy and impartiality of civil society organisations and how they are perceived by local populations. Finally, it is crucial to recognise that the counter-terrorist infrastructure in the wake of 9/11 is here to stay. After the death of Osama Bin Laden in May 2011, President Barack Obama made clear that Al Qaeda continued to be a threat. The securitisation of civil society has become accepted. However, this can only endure as long as civil society

organisations continue to allow this. The challenge for the future, then, is how to deconstruct the counter-terrorist scaffolding so as to reclaim the spaces for civil society actors.

Turning to China, this cursory reflection on the potential implications of China's expanding economic power and political presence for civil societies elsewhere suggests that this is an area requiring much greater research and detailed empirical studies. Does the recent push outwards by a few Chinese NGOs point to a growing trend? Will the Chinese government encourage this more? With some African politicians favourably comparing China's aid "model", with its emphasis on infrastructure, investment and trade, to Western donors' focus on governance and "soft issues," it is unlikely that China will channel much aid through its own NGOs, local civil society organisations, or international NGOs. Indeed, China is unlikely to be a "friend" of civil society groups in other contexts, and is likely to be indifferent to the fate of international NGOs that are expelled from countries with humanitarian crises, as occurred in Darfur, Sudan.

In brief, this reflection on the challenges posed by the War on Terror and the rise of China for civil society has raised a number of issues that civil society actors need to be alert too. There are also other challenges, such as climate change, global economic recession and the rise of the other BRICS, that were beyond the scope of this piece but that also merit attention. Most importantly, there is no room for complacency that the conditions for civil societies to flourish can be sustained or will inevitably improve. How this all unfolds, will depend in part on the visions, analyses and strategies of civil society actors.

## Notes

1. For a discussion of the effects of climate change, the War on Terror and the global economic recession on civil society, see John Clarke (2011) and my riposte to his article (Howell 2011).
2. BRICSs refers to the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
3. This is not to say that Russia also still displays many features of an authoritarian state, but unlike China, it has a formal democracy with regular parliamentary elections and limits on the rule of incumbents.

4. For a full account of the effects on specific countries, see Howell and Lind 2009 and 2010.
5. In a speech to the World Affairs Council in Los Angeles in August 2006, Blair stated that “We will not win the battle against this global extremism unless we win it at the level of values as much as force” (Wintour 2006).
6. “Material support” under this provision of the Patriot Act refers to training, expert advice or assistance, service or personnel.

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# Civil society and the United Nations

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In 1945, the founders of the United Nations created a special role for independent citizen organizations.<sup>1</sup> In the arena of international diplomacy, previously the preserve of nation-states, this was a major departure.<sup>2</sup> International “non-governmental organizations,” with branches in many countries, obtained “consultative status” with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), enabling them to speak and to present papers at Council meetings (United Nations 1946). Trade union confederations, faith groups, disarmament movements, and business associations were among the first forty-one organizations to be admitted in 1948. Others soon followed.

Most NGO representatives in those early years were volunteers – people with great enthusiasm for the UN and a belief in its capacity to build a peaceful and just world order. They set out to discover how NGOs could influence intergovernmental policymaking, and they learned how to lobby diplomats – sometimes on highly political topics like disarmament and decolonization. As the new headquarters structures rose on the East River in New York, NGOs came to work there and others gathered at the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva, the UN’s second most important venue.

Over the years, NGOs became adept at advocacy skills for influencing international policy making: using the media, presenting original research, advancing novel ideas, bringing fresh information from the field, building alliance with friendly states, and conveying the concerns of the world’s ordinary citizens. Numbers grew steadily, and by 1970 there were about four hundred NGOs inscribed on the ECOSOC accreditation list. Some member states complained that there were “too many” NGOs, a concern that persisted and even increased as NGO numbers swelled in future years.

The civil society movement enlarged and diversified and new organizations arose, adding voices on women, the environment, health, population, indigenous people and human rights. Newly-decolonized states joined the UN’s membership at this time and brought new voices for

change into the organization on the member state side. These two kinds of newcomers promoted novel UN conferences and activities, stimulating a new level of NGO activity in the 1970s as steadily more NGOs gained accreditation. NGOs divided into specialized, issue-based committees, set up under the umbrella of CONGO, the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC. The UN Department of Public Information (DPI) began to accredit nationally-based, often smaller NGOs, opening the UN to a wider mix of voices, including increasingly those from the global South. Special international meetings, such as the Stockholm Conference on the environment in 1972, opened the accreditation system wider, with less onerous accreditation processes and efforts to promote NGO participation.

In Geneva, the Human Rights Commission attracted an increasing number of NGOs to its annual meetings, especially in the 1970s and beyond, as NGOs increasingly provided testimony about national human rights abuses. Amnesty International, founded in 1961 and developing into a powerful international network by the 1970s, contributed substantially to this process. Also at this time, UN agencies, funds and programs began to open their doors to civil society partners in their special field of competence (children, health, population, etc). DPI organized weekly briefings for NGOs in New York, and it also produced (in cooperation with an NGO advisory body) an annual conference that drew large numbers worldwide to headquarters. ECOSOC-accredited NGOs rose to 600 by 1980 and nearly 1,000 by 1990, while hundreds more had an associative relationship with DPI (Willets 1996b).

NGO support for the UN was so strong and engagement with global political issues so visible, that some observers began to speak of civil society as a new source of global influence, challenging the monopoly and even the primacy of nation states. Political scientists spoke of “the retreat of the state” and of “new actors” and “non-state actors” in the global policy-making process (Weiss and Gordenker 1996; Strange 1996; Higott et al 2000). A new era, it was said, was dawning – especially as states were losing capacity and facing weakened public support in an increasingly privatized, neo-liberal world.

Those who predicted a steady upward path of civil society influence at the UN proved to be wrong. The picture today, in 2011, is more complex. There have been advances and setbacks, moments of accomplishment and of backward motion. Most significantly, states have remained strong primary actors, and they have become less tolerant of civil society and for what we might call the “democratic opening” in international affairs in the 1980s and ‘90s. The 1990s seemed to represent a surge of democratic, social policy in the international sphere and a rise of NGO influence. But even then, the barriers for NGOs were rising and the balance of state policy shifting, prefiguring more negative developments in 2000 and beyond.

### **The dynamic 1990s**

As the UN changed in the post-Cold War environment, some thought that a new, more just global order was about to emerge. A series of UN Global Conferences, beginning with the Rio Summit on the Environment in 1992, attracted thousands of civil society organizations and activists, establishing the UN as an institution where citizen voices could be heard and have influence. Many NGOs saw the UN as an alternative space, especially open when compared to the undemocratic, financially-driven Bretton Woods Institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and the G-8 meetings with their great-power exclusivity and neo-liberal orthodoxy. At the UN, a kinder, social democratic perspective was seen to prevail in many quarters. The *Human Development Report* seemed to mark a new path in social policy (United Nations Development Programme 1990). The UN housed innovative social thinkers like Pakistani Mahboub al-Haq of UNDP, and financial system critics, such as Canadian Stephen Lewis of UNICEF. As such, the UN came to be a rallying ground for like-minded NGOs, from the global North and South.

NGOs’ surge of visibility drew not only on the political moment, but also on the emerging digital technology that they were quick to adopt. E-mail, the Internet, and cellphones gave them a new global capacity at relatively low cost, enabling information exchange, public outreach and global coordination that gave them an advantage over governments. NGO advocacy at the UN could use a new flow of information, drawn from every corner of the globe, and new sources of global policy thinking. While



diplomats were still imprisoned in government secrecy and bureaucratic process, NGOs were moving ahead and bringing large publics with them.

After Rio, the UN organized a series of important global conferences – on Human Rights (1993 in Vienna), Population (1994 in Cairo), Women (1995 in Beijing), Social Development (1995 in Copenhagen), Food (1996 in Rome), and the 1998 conference in Rome to found the International Criminal Court (ICC). In each case, intergovernmental “Preparatory Committees” or “PrepComs” met multiple times over two or three years, for intense sessions of two weeks or more, to negotiate the final outcome document (four PrepComs was typical, but the ICC negotiations involved ten such meetings). This open process, created thanks to friendly diplomats and helpful Secretariat officials, enabled NGOs to participate actively in the shaping of conference results, by offering innovative ideas, coordinating joint advocacy, using media skillfully, and practicing savvy diplomacy.

The conferences attracted tens of thousands of NGO representatives, who assembled at their own parallel conferences and issued their own alternative declarations, pressing governments to do even more than the promises in official Declarations and Programs of Action. Conference follow-up sessions in New York likewise attracted intense NGO interest and participation, especially the annual Commission on Sustainable Development that continued the work of Rio every year for two weeks in the spring. The UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS – an inter-agency body founded in 1975) gave valuable assistance, by organizing government funds for NGO travel to UN events, advising NGOs on how to advance their work, and providing helpful guidance for cooperation between NGOs and UN bodies.

Because the conference PrepComs were often held in New York, they brought a flow of NGO representatives from all over the world to UN headquarters and stimulated interaction between NGOs and diplomats. This meant that the NGO presence better reflected the global citizen movements. It also meant that new ideas and energy were injected into the policy discussions at headquarters.

The 1990s was a decade of civil society dynamism in other ways as well. In the global South, strong and forward-looking new NGOs and

NGO networks developed. The Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE) and Third World Network in Malaysia had already been founded in the 1980s. Now they grew and flourished in the environment of the global conferences and the increasing optimism of southern-based leadership. Social Watch, based in Montevideo, grew directly out of the UN's Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, as a means to monitor the outcome commitments. These organizations, alliances, networks and caucuses proposed alternative ways of thinking and a more global approach to policymaking than the older NGO associations with Northern roots. In UN events they often were the most visible, and they assumed leadership in thinking and action.

Some upstart Northern NGOs were active and innovative as well. In the last half of the decade, the World Federalist Movement provided leadership for the foundation of the International Criminal Court. It is fair to say that the ICC would never have happened without the ideas, inspiration and hard work of the NGO-based Coalition for the ICC, a coalition which itself took on a global scope and embraced membership from the global South. About the same time, Global Policy Forum (with partners in Geneva and New York) set up the NGO Working Group on the Security Council, providing a regular means for interaction and dialogue between NGO representatives and Council ambassadors, as well as high UN officials. No one previously thought it would be possible for NGOs to meet with Council ambassadors, but in short order ambassadors were meeting this way on a very frequent basis, and NGOs were able to learn about the Council's work and have input into the policy discussions (Paul 2004). In these and other cases, active NGOs worked in close partnership with friendly ambassadors such as Juan Somavia of Chile, Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Antonio Monteiro of Portugal, and Ahmed Kamal of Pakistan.

During this period, two Secretary Generals regularly spoke about NGOs as the UN's "indispensable partners" and in similar positive terms (Boutros-Ghali 1996; United Nations 2004b). However, Boutros Boutros Ghali (1992–1996) and Kofi Annan (1997–2006) were more ready to praise NGOs than to take real steps to strengthen their role. As the decade came to a close, governments and the UN bureaucracy

grew increasingly wary of NGOs and their “activism.” Governments of the global South, unused to civil society critics and nervous about their country’s human rights record, were suspicious of NGOs, sometimes accusing them of being mouthpieces of the rich and powerful states of the North. Ironically, Northern governments also grew wary of NGOs, who they suspected of favoring radical change and of promoting solidarity with the nations of the South. Nevertheless, NGOs remained in the game, and governments everywhere tried to work with them (and co-opt them if possible). More than ever, governments gave funding to NGOs and urged them to accept “partnerships,” especially in the humanitarian sector where billions of dollars started to flow into NGO budgets from government sources.

The UN as an institution tried to improve its work with NGOs, setting up “focal points” in many agencies and departments and inviting NGOs to briefings with senior officials. UN staff had various views of NGOs. The instrumentalists saw NGOs as implementers of UN projects and as disseminators of UN information and ideas. Others saw them as new governance “actors” who would have to be tolerated, accommodated and incorporated. Others yet saw NGOs as difficult and even dangerous – to be avoided whenever possible. Only a minority saw NGOs as Annan had framed them – a source of inspiration and democracy. To the credit of Annan, in 1998 he assigned Assistant Secretary General Gillian Martin Sorensen to work with NGOs and help solve their access problems and address other issues. She proved to be an effective mediator and problem solver, helping to offset some of the negative trends.

### **Positive steps and negative trends**

To provide openness towards newer Southern NGOs, some UN delegations proposed revised rules for NGO accreditation. In 1993, a negotiating process got under way (United Nations 1993). Under the leadership of Ambassador Ahmed Kamal, ECOSOC finally approved in 1996 a new regime for NGOs that widened their role and opened the door to influential national-level organizations for the first time (United Nations 1996a). A second ECOSOC resolution, passed at the same time, called for negotiations towards formal NGO relations with the General Assembly

which would allow accredited NGOs to participate in the work of that body (United Nations 1996b). Kamal tried to carry the momentum onward to that second negotiation in 1997, but in spite of diplomatic skill, he did not succeed. Government opposition was simply too broad. This setback signaled the limit to NGO aspirations and gave warning that serious problems lay ahead. Had the negotiations succeeded, NGO engagement might have strengthened the weak General Assembly and given it new dynamism, but governments were in a defensive mode and simply not ready to move the idea forward.

At about this time, UN security officials expressed increasing concern over the perceived threat posed by NGOs, especially at headquarters. Under pressure from the New York City Police Department and US federal security officials, UN security Chief Michael McCann began a series of moves that greatly impeded NGO passage through the perimeter security barrier. The security department closed the entrance at 43<sup>rd</sup> street to NGOs, required NGO screening through metal detectors at 45<sup>th</sup> street, and sought to limit the number of NGO-accredited interns. In 1999, the Secretary General's Chief of Staff, Iqbal Riza, issued a memorandum, closing off NGO access to the second floor of the Conference Building, where the Delegates' Lounge is located and where the Security Council and ECOSOC chambers have their main entrance.

The tone of Secretariat discourse on NGOs changed perceptibly. Officials now said that NGOs posed a security threat, that their numbers had grown "explosively," that the UN was "flooded" with NGOs and that something had to be done to control this multitude. Security officers seized NGO leaflets and accused NGOs of harassing diplomats, setting off a firestorm of criticism on the NGO side. The "new actors" were not as welcome as they had imagined. Sorensen managed to moderate the trend, by bringing NGO leaders into contact with McCann and his top security staff. But member states added to the negative environment, reacting defensively against human rights critics, environmental advocates, women's campaigners and other NGO activists (Paul 1999; Global Policy Forum 1999).

The worst blow to NGO access at this time was the UN's abandonment of the high-level conferences. The United States government, alarmed at the gathering worldwide criticism of globalization and neo-liberalism, led a sharp attack on the conferences as unproductive, expensive and pie-in-the-sky, with (Washington charged) little policy-relevance in the real world. The US Congress even passed legislation in 1996 threatening to restrict US dues payments if global conferences continued. Some other governments agreed, nervous that their own unpopular policy options might be challenged if future conference were convened. Annan and his team felt constrained to abandon the conference idea, even if this meant distancing the UN from the progressive NGO movements and the great energy and support they brought to the world body. Annan announced in 1996 that he would oppose any further conferences, though in fact several remained in the pipeline. The last major conferences of the 1990s tradition took place in 2002 – the “Financing for Development” Summit in Monterrey, the Summit on Aging in Madrid and the Johannesburg Summit on the Environment. From that time forward, UN conferences would be much less frequent and far less ambitious – and the PrepComs would be short, infrequent and carefully crafted to keep NGO participation to a minimum.

### **Civil society trends and diversities**

During the 1990s, as global civil society grew rapidly, there were new internal debates about what the movement comprised and what it stood for. These trends inevitably affected developments at the UN. On the one hand, many traditional UN-associated international NGOs (like the Boy Scouts, the YMCA, or Rotary International) faced competition from new national and international NGOs, many based in the global South, as well as by grassroots movements of peasants, indigenous people and other claimants to a voice in global policymaking. The worldwide peasant movement, Via Campesina, founded in 1993, was a newcomer of this type (Martinez-Torres and Rosset 2010).

To complicate matters further, rich governments increasingly made direct grants to humanitarian NGOs to fund development programs and

emergency relief operations. This blurred the non-governmental line and exposed NGOs to influence and pressure from states that limited NGO independence. Some such organizations, active at the UN, derived nearly all their revenues from government sources, raising questions about the meaning of civil society. Pressure on such NGOs to cooperate with controversial military operations only made matters worse.

As early as the Rio Conference in 1992, influential UN officials had tried to incorporate diverse “non-state actors.” The Rio declaration, “Agenda 21,” had established eight “major groups” as central to the follow-up architecture – farmers, indigenous, local authorities, scientists, trade unions, women, youth and business. As the decade progressed, debates continued about who should be at the table and how representation should be organized. In this period of contestation, the term “civil society” came increasingly into usage – a term that seemed to fit the diversity of organizations and political movements. But conservatives found the term useful for different reasons. It could, after all, embrace claimants such as transnational corporations. In this way, the ideological stage was set for a corporate intrusion into the UN system, framed as a widening of democracy and a broadening of the global consultative process and justified with a corporatist model of representation.

### **Corporate competitors: the rise of the global compact and UN–corporate “partnerships”**

In the 1970s, governments had sought to rein in the abuses of global companies by establishing a UN “Code of Conduct” and to begin a regime of global corporate regulation. They had set up the UN Center on Transnational Corporations in 1974 to advance this work. But after two decades of increasing hostility from the corporations and their powerful host countries, Secretary General Boutros Ghali shut the Center down in 1992. Secretary General Annan carried this even further, by promoting cordial relations and even “partnerships” with companies.

In June 2000, at a meeting attended by top managers of fifty global companies, Annan announced a new “Global Compact” – a program to draw the corporations into the UN, encourage their good behavior and

attract their support. The Compact was a nine-point plan to promote TNC self-regulation and “best practices,” devised by Annan’s team, including policy advisor John Ruggie. They set up a new unit in the Executive Office to organize the Compact. Shortly, the UN began to organize conferences, meetings, and seminars about corporate social responsibility, some featuring top executives of high-profile companies like BP, Daimler, Unilever, Deutsche Bank and Nike (Paine 2000).

Governments at this time were establishing “public–private partnerships” and actively seeking close relations with companies, arguing that the private sector was better and more efficient at providing public services. It was not surprising that the UN took this path. Corporate executives, on their side, saw advantages to their “brand” being identified with the UN’s image, a process that NGOs soon labeled “blue-wash” (whitewashing with the UN’s color blue). The Global Compact arose amid a wave of UN “partnerships” with private companies. Dozens of agreements of this kind were put in place in 1999 and 2000, and hundreds more were to follow.

In a time of financial crisis and budgetary constraint at the UN, corporate partnerships offered a source of new money for the cash-strapped world institution, while blue-wash flowed liberally. Corporate agenda-setting weakened NGO influence. The UN’s corporate tilt accelerated after the Seattle World Trade Summit (1999), when citizen protesters shook the policy elite. Similar grassroots challenges arose across the global political landscape, including tens of thousands of protesters at G-8 meetings and vast campaigns against privatization of water systems, public pensions, health care and other structural economic “adjustments” (Paul and Paul 1995; Larsen 2011). Governments reacted with determination to rein in the civil society multitude, using militarized security measures, cordoned-off zones for official meetings, repression of peaceful protesters, and a general reduction of space for democratic discussion.

Progressive civil society leaders felt increasingly frustrated and their grassroots followers even more so. Global problems were accelerating, as the UN itself was constantly pointing out. Hunger, poverty and displacement were on the rise. The global economy was unstable and enormously unequal. States were “failing,” amid rising violence, warfare and intervention (United Nations 2004c). Yet governments were not

responding. Instead, they were digging in and adopting conservative, defensive strategies. A growing body of civil society opinion saw the need for new venues of action, outside the state-dominated UN.

Substantial numbers of conservative and even right-wing NGOs appeared at the UN at this time. Previously, conservative movements had fervently disliked the world body for its global perspective and perceived threat to national sovereignty. For a half century they had stayed away. Now, they saw an opportunity to exercise their influence. Among others, the US-based National Rifle Association, a notorious weapons lobby, applied for and received UN accreditation. The right-wing cleric, Reverend Sun Myung Moon, began to exercise his influence through several newly-accredited NGOs under his control. Moon and his colleagues doled out large speaker fees, flattering awards and travel opportunities to naïve scholars, diplomats, and NGO leaders. Moon ingratiated himself with many, including senior diplomats, as he pursued right-wing goals. In 2000, he brazenly organized a mass wedding in a major UN conference room, to the great embarrassment of the Secretary General (Paine and Gratzner 2001).

Corporate-influenced or even corporate-created NGOs made an appearance at this time, following strategies advanced by Edelman Worldwide, a big New York-based public relations firm. In 2001, Edelman launched a series of “NGO seminars” to help business leaders learn about this new challenge. Edelman told its clients that activists were “winning” because they were more aggressive in getting their message out to the public. Edelman argued that corporations should take the offensive, through “partnerships” with NGOs, challenges to NGOs, and even setting up new corporate-friendly NGOs when necessary (Edelman 2011).

Also at this time, many mainstream NGOs began to turn to corporate funders for financial support. They set up corporate advisory boards and adopted corporate methods of operation. They began to recruit their own top management from the ranks of the private sector. And they took up market-oriented activities quite distinct from their program work. NGO-branded credit cards came into widespread use as a source of finance. Discussions of “social entrepreneurship” arose. Many organizations began to sell products and services ranging from packaged tours to tee shirts and



life insurance. In one extreme case, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) became a major provider of annuities, life insurance and health care insurance, with product-related income vastly greater than member dues. Top management pay in such prosperous NGOs rose accordingly. Conservative shifts in the policy posture of such NGOs were hardly surprising under the circumstances.

Faith group politics at the UN were also changing swiftly. Women's rights NGOs were shocked in 2000 to discover that an alliance of conservative Catholic, evangelical Protestant and Muslim organizations were building support for a conservative counter-attack on UN resolutions on reproductive health and women's rights (Butler 2000). Many delegations responded positively to such new lines of advocacy. It was no longer possible to think of the NGO UN community as more-or-less united or homogeneous. The right was firmly asserting itself, and it usually had lots of money and powerful friends.

Some delegations began to use the disputes as a means to discredit the NGO movement and to insist that NGOs were not only pursuing unpopular causes but divided and (most damning) *unrepresentative*. "Governments speak in the name of their peoples," some diplomats insisted, "but NGOs are not elected and cannot really speak for anyone." Such claims were disingenuous, since delegates knew very well that NGOs often speak for a very large number of citizens and may enjoy considerably more popularity and respect than governments. In spite of these challenges, the NGO movement held its ground.

### **The Cardoso Panel and "multi-stakeholder dialogue"**

Secretary General Annan sought to define a new set of relations between the UN and NGOs. To sort out the tangle of issues and bring NGOs into a moderating structure, Annan turned to a panel of "eminent persons." In February 2003, without any prior consultation with NGOs, he named former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso to chair a panel that would consider the matter and come up with a definitive report. Annan named just two NGOs to the 12-member panel. Cardoso then appointed John Clark, a former staffer at the World Bank, as the committee's executive secretary. The "Cardoso Panel" thus got off to a

dubious start. Some said it was visibly stacked against NGO aspirations. After lengthy consultations and deliberations, the panel eventually produced a document in June of 2004 (United Nations 2004a).

The report recognized that there were serious problems in relations between NGOs and the UN: "Difficulties and tensions have arisen, particularly in the deliberative process. Governments do not always welcome sharing what has traditionally been their preserve," it noted, continuing: "At the same time, many in civil society are becoming frustrated; they can speak in the UN but question whether anyone is listening, or whether their participation has any impact on outcomes" (United Nations, 2004a).

But the report showed scant understanding of the issues of most concern to civil society. Dozens of leading groups had outlined for committee secretary Clark the key problems of physical and political access, which he largely ignored. NGO representatives had urged the panel to propose a new high-level policy person in the office of the Secretary General to replace recently-departed ASG Sorensen. They had insisted that the UN publish its NGO rules and agree to consult with NGOs before changing rules in the future. They had asked for better financing for key NGO focal points and for the NGLS. They had raised concerns about the UN's increasingly restrictive security environment. And they had argued that Southern NGOs must get a larger voice. All these and more were disregarded or given little attention (Martens and Paul 2004).

The report focused on a new paradigm – a "multi-constituency" or "multi-stakeholder" dialogue that would re-position the UN as a place for discussion, not a scene of binding decision-making. Among those at the table would be local governments, parliamentarians, and (most significantly) the private sector (United Nations 2004a; Willets 2006). Few were happy with the outcome, and the NGO community was especially irked. Annan faced such a great outcry that he had to distance himself from the panel and produce his own hasty (much modified) report three months later (United Nations 2004b). The Cardoso Report had little life left when the General Assembly debated the topic in the fall. However, Annan and his team did not hesitate to put into practice many of Cardoso's basic concepts, especially the controversial idea of multi-stakeholder dialogue.

**Communication barriers: digital documents and (malfunctioning) earphones**

The Cardoso Panel did have one significant accomplishment: UN provision of its digital documents to the NGO community and to the global public. The campaign for access to these documents had started in 1997, by a partnership of a dozen key NGOs. Again and again, the campaigners had asked Secretary General Annan to make UN documents universally available through the Internet. Beginning in 1997, the UN had made these documents available to member states through a restricted internet portal. NGOs argued that with all the talk about “transparency,” the UN should make the same portal open to all the world. UN officials complained that the organization did not have sufficient funding to meet this need (though it was producing thousands of copies of documents in print form at far greater cost). After dozens of NGO meetings and constant advocacy over seven years, the UN finally agreed to make its document system available to all. Cardoso had supported NGOs on this issue and he deserves some credit for the new policy.

While the digital documents effort took seven years, the NGO struggle over earphones was never resolved. UN conference rooms, including the chamber of the Security Council, have galleries for the “public” where NGOs are invited to sit during important meetings. Earphones at every seat in these galleries allow those attending to hear simultaneous interpretations of the official proceedings. The earphones were often not functioning (half or more of the units in the gallery would typically be out of service). NGOs working on Security Council matters were especially active in lobbying for an improvement in earphone functionality. But in spite of regular NGO requests to the Council, to the UN Secretariat and to individual delegations, the UN never fixed the earphones, making serious monitoring of the meetings difficult or impossible. The condition continued from at least the mid-1990s until the time of the Capital Master Plan renovations in 2010,<sup>3</sup> symbolizing the lack of concern for basic NGO needs.

**The war on terror, the multiple crises, and the World Social Forum**

In the post-Cold War period, the UN had to cope with widening war and social instability, including the conflicts in Angola, Somalia, Former

Yugoslavia, Palestine, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. The crisis was deepened by the events of September 11, 2001, which led to the global “War on Terror.” Governments adopted repressive and security-oriented tactics that set aside human rights protections and reflected a siege mentality. The UN as an institution was swept up into “counter-terrorism” policy and local wars, worsened by the Iraq conflict of 2003 and beyond. Later in the decade, the “multiple crises” set in – the food, energy and climate crises, as well as the ominous economic and financial crisis. These emerging and interconnected crises evoked more civil society concern and they provoked more frustration with the lack of effective government action within the UN policy process.

NGOs could not sustain the enthusiasm and optimism that had been the hallmark of the global conference decade. Some influential groups felt that civil society should form its own alternative zone for policy reflection and action. This impulse, dating from the beginning of the new century, led several NGO leaders to found the World Social Forum, which met for the first time in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001. The Forum attracted a turnout of 12,000 activists and challenged the global system with newfound enthusiasm. Growing to 75,000 participants by 2011, the Forum continued to hold annual global gatherings as well as regional and local ones. It stimulated and energized, but it also failed to engage with – and transform – systems of power.

### **The General Assembly Presidents’ initiatives on NGO access**

Meanwhile, the UN continued to consider a more broadly-agreed framework for civil society participation. Some asked: how could World Social Forum energy be brought back into the UN? When senior Swedish diplomat Jan Eliasson took up the presidency of the General Assembly in September, 2005, he met with civil society representatives and promised that he would produce meaningful action in favor of expanded NGO rights. Eventually, in May 2006, he launched a consultation process to gather NGO views and sound out member state opinions (Global Policy Forum 2006). NGOs made their views known, including the long-standing request for a consultative arrangement with the General Assembly and the need for an official in the Executive Office with an NGO portfolio. Most of all, civil society groups reminded the UN of

the huge gap between the aspirations of the world's people and the static and difficult-to-access process of official negotiations.

Member states remained cool to such ideas. When Eliasson's term ended, he had made little real progress. Consultations in the General Assembly and other diplomatic efforts nonetheless continued. The GA President's office organized a conference with NGOs in the spring of 2007 to explore key issues. NGOs submitted statements, wrote letters, lobbied friendly delegations. But member states were still not ready to move forward. Two years after Eliasson, it became clear that GA presidents could not make progress on the NGO file. By September 2008, the initiative disappeared altogether from the GA agenda.

During this time, many governments were acting domestically to restrict and diminish civil society influence. One government after another passed laws to tighten government control over these groups. As the journal *Global Trends in NGO Law* summarized, there were: "restrictions on the formation, activities and operation of NGOs in comprehensive NGO framework laws; increasing restrictions on foreign funding to NGOs; [and] international cooperation laws that place prohibitions on NGO exchanges of knowledge, capacity and expertise across borders" (International Center for Non-Profit Law 2009). For NGOs in the global South, these pressures were very serious and greatly diminished their capacity to work at the international level.

NGOs also faced a general decline in revenue, due to the financial crisis. Private donors had less money to give away, and governments were cutting back on a wide range of grants and programs that had been outsourcing to NGOs. The data for a precise assessment is not available, but it seems that numerous NGOs simply disappeared in 2008 and after, while many others suffered substantial program and staff reductions. NGO capacity at the UN was complicated further by tightening UN security measures, by the squeeze on space created by headquarters renovation, and by further cuts in budgets of NGO focal points and support units, especially the NGLS. Paradoxically, while NGOs were denied access to the General Assembly itself, they continued to interact intensively with several of the GA's main committees, notably the First Committee (Disarmament) and the Third Committee (Human Rights).

Some, like Amnesty International, used their worldwide presence to lobby governments in national capitals on policy positions at the UN and to bring advocates from local chapters to speak at “side events” and meet informally with delegates in New York and Geneva. Networks, such as the Global Call to Action on Poverty, proved adept at bringing strong delegations to UN events for focused advocacy at key moments. NGO interaction with Security Council delegations went forward robustly. And the tide of NGO participants at major meetings, though diminished from the global conference era, was still substantial. The overall number of accredited NGOs continued to rise – to well over 3,000.

In UN centers other than New York, the access picture was occasionally encouraging. In Geneva, NGOs sustained strong engagement with the newly-formed Human Rights Council. And in Rome, member states re-organized the Committee on World Food Security, incorporating an innovative “Civil Society Mechanism” with input that included the voices of peasant and fisher movements from around the world (McKeon 2009).

### **The NGO access groups**

In New York, Geneva and Vienna, NGOs formed working groups in 2009 to advocate for further progress in access, to protest negative changes and to lobby for a deepened partnership with the UN. They have called public meetings and lobbied energetically. The New York group, composed of senior representatives, has met with high UN officials and top security personnel, consulted with senior staff at the Capital Master Plan, and communicated with the Secretary General. The NGOs have insisted on more commitment from the UN, and they have made it clear that the problems include more than the details of day-to-day access – but also improved relations with citizen movements in every land.

### **Conclusion**

Looking over the past sixty-five years, it is clear that NGOs have dramatically expanded their role in the policy process at the UN. But they still face many hurdles. Today, NGOs must cope with government conservatism, funding difficulties, and private sector pressure – while also confronting multiple global crises: rising hunger, climate change, and global economic

instability. NGOs can draw strength, though, from emerging grassroots movements and global democratic openings such as the “Arab spring” and anti-austerity mobilizations. Citizen movements of many kinds are rising up to challenge official orthodoxies, build alliances across borders and search for real change. With the future shape of the global system in flux, the period is filled with uncertainty. There is a danger of social fragmentation and the possibility of repression. But NGOs may be able to seize the opportunities and make the most of them, as legitimacy-bereft governments find they must alter course in promising directions. If so, important new horizons may open up for NGOs – at the UN and beyond.

### Notes

1. This essay focuses on UN–civil society relations at headquarters in New York, which is the central locus of civil society–UN interaction. It does not deal with all aspects of UN–civil society relations, in all geographical regions and with all agencies, funds and programs – an enterprise far too broad for this undertaking.
2. Some precedents did, in fact, exist as Seary notes in a helpful historical review (Seary 1996, referred to in Willets 1996a), but the United Nations Charter – and the NGO activity that followed – still should be considered to be a major departure from previous concepts and practice.
3. The UN’s “Capital Master Plan”, a complete renovation of the entire UN headquarters campus, began preliminary construction work in 2008 and will continue through the end of 2014. Drastic space restrictions went into force when intergovernmental meetings shifted to the temporary North Lawn Building in 2010.

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# What issues rouse global civil society?

Clifford Bob

Conflicts over resources, politics, rights, and the environment are common throughout the world. Yet most remain little known outside their home regions. In a handful of cases, however, key actors in global civil society – non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, media, and transnational networks – rally to a cause. It becomes, sometimes quite suddenly, an international *cause célèbre* – even as analogous conflicts remain mired in obscurity. For observers of international affairs, the result is puzzling irregularity in international support among seemingly similar issues. But the imbalance is more than just an intellectual riddle. It has real effects on the lives of millions, particularly on the many whose causes *fail* to gain international attention and the resources that frequently go along with it.

Why, for instance did the Darfur conflict become an object of major international activism in the 2000s, while more severe conflict in the nearby Congo had a far lower profile? Why did Aids become a focus of international health spending in the 1990s and 2000s, when other diseases such as malaria and diarrhea have higher death tolls? More generally, as Ron, Ramos and Rodgers (2005) ask, what explains the way in which the human rights movement chooses among the many possible objects of its concern?

These comparative questions underline the importance of the issue. Various forms of outside support, including money, *materiel*, strategic advice, and political pressure, play important roles in many conflicts. Indeed in some, such support can be a matter of life or death. Yet many serious issues, problems, and crises attract little notice, let alone major action by civil society.

Some would argue that drawing the world's attention is little more than a crapsheet. For instance in 2004, United Nations' Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland said this (Hoge 2004):

I don't know why one place gets attention and another not. It's like a lottery, where there are 50 victimized groups always trying to get the winning ticket, and they play every night and they lose every night. I myself have said that the biggest race against the clock is Darfur, but in terms of numbers of people displaced, there are already more in Uganda and the eastern Congo.

Certainly luck plays some role, as Egeland believes. But closer examination reveals that there are also systematic characteristics in the conflicts that gain notice – and those that do not. What factors make a difference? One hypothesis would hold that recent media and technological advances explain the rise of contemporary *causes célèbres*. But in fact, this cannot be the answer. Even in the age of the Internet and Twitter there is often significant variation in the levels of international support that particular issues spark.

Others might claim that there is a global “meritocracy of suffering” in which selfless international activists devote the most assistance to the worst crises. Would that this were so! In fact, as the Congo–Darfur comparison makes amply clear, that is often not the case. In Darfur in the 2000s, perhaps 200,000–400,000 were killed, sparking major mobilizations by NGOs, celebrities, and politicians worldwide (Hagan and Palloni 2006). But in the wars that have ravaged Zaïre/Congo since the mid-1990s, 3–4 million were killed and countless others displaced, yet global civil society's response has been more restrained (Stearns 2011). Similarly, death counts from Aids are dwarfed by the tolls from other diseases that affect the developing world (Easterly 2009; World Bank 2009). This is not to say that Darfur and Aids have been the “wrong” focus of international activism. Clearly, these are critically important issues. But the comparisons underline the gravity of the questions at stake in this essay.

### **Power and marketing**

If the foregoing hypotheses provide only limited explanations, what in fact drives international concern for key issues? I start from the premise that, notwithstanding significant concern among NGOs and citizens in zones of peace, international resources and attention are scarce, given the

huge needs in the world as a whole. As a result, gaining crucial outside assistance is difficult. At any one time numerous wars, diseases, disasters, and accidents compete for notice and action.

From an analytic standpoint therefore, international support is best conceived not as altruism, but as exchange – between parties with highly unequal amounts of power. Because so many causes vie for attention, aggrieved “local” groups are the weaker party and must “sell” themselves (AlertNet 2005). By contrast, NGOs have relative power in the exchange because they select among the myriad causes that can use support (Bob 2005).

Given NGOs’ limited budgets, personnel, and time, these choices often hinge on their pre-existing views about which problems are important and which solutions are appropriate. It is true, of course, that many NGOs are motivated by “principled” ideas (Keck and Sikkink 1998, p 1). But because of NGOs’ own scarce resources, they cannot act on their principles in every case. They must choose a small number in which to invest their time and energy. In fact, the most likely objects of their support are groups whose profiles closely match the NGOs’ more specific preferences, as these are expressed in mission statements and organizational behavior. Often these preferences are purely substantive, as in the case of environmental or human rights NGOs. For these groups, broad missions are more narrowly defined in practice. Issues that do not fit the narrow interpretation may not be supported, as Hopgood (2006) has shown for Amnesty International. Nor are NGO preferences purely substantive. Often as well they relate to tactics, with most civil society actors preferring non-violent to violent ones. NGOs’ internal needs for funding and survival also play an important role in decisions on which cases to address, making it more likely that they will support those whose goals are likely to be achieved than those viewed as “lost causes.”

If this power-based view of global civil society holds merit, two distinct if related concepts provide a basis on which to understand why certain issues gain major global traction whereas most others do not. Some of these are “structural,” meaning that they are relatively difficult for the parties involved to change. A second set is “strategic” and subject to alteration or even manipulation by those seeking to gain or provide overseas support.

### **Structural factors**

Certain conflicts are by their nature more likely than others to gain the international spotlight. All else equal, the following factors, each of which usually operates independently, play major roles. First, notwithstanding contemporary communication and transportation technologies, those occurring in locales more accessible to international actors often gain more support than those in remote areas. Second, those involving pariah governments, whose leaders or political regimes are already anathema to powerful constituencies in richer states are more likely to attract disapproval than those in countries whose governments are internationally respected. In related vein, conflicts in some way implicating well-known global entities, such as multinational corporations or international financial institutions, also stand a better chance of gaining attention than those which appear disconnected from these bodies.

### **Strategic factors**

The foregoing characteristics do not guarantee a conflict's celebrity. Conversely, even "unpromising" issues may sometimes gain acclaim. To explain these anomalies, it is crucial to understand two strategic processes conducted by international political "marketers." Typically, these marketers are the leaders of an aggrieved group. The most adept have prior knowledge of or contacts with the international media and NGOs. In some cases, these indigenous marketers are joined by outside "champions" – journalists, missionaries, academics, or others – who take strong interest in a cause.

#### *Raising awareness*

First, these "marketers" increase international attention to the issue. One important method is by lobbying NGOs, bombarding them with information and appeals for support. Initially, such lobbying often occurs through electronic means. Direct personal contacts between marketers and NGO principals are also common.

The media plays a key role as well. In some cases, the gravity, violence, or novelty of an event will attract reporting and a conflict or issue will "sell itself." In others, however, only strategic action – such as protests,

What issues rouse global civil society?

lawsuits, or force – will attract journalists. Savvy marketers familiar with what attracts media interest can bootstrap obscure conflicts to prominence.

#### *Matching expectations*

A second strategy involves reshaping local, parochial, complex, or obscure conflicts to meet the preferences and needs of foreign supporters. Most such conflicts require “simplification” to make them understandable and appealing to international audiences. Groups seeking support may subtly reshape their claims, tactics, organizational practices, and even their identities to fit NGO predilections.

At times, this may distort realities on the ground. In particular, conflicts may be painted in stark, exaggerated terms, where subtlety and nuance more accurately reflect the facts. Internationally recognizable institutions may come to supplant obscure local factors as the “cause” of conflict. Tactics that grab international attention may come to replace less dramatic methods. And identities with wide global appeal, such as environmental or indigenous, may be added to longstanding, pre-existing but less resonant ones, such as poverty.

#### *Who benefits?*

Notably, in fact, the neediest groups are often the least capable of executing these strategies effectively. Groups having superior resources or pre-existing international contacts hold the upper hand. Those with leaders who are familiar with the Western media, NGO interests, and broader public concerns have significant advantages. Yet often such disparities hinge on little more than historical or geographic accident.

For their part, NGOs achieve important internal objectives even as they support needy clients. But the organizational factors affecting their behavior also mean that NGOs frequently move from one cause to another. For needy groups, this can be problematic, as support sometimes declines suddenly and unexpectedly.

#### **Conclusion**

Given the number of factors involved, it is probably impossible to predict with certainty the local conflicts that will become international *causes célèbres*. But knowing the factors, it becomes possible for local actors

to increase their chances of gaining support. For privileged members of global civil society, such knowledge may not only raise awareness of the forces driving the market – but also allow for development of means to make the market more equitable.

Such knowledge may also clarify that international assistance is more ambiguous in its effects than often assumed. For many scholars and journalists, overseas activism is an unmitigated blessing. Reflecting a penchant to idolize NGOs, analysts confuse the apparently altruistic intent of support with its effects. But when the latent sources of aid are considered, one can more easily assess its costs. On one hand, local challengers must conform to the needs and agendas of distant audiences, potentially alienating a movement from its base. On the other hand, the organizational imperatives driving NGOs mean that even the most devoted can seldom make a particular insurgent its top concern. The result can be problematic, even deadly: challengers, enticed to attention-grabbing tactics or extreme stances, may find distant stalwarts absent or helpless at moments of gravest peril. But even if these most extreme consequences of the global morality market do not arise, it nonetheless must be considered both by analysts trying to understand it and activists seeking to use it to advance their causes.

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# Implementation of the Nordic+ conclusions on civil society support: The case of Zambia

Karin Fällman

The Nordic+ initiative originated as an effort by six like-minded donors to improve their civil society support in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2006). In 2007, the donors – ie the official donor agencies of Norway, Finland, Sweden, Ireland, Canada and Great Britain – commissioned a study of their civil society support in six countries.<sup>1</sup> The management response became known as the Nordic+ conclusions (Scanteam 2007). This one-pager of findings and guidelines was endorsed by a majority of the donor agencies' Director Generals in February 2008 and later tested in three pilot countries; Zambia, Mozambique and Ghana.

Zambia's pilot implementation is the topic of this article. In Zambia, the implementation of the Nordic+ conclusions focused on the recommendation to increase core/program support, joint funding and support via intermediary (sub-granting) organisations. As coordinator in Zambia, the Embassy of Sweden promoted knowledge sharing, donor harmonisation and work in line with the aid effectiveness principles primarily through the Non-State Actor Group (NSAG) and in the donor group supporting the Zambian Governance Foundation.<sup>2</sup>

The Nordic+ guidelines were already reflected in civil society support in Zambia at the time of testing the Nordic+ conclusions. Core/programme funding was frequently granted; the use of intermediaries was on the rise; and joint funding models were increasingly common. The latter presupposes increased donor coordination and the use of aid effectiveness principles. However, the move towards joint support, core funding and support via intermediaries was not directed by joint steering documents. There had been discussions in the NSAG about developing

country specific guidelines, but the members were cautious, pointing to the danger of joint guidelines limiting civil society support, and making it riskier by encouraging the use of a few funding modalities only.

Thus the development towards more joint support, core funding and support via intermediaries was widely debated in Zambia. The assumption in the Nordic+ study that this trend was donor driven and caused by donors' need to slim down the administration of CSO support, was frequently echoed in Zambia, especially by CSOs. Another criticism often voiced – also by donors – was that core funding, and in particular core funding via intermediaries, only benefitted large, well-connected and professional organisations and, therefore, streamlined CSOs. To get a better understanding of how the common support models performed in terms of aid effectiveness and to complement the Nordic+ report with renewed data and additional information, the Embassy of Sweden initiated the following survey among selected donors and partner organisations (Embassy of Sweden 2010).

### Methodology

This survey is quantitative and offers an overview of the rating of different support models and funding modalities in relation to ten principles that are part of the Nordic+ and Paris doctrines or closely connected to them.<sup>3</sup> Respondents are actors which at the time were involved in civil society support in Zambia, either as donor or CSO representatives. Thus the sample follows the design of the Nordic+ study and is skewed to already known and active partners.

The respondents can be divided into two groups: leading *official donors* in the NSAG, and *civil society organisations*. The latter is sub-grouped into Lusaka-based National CSOs (NCSOs) and International CSOs (ICSOs) present in Zambia. The initially small scale survey quickly grew with the assistance of the Swedish NGO Forum Syd in Lusaka, whose coordinator distributed the questionnaire to different CSOs, increasing the number of respondents.

Altogether 54 respondents were asked to participate in the survey (12 official donors; and 42 CSOs, out of them 29 NCSOs and 13 ICSOs). Within the survey period, nine official donors, nine national NCSOs, and

four ICSOs provided their answers.<sup>4</sup> The response rate for official donors was high, 75 percent, and should be perceived as adequate. However, the non-responses from CSOs were unsatisfactory; approximately 30 percent of aggregated and disaggregated CSO respondents provided answers. This should be considered when analysing the data.

Among the non-responding actors, national CSOs seem to be overrepresented – most probably, but not certainly, choosing not to participate in the survey due to lack of time. Non-responses may also stem from inadequate information of the purpose and use of the survey, which would explain why official donors in the Non-State Actor Group responded satisfactorily – having had more insight in the study process. Another problem with the respondents is the bias of the different sub-groups in absolute numbers, weighting the international CSOs disproportionately heavy. It is therefore important to note that the *aggregated scores do not reflect the different respondents equally*, thus the need to disaggregate the scores and highlight evident differences between official donors, NCSOs and ICSOs.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, two of the four ICSOs originate in Sweden which may have biased the results – assuming a risk of homogeneity among 50 percent of the responding ICSOs with regard to values, perceptions and preferences when it comes to civil society support.

As already pointed out only official donors, NCSOs and ICSOs were invited to participate in the survey. This is a weakness, since other relevant stakeholders, such as non-CSO intermediaries, recipients of the assistance, and rural-, grassroots-, or not yet well-established CSOs are left out. A suggestion for future surveys on the topic is to expand the scope and include a wider group of recipients – reflecting the relevant stakeholders more thoroughly.

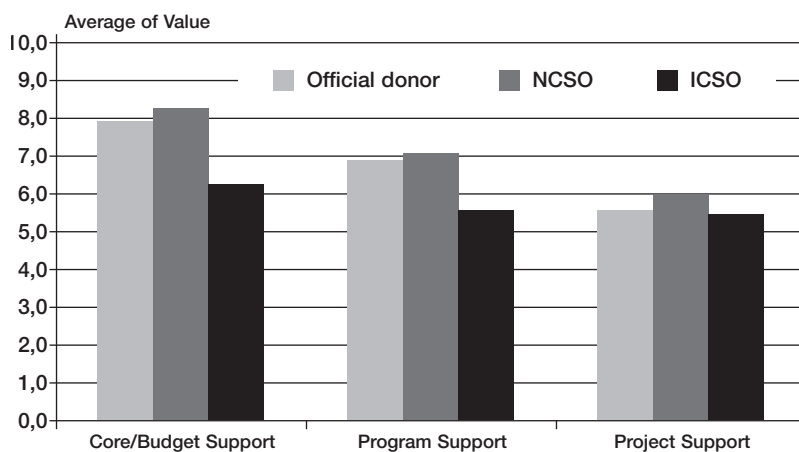
Respondents were asked to rate the performance of eight support models in relation to the ten principles. They were also asked to rate how core, program, and project support perform in relation to the same principles. Answers were provided using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represented poor, 5 satisfactory and 10 excellent. The data was analysed in a pivot table to illustrate the multidimensional aspects of the data. Charts of the different respondents' ratings of the modalities, as well as tables

with the total average were then created to better illustrate the findings. The complete data is presented in appendices (Embassy of Sweden 2010).

## Results

### *Funding modalities*

**Table 1.** Respondents rating core-, program-, and project support in relation to the *Paris principles overall*.



The Zambia study supports the Nordic+ guidelines in so far as to identify *core funding* as the most popular funding modality (Table1). Many of the donors have policies promoting this kind of support, and the CSO respondents belong to the group of well-established organisations that are likely to qualify for core support; hence this strong preference is not surprising. The core funding modality is in total the strongest performer in relation to all principles. Not unexpectedly, it scores particularly high on *alignment to end recipient CSO systems* (8.6), *ownership* (8.2) and *donor coordination* (8.2). More surprising is that core funding is also rated exceptionally high in relation to *outreach* (8.2). While many would argue that core funding cannot provide a large outreach, as only well established

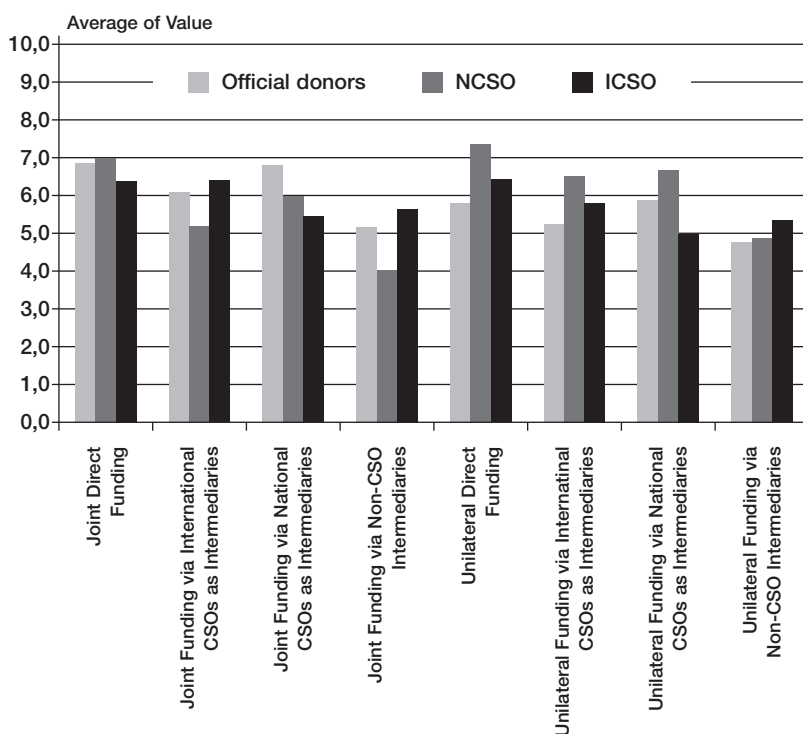
CSOs have access to it, the explanation for the high scores may be that core funding encourages capacity building rather than short term results and therefore may *give larger outreach in a long term perspective*.

Program funding is the second preference in all but one category – *mutual accountability between intermediaries and donors* – where it performs equally well as core funding (8.0). Program support is also rated as relatively good at providing *outreach* (7.4) but weak in relation to *dialogue between CSOs, donors and other stakeholders* (6.1).

It is difficult to interpret the high scores for mutual accountability between intermediaries and donors on the one hand, and relatively poor dialogue between CSOs, donors and other stakeholders on the other. Perhaps program support is only well understood and transparent for those directly involved – recipient CSOs, intermediaries and donors – while for outsiders who dialogue with these actors, the program support level may be difficult to comprehend and perhaps not seen as very relevant to talk about, as compared to a dialogue related to core support, where the topic is a specific organisation and its strategy.

Project support is the least popular funding modality with particularly low scores in relation to *donor coordination* (4.7), *dialogue between CSOs, donors and stakeholders* (5.1) and *alignment to end recipient CSOs' systems* (5.3). This funding modality's highest scores, and thus its *relative* strength, are related to its ability to promote *transparency* (6.6), *outreach* (6.4) and *results* (6.4). One reason may be that project support is more hands-on, with well-defined objectives making it more transparent and allowing it to produce tangible results. Moreover, project support can benefit also small and/or fragile CSOs and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs); hence it may indeed provide a large outreach.

Altogether, CSOs – and especially national CSOs – are more supportive of project funding than are the donors. A possible explanation is that responding CSOs often function as intermediaries and, as such, they are likely to have recent, positive experiences from working with project support. Donors, on the other hand, are themselves working less and less with project support; hence their experiences may be outdated. They may also rate project support low to justify their move towards core support.

*Unilateral support and joint support*Table 2. Respondents rating different joint and unilateral support models in relation to the *Paris principles*.

The second component of the Zambia survey sorts out preferences between *joint*, *unilateral*, *direct* and *indirect* support models. To start with, when comparing preferences between unilateral and joint support models, donors clearly prefer joint support, and NCSOs unilateral. ICOSOs have no such clear partiality. NCSOs' strong support for unilateral funding nevertheless makes CSOs as a group favour this model (Table 2). Donors' choice of the joint support model confirms Scanteam's and others' conclusions that *the development towards joint funding is donor driven* and probably explained by donors' desire to work in a coordinated manner in line with the Paris Declaration, and to slim down the administration of civil society support.

The reason behind NCSO preference for unilateral support may be found in the high scores this model gets for promoting results, dialogue, ownership and alignment. As pointed out by Scanteam and by many NCSOs, *unilateral funding tends to create stronger, strategic and more equal partnerships between donors and NCSOs*, which in turn gives better dialogue, enables alignment and creates stronger ownership. This is particularly true when unilateral and joint support is direct and the chain of actors the shortest possible, thus strengthening the position of the end recipient CSOs. Direct and indirect support will be further discussed in sections below.

In the Scanteam study, NCSOs raised concerns about donor coordination and donors' move towards joint support models, as they feared that conflicts with one donor would risk the support of all. Such concerns appear to be supported by the Zambia survey with its preference for unilateral support, and this model's particularly high scores in relation to ownership, alignment and dialogue. These findings point to a valid risk that donor coordination poses to CSO independence, similar to the fear expressed by the Government that the balance in relations and bargaining power might become skewed, as donors "gang up."

The fact that ICSOs are less negative towards joint support may have to do with their often stronger links to donors, especially donors from their country of origin. Moreover, the responding ICSOs tend to think that all support models perform rather equal when it comes to dialogue with donors, perhaps because ICSOs are not as financially dependent on the group of donors who support them in Zambia as are the NCSOs.

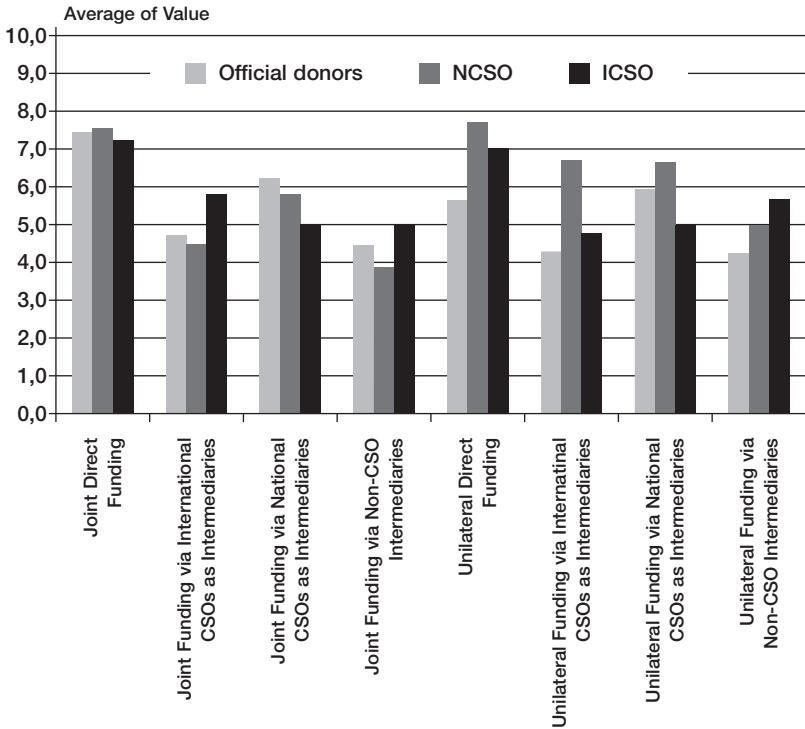
#### *Direct and indirect support*

Another support model recommended by the Nordic+ guidelines is indirect support, ie funding via intermediaries. However, *if there is one clear preference in the Zambia survey besides that for core funding, it is for direct support*. Although CSOs want the direct funding to be provided by one donor at a time, the unilateral model receives a lower total average (6.5) than joint direct funding (6.8) which is the single most popular model, much due to donors' strong support for joint funding. Unilateral direct funding scores an average of 6.5 in relation to all principles, with the



not very surprising exceptions of *dialogue between CSOs, donors and other stakeholders* (6.3) *outreach* (6.2) and *donor coordination* (5.0).

**Table 3.** Respondents rating different support models in relation to *alignment*.



In relation to unilateral direct support, it is interesting to note that *donors think they are less aligned to CSOs' agendas as sole financiers* than what CSOs themselves think (Table 3). The responding donors and NCSOs further perceive funding through non-CSOs intermediaries as impeding the alignment, rating it below satisfactory in this regard.

The dissatisfactory alignment of joint and/or indirect support might be explained by the quality of *dialogue* between CSO and donor when working with different support models. In the Scanteam report, CSOs were concerned that harmonisation was impeding a constructive dialogue with donors, and claimed it was rather creating a forum for donor

monologue, where CSO priorities were neglected. The Zambia survey strengthens these findings, with CSOs rating dialogue in unilateral funding much higher than do the donors. The same pattern can be discerned for the closely related *mutual accountability*. Here as well, CSO respondents have a more positive view of the performance of unilateral direct support models than do donors.

### *Indirect support via CSO intermediaries*

When working with indirect support models, it is important to choose “the right intermediary.” Most popular in the Zambia survey are the NCSOs. Non-CSOs are the least preferred, scoring 4.6 and 4.9 in total, thereby falling below what is considered satisfactory. Non-CSO intermediaries will be discussed more in-depth in the section below.

When the results are disaggregated, ICSOs and NCSOs alike rate themselves as the best intermediaries. The analysis of how various intermediaries perform should take this pattern of auto-rating into account, as NCSOs tend to give themselves slightly lower scores than what the ICSOs do. Additionally, NCSOs are more generous when rating their ICSO colleagues than the other way around.

In the survey, *NCSOs confirm their reputation as the intermediary who caters for strong ownership and alignment to end recipient CSOs’ system*. Donors even rate NCSOs as more aligned than do the NCSOs themselves. They are also considered better at promoting *outreach*, making this model score slightly better here than the favoured direct funding. An interesting observation is that ICSOs only agree that NCSOs are strong promoters of outreach when funding is provided jointly, indicating that ICSOs finds bilateral cooperation between NCSOs and donors relatively closed. One explanation may lie in the strong, strategic partnerships that are prone to develop in a bilateral cooperation, as indicated by both Scanteam and survey respondents. These partnerships are important for exchange of strategic information and for mutual moral and political support. This, in turn, would indicate that the dialogue is close and sometimes confidential and, also in part exclusive, hence perceived as closed.

Because of strong donor support, NCSOs also rank as the top intermediary in relation to *donor coordination and harmonisation*. The NCSOs

themselves, however, think that ICSOs are better. Perhaps this is so because ICSOs are considered more closely connected to donors and therefore better positioned to promote donor coordination.

NCSOs are also top rated in total in relation to *dialogue* between CSOs, donors and other stakeholders, and to *mutual accountability* between end recipient CSOs and donors. However, ICSOs score equally high on promoting mutual accountability between intermediaries and donors. This is quite remarkable given that NCSOs are frequently voiced as the intermediaries who are closest to the end recipient CSOs. *Thus NCSOs appear good at promoting dialogue and mutual accountability between donors and end recipient CSOs, but less successful in promoting mutual accountability between themselves as intermediaries and their CSO partners.*

ICSO intermediaries also receive the highest scores in relation to *transparency*, thanks to the strong support they receive from their NCSO colleagues. Donors on the other hand have rated NCSOs as the most transparent intermediaries, at least when funding is joint. However, donors give NCSOs a notably lower transparency score when funding is unilateral. One possible reason is that joint funding demands greater transparency, while unilateral funding via NCSOs is seen by donors and ICSOs alike as a relatively closed cooperation.

Finally, ICSOs perform slightly better than NCSOs as intermediaries in relation to *development results*. Donors make little difference between how ICSOs and NCSOs produce results when working as intermediaries, but the CSOs themselves make a clear distinction, in both cases in favour of themselves.

#### *Indirect support via non-CSO intermediaries*

The one intermediary that clearly stands out as the least preferred is the non-CSO intermediary. The weak support for non-CSOs in total (4.8) is striking and puts this intermediary *below the level of satisfactory*. In Zambia, the model has primarily been used with UN agencies and consultancy companies – the best known example of the latter probably being the Zambia Elections Fund of 2006. Since most arguments for working with intermediaries derive from the Paris Declaration on Aid

Effectiveness, it is interesting to see that this intermediary receives its lowest scores, when support is *provided in line with the aid effectiveness agenda, ie coordinated by a group of donors*, as compared to unilaterally, by one donor.

When funding is unilateral, the performance of non-CSO intermediaries is less than satisfactory in relation to *alignment* (4.9), *donor coordination and harmonisation* (4.3), *outreach* (4.6), *ownership* (4.8), *results* (4.8) and *mutual accountability between end recipient CSOs and donors* (4.8). Here, all responding sub-groups seem to agree in their rating, with reservation for marginal variations. When funding is joint, however, only *dialogue* (5.5), *donor coordination and harmonisation* (5.1), and *mutual accountability between intermediary and donor* (5.1) are rated above satisfactory, and then only marginally above. Given that most of the support via non-CSO intermediaries has been provided jointly in Zambia, these results are quite disappointing. Further assessment of this model is therefore encouraged.

NCSOs are the most critical towards this model, whereas ICSOs have the least negative attitude. Donors are not very content with the model either but assess it as slightly above satisfactory when funding is joint. Scanteam suggests that one reason for the low rating is non-CSOs' lack of credibility in relation to the CSO community. And indeed, NCSOs in Zambia have criticised the non-CSO intermediaries using credibility-related arguments: non-CSOs have less knowledge about the CSO sector; they work with economic profit objectives and therefore have a different and less popular aim; and they are less rooted among CSOs and CBOs in the provinces and at grassroots levels.

The relatively positive attitude of ICSOs towards non-CSOs might be explained by similarities in functions and working methods. Both types of organisation often work as sub-granting organisations, supporting NCSO partners in the implementation of their agendas.

It is surprising that *donors are negative towards support via non-CSO intermediaries*. Given the recent establishment of the *Zambian Governance Foundation* – managed by a consultancy company – and donors' positive evaluations of the jointly supported *Election Fund* – also run by a company – it is remarkable that donors rate non-CSOs as weak perfor-

mers. Not even in relation to *development results* and *outreach*, which are common arguments for a professional company as an intermediary, does this model get significant support. The *relatively* high scores the model receives for *donor coordination* may explain why it is used, despite its generally meagre performance.

However, when analysing the low scores for non-CSO intermediaries, it is important to remember that the Zambia survey followed the example of the Nordic+ study, carried out by the consultancy company Scanteam, and did not ask for the opinions of the non-CSO intermediaries themselves. Nor were rural, grassroots and new CSOs/CBOs with limited access to donor funding asked, organisations that might have been more open to alternative intermediaries who could increase their access to funding.

One recent attempt to reach CSOs and CBOs that do not usually access donor funding is the Zambian Governance Foundation (ZGF), which offers a variety of funding modalities. It reaches all levels of CSOs/CBOs by providing funding for projects and capacity building, even though core funding is the preferred modality. This should enable the ZGF to align with end recipient CSOs' systems and promote strong ownership. To ensure the latter, the ZGF is also managed by a Zambian board of "prominent, but independent" individuals. Finally, monitoring and evaluation, knowledge sharing and joint learning are all part of the results focus of the ZGF. However, since funds had not yet been disbursed at the time of the survey, the possible impact of this model will have to be evaluated and compared to other indirect models at a later stage.

### Conclusions and way forward

The favoured support models in the Nordic+ conclusions – core support, indirect support and joint support – are not necessarily the ones performing the best according to the twenty-two CSOs and donors who participated in the survey in Zambia.

Core funding is the one Nordic+ model that is strongly supported by all respondents, and it scores particularly high on alignment, ownership, donor coordination and outreach. The second preference, program support, has its strengths in the mutual accountability between interme-

diaries and donors and in outreach. The least preferred modality, project support, is relatively strong in relation to transparency, development results and outreach.

CSOs, and particularly NCSOs, prefer unilateral funding; only donors favour joint support models. According to NCSOs, donors are more aligned and open to mutual accountability in unilateral arrangements than the donors themselves think they are. Unilateral funding also scores particularly high in relation to ownership, alignment, dialogue and development results. If funding is to be joint, CSOs prefer it to be direct.

Thus, direct support is considered better than support through intermediaries. CSOs, and particularly NCSOs, favour unilateral direct funding, while donors prefer joint direct funding. When working with indirect support, NCSOs are the most popular intermediaries, followed by ICSOs, and with non-CSOs falling far behind the two. Funding via NCSOs is considered to promote ownership, alignment, outreach and mutual accountability between CSOs and donors, whereas support via ICSOs score high on transparency and mutual accountability between both intermediaries and CSOs, and intermediaries and donors. Moreover, ICSOs are considered the best intermediaries at producing development results, although only slightly better than NCSOs. Non-CSOs, on the contrary, are seen as weak performers and have an average score below the level of satisfactory.

It is important to remember that these results should be seen in the light of the methodological limitations and the scope of the study – the survey's respondents being well connected CSOs and official donors, and the aggravating fact of a strong tendency to “auto-rating” by the respondents. Had the survey also asked for the opinions of non-CSO intermediaries and rural, grassroots and new CSOs/CBOs with limited access to donor funding, the models may well have scored differently – and particularly so if the recently established Zambian Governance Foundation, which addresses many of the model's weaknesses, had been operational before the survey.

In sum, the support models developed in line with the Nordic+ and Paris principles may be less successful at promoting ownership, alignment, mutual accountability, transparency, harmonisation, outreach and

development results than expected, and less successful than old fashioned models such as unilateral direct funding.

An important conclusion is that the *type of respondent* seems to be a much stronger determinant when it comes to scores for each support model than is the choice of variable within each model. For instance, when focussing on NCSOs' assessment of each funding model, almost invariably joint funding via non-CSO intermediaries scores the lowest, and unilateral direct funding scores the highest, regardless of which Paris principle one looks at. Similarly, donors' assessments (or that of ICSOs) of the same support models and Paris principles will often vary from those provided by the NCSOs, but will again be strikingly consistent internally, regardless of which Paris principle is the object of the assessment.

So, tell me your choice of support model and I will tell you who you are! If you prefer direct, unilateral support, you almost certainly belong to a well-established, national civil society organisation. If you have no obvious preference between joint and unilateral support or between direct and indirect funding models, you probably represent international civil society. But, if you clearly favour joint funding (and do not mind working via intermediaries), you are likely to be a donor. The Nordic+ support models of joint and indirect support seem to correspond primarily to donors' preferences and to some degree to the likings of ICSOs. *Looking at how preferences follow the practitioner type, the Nordic+ should probably have agreed on a variety of support models instead of searching for one or two models that fit all.*

A lesson for future CSO support is the understanding that there are numerous support models with ideal features – and which is the favourite depends on the type of respondent. Therefore, the end recipient CSO should be the starting point for selecting funding modalities. Moreover, for future survey, given the importance of the practitioner type, it is crucial to include also community based organisations, new and less well-connected CSOs as respondents. Finally, for future studies it is suggested to link the preferred support models to development results, to find out not only which support models are favoured but also which models are best at producing development results.

## Notes

1. The study was carried out in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia and by the consultancy company Scanteam (Scanteam 2007).
2. The Zambian Governance Foundation was a new support model at the time, developed in line with the Nordic+ conclusions to strengthen core/program support, joint funding and support via intermediaries (sub-granting) organisations
3. The support models were unilateral direct funding; joint direct funding; unilateral funding via national CSOs as intermediaries; unilateral funding via international CSOs as intermediaries; unilateral funding via non-CSO intermediaries; joint funding via national CSOs as intermediaries; joint funding via international CSOs as intermediaries; and joint funding via non-CSO intermediaries. The principles were 1) results/fulfilment of program/project objectives, 2) transparency, 3) mutual accountability between end recipient CSOs and intermediaries, 4) mutual accountability between end recipient CSOs and donors, 5) mutual accountability between intermediaries and donors, 6) ownership of end recipient CSOs, 7) alignment to end recipient CSOs' systems, 8) outreach, 9) dialogue between CSOs, donors and other stakeholders, and 10) donor coordination/harmonisation.
4. See Appendix 1, Responding Agents, in Embassy of Sweden 2010.
5. All aggregated and disaggregated data are found in appendices in Embassy of Sweden 2010, Appendix 2 illustrating Funding modalities in relation to the Paris principles; Appendix 3 illustrating Support models in relation to the principles; and Appendix 4 displaying aggregated scores for different modalities in relation to the principles.
6. NCSOs ranking themselves as 6.3 (5.9) on total average when joint funding is provided, and 7.4 (7.0) when unilateral funding is provided; ICSOs ranking themselves as 7.3 (4.8) in total when joint funding is provided and 7.5 (4.8) when unilateral. The average score respective respondent gives their counterparts are seen within brackets. It is interesting also to note how NCSOs perceive themselves as far better performers when receiving unilateral funding.

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# Local voices or new international donors?

Lisa Sjöblom

In the international development cooperation landscape, large international non-governmental organisations are important actors that channel substantial amounts of funds and influence policy-making. Who do these organisations represent? Where do they gain their legitimacy? Are they so called “local voices” or mainly new international donors?<sup>1</sup>

Large international organisations are certainly donors in the sense that they channel funds from institutions, such as the Swedish government agency, Sida, and the EU, as well as from individuals in high-income countries to projects and organisations in low-income countries around the world. Most of them are not new. Many have existed for quite some time and have always been important actors.

To what extent are they then local voices? Let me start by discussing where these international organisations formally gain their legitimacy. Many of them, such as Save the Children Alliance, the WWF International, and Plan International, have problematic internal governance structures. Generally, there are three types of entities in these international organisations, federations or alliances. The first type is “donor country organisations”, such as WWF Sweden, Save the Children UK and Plan Norway, who are active in the countries where funds are raised. The second type is the international organisation, federation or alliance itself, for example WWF International, Save the Children Alliance and Plan International. And finally, the third type of entity is the “program country organisations” who are active in the countries where the programs are actually being implemented (generally low-income countries).

## **Donor country organisations**

The donor country organisations are generally independent legal entities that are members of the international organisations. Donor country

organisations therefore have influence over the strategic decision-making of the international organisation and the selection of international board members. However, the donor country organisations can also make independent decisions over which the international organisation has no control. This means that the international organisations are formally accountable to the donor country organisations, and – in case they are member-based (as for example WWF Sweden and Save the Children Sweden) – to the donor country organisations' members.

### **Program country organisations**

The program country organisations, the ones who actually implement and should own the programs and projects, are generally *part* of the international organisations, and not independent members like the donor country organisations (the Red Cross with its federation of member countries with equal status is a notable exception). In other words, program country organisations are subsidiaries to the head quarters. They have no right to elect the board, nor to participate in strategic decision-making, and they have to follow directions given by the international head quarters. Since they are not independent legal entities, they do not have local members or locally elected boards in the countries where they work.

### **The international organisations; the example of Plan International**

It might therefore be easy to conclude that the international organisations, with their undemocratic governance structures, are development co-operation machines, implementing programs that are designed in London or in Sweden. However, that would be jumping to conclusions. Even if governance structures do not encourage local ownership, practise does. In the case of Plan, local offices develop their country strategies and programs after consultation with children and other important local stakeholders. Plan's employees are by and large local staff, even if they are generally well educated and in that sense do not represent the poor.

Historically, Plan's local offices have worked directly with communities and community-based organisations, rather than through registered and well-established, civil society organisations. These small organisations,

created by the poor, children or students, are often not even registered. They handle small amounts of funds, and generally have weak administrative capacities. They are organisations who to a very large extent represent the voices of the poor, but they have difficulties gaining access to funding and important decision-making arenas.

Thus, Plan provides financing to such small organisations – and in that sense acts as a donor. But Plan also has access to United Nations bodies, to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Union, the European Union etc, which means that Plan can bring the voices of these community-based organisations and the people they represent onto the international arena.

In the new policy landscape, government agencies require that as much funds as possible should be transferred to local civil society organisations with formal legitimacy to represent the poor. However, funds can only be transferred to registered, professional CSOs and these are not the small grassroots, community-based organisations that Plan traditionally has worked with. Non-registered community-based organisations would not be able to open a bank account, be subject to audit etc.

Registered CSOs sometimes have a large member-base, consisting either of individuals or other organisations, but often they are quite “closed” with a strong Chief Executive Officer. There are, of course, registered CSOs that are small and community-based and very efficiently provide an organised voice for the poor. But just as often they are stronger, larger and more professionalised NGOs that, like the international NGOs, work with the poor without formally representing them. As donor requirements become increasingly stringent, many donors (including the international organisations) tend to choose larger and more professionalised NGOs over small, locally based CSOs – where the poorest are actually active themselves – as counterparts, since only those organisations can live up to the requirements.

### **Competing organisations or voice providers?**

I would argue that, technically speaking, Plan and other international organisations are certainly more international donors than local voices. Most international organisations lack the formal legitimacy to speak for

the poor – the poor have not elected their board members, and the poor have limited formal ways to influence their agendas.

However, even if international organisations cannot *be* a voice for the poor, they can, through strategic and responsive work, *provide* a voice for the poor; make the voices of the poor heard. And to make these voices heard is not necessarily about transferring funds to locally registered CSOs, even if this is an important part of their work.

As argued above, local CSOs that can live up to current donor requirements do not necessarily represent the poor any more than the international organisations do. Sometimes international organisations can more efficiently act as a channel of funds, while living up to donor requirements. They provide small non-registered community-based organisations with the small amounts of funds they need to carry out their activities, and give them access to international networks and as well as national and international decision-making arenas.

We are walking a fine line here, though. Given that the international organisations do not represent the poor but want to provide the poor with the resources that they need to claim their rights, when do the international organisations begin to take up space that grassroots actors could and should take?

In a more decentralised funding structure, international organisations could start to compete with those they actually want to support. They therefore need to have the strength to only accept the role as a donor or channel of funds when this really adds value to those – the children, the poor – whose rights they claim to work for. These are issues that the international organisations themselves must continuously work on.

#### **Note**

1. This article is based on my experiences from working at Plan Sweden, part of Plan International. The reflections are my own and should be regarded as such.

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**Social movements in a neo-liberal era:  
Ethnographies of local activists in transnational  
networks**

Introduction Eva-Maria Hardtmann	113
Civil society and social movements in Eastern Europe Grzegorz Piotrowski	118
Collective action and absent civil society organisations in the Maputo suburbs Maj-Lis Follér and Kajsa Johansson	124
Connected citizens and networked resistance Johanna Stenersen	131
Transnational activism and the Dalit women's movement in India Upasana Mahanta	140



# Introduction

Eva-Maria Hardtmann

## **The Global Justice Movement in relation to the UN family**

The recurrent World Social Forums (WSFs) celebrated one decade of existence in Dakar, Senegal, in February 2011. They have attracted all kinds of movements and hundreds of thousands of activists, artists, journalists and others under the slogan: “Another World is Possible.” During the past decade, we have seen attempts by the activists to build alliances across continents, cutting across different issues such as the right to food, housing and work, gender equality, environmental issues, and work against different forms of discrimination.

Activists in the Global Justice Movement (GJM), particularly in the World Social Forum-process, have been united, not only by their vision of another alternative world, but also in their criticism against the economic globalisation and the neo-liberal policies of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

During the 1990s, the large United Nations world conferences served as a platform for activists, who got together and created transnational movement networks. Increasingly, however, during the 2000s, also the UN has come under scrutiny by the activists. In short, many activists are ambivalent towards the United Nations, claiming that a change in the UN’s direction was obvious already during Kofi Annan’s time as Secretary General (1997- 2006), as he collaborated more closely with the World Bank. For example, the World Bank’s Vice President for External Affairs, Mark Malloch Brown, was appointed by Kofi Annan as the Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1999. According to many activists, Annan’s successor, the present UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, has followed the same path.

In other words, the UN entanglement with the World Bank’s finances creates tensions among activists. Many NGO activists have got, or aim at,



consultative status within the UN, while others have come to regard the UN as directed by the World Bank, which they see as one of the driving forces behind the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies around the world. As expressed during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2005: “The macro-economic functions of the UN have been taken away by the Bretton Woods institutions” (Tavola Della Pace 2005, quoted in Smith 2008, p 191). Likewise, during the 2009 WSF in Belém, where I did fieldwork, a UN representative speaking in a session on the UN Millennium Goals was criticized for UN collaboration with the World Bank. After the session, a Dalit activist from India even questioned UN presence in the WSF at all. He ended with the following words: “The World Social Forum has been hijacked by the United Nations.”

#### **Transnational social movements related to international NGOs**

Transnational social movements *may* include different formal and transnational organisations, often called Transnational Social Movement Organisations (TSMOs). The International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs) are probably the most discussed among them, due to their drastic increase in number since the mid-90s. These kinds of organisations could be informally linked. However, focus on the formal organisations alone, or even the informal linkages between them, does not capture the fluid character of a social movement. Transnational social movements differ from INGOs (as well as from national NGOs with international outreach) in the sense that we also find informal interaction tying informal groups and individuals together (Eschle and Stammers 2004). Escobar (2009) prefers the concept “meshwork” when talking about social movements, and Juris (2008) gives detailed examples of this in his ethnography. Still, the informally linked (I)NGOs are often talked about as social movements.

There has been a tendency – among scholars as well as activists, donor agencies and practitioners – to idealise (I)NGOs as well as transnational social movements. One may present (I)NGO as the prolonged arm of minorities, women or others in civil society, putting pressure on governments through international institutions such as the United Nations. Transnational social movements may be romanticised as well, considered being closer to the lives of ordinary people at grassroots level, while (I)NGOs

are then in contrast, seen as led by élites, distanced from the people, and legitimating World Bank claims to be in dialogue with civil society.

### **A movement of movements**

Transnational feminism has been recognised as one of the most important factors setting the World Social Forum-process in motion, and it is still an important force, shaping the Global Justice Movement (Eschle and Maiguashca 2010; Smith et al 2008). Feminists connect with each other and criticize the patriarchal structures in society. Counterpublics of feminists have grown from within social movements as well, demanding gender equality in their own movements (cf Fraser 1992). For example, in India, the Dalit women have been marginalised both by men in the Dalit movement and by the Indian women's/feminist movement. The Dalit women began to organise nationally already in the mid-1980s, built feminist alliances transnationally in the 1990s, and came to shape the World Social Forum in Mumbai 2004 to be probably the most feminist WSF so far (Hardtmann 2009).

Anarchist ideas have been another strong influence in the Global Justice Movement. Graeber writes that even though the critics may portray these activists as lacking a coherent ideology, and picture them as a “bunch of dumb kids touting a bundle of completely unrelated causes,” anarchism should rather be understood as an elaborated way of organising democracy, not in a top-down fashion but based on principles of decentralisation and non-hierarchical consensus democracy (Graeber 2002, p 70; 2009). Decentralised fields of consensus democracy could, of course, be structured by informal power relations as well, but the ideals and practices of anarchism are definitely significant in the Global Justice Movement.

Without doubt the Zapatista rebellion of 1994 and the Zapatista transnational solidarity network have played a crucial role for the Global Justice Movement, not least because of the new way in which activists took advantage of media – particularly the Internet – to disseminate their messages. (Olesen 2004). The uprising among Indian peasants in Chiapas in Mexico is still referred to, by activists across the world, as one of the most inspiring events in their common history. The Zapatista rebellion

is only the most well-known example among the many indigenous movements who set the WSF-process in motion.

The labour organisations, finally, have played an important role within the Global Justice Movement, despite showing their ambivalence towards the new, often community-based social movements. The Brazilian Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST), for example, has been part of the Organizing Committee of the World Social Forums, and unions have increasingly taken part in national and international demonstrations against neo-liberal globalisation. The relation between the unions and the social movements is not only intertwined, but rather characterised by interdependence (Waterman 2008, p 257).

### Local ethnographies on transnational activism

The Global Justice Movement is an attempt by activists to communicate and organise across continents. Transnational feminism, anarchism, the indigenous movements and labour unions have all played a decisive role in the WSF process. Even though knowledge about the Global Justice Movement and the WSF process is growing, we still lack knowledge on the everyday practices of activists, and not least, on these practices *in relation* to their local and regional surroundings. Ethnography and actual examples from different parts of the world, with activists put in context, will certainly make the picture of transnational activism more nuanced and multifaceted. We will then also learn more about the tensions and different directions in which activists are moving.

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# Civil society and social movements in Eastern Europe

Grzegorz Piotrowski

The big wave of social mobilisation under alterglobalist slogans seems to be behind us. Although the current economic crisis raises lots of social contention, the future of the alterglobalist movement (or the Global Justice Movement) is hard to define, at least in its current terms. The alterglobalist movement is mostly regarded as opposed to neo-liberal capitalism and globalisation; at the same time, the movement seems to be particularly weak in places that have introduced this model of capitalism and governance. The reason for my choosing the alterglobalist movement for comparison with the broader civil society sector in Eastern Europe is its significance for local social activism, and its comparability with its counterparts in the rest of the world. Also, in Eastern Europe, the development of politics (including the contentious) and civil society is different from that in other parts of the world. The region's transformation after 1989 resulted in the introduction of a neo-liberal economy, which re-defined the way society works. Relations between the political and economic areas are complex and full of tensions.

## **The alterglobalist movement**

The name “alterglobalist movement” (sometimes referred to as the antiglobalist or Global Justice Movement) became popular after the Battle of Seattle in November 1999 – riots that broke out on the streets of Seattle during the World Trade Organization summit. The protests and other events that were soon to follow (other counter-summits, World and local Social Forums etc) created a growing interest within the academic world. The wave of mobilisation was seen as a new kind of social movement. Most of the signs of the alterglobalist movement were also present in Eastern Europe, with counter-summits (September, 2000, in

Prague, April 2004 in Warsaw, December 2008 in Poznań), local social forums, street parties, anti-war demonstrations, campaigns and so on. Although the political impact of the movement was limited, it brought many activists together and laid the foundations for future networks.

Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani list four characteristics of social movements (1999:14-15) which seem to perfectly fit the alterglobalist movement:

1. Social movements are informal interaction networks. They are never formed by one organisation, but always by a plurality of organisations, groups, and individuals. Interaction among them form a movement.
2. Social movements are kept together by shared beliefs and solidarity. In other words, a social movement is cemented by a collective identity that is shared across its constituent parts.
3. Social movements engage in collective action focused on conflict. They take part in political and/or cultural conflicts, and strive to promote or prevent social change.
4. Social movements use a protest action repertoire. Although this criterion is not accepted by all scholars, social movements are often understood as actors engaged in non-institutional protest tactics.

However, the alterglobalist movement differs significantly from other waves of social mobilisation with its weak (or lacking) organisation, which is mostly based on loose networks with different political objectives. Previous social movements (such as the women's rights movement, the peace movement etc) were focused on political change that could be achieved through political means. They therefore formulated their claims in a way that allowed them to reach a broader public and, in the end, either change legal conditions or replace already existing power structures. The alterglobalist movement, in contrast, does not have a clear political programme or vision – there is one “no”, but there are many “yeses”. This makes it possible to organise broad networks with shared beliefs that are highly inclusive; on the other hand, the lack of a common political program is seen by some as an inherent vice of the movement that will lead to its decline.

### Development of civil society in Eastern Europe

Civil society in Eastern Europe has a specific history and a different line of development than its counterparts in Western Europe. In the late 1970s and during the 1980s, attempts to build a civil society were a way to fight the Communist regimes. Independent civil society – whether it was an independent trade union, or academic lectures held in secret in private apartments – was a challenge to the authorities that could not control it. As one of the leaders of the democratic opposition in Poland, Bronisław Geremek (1992, p 4) put it:

the idea of a civil society – even one that avoids overtly political activities in favor of education, the exchange of information and opinion, or the protection of the basic interests of the particular groups – has enormous anti-totalitarian potential.

It was also a call for an independent society with an uncontrolled arena, where it could operate. In this sense, Eastern European civil society came very close to its definition as the force that protects society from the state and the market (which are more or less the same in a centrally-planned economy).

#### *The NGO-isation of civil society*

When the regimes changed, the sphere of civil society also underwent a fundamental transition. Civil society has developed into a “third sector,” providing auxiliary services and expertise knowledge to the state (Žuk 2001, p 114). The development of this sector, located between the state and private-owned business, is argued to be a consequence of the neo-liberal way of thinking that was codified in the Washington Consensus (Załęski 2006). State institutions were regarded as less effective than a free-market and competition-based array of non-governmental organisations, foundations, associations and non-profit organisations. Most of the organisational models and – in the first years – also funding came from Western Europe and the US, reproducing the shape of civil society in these areas. The introduction of a grants-based funding model resulted not only in higher competition among the actors, but also in the

abandonment of political claims and the adoption of a much less radical repertoire of actions.

The two groups of actors – civil society, in the shape of non-governmental organisations, and social movements – not only grew apart, although they came from the same background, but began to oppose each other as well. One main argument that social movement activists give is that civil society organisations in this region are not entirely independent, since they rely on funding from national and local authorities or supra-national entities, such as the EU or the big business. Social movement activists find it difficult to trust the independence of a sector that financially relies on external funding. Along with the financial dependency comes a number of legal restrictions for civil society organisations (CSOs), such as the exclusion of people with criminal records from their boards, or threats of being deleted from the court registries in case one is not law-abiding. Even minor cases – for instance the organisation of an illegal demonstration – may lead to the exclusion of a particular group from public grants; similarly, tracking the changes in regulations on strikes shows increase in criminalisation of this kind of protest.

#### *Grassroots social movements*

When one looks at the current initiatives and campaigns of social movements, especially those that grew out of the capitalist-critical and anti-neo-liberal alterglobalist movement, one can see a shift in civil society actions. A number of initiatives to protect the citizens from the market and the state are organised by social movement activists. These include: the protection of minorities (ethnic, sexual) from aggression and attacks, particularly during public events, such as during the mobilisation against right-wing vigilantes harassing Roma people in Hungary; or the involvement of activists in the Gay Pride marches all over the region; as well as anti-gentrification campaigns, protecting local poor residents from private investors, and forcing local authorities to implement more citizen-oriented social housing programs. Also, the whole region witnesses a growth in grassroots trade unions that try to protect their members in a much more radical way than the already existing unions do.



A similar situation can be observed within the environmental protection movement, a long-time example of the development of civil society in the Eastern Europe. A number of recent mobilisations show that for some of the activists – many of whom also have an alterglobalist experience – the role as service (including education) or expertise knowledge provider is no longer sufficient. Nor is appealing to the public opinion for support, or lobbying for policy change sufficient for these groups, who move towards more radical activism, inspired by Direct Action.

### Conclusion

The shift from CSOs towards grassroots groups suggests a significant shift in the composition and ways of action of the whole civil society sector in Eastern Europe. As such, it also suggests the need to redefine how the concept of civil society is applied in the region. The exclusion of grassroots mobilisation groups and social movements (the alterglobalist movement being one good example) was a process that took place during the time of transition, when, I suggest, contentious groups were not “needed” by the regimes of the new and weak democracies. Ensuing developments (such as changes of legal systems and funding opportunities) have led to a rapid growth of the “third sector” composed mostly of NGOs and political parties. However, at some point, the existing societal structure proved incapable of solving the problems of the everyday lives of citizens, and this opened up space for grassroots mobilisation groups and organisations. Not only do these groups benefit from the experiences of the alterglobalist movement, but they also rely more and more on new communication technologies, in particular on the social networking websites. This technological revolution is adding another piece to the puzzle of civil society in Eastern Europe.

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# Collective action and absent civil society organisations in the Maputo suburbs

Maj-Lis Follér and Kajsa Johansson

Protests against injustice and inequity occur in many places today, not least in Northern Africa and the Arab world. Media shows agitated people in the streets, but superficial interviews give little or no background and context for the upheaval. However, protesters oppose neo-liberal globalisation, misuse of power and increasing inequalities. People struggle for survival, dignity and the right to food, water and health. The protests are often directed against governments, but also against visible gaps between rich and poor in the country. Boaventura de Sousa Santos talks about these kinds of protests as a radicalisation of democracy and as an instrument for social change (2011). Our example from Mozambique concerns a collective action related to absolute and relative poverty and citizenship.

In September 2010, in the capital of Mozambique, collective protests took place against raised food prices and costs for basic services, such as transport, water and electricity. During media's short attention it was described as "hunger riots", causing the death of 13 persons and with more than 200 injured, mainly by police violence. On the first day of the manifestations, president Armando Emílio Guebuza called the demonstrators "bandits"<sup>1</sup> and illegitimate. However, the official discourse soon changed, instead describing the demonstrators as "magnificent" and "beautiful." Less than one week after the manifestations, the government presented its measures, including subsidies on wheat, tomatoes and onions, as well as cancelled price raises on water and electricity for the smallest consumers. To pay for this, government officials were not allowed to travel abroad

as planned, nor to travel Executive Class, and salary increase for higher government officials was cancelled.

This article examines if these manifestations in the periphery of Maputo contained the seed of something more than the isolated event. How (if) is it related to protests in other countries against similar inequalities? It also examines the linkages between the manifestations and established Mozambican civil society organisations (CSOs) based in Maputo, and whether CSOs engaged in any critical analysis regarding their own role and mandate. Many CSOs focus their work on advocacy for the rights of the poor, demanding accountability from the government on their behalf, and work to promote participatory democracy. Several organisations claim to represent those “without a voice.” The most powerful CSOs are involved in dialogue with the government and see themselves as representatives of the Mozambican civil society.

This article is based on interviews with participants in the manifestations and with representatives from CSOs, as well as on participation in meetings, review of literature and news clippings. Quotes are used extensively to highlight the voices of the interviewees.

### The context

We will always be poor and they will continue to get richer. For how much longer can we get poorer? Does it always have to be the future that is better – will it never be the present? (*24-year old male demonstrator*)

Mozambique gained its independence from Portugal in 1975, but only experienced a few years of peace before a destabilisation war broke out that lasted for 16 years. The war had a devastating impact on the development of the country. Since independence, Mozambique has undergone major structural political changes, from a centralist socialist economy to a market economy by the end of the 1980s. Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world, with more than half of the population living in absolute poverty. During the past decade, major changes in poverty level were seen, but the development is unequal. Between 2003 and 2008, GDP increased by 55 percent, while absolute poverty decreased by only 7

percent. This means that economic development to a very limited degree contributes to poverty reduction (Castel-Branco 2010). Some data even claim that poverty is increasing (Hanlon and Smart 2008). However, international donors, eg the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, see Mozambique as a success story in terms of economic growth during the past decade.

Civil society organisations and independent media are fairly recent phenomena in Mozambique. The right to freedom of association was initially established in 1990 with the new constitution that introduced political pluralism in the country.

### Characterising the September manifestations

The reasons for the riots are not the levels of absolute poverty. In 1983 we passed some really bad times with extensive famine but we were all conscious that we were all working to contribute to the construction and wealth of the nation. (*CSO representative*)

The majority of participants in the manifestations in 2010 were young women and men, unemployed or with insecure work positions, many of them having participated in the previous manifestations in February, 2008, or having sympathised with them. They were not organised in any formal network or organisation, and they declared little or no belief in that organisational membership would solve anything. The interviewed demonstrators had heard nothing of CSOs working in their neighbourhood. Many expressed the view that CSOs and the economic and political elite were similar – something they had heard on television. With a clear sentiment of despair, they proclaimed they had nothing to lose, underlining the issue of injustice by saying that what was at stake was not the lack of equal distribution – but the complete lack of any distribution at all.

No person or organisation can be pointed out as the leader or organiser of the manifestations. Text messages were used to spread information regarding government decisions to raise prices on several basic services and products. However, even before the texts started to circulate, there was already general awareness in the suburbs about rising prices and living costs. The function of the text messages was therefore to inform about and

call people to manifestations. Some say that the government contributed to the manifestations through its way of communicating raises in costs.

In the interviews with the demonstrators, the main causes for the manifestations appeared to divide into two types: first, the *absolute causes* of increased living costs (bread and other food products, electricity, water and transport) and the perception that life was getting less affordable; and second, the *relative causes* of perception of increased economic injustice. People are well aware of the wealth that is created in Mozambique – but also of the fact that it only benefits a limited group of people. The relative poverty and feelings of injustice create discontent and frustration, building up over time; but the increased absolute poverty with rising costs was the reason to why the upheavals took place at this particular date. It is therefore important to analyse the co-relation between the two, and how the conditions for manifestations change over time with changes in perceptions of relative as well as absolute poverty.

Furthermore, the interviews indicate that the manifestations were not about *political* power, but for claiming greater *social* power. Political power is mainly the control over political processes and decision-making, while social power can be described as people's capacity and possibility to influence and change their own situation (Åkesson and Nilsson 2006). Changes in social power are not necessarily linked to changes in political power structures; they may even strengthen the legitimacy of the governing structure through social contracts. In the case of Mozambique, unlike in many of the recent examples from Northern Africa and the Arab countries, it became obvious – in interviews with demonstrators and CSOs, as well as in daily papers – that the main aim of the manifestations were not to overthrow the government, nor necessarily to advocate for changing ruling parties. It was rather to manifest the discontent with undistributed wealth, be it that of the politicians or that of the elite. Obviously, many demonstrators had voted for Frelimo, and now they wanted to hold them accountable. Yet:

The demonstrators were not attacking for example the Frelimo offices in the neighbourhoods – although they could have. Not one neighbourhood leader house was attacked. What were attacked were representations of economic agents – of business and wealth (*CSO representative*).

There were outbreaks of violence during the manifestations, and demonstrators destroyed cars, small shops, roads and commercial centres. However, according to demonstrators, the violence was provoked by brutal police interventions. The interviewed demonstrators were all convinced, though, that without violence, there would not have been any results – a sign of mistrust of the political leadership, as well as an expression for the fact that there are no platforms for dialogue with the leaders. The demonstrators had little or no knowledge about the institutions that were set up within the frame of the decentralisation process. Some quotes illustrate the demonstrators' view on violence:

Violence is not the best way, but when it comes to survival, the weak person chooses the best way to save himself, like self-defence (*19 years old female demonstrator*).

This is not violence. This is a way of giving value to our voice (*30 years old female demonstrator*).

### **Mozambican CSOs and the manifestations**

During the actual days of the manifestations, no national CSO or representative from media were seen in the streets, but directly after some CSOs wrote declarations and statements. At first, the National Civil Society Coalition was supposed to make a joint statement, but due to differing interests and affiliations, that never happened. Declarations that appeared thus varied in content, but they jointly condemned the violence, from both sides, and emphasised the need of platforms for people's participation. In the interviews we made with CSO representatives, they gave a variety of explanations as to how they analysed the manifestations and saw their own role and legitimacy:

We believe that there are platforms to practice citizenship that should be used.

Civil society organisations were not present during the demonstrations, but we came in afterwards to make sure that the issues are being dealt with.

The people in general, including the ones who participated in the demonstrations, end up being represented by us.

The causes of the manifestations have to do with lack of good governance and that the government is not taking responsibility. Civil society has no reason to blame itself for anything.

The opinions above imply no CSO responsibility nor any need for self-critical reflection regarding their role and mandate. They stand in sharp contrast to the following statements, also from CSO representatives:

The manifestations signalled a real expression of citizenship. Without results-based matrixes, without theory, without budgets. No one has achieved as much as these manifestations.

I believe that NGOs are actually reducing the practice of citizenship among the population. NGOs are more like a club in the city centre that doesn't touch upon the problems of the people. The money goes to increasing the wealth of the elite that dominates the NGO world, and the biggest part of the funds ends up in transactions within central Maputo.

### **Concluding remarks**

So, two ways of thinking stand out: Firstly, civil society as a self-appointed, legitimate representative of the population, with a mandate to advocate for their rights; and secondly, civil society as part of the problem, due to a lack of representativity and to a different order of priorities than that of the broader population. The former may be described as conservative and apolitical in its analysis, while the other identifies needs for political social movements and member-based organisations, such as trade unions, and expresses a sense of crisis of legitimacy. The former expresses the need to improve the linkages upwards – to strengthen lobby work with politicians; the latter sees the need to strengthen the links to the grassroots.

Interviewed CSO representatives agreed that the manifestations had virtually no effect on their daily work; nor was the sharing of reflections between the organisations recommended.



## Note

1. In the Mozambican context, the term “bandit” is very strong, as it was used to label Renamo, the opposition during the destabilisation war.

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# Connected citizens and networked resistance

Johanna Stenersen

I was invited by one of my informants, via Facebook, to assist in a “marcha de las putas” (SlutWalk<sup>1</sup>), by now a nearly worldwide feminist symbolic action with the multiple aims of protesting against sexual assault against women and showing that feminism still matters. The march I was invited to would take place in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, and although I would not make it to the march, I clicked “assist.” Why? Well, I sympathised with the idea and felt that attending the call on Facebook was, however weak, a contribution in itself, to the cause as such, as well as to this specific walk in Matagalpa.

In a globalised and networked society, civic involvement and social mobilisation become increasingly more connected to issues of communication, culture and consumption. On-and-off-line life and action mix to an ever increasing extent, and political engagement grows more and more intertwined with social practices in various media. Transnational communication flows add to the complex organisation of political and social life and offer new ways to engage with society, both within and between local and global realms. The aim of this article is to shed light on the ways in which social and political activism are embedded in different communicative practices, at a local as well as a global level, and the various ways in which these practices are part of people’s everyday life. The focus lies on civic practices and the kind of power relations that emerge from new and old ways of organising, mobilising and networking.

Empirically, this article draws on a study carried out in Nicaragua in February 2011.<sup>2</sup> The study applies a critical ethnographic approach to look at feminist civil society organisations in Nicaragua and their work to advocate human rights and gender equality in a context marked by

religious and political tension. I centred my study on a feminist organisation, *Grupo Venancia*.<sup>3</sup> However, rather than the organisation per se, it is its activities, affiliations, discourses and involvement of people within and around it that were the focus of interest.

### Transnationalisation and civil society

The women's movement in Nicaragua is facing some serious challenges as a result of the anti-feminist politics of the Sandinista government, led by President Ortega. Over the past years, a strong and rather peculiar alliance between the Sandinista government and the Catholic Church has developed, which step by step has led to the return of patriarchal rule. The penalisation of therapeutic abortion in 2007 can be seen as the utmost manifestation of this regime. Abortion and issues related to sexual and reproductive health have triggered an infected public debate, and also made evident the discrepancies between the political feminist left and right. This has opened up for a new set of discourses around gender and citizen rights, equality, social justice, and power. These emerging discourses contest, to a high extent, the revolutionary legacy on which the Sandinista party and the political left depend ideologically, and this is one of several reasons to why the feminist movement also experiences internal struggles.

Nicaragua also sees a conflict over some key notions in both revolutionary and liberal (and, for that matter, communitarian conservative) tradition. Who gets, for example, to define the meaning of "participación ciudadana," citizen participation? At macro level, the *discourse of participation* reveals participation as a concept and practice virtually turned into an imperative, mainstreamed into the leading development discourse, and "operationalised" in numerous ways by important and powerful donors and institutions.<sup>4</sup> Critical voices talk of "participation for show," and that the participatory paradigm is being used as a cover-up for neo-liberal individualism (Brown 2003, 2005; Sen 2007; Söderbaum 2008). Lisa Richey (2009) talks about the "compassionate consumer," suggesting that consumerism, or "causumerism," is a way of expanding citizen participation and civic compassion into the realm

of consumption. Wendy Brown (2003, 2005) claims that a whole new morality has developed, in which the individual – and thus citizen – is increasingly made responsible for “running the business” of his or her life. In Nicaragua, as in many “receiving” countries, international aid has largely contributed to the implementation of a democratic framework that rests on these principles and ideals. The vocabulary around social change, with an increased focus on “accountability,” “ownership,” etc, reflects this new orientation. For *Grupo Venancia*, citizenship has become a central concept, along with individual and collective “empowerment.”

Various researchers have looked at civil society as a platform for democracy and pointed to its potential to function as a “school of democracy where citizens learn the values of trust, compromise, peaceful conflict resolution, tolerance, and civic participation” (van Sickle 2008, p 2). Others have pointed to the conflictive character of civil society. Clifford Bob (2007, p 37) even suggests that civil society is not ruled by altruism, but is rather a “Darwinian marketplace where legions of desperate groups vie for scarce attention, sympathy, and money.” Clearly, civil society is heterogeneous with conflicting interests; nevertheless, it is a significant realm for social and political struggle and democratic practice. The new power dynamics and socio-political transformations that the world has experienced through globalisation in the past decades have led to that “citizenship defined as both practice and status becomes a field of contest” (Isin and Wood 1999, p 6). The character of political and social participation is rapidly changing, and it is understood that globalisation<sup>5</sup> processes and the globalising technologies and processes (Chouliaraki 2010) add to the complexity of any analysis of social interaction. A characteristic feature running across all these dimensions is the *mediatisation* in and of society. An ever more compelling issue is the role media<sup>6</sup> play in democracy as well as in the everyday lives of people. To a growing extent, various social and political processes are embedded in an equally expanding variety of cultural processes and practices, new and old. This calls for a closer analysis of how we understand and relate to “the social” as well as “the political,” but also of the role media and communication technology play, or rather, how people use them.

### Connected citizens, new media and public connection

Interest is great in the connection between media and democracy, and especially in the potential role of internet and new media in political and public deliberation (Couldry 2005; Couldry et al 2007; Bakardjieva 2011; Bakardjieva 2009; Dahlgren 2009; Dahlgren 2005). The conceptual framework is expanding, and terms like “interactivity,” “connectivity,” “expressivity” and “creativity” have been explored at length in a variety of disciplines. They have also to a varying degree been informing research and theories in political and social sciences (ie Jenkins 2008; Dahlgren 2009). **New communication technology has made it possible for civil society to transcend the limits of the local and national and have expanded the possibilities to interconnect, mobilise and advocate over geographic and demographic boundaries. In other words, new media and communication technology change the core of social life and – obviously – also civic life.**

I participated in a workshop on citizenship and gender provided by *Grupo Venancia*, where some 30 women of different ages had gathered. Although theoretical concepts and ideas were introduced, the various exercises departed from the women’s daily lives and personal experiences. During the course of the day, numerous testimonies were shared, and discourses of empowerment and feminine solidarity blended with horrifying stories of abuse, violence and oppression, but also with laughter, dancing and hugs. The women came from different movements and organisations in the region. Their involvement in social or organisational work at the local level had mostly a very practical sense to it, and appeared immediately connected to the daily lives and experiences in the community. They wanted a better life for themselves and other women, and struggled to decrease domestic violence and help victims to report abuse. They also fought for better health care and more education, especially related to sexual and reproductive issues. Much of the focus during the workshop was on bridging the gap between abstract discourses on citizenship, emancipation and deliberation and the real, material conditions of everyday life. One exercise consisted in discussing and performing (through sociodrama) how, why and which values and norms come across in different social realms: in the family, in church, in the educational system, and the media. These moments opened up

for critical reflections and ideas about how to interfere, resist or change these values and structures. However, the subsequent discussions also witnessed of a kind of resigned pragmatism: symbolic action has, after all, limited effects on reality. On a similar note, some informants expressed scepticism in regards to the “true” democratic potential of the Internet, but recognised that it offered expanded visibility and networks, and that cultural production and circulation on-line is a comparatively affordable way to give voice and connect and join forces transnationally. One fruitful way to address this dilemma could be by connecting to Couldry, Livingstone and Markham’s (2010) term *mediated public connection*, describing how media usage can be a way to address or express a public orientation and negotiate between the private and the public realm. Couldry et al argue that we need to look beyond our “old” preconceptions of political participatory actions and see how people make sense of society, their place within it, and how they engage in debate or social and political questions at different levels. I believe that Carol Hanisch’s claim “the personal is political” (in Bakardjieva 2009, p 93) is key to understanding how citizenship emerges from private experiences and needs.

### **Representational space and sense-making**

So, how can we understand new media in terms of citizen participation? The latest hype around social media’s “inherent” democratic potential that followed the uprising in Northern Africa in the beginning of 2011 made Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson, argue in favour of net activism and label Twitter and Facebook “technologies of liberation.” However, technology in itself is quite value neutral, and does not have some kind of in-built democratic meter. What technology can offer is the expansion of social relations, and an increased opportunity for individuals and collectives to engage publicly, build communities, and gain and spread knowledge. *SlutWalks* is but one example of how local worlds can transcend the barriers of physical and cultural contexts. In my many encounters with organised feminists, members of womens’ organisations, and local community developers/activists, this connection with some “virtual,” but equally real communities was considered significant. It inspired and spurred their cause,

but also represented a way for them to connect to realities beyond their own, and add a political significance to their everyday lives. In this sense the awakening of a political consciousness and recognition of a political identity become very connected to communicative action, but also the ability to reinterpret well-known everyday routines and relations. I find it useful here to discuss the term *subactivism* as introduced by Maria Bakardjieva (2009), referring to “the kind of politics that unfolds at the level of subjective experience and is submerged in the flow of everyday life” (Bakardjieva 2009, p 92). She notes (Bakardjieva 2011, pp 6-7) that:

...novel practices intersecting new media (blogs, social networking sites, video-sharing sites and others) and traditional media (press, radio, television) bridge the everyday life of the subject and these previously remote deliberative spheres. The proliferation of such practices creates favorable conditions for subactivism to transform into activism proper.

Space-making relates to the ways in which citizenship, citizen practices and participation are linked to space, publicness and deliberation (Habermas 1989). Negotiations of space and place – physical and representational – make up an important dimension in the strategic work of *Grupo Venancia*. To make and claim space become politicised actions, where the politics of everyday life occur; it is part of the striving for recognition, and makes up a “constitutive dimension of radical or subversive forms of citizenship in itself” (Fraser 1997, in Chouliaraki 2010).

In interviews and observations I found that small everyday duties and actions could be filled with different and ambiguous meaning. The social character of human action and interaction is vital in understanding citizen participation as a social practice, and it would be wrong to disregard the importance of arenas and actions where politics manifest themselves or become embodied. For example, my informants behaved differently depending on the setting and situation and would generally act more “freely” during collective action within organisational settings. They would also be more courageous in these situations and make a more critical analysis of structural and institutional inequalities. Several informants referred to the physical environment, the safety and the liberating atmosphere of the workshop mentioned above, and these

feelings were closely related to the strength of the collective. However, the terms “citizen” and “citizenship” often appeared artificial to them. Instead, it was as “women” they assumed these civil rights and this status. This, although abstract, comfort – in belonging to a greater movement, and to have something in common with women one had not even met, and whose realities might appear unimaginable to some women – was in itself empowering.

### Conclusion

It is crucial to distinguish between the various objectives and activities, but also the different realities that form a social movement. We have to remember that social movements are formed around already existing social constellations; it is easy in the hype around what is “new” to forget that sometimes the most relevant or urgent knowledge is found when we look deeper into the social and cultural sediments of life worlds. The link between communication and culture and the exercise of democratic or civic engagement is growing stronger with the ever increasing opportunities to engage with both public(s) and public spaces/spheres as well as with politics. This will obviously impact the preconditions for *civic culture* (Dahlgren 2005) and participation. But one must not disregard the materiality of peoples’ lives, nor the bias and inequalities built into the technology itself. There is a growing need for individual citizens as well as collectives to acquire and improve their communicative “skills,” or rather the communicative repertoire required to penetrate and be part of these potentially transnational flows of voices that can bring about social change.

### Notes

1. SlutWalks started as a very local initiative in Toronto in April this year, but has quickly spread and have mobilised thousands of demonstrators – virtual and real – around the world; North and South America, Asia and Europe. Washington Post has labeled SlutWalks “the most successful feminist action of the past 20 years” ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/slutwalks-and-the-future-of-feminism/2011/06/01/AGjB9LIH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/slutwalks-and-the-future-of-feminism/2011/06/01/AGjB9LIH_story.html) (accessed June 3, 2011)).
2. The study is part of my PhD project on citizen participation and communicative practices and social change. The methods deployed include interviews, focal group



interviews and participant observation of organisational and communitarian activities, as well as of the informants' everyday practices, such as domestic chores, shopping and attending church.

3. *Grupo Venancia* (GV) is a feminist organisation founded in 1992. GV is located in Matagalpa, and uses a cultural center as basis for its administrative staff. GV provides training for members and other civil society organisations in the region on diverse topics related to gender, equality, human rights etc. Furthermore, GV is a political force in the local community, and is affiliated with national and transnational women's movements. GV's mix of activities gathers people from remote rural areas as well as the urban zones.

4. Here I refer to rich Western donors and institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, but also philanthropic endeavors such as the Melissa and Bill Gates Foundation and similar resourceful initiatives.

5. I here use globalisation in a very broad sense to refer to a number of processes and changes that have taken and/or take place in economic, cultural, political, social realms, ranging from the demise of the Soviet Union to the impact of outsourcing on local communities.

6. I here refer to the increasing media saturation in society and the ways in which production, consumption, distribution, technology etc are changing.

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# Transnational activism and the Dalit women's movement in India

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Transnational advocacy networks have emerged as a crucial phenomenon in regional and international politics in the twentieth century. This has led to a remapping of relations between local and global social movements. New links are being built among actors in civil societies, states and international organisations, thus multiplying the opportunities for dialogue and exchange. Feminist movements today also seem to increasingly become part of transnational networks to further the cause of their domestic struggle. In this context, one can examine the Dalit women's movement in India, which has worked towards forming cross-border collective action so as to internationalise the domestic grievances of Dalit women.

## **What is transnational activism?**

Transnational activism networks are defined as including "those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse and dense exchanges of information and services" (Keck and Sikkink 1999, p 89). Transnational networks may include national and global NGOs, foundations, advocacy or research organisations, media, intellectuals, and such others. The growing visibility of transnational networks in the international arena, it is argued, may point towards the emergence of a "global civil society" (Clark et al 1998). Local women's movements today are increasingly aligning themselves with global advocacy platforms. They "remain rooted in national or local issues, but their vocabulary, strategies and objectives have much in common with each other and have taken on an increasingly supra-national form" (Moghadam 2000, pp 61-2). However, it needs to be acknowledged that the construction of goals and strategies that

integrate the interests and concerns of domestic struggles with global concerns is an immense challenge. In this context, this article explores the processes through which the Dalit women's movement in India has emerged within the larger Indian women's movement discourse, and how this movement has worked towards aligning its domestic struggle with transnational networks. The article further examines whether this interaction of local and global ideas significantly alters the local contexts of the Dalit women's movement in India.

### Understanding the Dalit women's question

Dalit women in India are argued to be suffering from multilayered exploitations and subordinations on account of their caste, class, and gender. Caste hierarchy has been recognised as one of the most crucial instruments for the oppression of Dalit women. As per the caste system<sup>1</sup> prevalent in the Hindu society in India, there are four castes – the Brahmins (priestly caste), the Kshatriyas (warrior caste), the Vaishyas (traders) and the Shudras (menial task workers). Dalits (formerly known as the untouchables) fall outside these four castes and are considered below all and polluting. As Zelliott argues (2001, p 264), Dalits represent “those who have been broken, ground down by social groups above them in a deliberate manner.”

Although the law of the land in India bans untouchability as a punishable crime,<sup>2</sup> the discrimination and subordination of Dalits continue to exist in various ways and forms. Within this rigid caste hierarchy, Dalit women face further discrimination owing to their gender. For instance, the *Manusmriti*<sup>3</sup> explicitly justifies the killing of a Dalit woman by a Brahmin as a minor offence (TNWF 2007, p 2). Women, argues Dr Ambedkar, are the gateways to the caste system (Pardeshi 1998, p 5). The following statement of the *All India Dalit Adhikar Manch* (All India Dalit Women's Rights Forum 2007, p 2) bears testimony to the large scale exploitation and violence that Dalit women are subjected to:

On an average 27,000 incidents of serious atrocities and human rights violations are registered under the SC/ST<sup>4</sup> (Prevention of Atrocities Act), annually. Despite the lack of disaggregated data on the extent of

violence on Dalit women, there is no doubt that women are affected disproportionately in these incidents. A micro study of 124 cases by the Centre for Dalit Rights of atrocities in 5 districts of Rajasthan between October 2004 and January 2006 showed that 55 of these cases were directly inflicted on Dalit women and girl children. They ranged from rape, gang rape, rape of minor girls, murder and attempt to murder, physical assault, battering and acid attacks. Another 28 women were affected along with their families through land related violence, social boycott, murder of husbands and sons. It is clear that Dalit women are the prime victims in violence against Dalit communities.

### **The Dalit women's movement in India**

The first autonomous assertions of the Dalit women's movement in India can be traced to the early 1990s. Although the Dalit women's question was largely absent from the social movement discourse in the first two decades of the post-independence period, it has to be acknowledged here that Dalit women played a very significant role in the Phule and Amedkarite<sup>5</sup> movements in the pre-independence era. However, it may be observed that two of the most prominent social movements that emerged in India in the post-independence period – the women's movement and the Dalit movement – paid little attention to the issue of the intersections of caste and gender, and failed to take up the question of structural discrimination and oppression of Dalit women. Describing this phenomenon as “masculinisation of Dalithood and savarnisation of womanhood,” Sharmila Rege (1998, p 42) argues that it was a “classical exclusion” where all the Dalits were “assumed to be male” and all the women came to be looked at as “savarna.”<sup>6</sup> However, the assertions of autonomous Dalit women identity in the early 1990s ushered in an era that saw Dalit women carving out their own independent struggle within the larger social movement discourse in India. In this context one may also point out that during the 1980s and the 1990s, politics of difference was gaining vast prominence in the global feminist movement, with increasing affirmation of black feminist and third world feminist identities. As Guru

argues (1995, pp 254-89), “[i]n a situation, where the organization of politics around difference has become a major feature of feminist politics, the organization of Dalit women around the notion of difference is bound to be a logical outcome.” This independent assertion, as Guru argues (*ibid*), should not be perceived as divisive by Dalit men, “instead, it ought to be seen as carrying positive emancipatory potential” that can “lead to a meaningful engagement of their creative energies.” With the assertion of autonomous Dalit women’s identity, the 1990s saw the formation of the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW) and the All India Dalit Women Forum. There were also various regional Dalit women’s organisations that came up during this period (for instance, *Maharashtra Dalit Mahila Sangathana*). Thus, intersections of caste and gender have emerged as a crucial component of feminist movement in India.

#### **Transnational advocacy and the Dalit women’s movement in India**

The Dalit women’s movement in India made conscious attempts to align themselves with transnational advocacy networks to further the cause of their domestic struggle. Mobilisation of Dalit women was happening in India prior to the Beijing Conference in 1995 in form of conferences organised in Mumbai, Pune, and Bangalore. The question that is crucial in this context, however, is why the need was felt by the Dalit women’s movement in India to align itself with international forums for the furtherance of its domestic struggle. Keck and Sikkink (1999) argue that this linkage happens in order to alter the behaviours of the states that have hitherto failed to recognise the rights of the domestic groups by bringing pressure on them. Calling it the “boomerang pattern,” they argue that in situations when “...governments are unresponsive to groups whose claims may none the less resonate elsewhere, international contacts can ‘amplify’ the demands of domestic groups, pry open space for new issues, and then echo these demands back into the domestic arena” (*ibid*, p 93). Thus, through transnational networks, a non-powerful, non-state actor can assume a position whereby it is able to “persuade, pressurize, and gain leverage over much more powerful organizations and governments” (*ibid*, p 89).

Dalit women in India were feeling alienated both from the women's movement and the Dalit movement discourse. There was also much discontent with the states' response to Dalit women's oppression.<sup>7</sup> There was, therefore, a belief that by raising the issue of Dalit women in international forums, pressure would be put on the state to create institutional mechanisms for addressing the issue. In this context, one need to highlight that despite the recognition of women's rights as human rights, the international human rights discourse for a long time was not addressing the issue of discrimination of women based on caste. In fact, the key focus of the first two UN World Conferences against Racism, held in 1978 and 1983, was apartheid in South Africa. However, the Dalit women's movement in India played a crucial role in mobilising support for their cause in the UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. Alliances were formed between various Dalit groups to come together and to raise their concerns in an international platform. These alliances were also being supported by lower caste activists in other South Asian countries, such as Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), formed in 1998, sought to bring in international attention to the issue of atrocities against the Dalits. The First World Dalit Convention that was being held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in October, 1998, also urged the UN to appoint at the earliest "Special Rapporteurs" in order to investigate into the human rights violations of the Dalits. The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) that was established in the year 2000, with its secretariat in Copenhagen, Denmark, also played a significant role in mobilising international support for the Dalit women's cause. Following the setting up of the IDSN, a number of organisations and networks across the globe took up the cause of the Dalits. For instance, in Europe alone, networks working on issues of caste-based discrimination are operating in seven countries, all of which are members of the IDSN.<sup>8</sup>

The pressure created through transnational activism has finally compelled the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) to affirm in 2002 in its General Recommendations of

the International Convention that discrimination based on “descent” is defined to include “discrimination against members of communities based on forms of social stratification such as caste and analogous systems of inherited status which nullify or impair their equal enjoyment of human rights.”<sup>9</sup> Thus caste discrimination came to acquire a new meaning in international platforms.

Apart from the UN, another key site for transnational feminist activism since the Beijing Conference of 1995 has been the World Social Forum (WSF) (Desai 2005, p 325). The Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN), in collaboration with the NCDHR, the NFDW, the All India Dalit Women’s Rights Forum, the Feminist Dalit Organization, Nepal, and the IDSN, organised a conference on human rights and dignity of Dalit women in the Hague, November 20-25, 2006. The Declaration adopted in this conference, known as the *Hague Declaration on the Human Rights and Dignity of Dalit Women*, argued that domestic governments have an obligation to take up all the required policy measures to facilitate the realisation of Dalit women’s human and fundamental rights.

It is argued that this international recognition of the Dalit women’s rights as human rights creates a sort of moral expectation on the domestic political system to address the issue of caste-based oppression. “Moral leverage,” as Keck and Sikkink argue, “involves...’mobilization of shame,’ where the behaviour of target actors is held up to the bright light of international scrutiny” (1999, p 97). This can be a very effective mechanism in a situation where a lot of value is placed by the state on “international prestige” (ibid). It may be seen that the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in his address at the Dalit-Minority International Conference in December 2007, has come to acknowledge, in front of the international community, that “untouchability is not just a social discrimination. It is a blot on humanity” (cited in Human Rights Watch 2007). The Government of India has now extended permission to UN Special Rapporteurs to investigate within India. The Dalit Women’s Access to Justice and Dignity (DWAJ) project was launched in November 2006 by the Department of Justice, the Government of India, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



## Conclusion

The practice of untouchability in India is argued to be continuing to prevail as a “hidden apartheid” (Human Rights Watch 2007). Although the Indian government today has expressed commitment to address the issue of violation of the Dalit women’s human rights, as the discussion earlier in this paper reveals, the realities on the ground tell a different tale. Custodial torture of Dalits, rapes of Dalit women, and the looting of Dalit property by the police are argued to be “condoned or at best ignored” (ibid). Thus, although transnational activism has been able to exert some sort of pressure on the domestic government to address the Dalit women’s issue, it may be argued that it can work only as an “enabling” condition. The success of transnational activism requires vibrant and strong domestic movements that mobilise and exert pressure from within the boundaries of the state. Western human rights norms often seem to become the defining framework within which transnational networks work. Therefore, aligning local struggle with global platforms must not put the local realities in the back banner in the pursuit of global norms. Thus it may be argued, in the words of Keck and Sikkink, that transnational networks are “not conveyor belts of liberal ideals, but vehicles for communicative and political exchange, with the potential for mutual transformation of participants” (1999, p 100).

## Notes

1. “The caste system is a hierarchy of endogamous groups that individuals enter only by birth. A caste differs from a clan or sib in being endogamous and recognizing various ranks. It differs from a class in its strict enforcement of permanent endogamy within caste groups” (Olcott 1944, p 648).
2. Article 17 of Part III (Fundamental Rights) of the Indian Constitution abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice in any form. To further reinforce this commitment, the government of India had passed the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, which was later amended in 1976 as Protection of Civil Rights Act.
3. Known in English as the *Laws of Manu*, *Manusmriti* is the most important and earliest metrical work of *Dharmasastra* (learning, religious and legal, pertaining to Hindu Dharma or Hindu religion) textual tradition of Hinduism.
4. The terms SC (Scheduled Castes) and ST (Schedule Tribes) are essentially legalistic categories, which are a sub-part of a larger term “backward classes.” Under the Govern-

ment of India Act of 1935, a separate schedule was created to govern relations between the state and the classes/castes/tribes under the category of backward classes. Scheduled Castes include all those castes that were originally considered “untouchables” while scheduled tribes referred to all aboriginal and hill tribes (Zachariah 1972).

5. Jyotiba Phule had launched a massive movement against the tyranny of Brahmins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century India and worked towards eliminating the stigma of untouchability. Dr B R Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, also led a life-long crusade against the Hindu caste system.

6. As part of the Hindu caste (varna) system, communities that belong to one of the four varnas Brahmin, Kshtriya, Vaishya, and Sudra are called “savarna”. Dalits (formerly known as the untouchables) fall outside these four castes and are known as “avarna.”

7. The Indian government’s stand was that caste is purely an internal matter of the country and the international community should have no business to be involved in this.

8. It is argued that “...as networking becomes a repertoire of action that is diffused transnationally, each effort to network internationally is less difficult than the one before” (Keck and Sikkink 1999, p 93).

9. The General Recommendation 29 concerned Article 1, Paragraph 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which defines “racial discrimination” as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.” Find the Recommendations at [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/f0902ff29d93de59c1256c6a00378d1f?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/f0902ff29d93de59c1256c6a00378d1f?Opendocument) (accessed November 30, 2011).

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## **The implications of the growing clout of emerging powers for civil society**

Introduction Johan Lagerkvist	151
Nascent civil society in Lao PDR in the shadow of China's economic presence Gretchen Kunze	154
Principles for civil society engagement with multilateralism Heather MacKenzie	159
African civil society in a new era of international trade relations Herbert Moseki	167



# Introduction

Johan Lagerkvist

There is one overarching question that should be on the lips of policy-makers, activists and researchers these days: What is the global in *global governance*? The G-20 forum and the new IMF member composition are beginning to reflect geo-economic and geopolitical realities. Yet there is still some way to go – just look at two of the permanent five members of the UN Security Council, France and the UK. Are they punching above or below their weight? Will they willingly step aside to let India, Brazil or Japan take their seats? The answer is negative. So, making global governance truly global, and not just management by the North, is still a distant goal on the horizons for emerging economies and powers of the global South and East.

However, in the light of this conference, *Global Civil Society: Shifting Powers in a Shifting World*, two related, highly topical and timely questions follow on the overarching question about global governance. First, as mentioned above, what is the global in *global civil society*? Second, what constitutes the common features and contradictions inherent in the construct “the global South?” If we want to understand the true nature of civil society on the global level, with all the transnational linkages, we must attempt to answer both these questions.

There are reasons to believe that South-South relations are set to become more important in the future, but also more ambiguous. Naturally, North-South relations, and forums of global governance such as the United Nations, the G-8, the G-20, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), will also be affected by what is likely to be viewed as a return to the more interest-based nationalist state policies of bygone eras, while societies at the same time will be more connected, wired, and transnational than ever before. Thus, mechanisms of global governance look set to become more dysfunctional, while global civil society and non-state sectors are set to energise local, regional and global

politics – phenomena that entail thorny problems for nation-states and many multinational companies, private as well as state-owned, which all used to handle emerging civil societies in foreign lands as dependent and non-autonomous. Emerging economies and powers such as the democracies Brazil, India, and South Africa may perhaps be better suited than China to deal with this task, as their investment footprints are becoming more visible in many smaller developing countries. But they too are part of the growing asymmetry between low-income and middle-income developing nations.

In Africa, a financially strong emerging economy – as China – meets nations with weak state capacity, some of them host to domestic and international NGOs. In this tense international environment, Chinese diplomacy and strategic thinking are under constant pressure. Arguably, China's relations with Southern Africa amount to a fruitful test case for how China's relations with the world will develop in the future. China is experiencing tremendous opportunities and challenges there. This will provide Chinese public diplomacy and foreign policy with a testing ground for policies on matters ranging from direct interaction with African civil societies – NGOs and trade unions, as well as foreign NGOs – to non-traditional security threats to Chinese companies and citizens, and friction with Western trade interests and aid policies. For China, but also Brazil and India, the rest of the developing world can be viewed as a screen on which their long-term global ambitions are projected while fulfilling their current economic and energy needs. The most pressing and important challenges for the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), following on their growing clout, especially in relation to smaller developing states in the international system, include but are not limited to the following issue-areas:

- There is a growing political and economic asymmetry between the large block of developing countries that constitute the amorphous term “the developing world.” The intense summitry between big developing countries, such as India and China, and their smaller brethren in Africa under the Forum for China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) framework is indicative of this change.

- The BRICS want to become “responsible stakeholders” in the current world order, as they firmly establish their role as regional power centres of their respective subsystems in the world order. This displays an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ethos – although rhetoric and practice are not always consistent, as voting patterns in the UN Security Council revealed during the “Arab Spring” of 2011.
- The emerging economies are also becoming donors competing with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries about valid and efficient development models. Recent calculations by the *Financial Times* are very telling in this regard. From 2008 through 2010, China Eximbank and China Development Bank allocated \$110 billion to developing countries. During the same time period the World Bank allocated \$100.3 billion. And between 2006 and 2008, aid flows from countries outside the OECD/DAC (Development Assistance Committee) increased by 63 percent. This is nothing but a sea change that needs to be closely scrutinised in the crucial and related areas debt, poverty reduction and economic development, as well as how human rights, non-interference and non-intervention are regarded as inherently good or evil.

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# Nascent civil society in Lao PDR in the shadow of China's economic presence

Gretchen Kunze

## **The emergence of Lao civil society**

Civil society in Laos is amongst the most limited in the world (Delnoye 2010). Since the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975, the state has disseminated information and policies, delivered any basic social services, and consulted the public through the party-led mass organizations. With hundreds of thousands of members, well-organized communication and outreach structures, and presence throughout the country into even the most remote villages, these mass organizations have played the role that civil society organizations traditionally occupy in other countries and political contexts.

That said, though little known or utilized, under Article 44 of the Lao constitution civil society groups in the official form of "associations" are legally permitted. The constitution states, "Lao citizens have the right and freedom of speech, press and assembly, and have the right to set up associations and to stage demonstrations which are not contrary to the laws." The number of Lao associations varies greatly depending on the source of the information. Some speculate that between 80 and 200 exist throughout the country, whereas international organizations generally speculate that there are only about 15 to 20 associations capable of operating with a level of impact. The majority of associations that are already formed are at their first stages of development and often lack basic capabilities including: identifying and applying for funds; meeting the standard financial and audit requirements of funders; developing

management plans; and designing projects. Most Lao citizens are unaware that associations exist at all, much less what role they can or do play.

Before 2009, a major barrier to forming associations was that, while legally permitted, there were no clear procedures for their establishment, roles and functions, and no oversight by a designated government agency. In recent years the Lao government has taken steps to reduce these ambiguities. The process of creating an improved legal mandate began with the drafting of a Decree on Associations in 2006, and continues with the ongoing drafting of a Decree on Foundations. The impetus for these developments is largely seen as originating in the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010, which expresses a commitment to “provide basic social and essential economic services, and ensure security and facilitate the participation and empowerment of the poor in economic, social, political and other arenas to reduce poverty on a sustainable basis.” By some estimates, the government has recognized the role that local associations can play in national development and how they can help the government meet its goals.

In April 2009, the Prime Minister’s Office approved the Decree on Associations (Decree Number 115/PM) with the stated aim to increase the number of associations, streamline the registration process, and improve oversight. The Decree, which took effect in November 2009, defines an “association” as being a “non-profit civil organization set up on a voluntary basis and operating on a permanent basis to protect the rights and legitimate interest of the association, its members or communities.” The “types of associations” listed include economic associations; professional, technical and creative associations; social welfare associations; and others (Lao PDR 2009). The decree is groundbreaking in its attempt to systematize and codify the registration process for civil society associations and consolidate their oversight under one government body, the Civil Society Division within the Public Administration and Civil Service Authority (PACSA).<sup>1</sup>

It is relevant to note that these local organizations are called NPAs, or non-profit associations. The term “non-governmental” or NGO is

considered to give the impression of being in opposition to the government and therefore not palatable or appropriate.

As of April 2011, sixteen months after the decree was enacted, only two NPAs had been approved by the government. PACSA reported that at that time 72 organizations had applied for registration, with roughly half of those being organizations “re-registering” (as all existing NPAs were made to re-register under the new decree) and the other half being newly formed organizations. They had set the goal, however, to approve 90 percent of the applicants within the year.<sup>2</sup>

### **China’s growing economic presence**

Laos remains amongst the poorest countries in the world, but in recent years it has seen steady economic growth and increasing foreign direct investment.<sup>3</sup> By December 2010, China surpassed Thailand as the single biggest investor in Laos. The Lao Ministry of Planning and Investment reported that in 2010 Chinese investment between 2000 and 2010 reached about US\$2.9 billion. Thailand has a total investment over the same period of about US\$2.6 billion, and third place is held by Vietnam with investments of roughly US\$2.2 billion. But what is more striking is the speed of recent investment. In the first six months of 2010, Thai companies invested in four projects worth US\$37 million. Chinese companies invested in 16 projects with a total value of US\$344 million (Phoutonesy 2010). As for Chinese development aid, these figures are confidential and, at any rate, not always so clearly delineated from investment.

Donors and international development organizations (generally members of the Development Assistance Committee, DAC, of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD) have shown great interest in this new development for the role that civil society can potentially play in good governance and poverty alleviation. But access to Chinese investment (and aid) makes it easier for the Lao government to achieve economic growth and gain development resources without the complications of having to deal with the same conditionalities as those of Western companies and aid agencies that might create,

directly or indirectly, a more enabling environment for the development of civil society organizations.

### **Looking forward and the character of Lao civil society**

There are motivations for the Laos government to permit some civil society development in the country, including meeting development goals and international legitimacy. There are also motivations for keeping it tightly controlled, so as not to interfere with the state's stability or economic goals.

Larry Diamond (1994) writes that pluralism, diversity, and partialness are distinguishing characteristics of civil society. In the context of Laos, where harmony, unity, and cohesion are amongst the highest ideals, this definition does not seem to indicate much chance for the development of civil society. Rather than the definitions prevalent in the literature, it appears more appropriate to consider this new civil society as following a somewhat different path, appropriate for the circumstances of Laos and a single party state.

The modest civil society sector in Laos will likely not take on a Western face to be one of advocacy, making demands, or building coalitions with foreign activist organizations. Rather, at least for the foreseeable future, it will likely be focused on service delivery provision that will attempt to address the nation's daunting development needs. More importantly, civil society development will be a process progressing not in opposition with the state, but in harmony with its interests and often working in partnership. In the newly emerging space allowed for civil society in Lao PDR, this process of growing the capacity and legal standing of civil society organizations will need to be carefully calibrated with building trust and understanding between the organizations, the government and the larger society. The goal of supporting these organizations to engage with their government in a positive, mutually supportive manner may be more achievable in the near term.

If the result means a new route for opening paths of communication between citizens and government, more and better services for those who need them, and a freer flow of education and information, then this should not be considered a failed project even though it does not fit Western norms.

### Notes

1. Conversation with PACSA, 4 April 2011. PACSA has since changed its name to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA).
2. Ranked 122 in the UNDP 2010 Human Development Index.

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# Principles for civil society engagement with multilateralism

Heather MacKenzie

As powerful multilateral bodies emerge on the global stage, in particular the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), civil society (CS) is facing new challenges. What are the implications for civil society? Will the roles and existing policy impacts of civil societies shrink or grow? Importantly, what are the BRICS' views on civil society organizations, on global governance, and on global civil society?

This article offers a partial response to these questions in the form of principles for the engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) with multilateralism. A major premise underlying these principles is that civil society credibility is critical to ensuring its effectiveness in advancing democratization of global governance in a shifting world.

Civil society actors working at the global level have been increasingly engaged and successful in influencing international governance through their advocacy and monitoring skills. Until recently, the key decision makers have been Northern-based governments with long-standing traditions of supporting a free and independent civil society. Decision-making powers are now shifting to countries without such traditions, and this shift brings new challenges to civil society credibility. Many international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are in fact regarded with suspicion by governments and civil society throughout the global South. INGOs are often viewed as part of a “North/South” problematic, displacing, and consequently disempowering, the leadership of local civil society.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, large operational and advocacy INGOs have often been seen to be tools of Northern governments, parachuting their values and political priorities into emerging democracies. This perceived (or real) collusion between INGOs and Northern governmental donors detracts from CSO credibility and undermines the CS/multilateral interface.

According to FIM's<sup>2</sup> experience, the BRICS' views on CSOs, on global governance, and on civil society can be shaped by civil society itself. Credible CS action is rooted in principles supported by extensive, practice-based, knowledge. Civil society actors who are part of the FIM network have developed *Principles for the Engagement of Civil Society Organizations with Multilateralism*. They are based in FIM's convictions that:

- a) democratized multilateralism at all levels, from regional to sub-global to global, is a necessary condition for attaining democratic global governance; and
- b) active engagement of CSOs with multilateralism is essential to achieving this vision.

The principles aim to contribute positively to CSO practice and to how CSOs are viewed in a shifting world. They offer to civil society actors a distinctively civil society basis for self-reflection and discussion about their best practices and the visions and values that underpin these practices (Tandon 2009).

### **Inputs to the principles**

The need for overarching principles for good practice was noted early in FIM's history. Civil society leaders who participated at FIM's 2000 forum (Mwangi 2000) stressed that credible and legitimate CSO activism needs to be grounded in principles that resonate in society. At FIM's 2008 forum (Ritchie 2008), it was clear that the time had come to move beyond discussions of CS strategies and lessons learned. Participants wanted to think more broadly and articulate general principles that could underpin strategies for engagement with multilateralism. A preliminary outline of ten principles<sup>3</sup> was subsequently piloted in December of 2008 in Cairo.<sup>4</sup> Feedback from this session, as well as principles generated at earlier fora, were integrated, and a draft "working paper" was presented to participants at an international forum in New Delhi (FIM 2009). A second draft incorporated the new feedback, input from FIM's Board of Directors, and general principles embedded in recurring themes in FIM's case studies (MacKenzie 2009). Finally, thirty-two international CS lead-

ers were surveyed for their input to this draft. The resulting principles will be further refined by civil society practitioners. Following is a brief description of each principle.<sup>5</sup>

### **The principles**

#### *1. That CSOs build and maintain local to global and global to local links*

This principle asserts that CSOs at local and national levels constitute the broad and essential base for civil society credibility and legitimacy, and for achieving sustainable change and reform at all levels of the multilateral system. Indeed, the most significant changes occur at international as well as national levels, when reform efforts are buttressed, if not driven, by domestic, well-organized and informed civil society. Building and maintaining CSO linkages from this local base to the global arena and back to the local is fundamental to democratization of global governance. Such linkages enable a balanced flow of information and provide the overall coherence and context essential for informed action and shared guidance. These linkages are the mechanisms that allow CSOs, working at regional and global levels, to draw from local and national realities. Local to global linkages also make it possible for regional and international activists to inform activists at local levels as to how their priorities both affect, and are affected by, the broader regional and international contexts.

#### *2. That CSOs document and disseminate their practitioner knowledge*

Documentation and dissemination of CSO experience, knowledge, and lessons learned is foundational to good practice and to the democratization of global governance. CSOs need to reflect upon and learn from the past, share their lessons and strategies with the wider community, and systematically transfer this knowledge to the next generation. A recognized, valid, and legitimate practitioner knowledge base is essential for CSOs to be able to communicate effectively within the diversity of its own sector and beyond. CSOs require capacities to conscientiously document and share their experience and knowledge in forms that are widely accessible.



*3. That CSOs embrace the full diversity of their sector*

Democratization of global governance is a civil society objective, approached from a diversity of civil society perspectives, and spanning local to global levels. This diversity is civil society's defining quality and strength. Full inclusion of all voices and levels and of the ever-increasing diversity of civil society's issues, causes, and points of view is a necessary condition for achieving democratic global governance. This principle also recognizes that the complexity of diversity and the demands of inclusiveness can create tensions that slow progress. To address this reality, and to enable CSOs to release the full power and strength of their diversity, CSOs require the capacity to communicate, collaborate and negotiate across its sector. To value civil society diversity is to value and empower civil society as a multifaceted sector that includes, but is not limited to, CS organizations, coalitions, alliances, and networks.

*4. That CSOs understand the broad context of global governance*

Democratization of global governance is a systemic project where all seemingly separate issues are part of a larger, interrelated whole. The capacity of CSOs to understand and to work within this broad political, social, and economic context is essential to the achievement of democratic global governance. These contexts include the diverse and changing social and political realities of people living and working in their communities, the academic community, individual governments, donors, and other actors engaged in democratization of global governance. CSOs must also be aware of, and sensitive to, the various linkages and interrelationships amongst these contexts. Critically, in order to influence multilateral policies, programmes, and practices, CSOs must understand multilateralism as a concept and phenomenon as well as the specific multilateral agencies and representatives that they wish to influence.

*5. That CSOs are willing and able to engage, and to disengage, diplomatically with those who do not share their vision of the common good*

In addition to advocacy, CSOs require diplomacy capacities that will enable them to engage directly with those persons or institutions with which they might otherwise avoid dialogue. In the face of an increasingly

complex and globalized world, CSOs need to be able to engage, as credible and legitimate “civil society diplomats.” CSOs must be willing and able to work directly with those who do not share their vision, including governments, multilateral bodies, corporations, institutions and individuals, in order to constructively address global concerns and to prevent the tragedies and global crises that CSOs, working locally, are often the first to experience and to predict.

*6. That CSOs are actively committed to their long-term vision and goals*

Sustained change and measurable progress toward the vision of democratization of global governance can take years and even generations. Hence, CSO commitment over the long term is essential. This principle values CSO patience and persistence. It warns of the danger and counter-productiveness of cynicism that can take hold of beleaguered civil society activists. It also stresses the importance for CSOs to challenge and change their own policies and practices, as well as the policies and practices of donor communities, which focus on short-term results only and ignore or devalue the long-term vision and goals of democratization.

*7. That CSOs are open and transparent about whom they represent and to whom they are accountable*

CSO openness, honesty, and transparency regarding whom they represent and to whom they are accountable are critical to establishing and maintaining CSO legitimacy and credibility. Civil society practitioners and their organizations, alliances, and networks should be rigorous in identifying and communicating whom they represent and to whom they are accountable. CSOs represent those who have mandated them to carry out their mission. This includes memberships, constituencies, and Boards of Directors or overseers. Thus, within the democratic context, CSOs are accountable to those they can claim to represent and, conversely, CSOs represent those to whom they are accountable.

*8. That CSOs align their practice with their values*

It is imperative for CSOs to articulate their ideals and values, to champion the highest standards of conduct, and to strive consciously and systemat-

ically to meet these standards. We recognize that the actions of civil society activists and CSOs are not always consistent with their stated goals and values. Practice, unlike theory, is affected by complex contextual factors and does not always fully reflect the principles and ideals of civil society actors or CSOs. Alignment of CSO practices, policies, and values is achieved through ongoing self-assessment, evaluation, and improvement.

### **Reflections on the value of the principles project to civil society capacity building and credibility**

The BRICS is quickly taking its place as an influential, Southern-based multilateral grouping. The emergence of this body presents a new opportunity for civil society in BRICS countries to have a stronger voice at regional and global levels. Principles for CSO engagement with multilateralism point to good practices that are based in well-established lessons and can help to optimize civil society participation in such power shifts. Each of the eight principles can be applied to help inform CSO strategy and actions.

Principle #1 for example: “That CSOs build and maintain local to global and global to local links” situates indigenous civil society, grounded in the realities of their local and national priorities and struggles, as the source of civil society credibility and legitimacy. A strong local civil society base in the BRICS countries is essential to building robust local to global and global to local links. CSOs in Brazil, India, and South Africa are well established in activism at local levels and independent CSOs in China and Russia are also advancing in their capacities to influence their governance. With the coming together of the BRICS grouping, these actors are now challenged to scale up their capacities to influence their own governance.

At the same time, the numbers of subsidiary arms to Northern-based INGOs is growing in the BRICS countries. These organizations can pose obstacles to building indigenous capacities. CSOs in these countries are concerned that INGO subsidiaries will displace established indigenous civil society, particularly in their efforts to gain access to the BRICS. Indeed, given their heavy investments in the global South, it is often

easier for large INGOs to meet with national governments than it is for the poorer, local CSOs.

It is critical for advancing the project of democratization that CSOs, indigenous to the BRICS countries, along with the large INGOS who have traditionally dominated the global governance discourse, heed lessons learned on the essential requirement of a strong local base from which to effectively (and credibly) influence multilateralism. CSOs in the BRICS countries must increase their participation in global governance by building sustainable relationships with the BRICS multilateral grouping. Large, richer transnational NGOs can contribute to strengthening indigenous CSO capacities to shape their own destinies. Transferring their experience and knowledge on monitoring and advocacy, along with providing needed financial resources will serve to build the free and independent (global) civil society required to further the democratization of global governance in a shifting world.

The ongoing process of developing and refining principles for the engagement of CSOs with multilateralism is, in itself, a learning and professional development opportunity for civil society actors, including the FIM Board and staff. The development process was a valuable opportunity to revisit and clarify together concepts such as “democratization of global governance,” “representivity,” “accountability,” and “inclusivity.” It was clear that busy CSO leaders would like more time for such reflections and more opportunities for dialogue: to “think about principles as activist” and “help [us] to understand [our] context.”

## Notes

1. Even in Japan, this problem has rapidly emerged. In the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami that in 2011 devastated east Japan, a leading Japanese NGO coalition circulated a request to the INGO community that it work closely and in coordination with local Japanese NGOs and limit the number of staff deployed to the affected regions to avoid displacing local resources. See “Recommendations to the International NGOs for Disaster Activities in East Japan;” [http://www.japanplatform.org/E/donate/jp\\_eq\\_tsunami20110321.pdf](http://www.japanplatform.org/E/donate/jp_eq_tsunami20110321.pdf) (accessed November 30, 2011).

2. FIM Forum for Democratic Global Governance (FIM) was established in 1998 as an international, knowledge-based, Non Governmental Organization. We are a non-aligned convening body with a small secretariat located in Montréal, Canada. We do not participate in direct advocacy. FIM strongly supports the inherent value and importance of multilateralism, and of the inclusion of the missing voices of civil society, to the democratization of the multilateral system. Our activities are focused on opening spaces for civil society dialogue on democratic global governance and

on mobilizing knowledge about the civil society interface with global governance. FIM supports the development and dissemination of civil society practitioner experience and knowledge. We commission practitioner case studies and project-based research and convene global civil society conferences and forums. Our growing expertise is in facilitation of informal dialogue and “civil society diplomacy” between civil society leaders and governmental and multilateral actors. For example, FIM convened the first dialogues between civil society leaders (the majority from the global South) and the G8 (Martin 2008) and the G20 (FIM 2010).

3. FIM is grateful to Kumi Naidoo and Siddharth Bannerjee for their extensive contributions to the development of this first draft.

4. Draft principles were presented at a meeting of *Building Bridges: Engaging civil society from Muslim countries and communities with the multilateral sphere*, an ongoing FIM project. The Cairo meeting included civil society leaders from CSOs in Egypt, India, Pakistan, Bahrain, and Bangladesh.

5. For the full text of the principles, see: [http://www.fimcivilsociety.org/en/library/CS%20Principles%20for%20Good%20Practice\\_FIM\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.fimcivilsociety.org/en/library/CS%20Principles%20for%20Good%20Practice_FIM_FINAL.pdf) (accessed November 30, 2011).

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# African civil society in a new era of international trade relations

Herbert Moseki

This article seeks to explore the ability of civil society to influence one particular policy area: trade policy. African countries are facing the challenge of how to reasonably utilise the forces of NGOs in solving their practical problems with, for example, good governance and economic development. They also face the challenge of preventing these organisations from becoming the tools of foreign donors, trying to realise their own goals. The article tries to analyse this relationship in the context of the prevailing international development discourse, and the subsequent emergence of the BRICS onto the global stage. It is argued that one important role of civil society could be to ensure that trade relations guarantee a sustainable development of the African economies, thereby assuring the creation of jobs for poor people and access to basic services.

## **Trade and development: Is there space for the civil society?**

Organisations such as United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Bank and the International Trade Centre (ITC) have linked trade and development in the past. Until recently, however, the link was not prominent in broader development circles. The tone began to change when world leaders announced the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, and gained momentum when the World Trade Organisation (WTO) launched a new round of talks in 2001. The Doha Development Agenda promised to put developing countries' concerns at the heart of trade negotiations. Belonging to the world's largest trading club is important, but being a member is not enough. Part of the answer lies in Aid for Trade. The fact is that many developing countries have been unable to benefit from the market opening that the WTO has achieved, because they lack the necessary trade-related capacity and

infrastructure. Various issues shape the Aid for Trade debate, relating to both the quantity and quality of aid. One important influence is the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is examining how to measure and evaluate the impact of Aid for Trade. Lessons learned indicate a need for more predictable financing, “demand driven” programs to ensure ownership and coordination among donors, and a stronger poverty reduction focus. The ITC is contributing to ongoing initiatives.

The Doha trade talks may have stalled in July 2006, but there was consensus on one issue: the importance of Aid for Trade. At the Hong Kong ministerial meeting, Japan announced trade-related development assistance spending of 10 billion USD over three years; the United States announced Aid for Trade grants of 2.7 billion USD a year by 2010; and the European Union and its member states announced trade-related development assistance spending of 2 billion Euros per year by 2010. A WTO task force on the subject released recommendations at the end of July. “There was a clear consensus on the Task Force that Aid for Trade is important in its own right, and that it should move forward expeditiously, despite the current difficulties in the Round,” said Mia Horn af Rantzien, at the time Ambassador of Sweden to the WTO and Chair of the Task Force.

### **Africa as an emergent power in the twenty-first century**

The twenty-first century might very well see Africa emerging as a prominent contestant on the global playing field. Many opinion leaders in Africa and elsewhere fully realise that the continent, with its wealth of people and resources, is too valuable a potential player to remain idle on the sidelines. However, it is common to find commentators that simply write Africa off on the basis of its track record. To grasp the positive dynamics that give rise to an optimistic outlook, one should instead take cognisance of how out of form for international competition the continent was ten or more years ago. The World Bank published the book “Can Africa Claim the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?” in 2000. Giving a comprehensive account of the status of Africa at the time, the authors dealt frankly with issues that had afflicted the continent in the preceding decades and brought it to

the brink of collapse. Among the contributing factors they exposed were bad national policies, shortcomings in leadership and weak governance, as well as some unwise policies and practices on the part of international institutions such as World Bank and the IMF. The 1980s were singled out as a particularly bad period in Africa's history, plagued by instances of corruption, military rule, violations of human rights, large numbers of refugees and aborted elections in many countries.

### **The BRICS–Africa relationship in perspective**

The development of the BRICS provides many lessons in terms of how reforms can lift the poor out of poverty. Since China adopted an open door policy in the late 1970's, according to the World Bank, it has reduced the number of people classified as living in poverty by 600 million, a very respectable 46 percent of its population. Fuelled by Brazil, between 2002 and 2008, Latin America removed 40 million out of its 580 million population from poverty. The point is clear; as the GDP growth rates of the so-called emerging nations continue their frenetic pace, the levels of poverty fall. This is true for China, India, and Brazil and it is starting to be so for Sub-Saharan Africa. So, what is the game-changing and exciting meaning behind the phenomenal growth rates seen in China, India and Brazil?

South Africa's membership in the BRICS bolsters its position as a world champion; this will raise its clout on the world stage. In order to recognise the channels through which civil society may influence Africa's trade policy within this unfolding scenario, it is necessary to first analyse the legal framework of the bi- and multilateral relations South Africa already has, such as the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and TIDCA, the SACU-USA Trade, Investment and Development Cooperation Agreement. South Africa accounts for a third of the GDP in Sub-Saharan Africa and will offer BRICS members improved access to one billion consumers on the continent, as well as mineral resources including oil and plutonium. Many analysts claim that geo-politics drove China to invite South Africa to the club. South Africa's part in African post-conflict reconstruction and its leading influence in the African continent



is evidently important. Other analysts are inclined to believe that China's BRICS membership invitation is a strategically-timed diplomatic master stroke. China is moving expeditiously to make sure it has political capital in Africa, when it comes to taking tactical decisions that affect Africa's domestic and international affairs.

It is evident that communication between China and Africa is moving beyond the traditional areas, such as politics, business and trade. One example would be the China and Africa NGO Seminar that took place in Beijing in October 2010 under the theme "Enhance China-Africa Friendship, Seek Common Development." The seminar was co-organised by the China NGO Network for International Exchanges and Chinese-African People's Friendship Association, and it provided a platform for Chinese and African representatives to share their experience of NGO practices.

New policies at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) have also helped trade volume. At FOCAC's Fourth Ministerial Conference held in Egypt in November 2009, eight new measures were launched. Apart from continuing and increasing support in various areas – such as debt relief, expanding investment and aid to Africa – the new policies also put forward measures on environmental protection, clean energy, science and technology cooperation, as well as more support to African small and medium-sized enterprises. These policies are conducive to the expansion of Chinese and African market capacity and to updating trade structures, and the projects signal a new period of development for China-Africa trade and relations.

The fact that South Africa offers a gateway into the SADC market furthers China's corporate interests. The going-out strategy of Chinese companies will get a boost by joining South Africa's corporations in their exploring and exploiting of market and other opportunities in African economies. There are certain caveats to this theory, though; South Africa's ability to represent the African voice in multilateral fora and to be a gateway for the BRICS countries into Africa is questionable, and it is not clear whether the African bloc sees South Africa this way. This attempt by South Africa to be lead agency of the African agenda could be interpreted as a sub-imperial agenda across Africa (Moran 2011).

As South Africa contemplates its role and duties, it will be critical to evaluate how it interjects this with its interests in the region and on the continent as a whole. Not only does it need to demonstrate to its BRICS partners the confidence it has shown in its membership; it must also illustrate to the African people the efficacy of being part of the BRICS. It should not only be about multilateralism. Also needed are direct links to overcoming domestic, regional and continental challenges and aspirations, like unemployment and social development. The greatest challenge for South Africa is to start making BRICS work for it, while at the same time reconciling the expectations its BRICS partners may have.

### **The role of civil society: Way forward**

In such a complex world, with such seemingly intractable challenges, the ideal model would be one where the state (public services), the private sector (wealth creation) and civil society (social empowerment), each on its own platform, work together to meet developmental needs responsibly. In partnerships, all may profit. Non-profit organisations should display the same sense of urgency, efficiency, and drive for quality and performance that many state and financial organisations show. Likewise, it would be ideal if business displayed the same sense of passion, virtue and willingness to serve and to do good that characterises so many NGOs. A growing number of non-profit organisations do not depend on donations alone, but are taking pro-active steps to diversify funding sources and focus on sustainability.

To call upon civil society to participate in development and governance will require a radical shift in orientation, this in its turn calling for strategic planning and training on resource mobilisation techniques and organisational development techniques already alluded to. It will require a review of capacities, activities and services to enhance the capacity of not only civil society, but also of governments, in Africa to truly alleviate poverty. This has a direct bearing on the kind of technical assistance each will seek from the donors. In this context, the focus should be on how to improve coordination in the areas of capacity building and strengthening of civil society for development; the establishment of appropriate legal frameworks; the instalment of systems that ensure both economically and

financially accountable systems; a consensus on a common definition; and a priority agenda and practical modalities for popular participation in governance. The main weakness identifiable in civil society movements in Africa is that most of the time government programs are underutilised, often reflecting design flaws in terms of relevance. The programs often do not correspond to the needs of a community, because there is no involvement of the intended beneficiaries in the design and implementation of the programs. Participatory methodologies for planning, implementation and monitoring are the way to improved national capacities.

What are the basic modalities that should be adapted to ensure that the economic policies and strategies at the regional, national and international levels are supportive of sustained growth and poverty reduction in developing countries? I would suggest a three tier approach, the first being *consensus building* in the areas of interdependence, globalisation, and development strategies for better informed policy making, via a high level intergovernmental dialogue among the affected parties. Among the issues examined here would be issues related to policy coherence, and concrete proposals on how to achieve greater coherence. The second would be (policy-oriented) *research and analysis* of the modalities of integration of civil society groups. The analytical work will provide the basis for deliberations on the interdependence and global economic issues from a trade and development perspective on economic development in Africa. The third tier would be *technical assistance*, its basis being resource and financial management, as well as social entrepreneurship to help them sustain themselves in the long run as opposed to relying on donor funding.

The idea of having civil society lobby groups on board in deciding the trade agenda is a move towards achieving trade justice. The idea of trade justice or “fair trade” is a relatively new concept, which has been integrated into the discourse of sustainable development. Its definition, according to FINE – an international fair trade umbrella organisation – is of an alternative approach to conventional trade, a trade partnership which aims for the sustainable development of disadvantaged producers (Krier 2001). Fair trade is not merely about the process of trade itself, but also about development among Southern producers and Northern consumers. The challenge is that producers sometimes are too small to

live up to quality and quantity thresholds required for export. They may build the critical mass through joint production arrangements to achieve higher economies of scale. Overheads can be spread on efficiency enhancing equipment, technical personnel, and marketing.

It is obvious that globalisation is putting to test the cohesive forces of the nation state; in fact, it has made the state porous. In addition to that, mechanisms of international governance cause human rights violations and social injustices that are not under the control of the nation state. This compels civil society organisations to organise themselves to deal with this new centre of power, as many features indicate that economic integration of the globe has left social and ecological considerations behind. In response to this, a much more integrated and globally responsive civil society movement is the answer.

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## **Diaspora, transnational engagement and the national regimes**

Introduction Erik Olsson	177
Diaspora as an instance of global governance: The case of Kurds in Sweden Khalid Khayati	181
Transnational migration, social activism and the formation of new subjectivities Seo Seonyoung	186



# Introduction

Erik Olsson

Recent interest in the formation of communities and identity within migration contexts could hardly avoid reflecting over the popular concept of “diaspora.” In mainstream literature, this concept frequently refers to an ethnic community, minority or other social group in dispersion (cf Cohen 1997; Safran 1991; Sheffer 1995). However, this conceptualisation is contested by, for instance, asking why it is assumed that people automatically belong to a certain diaspora, when very little is known about whether they identify with a diaspora group at all. Moreover, the concept does not contain any information about the role and function of a diaspora, beyond its being a description of migrants in dispersion. In many cases, diasporas are – just like social movements – motivated by a political struggle and a will to react to issues such as racism and discrimination (cf Alinia 2004; Gilroy 1993). In these cases, the diaspora becomes more like a system of action, and the diasporic representatives need to find a social basis and the legitimacy for such an engagement. This speaks for an alternative approach to diasporic studies, such as to focus on the agency involved in the “diasporisation” of the migrant population that is claimed to be part of a diasporic community. In so doing, the study of diaspora will revolve around the stances, practices or projects that aim towards this community (Brubaker 2005), rather than the assumed community itself.

As a “mobilised” social form, diasporas are typically capable of involving people in formations such as associations, clubs, religious organisations, and so on. They are also genuinely transnational, particularly in their significant practices and commitments (eg Castles and Miller 1993; Glick Schiller et al 1992; Vertovec and Cohen 1999; Al-Ali and Koser 2002). Through people’s ambition to be a motor in the development and maintenance of ties, to engage in “homeland issues” and to nurture the idea of “return” (Cohen 1997), a diaspora becomes a matter of networking



between a country of residence and a country of origin. These networks serve to maintain social relationships within and between families, kin and friends. Hence, the transnational space is a resource for diaspora actors (Faist 2000). This bridging is crucial in order to both understand the extent to which, and how, the diaspora installs practices that respond to some “needs” in the population, and mobilises the targeted population of a community.

A frequent expression of practices where people use the transnational space is the different kinds of remittances that migrants send to their relatives in their country of origin (eg, de Haas 2007; Lindley 2009) and the formation of agencies that facilitate these kinds of services. Migrants also use the transnational space to facilitate different kinds of aid for locals in their “home villages” or for their political involvements of different kinds. In one way or another, these practices concern the public function of social networks in a migration context. What follows is that social networks, or rather their representatives in the shape of diasporic institutions and actors, could act as civil society institutions that provide solutions to people’s everyday needs, provide an arena for social gatherings, or function as mediators of political engagement. Transnational relations, involving several diasporic residences as well as the country of origin, can thus be an important resource when diasporas develop social practices of different kinds.

When diasporic associations or organisations mediate and distribute services, they include the transnational context as a resource in creating a “structure of opportunity” rather than restricting themselves to a national arena. Such diasporic associations may thus have similarities with well known and successful multinational corporations, but it is obvious that this transnationality operates on a smaller scale, for instance when families maintain strong social ties and services.

One of the crucial conditions for the practices generated in the diaspora is the responsibilities that transmigrants may assume for the welfare of family, kin and others within the social networks in their country of residence, as well as in their country of origin. In a world where power is distributed unevenly, and where the global reconfiguration of social relations is also refiguring the concept of civil society, it becomes even

more important to learn about the diaspora's "civic" and transnational engagement. Modern nation states, however, are still powerful structures that organise societal life, even in times of globalisation. It is evident that the laws, policies and practices of the sending and receiving states have a decisive impact on how transnational activities and practices are shaped (Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Basch et al 1994; Guarnizo and Michael 1998). The transnational approach will thus direct attention to particular phenomena in social life and the coping with powerful structures and policy.

The focus in the research approach suggested here is the understanding of diaspora as a "mobilised" social form and the way diasporic organisations, associations, and even enterprises within migration contexts, assume responsibility for social issues, support, remittances and other demands of service emanating from social networks of transmigrants. According to my opinion, it is crucial to explore what new practices are generated when the diasporas become "agents" with a civic engagement that cross the border of the nation-state. From this point of departure it will be important to ask how these practices are shaped by their transnational connections and their wrestling with power structures – but also how these in their turn will shape the power structures. Transnational practices generated by the diaspora will presumably be affected by national policy and by states acting across national borders, while the diasporic "institutions" at the same time may become agents that engage in policy-making transnationally. The aim of such research, which is illuminated by the articles of this section, is to comparatively explore how civic engagement evolves in a number of diasporic migrant networks, and how various forms of practices are developed that contextually respond to different needs and power structures in a transnational space.

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# Diaspora as an instance of global governance: The case of Kurds in Sweden

Khalid Khayati

The process of globalisation, the increase in numbers of diasporan populations and transnational social movements, and the expansion of non-governmental organisations have – together with transnational capital and corporations – generated considerable interest in global governance and the role of civil society at global and transnational level. In this respect, there are certain pessimistic interpretations that view transnational civil society as a neo-liberal construction that helps to maintain the current “unequal” global order (Drainville 1998). Other scholars believe that global civil society, operating on a transnational social field at the intersection of several nation-states, is an instrumental human resource for the regulation of various political, economic, social and cultural global flows (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor 2004).

Today, many diasporan populations – residing in Western societies – have created considerable civil society structures that function not only as a substantial means of integration in their residing societies, but also as genuine transnational institutions that aim, in one way or another, to affect the politics of their former homelands, especially in the direction of democracy, promotion of human rights and peace settlement with non-violent means. In this respect, diaspora appears as an instance of global governance and an arena of transborder citizenship.

Transnational civil society structures are the expression of various ethnic and cultural associations, social and professional institutions, online and on air arrangements, networks of personalities and celebrities in various political and cultural fields that are used by diasporan groups,

in order to cross the borders of two or more nation-states. As a result, civil society and diaspora become two interconnected notions, and diasporan groups become one of the central components of global civil society. According to Cochrane, there is a direct connection between civil society and diaspora. As diasporan groups take interest in conflict and peace-building efforts and political confrontations in their societies of origin, they should be seen not only as significant peace contributors in the study of global civil society (Cochrane 2007) but also as genuine *transborder citizens*, as they participate in the political processes, normative regimes, legal, juridical and institutional systems of both their new and old societies (Glick Schiller 2005). Likewise, transborder citizenship comparatively stands for a more modulated, multidimensional, dynamic and active form of diasporic agency (Khayati 2008). Cochrane (2007) claims that diasporan groups should be included in any analysis that contributes to peace-building and the creation of various sociocultural and political organisations in the former societies. Through their transborder civil society structures – appearing more often than not in the form of ethnic and cultural associations, social and professional institutions and networks of personalities and celebrities in various political and cultural fields – diasporan populations manage to cross the borders of two or more nation-states in order to intersect the political, legal and juridical systems of their new and old societies.

On such a transnational social field, diasporan populations participate in the normative regime, legal and institutional system and political processes of two polities; a participation which is not always painless and without dilemmas. It may be particularly problematic when the two polities arise from two different political premises and visibly represent two more and less contradictory political systems, such as democratic institutions in the countries of settlement, and non-democratic or less-developed societal organisations in the countries of origin. In such a context, transnational civil organisations of immigrant and refugee populations appear as manifestations of social energies and an awakening of human consciousness for achieving peace and democratisation in the former homelands. As such, they are often counteracted by certain social and political forces of their former societies, who see the presence of such

civil society organisations as menacing to their continued existence. For instance, global civil society movements that are working to promote gender equality, human rights or democracy in traditional societies are regularly confronted with local social forces that prefer to organise the society on the basis of political ideas that leave less room for political participation on democratic grounds.

In this respect, the case of diasporan Kurds in Sweden and their transnational relations to Iraqi Kurdistan can be considered as a relevant and illustrative empirical contour. Several researchers (Bruinessen 1999; Wahlbeck 1999, 2002; Østergaard-Nielsen 2000; Eccarius-Kelly 2002; Griffiths 2002; Alinia 2004; Emanuelsson 2005; Khayati 2008) maintain that Kurdish diaspora in the West acts more and more as a networked and homeland-oriented political activist organisation. According to Vera Eccarius-Kelly (2002), those diasporan Kurds who participate in social organisations in Western Europe display the typical characteristics of “social movement organisations” (term borrowed from Charles Tilly), suggesting that they consider themselves as legitimate representatives of other diasporan members, as they publicly push for the recognition of their agenda, develop connections with allied actors and seek new political opportunities for achieving acceptance. In so doing, diasporan groups attempt to affect not only the general integration policies of the residing states in their own favour, but also the general opinion of those societies in favour of the politics of their former homelands. For instance, in Sweden, diasporan Kurds create their associations and informal networks in order to use them not only as a supplementary resource to solve the problems arising from insufficient integration policies in Sweden, but also as genuine mobilisation platforms that are largely oriented toward their societies of origin (Wahlbeck 1999). In this regard, the Kurds in Sweden, who compose a socially and politically diversified diasporan population, effectively make use of the favourable Swedish political context in order to develop their diasporic structures in the form of a multitude of transnational arrangements, social networks, associations, women organisations, satellite TV and radio stations, publishing houses, internet and cyberspace platforms, and cultural settings that make them able to be among of the most active diaspora in the country (Khayati 2008).

Depicting the impact of the Kurdish transnational civil society organisations in Sweden on the Kurdish homeland implies that we should, as well, actualise a number of fundamental changes that Kurdish society at large has been undergoing in recent years. The most essential of these changes is the emergence of the *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq since 1992, which exerts considerable influence on not only how Kurds sustain their ethno-national identity, but also on how they create their diasporic structures in their societies of residence. The transnational connections between diasporan Kurds in Sweden and Finland and Iraqi Kurdistan account for a set of various experiences that are progressively generating a new consciousness, new “shared images of cosmos” (Keane 2003) and new transnational civil society dispositions among them. For instance, in the Iraqi Kurdistan legislative elections that took place on 25 July 2009, diasporan Kurds in Sweden and Finland played a considerable role, as they actively worked to establish appropriate structures (meetings, associations, chat rooms, internet sites, etc.) in favor of the main oppositional group (Change List, *Listî Goran*); a reform-oriented group which essentially addressed what it saw as corruption and undemocratic ruling methods undertaken by the two dominant Kurdish parties KDP and PUK. Change List received the considerable 25 percent of the Kurdish vote. At present, influenced by popular revolutions in the Arab and Islamic world in Northern Africa and the Middle East, followed by fundamental rapid political changes, diasporan Kurds in Sweden push actively for similar societal and political transformations in Iraqi Kurdistan. In this regard, a set of transnational organisations, networks, chat-rooms, websites and discussion fora have been created, a number of Swedish political personalities and organisations have been contacted, and several demonstrations have been organised in different Swedish towns and cities.

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# Transnational migration, social activism and the formation of new subjectivities

Seo Seonyoung

In general, while commodities, capital and information move relatively freely over nation-state borders in the global economy, the movement of people and labour across national borders is often highly restricted. In the Asia region, which has seen a rapid growth in cross-border migration for mainly economic reasons – and particularly in temporary labour migration – since the 1970s, the failure of state attempts to control migratory flows has resulted in diverse kinds of human rights and workers' rights abuses. Numerous reports and research findings have demonstrated the highly exploitative conditions under which migrants work, and some have documented collective resistances against this situation organised by NGOs and labour unions with the participation of migrant workers. Since the questions which migration raises are both global and local and therefore do not fit only within the realm of national politics, and because activism concerning migration issues is linked with the politics of both host countries and countries of origin, these resistances can be seen as a form of transnational activism (Piper and Uhlin 2004).

There is quite a bit of research on the activism of migrants in the Asian region, much of it focusing on and emphasising the agency of migrant workers struggling against structural constraints, as well as on the transnational nature of their activism, expressed in new forms of social practice and political spaces (Constable 1997; Gibson et al 2001; Piper and Uhlin 2002; Ogaya 2004; Piper and Ford 2006). However, little has been written about individual migrant workers who are involved in activism, their motivations and the process of their involvement. My research deals directly with the people who participated in social activism

to uphold their rights as migrant workers in the host country in the past, and who are currently involved in social activism after having returned to their country of origin. My focus lies on a case of Nepalese migrants who returned from South Korea (hereafter Korea), among whom I did fieldwork in Kathmandu and Butwal in Nepal for two weeks in June 2008. Through in-depth interviews, I explored the interviewees' process of transnational migration from Nepal to Korea and back to Nepal, their individual experiences of migration, and their involvement in social activism. Most of them had participated actively in social movements in Korea between the beginning of the 1990s and the early 2000s. The level and intensity of interviewees' activism in Nepal was identified by their position in their organisations in Nepal – two NGOs and one union — and the amount of time and resources they devoted to activities.

### **Nepalese migration to Korea**

In Nepal, after the advent of the democratic movement in 1990, it became easier to obtain travel documents and passports, and consequently the number of international labour migrants from Nepal to diverse destinations increased rapidly (Thieme and Wyss 2005). During the same period, that is, since the late 1980s, when dramatic economic growth and improvement of living standards in Korea led Koreans to shun low-paying jobs in the manufacturing and construction industries, resulting in labour shortages, people from neighbouring Asian countries have been going to Korea to take these jobs. As such, from the beginning of the 1990s, Nepalese people with tourist and other short-term visas have gone to Korea in search of employment

The Korean government began a full scale “Industrial Trainees System” in 1993, and people have entered Korea as industrial trainees from 1994. The first group of trainees to arrive was Nepalese (Yonhap News 1994). However, when accepting migrant workers within this system, the Korean government did not grant them work permits but rather designated them as trainees, placing legal and economic restrictions on them. Many of these trainees had left a regular workplace to get a higher income or to escape from severe working conditions but ended up as undocumented workers. Despite living in Korea, migrant workers

– in a legal respect – were not recognised as such until the Employment Permit System (EPS) was introduced in August 2004. It is not surprising to find that they have experienced many difficulties: highly intensive labour, hazardous working conditions, and low wages to mention a few.

According to current statistics (MOJ 2011), Nepalese migrant workers account for only around 1.4 percent of the total migrant workers population, but with regard to community organisation, the activities of Nepalese migrant workers in Korea appear quite remarkable in comparison to other migrant workers' groups. After the Nepalese Consultant Council (NCC) was first founded in 1993, more than 50 small-sized Nepalese community organisations have appeared, defined in terms of locality, language, caste, religion, and association with branches of the political parties in Nepal. The NCC has functioned as the representative of Nepalese community organisations for a long time and has participated actively in migrant workers' struggles in Korea since 1994. While NCC is the only nationality-based organisation, other organisations exist which have organised themselves around particular group identities.

### **Social networks, activism and subjectivities in Korea**

Regardless of prior social position and educational background, in Korea, as elsewhere, becoming a migrant worker implies getting a low social status. In particular, interviewees faced many hardships as a result of the Korean government's policy, aiming at extracting the labour power of migrant workers without recognising their rights as humans and workers. Only allowing temporary sojourns, often leading to undocumented status, places migrants in an underclass position (Grey 2004) as expendable labour. The structural constraints that interviewees faced as undocumented migrant workers were the primary motivation to get involved in social activism. This collective form of organisation had often been preceded by individual acts of resistance that had led no further than to their leaving their workplaces, bringing no improvement to their work conditions. Thus, while most interviewees were basically motivated by experiences of personal suffering and anger, previous experience of involvement in political activism and collective action in Nepal, as well as empathic and altruistic personalities, were also important factors for some interviewees.

Social networks and Nepalese community organisations played an important role for interviewees to begin and deepen their involvement in social activism in Korea. While a few interviewees were involved in only Nepalese community organisations, others extended their social networks and organisational activities to include the participation in migrant support NGOs or migrant labour unions, membership in the Nepalese community organisation functioning as a step into becoming involved in these other organisations.

Although my interviewees shared a common background of having participated in social activism for migrant workers' rights in Korea and, in so doing, formed resistant subjectivities, interviews revealed the formation of different embodied subjectivities and the extent to which this process was highly dependent on organisational activities.

First, interviewees who focused their activities within the boundary of the Nepalese community organisation NCC tended to demonstrate "patriotism" with a strong sense of national identity, which was most likely reinforced by NCC's organisational activities based on the same. Second, members of the NCC who participated most actively in joint activities and struggles in collaboration with migrant support NGOs often expressed "humanitarian attitudes" with regard to their participation in social activism, a tendency that can be related to the human rights-based perspective and activities of many migrant support NGOs (Park 2005), which are mainly religious groups and human rights organisations. Third, interviewees who were involved in migrant labour unions expressed their identities in terms of their social "position as workers" because of the trade unions' class-based perspective. Interviewees' membership in trade unions and solidarity actions with Korean workers, as well as their participation in migrant workers' collective actions sponsored by the ETU-MB (Equality Trade Union – Migrant Branch) and the MTU (Migrant Trade Union) were a significant factor in the formation of their identities as workers.

### **Return to Nepal from Korea: Transnational linkages and new subjectivities**

Their new identity as migrant worker activists in Korea impacts on their being involved in social activism also after their return to the context of the Nepalese society. Just as interviewees were represented as resistant

subjectivities in the Korean society, their involvement in social activism after returning home may see them as subjectivities involved to change the Nepalese society. Moreover, social networks – including the interpersonal ties created through organisational activities in Korea, and networks of organisations between Korea and Nepal – are extended as transnational forms of linkages, playing important roles for their activism in Nepal. Interestingly, three groups among the interviewees show particular characteristics in their activities in Nepal, connected to the different characteristics of cross-border social networks.

First, interviewees who founded the NeKoDeCo (Nepal Korea Development Council) had been active mainly within the NCC while in Korea; in Nepal, they work primarily to promote the participation of return migrants in national economic development, as well as on the achievement of individual benefit through cooperative economic activities. Their experience of activities in the NCC, a nationality-based organisation in Korea, might thus be seen to impact on their formation of a strong national identity, which in its turn seems an important motivational ground for founding an organisation whose focus is national development in Nepal.

Second, interviewees who formed the AHRCDF (Asian Human Rights and Culture Development Forum) had also been members of the NCC but had more actively participated in joint activities and collective struggles in collaboration with migrant support NGOs in Korea; they are now involved in pre-education for prospective migrants and a reintegration programme. Their work is aimed at promoting “successful” migration, as well as human rights of marginalised people in Nepal, activities implying that their involvement in human rights-based activities in Korea with migrant support NGOs have impacted on their activism in Nepal. They tended to identify themselves as activists for human rights – and such self-identification in Korea might have led them to be active for the marginalised people in Nepal.

Third, interviewees who are involved in the GEFONT (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions) Migrant Desk were members of migrant labour unions in Korea; now, their work emphasises the right of Nepalese migrant workers in destination countries and seeks to organise

them as union members. While they were members of trade unions in Korea, their experience of collective resistance and solidarity with Korean workers might have affected the formation of their identity as union activists as well as workers, and it seems to encourage them to become involved in trade union activism in Nepal. In addition, transnational networks and cooperative activism of trade unions in Nepal and Korea may also be seen as the basis of these interviewees' participation in union activism in Nepal.

### **Conclusion**

Just as transnational migration is an integral part of globalisation, the role of transnational migrants and the social movements they build also make up one dimension of globalisation in modern age. In the transnational spaces constituted by transnational migrants and their social networks, new forms of resistance and political practices come into being. Since collective activism of migrants and the changes they effect clearly show the capability of migrants to be counter-hegemonic subjects as agents of social change (Ogaya 2004), it may be important to examine the factors that motivate migrants as well as their process to become involved in transnational activism.

In this context, my research shows three important aspects. First, migrants involved in collective activism while in Korea formed resistant subjectivities that became agents able to contribute to social change, rather than simply powerless migrant workers, exploited and abused under structural constraints. Second, the activism of these migrants after returning to Nepal, aiming at economic and social development of their home society, is an alternative to re-migration in the face of Nepal's uneven political situation and chronic underdevelopment, and shows them as having developed new subjectivities through continued social involvement. Third, migrants' participation in social activism in Nepal, as well as in Korea, has been based on the experiences of migration and grounded in transnational networks constructed through the process of migration.

Although interviewees showed diverse characteristics, they may all be seen as having formed new subjectivities upon their return as agents

with the ability to influence social change in Nepal. While resourceful and shaped by positive visions, the real effect of their activities, which are still in the initial stages, on Nepal's social and economic development are not yet easy to estimate. The fruits of their work will have to be left for a future study.

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## **Globalisation and trade union internationalism**

Introduction Nora Räthzel	195
Rainforest communities and climate change in the Brazilian Amazon João Paulo Veiga and Scott B Martin	202
Labour and the globalisation of local resistance: The case of Arcelor Mittal Jacklyn Cock	208
Transnational solidarity and micro-enterprises: Home-based workers in Ahmedabad, India Marie Larsson	212
Asymmetric governance, labour standards and migrants' rights Branka Likic and Carl-Ulrik Schierup	220





# Introduction

Nora Rätzzel

## Historical legacies

Trade union internationalism marks the birth of the labour movement. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, labour internationalism mainly involved skilled male workers in the increasing number of factories of the emerging age of industrialisation. It was often connected to other international movements, like pacifist and anti-slavery movements (for a short and concise historical overview of labour and union internationalism see Waterman and Timms 2005). As the term “internationalism” already indicates, this is a form of organisation based on membership within nation-states and, therefore, it is always in danger of being overcome by nationalist sentiments and interests.

However, union internationalism has continued through the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the form of international unions, the former International Free Trade Union Confederation (during the Cold War, the Western part of the International Trade Union movement) and the World Federation of Trade Unions (during the Cold War, the Eastern part of the International Trade Union Movement), which merged in 2006 to form the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC, <http://www.ituc-csi.org>). The Federations have their international organisation in the Global Union Federations (GUF, <http://www.global-unions.org>). Despite this relatively stable, institutionalised internationalism, the practical forms of trade union internationalism deteriorated considerably before and during the first and second World Wars, when some unions resolved to nationalisms and the international movements split along the West/East divide. Another divide that continues to haunt trade union internationalism is the one between the global North and the global South.

## Globalisation and the North-South divide

In the past, North/South trade union internationalism has mainly been a one way relationship, in which trade unions of the global North

have helped those in the global South in various ways: financially, by supporting the building of unions; educationally, by sending Northern members to support Southern unionists in issues of organising and setting up a trade union organisation; politically, through supporting Southern struggles and by intervening directly when unionists have been incarcerated or harassed in any way by governments and/or companies. While these forms of internationalism were, and still are, vital for unions in the South, they are deficient in a number of ways:

- a) they do not enable trade unions in the South to have an equal say in the affairs of international unions;
- b) there is little communication between the international trade union organisations and the national unions, let alone unionists on the shop floor level, due to its institutionalised form; and
- c) the means of communication and organising – though making use of some IT features such as homepages and mail lists – do not respond to the possibilities of networking used by other social movements (see Waterman 2001).

With globalisation and the advance of globalising Transnational Corporations (TNCs), the needs of as well as the conditions for trade union internationalism are changing (Bieler et al 2008). Given the degree to which TNCs have been gaining power and have been able to integrate their production process at a global level, the need for unions to form global links capable of challenging TNCs is obvious. However, globalisation affects all workers but in different ways. In a “race to the bottom” (Chan and Ross 2003), TNCs move to the South, where environmental regulations are weaker, working conditions poorer, and wage rates lower. One could argue that this might strengthen trade union internationalism. Being employed by the same TNC in different countries provides an organisational setting for cross country forms of solidarity, since unions now have a “common enemy.” However, while workers of the same TNC in different countries sometimes do support each other, we have also found that due to different political and economic conditions in each country, it is often difficult for unions to even communicate, let alone create links of solidarity, across countries (Mulinari and Rätzzel

2009). This is, of course, as much true for contacts between countries of the global South as between countries of the global North. Relations between trade unions in the North and trade unions in the South become especially strained, since the “race to the bottom” sets workers in the North and workers in the South in competition against each other. As one trade unionist we interviewed in South Africa<sup>1</sup> put it: “the unions in the North are only interested in defending their jobs.” One of the strategies international unions suggest against this kind of competition is to improve the working conditions and salaries worldwide, to create a “level playing field,” thus making the relocation of industries less attractive. However, with huge global differences in terms of living conditions and costs of living, such changes seem to lie very far in the future when it comes to salaries.

A level playing field seems at first sight more likely to be achieved in environmental regulations. Climate change is a global issue, impossible to solve without the inclusion of all countries, though in different ways (Räthzel, Uzzell in press). Looking closer, though, it becomes obvious that, again, the dividing interests between workers of the global South and the global North are numerous. To begin with, the main polluters have been the countries of the North; therefore southern countries, as well as unions, claim that industrialised countries have a greater responsibility to combat climate change. They ask for financial support to upgrade their emerging industries so as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Technological transfer is needed, and the price of patents has to be lowered considerably or patents transferred for free to countries in the South. Northern governments and unions must abstain from imposing regulations that hinder Southern countries to export their goods into the North, using the argument that they have been produced under less strict environmental regulations. Concerning environmental degradation more generally, Southern unions do not want their countries to be the recipients of Northern waste.

Migration is another theme that can constitute a dividing line between Northern and Southern unions. Workers of the South want to have free access to Northern labour markets in the same way that capital has almost unlimited access to Southern resources and labour force. This may

conflict with protectionist practices of unions in the North, who, as was the case in Britain in 2009, demand jobs to be given to British workers first. Such movements develop now and again in Northern countries – and in Southern countries as well. One example is the wave of racist violence against migrant workers in South Africa during that same year. Thus, the conditions that make cooperation on a global scale necessary also create conflicting interests that make global solidarity more difficult.

Activities undertaken internationally by unions today are varied: they lead international campaigns for workers struggling for their rights in specific countries, especially in countries of the South; they negotiate international framework agreements with companies in an attempt to realise the “level playing field,” pressuring TNCs to guarantee workers’ rights and trade union rights in all countries where they are investing. The International Trade Union Confederation works actively to include workers’ interests into the negotiation process on climate change, and it regularly launches campaigns for “decent work,” the rights of domestic workers and migrant workers. Many of these campaigns are addressed at governments and at companies in general, but they often fail to become part of union activities at shop floor level. Union representatives have either not heard of the ITUC and international federations, or they do not think they represent their immediate interests. As Waterman (2001, p 317) has said, there is a need for a new union internationalism to be “favouring shop floor democracy and encouraging direct horizontal relations both between workers and between the workers and other popular/democratic social forces.”

However, not only are there conflicting interests between unions all over the world, within as well as between Northern and Southern unions; there are also different political traditions, which have led to different trade union practices and different relationships between unions, governments and companies. Hyman (2001) divides the European movements into those who embrace societal transformation, that is, who want to get rid of capitalism; those who believe in evolutionary change, seeking to create a fair and just capitalism; and those who relate only to companies, reducing their work to collective bargaining, seeking fair working conditions. Such political differences make it difficult for unions to form

alliances and to cooperate in a way that does not reduce their actions to the lowest common denominator – if they are able to communicate at all.

As a result of diverging North-South interests and conflicting forms of organisation, some unions of the South have formed a specific South-South alliance, the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR, <http://www.sigtur.com>).

### **New perspectives: New members, new allies**

A number of scholars believe that globalisation does not call for stronger unions or more successful trade union internationalism, but rather that trade unions have become obsolete. Castells (1997), for instance, maintains that labour movements “fade away” giving way to “identities of resistance”, based on “individualistic projects.” Hence, he argues, the new movements resist against what they choose as their issue of concern, but do not communicate, neither with the state nor with one another (Castells 1997, p 356).

While some unions in the North have a decreasing membership, others are gaining members. In some countries and in some professional areas (eg, white collar jobs), union membership is rising: for example, 19 percent in Spain’s *Comisiones Obreras*, and even 0.7 percent in the UK in total, which saw a most dramatic decrease before 2003 (Carley 2009). In the South, the situation is very diverse. In countries like India, where around 83 percent of workers are employed in what the North calls “informal employment,” the level of unionisation is extremely low. The “informalisation” and “precarisation” of work – that is, working contracts that are not permanent, include only part-time work, and do not guarantee workers the rights of unionisation, pensions, unemployment benefits, etc – is increasing in the North as well. On this basis, there is a need for unions all over the world to re-think their membership conditions, and to restructure their alignments.

Even though NGOs are important movements, trade unions (despite their many problems with organising locally and globally of which we have mentioned only a few) are best situated to establish a counterforce to TNCs:

- trade unions are organised locally, nationally, and internationally, and even if the links between these levels may leave a lot to be for, they do exist;
- trade unions have more than one hundred years of tradition and knowledge from confronting capital in the interests of workers;
- only trade unions organise workers at the workplace, therefore directly confronting capital where it is most vulnerable, in the production process.

If unions are to transform these potential capabilities into real power, they need to transform themselves considerably. They must include new issues on their agendas, the environment perhaps being the most challenging of those. Women's rights and gender equality are other important issues. While unions all over the world have campaigned for equal pay and have managed to achieve a new programme to protect domestic workers, women are still not represented equally in important union positions. Migrant workers are another group which – due to the contradictions mentioned above – has not received enough support from unions across the world for their rights. If unions are to gain strength and convince workers all over the world that they have the power to defend workers' rights, they need to include informal workers into their ranks, and form alliances with those bodies into which these workers have organised themselves, such as the organisations of street vendors, self-employed women, small farmers, etc. Different aspects of these new challenges for trade unions are discussed by the authors of the articles of this section.

### Note

1. Together with David Uzzell from the University of Surrey, the author is currently conducting a research project on trade unions and their environmental policies on international, national, and local level. The project is funded by FAS, the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research.

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# Rainforest communities and climate change in the Brazilian Amazon

João Paulo C Veiga and Scott B Martin

In the International Year of Forests, 2011, declared by the United Nations' General Assembly, a platform to promote sustainable management and conservation of forests has been set up.<sup>1</sup> The main objective is to raise public awareness of the key role of forests in the sustainable development efforts, representing nearly 20 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Forests around the world play a key role in climate change because they store carbon emissions and supply cities with water. According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), "13 million hectares of forest [are] destroyed annually," the size of a country such as Portugal, forests that "1.6 billion people depend on [...] for their livelihoods."<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations Deforestation and Forest Degradation program (REDD)<sup>3</sup> has a "plus" version, highlighting the role of local communities and indigenous people. Studies of the local communities of the Arapiuns River in western Pará (Brazil) show that efforts to engage families in sustainable management of forests might not be successful if their understanding of climate change is disregarded by policymakers, NGOs and international organisations. A bottom-up approach, privileging views and actions of local level actors, must thus be included by all subnational, national and international partnerships seeking to comply with and enforce REDD and other UN forest guidelines. The local approach involves placing central attention on the local understanding of the concept of sustainability and the global warming phenomena. Different ways to manage the forest, adapted to each community, must be part of policies and partnerships between private and public bodies, and local level governance must be reinforced.

Traditionally, environmental issues have been framed as "global," and multilateral governance has been applied to foster cooperation among

states towards agreements with top-down enforcement. The proposal here is the opposite: “local levels are the primary loci of governance” (Betsill and Rabe 2009) in a bottom-up approach which complements the traditional view. Climate change entails forging new identities and values, the outcome of which strengthens local communities as key actors in more integrated, multilevel, private-public, transnational institutional arrangements between states and international organisations, such as the UNEP and REDD plus. Working closely with local communities to develop capabilities and providing training and assistance to improve income and employment opportunities to the families, is one of the most fruitful and sustainable ways to preserve the forest; it also enforces the rules that authorities and local community leadership have committed themselves to.

#### **The communities of the Arapiuns River**

In the area of the Arapiuns River, a conflict pits timber traders and landowners against communities and small scale activities; the former exploit the forest with permission granted through licenses issued by the environmental authority (Secretary of Environment of the state government of Pará). Rural workers, who are self-sufficient labourers in small scale subsistence activities, and their families live in the “glebas” (territories) of Lago Grande and Nova Olinda. It is the latter of these that has been at the centre of local struggles (SASK 2010). The peak of the conflict occurred in 2009, when rafts carrying lumber were burned by community members due to “increased tension and lack of trust among the communities of the Gleba Nova Olinda, which resisted the extraction of lumber and the extractive model they reflected” (ibid).

Historically, a good portion of the communities in the region have lived at the margin of the state (at all levels), and have depended on their own resources. There is a strong sense of exclusion and a significant lack of social services. It is in this context that the timber companies are able to entice some communities with the promise of employment and benefits, such as regular wages, and with the donation of devices like electrical power generators, farm machinery, etc. Thus, some communities have allied themselves with the timber companies.

However, timber exploitation winds up expelling rural workers from their native areas, and paves the way for soybean cultivation, according to many statements. In this way, there is a tacit alliance between timber interests, soybean farmers, and mining companies – in collusion with Pará State government agencies – to implement and promote land occupation through a model of monoculture production on larger properties (SASK 2010).

Opposed to the loggers stand other communities, organised by non-profit social organisations and the STTR, the local rural workers trade union. They have decided to fight to guarantee the native communities land ownership and the right to traditional use of the land. The role that the STTR played, together with a project funded by the Finnish trade union confederation (SASK), was decisive in helping the communities to achieve these goals.

### **Project evaluation**

In September 2010, an on-site evaluation of the SASK project was conducted.<sup>4</sup> This five-year project aimed to develop training and assistance for local communities around the Arapiuns River, and was designed to build such institutional arrangements as collective settlements and civil society associations in the area. The local rural workers trade union (STTR) from the municipality of Santarém acted as project manager. The evaluation – based on interviews and site visits – entailed a 10-day journey through the Arapiuns River and its affluents (Maró and Aruã) to assess project effectiveness since its 2005 inception.

A number of questions were posed to informants in the area, concerning how the families interpreted the local impact of climate change on their “public good” – that is, the rainforest – and how they responded to that. The evaluation tried to find out which natural resources were seen as most vital to preserve, and which were specifically used in their community and for what purposes. Finally, an attempt was made to find out if and how they connected the use of their natural resources at local level with the environmental issues of global warming.

The evaluation underlined that the rainforest could be conceptualised as a “Common Pool Resource,” CPR (Ostrom and Moran 2009,

p 111), that is, a common good consisting of a limited and therefore under-providing natural resource, at risk of being over-appropriated by its various consumers (in this case, timber traders, lumberers, communities, and commodity producers). Collective action theory understands a traditional public good as one where beneficiaries cannot be excluded and “the use by one does not affect another’s appropriation of the good” (Keohane and Ostrom 1995, p 13). There are many beneficiaries of the use of forests, and as “each of those contributions is small relative to the cost of provision, the good will not be supplied in optimal quantity, unless institutional arrangements exist to induce incentives to provide it” (ibid, p 13). It is possible for local communities to act as forest keepers, to provide or restore equilibrium to the CPR, by behaving as “political entrepreneurs” (ibid). However, families need the right incentives to behave in such a fashion, and those incentives can be provided by a multi-level governance local system, based on cooperation among government agencies, non-state actors and international organisations.

### **Conclusion**

Through discourse analysis, based on fieldwork within communities, the evaluation could reveal huge differences across communities as they face the future in a context of climate change. It clearly indicates that the collective settlement projects and the creation of community associations in the region experience difficulties and challenges pertaining to shifting meanings and understandings of social conflict and climate change phenomena. In order to increase the success in environmental preservation and keep the families involved with efforts to sustain the forest, programs and policies from different agencies must consider the diversified universe of understandings about the impact of global warming that exists at the local level. Each community sees a different picture.

Whatever precise solution is pursued, rain forest sustainability must increase employment and income through one or more different activities, from fisheries to aquaculture to tourism. Local communities must be real actors, with leverage to influence and set the agenda, to enforce the collective rules and norms that are set in place, and to conduct their own evaluations of the outcomes. The most desirable and effective way

to achieve sustainability at the local level is to promote institutional arrangements which allow local communities to effectively participate through self-organisation.

Assistance programs from the outside must promote activities that employ most inhabitants and increase family income through partnerships, linking government agencies (national and sub-national), environmental NGOs, and civil society movements like the STTR. Collective settlements and civil associations are part of the decision-making process to determine and implement which projects are the most appropriate at the local level. More sophisticated institutional governance arrangements, with core enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, could also help to consolidate the local actors, and transform them into real stewards of rainforest preservation as well as practitioners of “sustainability” following their own understanding of that terms.

## Notes

1. <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011> (accessed July 03, 2011).
2. <http://www.unep.org/forests/AboutForests/tabid/29845/Default.aspx> (accessed July 03, 2011).
3. [www.un-redd.org](http://www.un-redd.org) (accessed July 03, 2011).
4. The evaluation was conducted by João Paulo Veiga and Pedro Maia Veiga in September, 2010.

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# Labour and the globalisation of local resistance: The case of Arcelor Mittal

Jacklyn Cock

Neo-liberal globalisation is driven by powerful, multinational corporations who frequently operate with what Bakan (2001) has termed a “psychopathic disregard” for their impacts on local communities. This feature of globalisation “from above” is a process which has been “left largely unexamined” (Burawoy 2009, p 240). In this paper, it is illustrated by an analysis of Arcelor Mittal, the largest steel producing company in the world. It demonstrates the concentration of power that marks global production chains, a power that overshadows many nation states. Trade unions were absent from the struggle against Mittal’s destruction of a South African community, largely because of their focus on defending jobs. However, this power is currently being challenged by a transnational grouping – Global Action on Arcelor Mittal – which illustrates a form of globalisation “from below.” In this process the “local” is being globally networked, and trade unions revitalised so as to access new sources of power.

## **Corporate power: The case of Arcelor Mittal**

Producing 10 percent of global steel output, Arcelor Mittal describes itself as “the only truly global steelmaker.” With over 300,000 employees in 27 countries around the world, a crude steel production of 116 million tons and a revenue of \$105.2 billion (Aitken 2008, p 6), it demonstrates the concentration of power that marks many global production chains. In the last three decades, Mittal has bought up old, run-down, state-owned steel factories in places including Trinidad, Mexico, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, South Africa, and Algeria. It has done so cheaply, ignoring legacy costs of environmental damage. In Trinidad, Ireland, the USA, Romania, Ukraine, Luxembourg, Kazakhstan, Bosnia and Herze-

govina, and South Africa it has been responsible for high levels of air or water pollution. In fact:

the cost of Mittal Steel's success has largely been paid by the communities living and working near the company's plants, Mittal Steel has a global reputation for prioritizing productivity over the environment and communities and unfair labour practices in all countries where it operates steel mills... (Aitken 2008, p 6).

The corporation supplies 80 percent of the flat steel employed in key sectors in South Africa, including mining, construction, motor vehicles, and general transport, machinery, equipment and metal products. It operates as an upstream firm with monopoly power, which impacts negatively on the environment and on downstream industries. Its excessive pricing indicates an abuse of its market dominance.

The steel mill at Vanderbijlpark in South Africa is one of the most profitable, but the pollution of the air and groundwater through the externalisation of environmental costs has had devastating impacts on the poor and the powerless who lived in the surrounding community of Steel Valley. Despite a long struggle, they have failed to stop the pollution or to obtain compensation for the loss of their health and livelihoods. One reason for this failure was that steel production was understood to be central to growth, and to jobs, with the result that the labour movement was largely absent.

### **Globalising the local**

Now, however, the people of the highly polluted Vaal Triangle have formed themselves into the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance and are beginning to make connections (albeit thin and tentative) with environmental justice activists in other societies to demand a redistribution of power and resources. These connections are locally embedded but globally connected and, in this sense, part of a process of "globalisation from below," sometimes termed "localisation" or "grassroots globalisation."

This transnational collaboration has great potential, enabling grassroots communities to reach up into global centres of power. In May 2008, a new coalition of global activists formed Global Action on Arcelor



Mittal which brought together activists from Ohio, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ukraine, India and Liberia. This is a growing network that has organised simultaneous protests in eight countries to mark Arcelor Mittal's Annual General Meeting and has produced two well researched reports describing its worldwide environmental abuse.

The globalised protests, and the organisational upscaling from the Steel Valley Crisis Committee to the Steel Valley Crisis Alliance, and then to the Global Action on Arcelor Mittal, points to the potential of this civil society initiative which is locally rooted but globally connected.

Furthermore, the emerging climate justice movement could strengthen global unionism and revitalise trade unions both globally and locally. "Climate justice" is stressed in both global and local terms. Globally, justice is a strong theme among climate change activists who claim that a wide range of activities contribute to an ecological debt owed to countries in the global South: the extraction of natural resources, unequal terms of trade, degradation of land and soil for export crops, loss of biodiversity, and so on. Locally, it is demonstrated that it is the poor and the powerless who are most negatively affected by pollution and resource depletion and will bear the brunt of climate change.

## **Conclusion**

The key questions on corporate power in relation to their environmental impact are:

How can the physical environment be protected from the actions of huge multinational corporations whose activities have, until recently, gone virtually unchallenged and unregulated? How can people, separated by language, politics, nationality and culture, come together to challenge corporations whose power transcends national boundaries? How can the poor and disenfranchised have their voices heard (Markowitz and Rosner 2002, p 2).

The answer involves the strengthening of social power that is "rooted in the capacity to mobilise people for cooperative, voluntary actions of various sorts in civil society" (Wright 2006, p 106). A global alliance of

labour and environmental activists, such as those committed to challenging the abuses of corporations like Arcelor Mittal, could become a significant source of counter power.

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# Transnational solidarity and micro-enterprises: Home-based workers in Ahmedabad, India

Marie Larsson

Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat located in western India, was previously known as “the Manchester of India” and for its militant working class.<sup>1</sup> With the decline of the textile industry from the 1970s and onwards, around 125,000 workers lost their employment and were forced to earn their livelihood in the informal economy (Breman 2004, pp 1-2), which led to a situation where workers had no protection in case of job loss or wages below the poverty line. Shahpur, the garment center of the city, is situated in the old eastern part of Ahmedabad. With the decline of the mills, many garment ateliers and shops were established in this part of the town. Characteristic for the area are the *pols*, neighborhoods, crossed by narrow streets faced by houses with girls’ dresses, cotton shirts and other clothing hanging outside the entrances. These are the homes of the garment contractors and subcontractors. They hand out the cloth to the women, mainly Muslim, who in their homes sew garments from the pre-cut fabric. The contractors then collect the finished product and distribute it to the traders in the market. As opposed to clothes from the garment workshops and factories, the products of the home-based workers are seldom exported but instead sold inside India. The women are paid per piece, and their income is very low and irregular. Moreover, they rarely know their employers due to the sub-contracting system.

On August 10, 2010, a fair-trade thread shop was established in Shahpur on the initiative of SEWA, the Self-Employed Women’s Association, a state-wide trade union in Gujarat among women workers in the informal economy.<sup>2</sup> The shop sells threads, needles, machine oil and other items that are required by the home-based workers to a lower price than in

the wholesale market. In October, two months after its establishment, I visited the area together with two women from Homenet South Asia, a regional network of home-based workers' associations, with its liaison office in Ahmedabad. At the request of SEWA, they made a survey in the area regarding the needs of home-based women workers, while distributing pamphlets to people in the neighbourhood informing them about the thread shop.

SEWA was one of the main initiators to Homenet South Asia. The members of SEWA and Homenet South Asia work closely together and have a common definition of home-based workers, including both dependent piece-rate employees – who work for an employer – and independent own-account workers.

Homenet was formed in 2000, and according to its own estimates, by 2010 it embraced some 190 organisations from five countries in South Asia – Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. A similar network exists in Southeast Asia, with its regional office located in Manila, the Philippines. There used to be a federation at international level – Homenet International – based in Leeds, England; however, the federation was dissolved in the early 2000s. There are also national Homenets in the various countries of South Asia and Southeast Asia. When I visited the area in 2010, Homenet India had its office in Ahmedabad and its president was a member of SEWA. This has since changed.

This article discusses the relation between local activism and transnational solidarity among home-based workers from the perspective of Ahmedabad. I will particularly focus on the political practices of SEWA and Homenet South Asia. As noted by Keck and Sikkink (1998, p 35) these practices involve recurring activities in order to accomplish political aims (see also Eschle and Maiguasha 2010, p 132). In my analysis, I include both collective bargaining and the assurance of service provisions to members, within the sphere of union practices. Both methods are used to improve the position of home-based workers in society and counter their exploitation by middlemen. These two faces of labour activism among home-based workers will be better understood against the backdrop of a theoretical discussion on labour and globalisation.

### **Theoretical perspectives on globalisation and labour activism**

The practice of outsourcing among the garment industries in Ahmedabad is related to the reorganisation of the international division of labour in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which came to be characterised by rising unemployment, weakened social influence of workers, and the growth of temporary, part-time, informal and home-based work (see Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay 2008; Moghadam 2005; Breman 2004; Prügl 1999). This restructuring of the economy has not been gender-neutral, as women are hardest hit by these processes. Several feminist studies have drawn attention to the importance of local gender regimes, when considering why women take up work in their homes (Wilson 2003; Mies 1982). In many Indian communities, above all among the Muslims and in some of the higher castes, long-established customs still prohibit women from working outside their homes (see Wilkinson-Weber 1999; Mies 1982). Moreover, their work is seldom legally acknowledged as such, since they are primarily considered housewives.

Another side to globalisation – apart from the economic one – is the growth of various forms of international protests and advocacy networks, referred to as “globalisation from below” or “grassroots globalisation” (Appadurai 2001). Some trade union scholars have introduced terms such as “social movement unionism” and “new social unionism” to include the growing importance of casual workers and women in the traditional trade organisations (Waterman 2007). Social movement scholars, on the other hand, have widened the concept of “social movements” to include NGOs, international advocacy networks, trade unions and parts of international institutions such as UNIFEM and the International Labour Organisation (Tarrow 2005, p 7).

Most importantly, by the 1980s and 1990s, many NGOs provided loans to income-generating schemes among the poor, leading to the growing popularity of microfinances within the Home-Based Workers’ Movement (cf Prügl 1999). International institutions, particularly the World Bank, have often promoted these projects as a way to increased employment and economic growth. In the eyes of these agencies, the informal economy is not the cause but the way out of poverty (cf Elyachar 2005, pp 78-80, 85). However, growing reports on microfi-

nance problems are appearing, as seen for example in the replacement of Muhammad Yunus from the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, and in suicides among indebted poor in Andhra Pradesh in India. Some scholars discuss the microfinances in terms of “working class debt” (Mollona 2009, p 651) or “empowerment debt” (Elyachar 2005, pp 29-30). However, unlike the growing number of profit-oriented Self-Help Groups (SHG) and microfinance firms, SEWA has not only focussed on access to credits but also on livelihood projects and social services (see below). The activities of SEWA in Ahmedabad should also not only be seen in terms of existing neo-liberal discourses of entrepreneurship, but in the light of Gandhian debates on self-reliance as well.

### **The trade union tradition in Ahmedabad**

In Ahmedabad, contemporary labour activism has been influenced by the dominance of the TLA, the Textile Labour Association, which was formed by Mahatma Gandhi in 1921. Consequently, the local tradition of labour unionism will be important when considering mobilisation among home-based workers. Significantly, Gandhi highlighted the harmonious relation between employer and employee. Therefore, a strike was regarded by the TLA as the last option when all “peaceful” means of conciliation and mediation had been worn out (Breman 2004, pp 44-50).

Ela Bhatt, a lawyer, established SEWA as a separate branch within the TLA in 1970. The aim was to mobilise women who worked within the informal economy. In contrast to the unionists of the TLA, the organisers of SEWA emphasised a more bottom-up approach, which has enabled many members to reach a leadership position. What is more, they differed from the TLA in that they called attention to the role of women as workers rather than mothers. In the course of time, the differences between SEWA and the TLA crystallised, and in 1980 SEWA was established as an autonomous organisation.

While TLA membership has decreased, SEWA has expanded to other parts of India and is also a very influential actor in unionism among informal workers at international level. Moreover it has carried on the Gandhian tradition of labour unionism, which can be seen in its daily practices (cf Breman 2004, p 283). Like the TLA, SEWA has been invol-

ved in negotiations rather than more confrontational methods to acquire higher wages and fairer working conditions for its members. Moreover, Gandhian ideas on economic self-reliance are reflected in the importance SEWA ascribes to cooperatives.

### **Labour politics among home-based workers**

Trade unions have had large difficulties in mobilising people engaged in volatile informal activities. Initially, the organisers of SEWA faced similar predicaments when they tried to assemble home-based workers. These women are isolated in their homes, and neither they nor society regard their activities as work. In the beginning SEWA used an area approach, where the organisers, often street vendors, tried to mobilise the home-based workers in their own areas. This strategy failed, and instead SEWA adopted a campaign method in which home-based workers were selected and trained as organisers. When home-based workers have become SEWA members, they are organised into local trade committees, holding recurring group meetings to identify their problems and needs. In their political practices, various methods have been used, including, of course, collective bargaining, but also advocacy, knowledge production, and service provisions (cf Eschle and Maiguashca 2010, pp 131-53).

#### *Advocacy*

Home-based workers from Ahmedabad have become engaged in advocacy activities, persuading and pressurising the state as well as international institutions. In the 1990s, they lobbied at worldwide meetings and ILO conferences for an international convention on homework – and the ILO Convention No 177 was finally passed in 1996. According to this convention, home-workers should be acknowledged as workers and enjoy the same rights as other employees. During the past ten years, the organisations of the workers have been advocating for its ratification by individual governments; this, however, has been a slow process. When Homenet India did not succeed in persuading the Indian administration to ratify the Convention, they turned to drafting a national policy regarding home-based work. Similarly, national Homenets of other South Asian states, among them Nepal and Bangladesh, have submitted drafts of

national policies to their governments. Homenet South Asia has facilitated the work by arranging international workshops and public meetings at which members meet and exchange experiences with each other.

*Knowledge production*

With the establishment of the SEWA Academy, the production and spread of knowledge has become an important activity among home-based workers. Most notably, the employees of the centre have trained activists from other parts of Asia. At these gatherings home-based workers from all over the continent meet, and a feeling of togetherness is created. For example, campaigners from the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand participated in a five-day training course on “Membership-Based Organisations of the Poor,” held at the SEWA Academy in 2010. They met with several home-based workers from Ahmedabad and learnt about their work and problems. As one of the participants from the Philippines told me, “it is like seeing a reflection of yourself.”

*Service provision*

What distinguishes SEWA from many trade unions is that it promotes not only collective bargaining but also service provisions for its members, for example, savings and credit (the SEWA Bank), livelihood opportunities (producer cooperatives) and insurance (Vimo SEWA). Broadly speaking, labour politics in Ahmedabad have two faces, “development” in the form of cooperatives on the one side, and the collective bargaining on the other, and union members perceive no contradictions between these practices. It is clear that the highlighting of economic self-reliance has made the association a model among international institutions – predominantly the World Bank – and NGOs (cf John 2005, p124). However, the growing popularity of the cooperatives – promoted by international institutions and funding agencies – involved appropriation and translation of Gandhian discourses about self-reliance into international neo-liberal discourses on microenterprises and entrepreneurship. When the microenterprises, in their turn, were “transplanted” (cf Merry 2006) to other parts of the world, particularly Europe, they were rejected by the organisations of home-based workers in favour of a more traditional class-based



struggle. In the process, tensions within the movement grew. Homenet International was dissolved, and an alternative federation – Homeworkers Worldwide – was established in 2006 with its base in Leeds. In contrast to the Asian Homenets, Homeworkers Worldwide has focused on one of the sub-categories of home-based workers – the dependent piece-rate employees – and its members are mainly concerned with issues such as employment rights and minimum wages.

### Concluding remark

In this article I have tried to identify the relation between local unionism among home-based workers in Ahmedabad and the creation of transnational solidarity. At the heart of this process is the local trade union tradition which can be traced to Mahatma Gandhi, illustrating that the struggle takes culturally loaded and historically specific forms.

Seen from another side, the material suggests that organisations – and individuals – are differently located within the transnational network. In contrast to many associations, SEWA has been able to influence policy proposals and coalition building; moreover, Ahmedabad is a central node within the network. However, it is difficult for home-based workers to create a common identity and, consequently, there are limits to transnational solidarity.

### Notes

1. This essay is based on a two-month fieldwork in Ahmedabad during 2010 and a three-month study in Manila in 2011.
2. Today SEWA has spread to eight states – Gujarat, Bihar, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Uttarkhand – and there exists an all-Indian SEWA federation.

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# Asymmetric governance, labour standards and migrants' rights

Branka Likic-Brboric and Carl-Ulrik Schierup

The emergence of a fundamentally reshaped global labour market regime during the past three decades has been marked by increasing informalisation of employment and followed by precarious working conditions, most seriously affecting irregular migrants. Ongoing processes of globalisation have so far been streamlined towards “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2005), implying a momentous shrinking of labour rights (Hertel 2009) and re-commodification of labour (Papadopoulos 2005). A range of social and political movements at transnational, regional and national levels have generated strategies and discourses of contestation that emphasise the prominence of universal and collective rights. In connection with these initiatives, this article addresses the issue of accountability and contingencies for the implementation of labour, migrants' and human rights and the International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s Decent Work Agenda within the existing global governance architecture. It is argued that setting up a workable model for codification and institutionalisation of labour standards, human rights and migrants' rights cannot be left to the currently asymmetric global governance regime. The essential role of global and regional trade union confederations and other civil society organisations (CSOs) in repositioning the issue of a rights-based approach to migration, labour standards and development onto the terrain of a fair globalisation is emphasised.

In this article, we present the contours of an emerging global governance regime and critically situate initiatives for promoting global social justice in general, and labour and migrants' rights in particular. We also investigate implications of the ILO's “decent work agenda” for the promotion of migrants' and labour rights, discussing different stakeholders' strategies and the significance of their discourses and practices for a reframing of

the neo-liberal understanding of development and migration management. We stress in particular the essential role of global and regional trade union confederations and other civil society organisations in repositioning the issue of a rights-based approach to migration, labour standards and development onto the terrain of a fair globalisation.

**An emerging global governance regime, “fair globalisation” and “decent work agenda”**

Global governance has been defined as “the set of normative, social, legal, institutional and other processes and norms, which shape, and in some cases regulate and control the dialectical interplay of globalisation and fragmentation,” involving a range of state and non-state actors (Clarke and Edwards 2004, p 6). Without doubt, the system of global governance and its agenda has predominantly been shaped by the most powerful and economically advanced countries, the OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development), the organisation of the most developed countries, led by the G7 and clearly dominated by the USA, as well as by transnational corporations.

The main global governance actors have primarily and consistently navigated the process of globalisation towards a creation of a liberal trade regime and a related financial and monetary system. It has become embodied in the establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), following the Uruguay Round. In processes of negotiation surrounding the establishment of the current global trade regime, global governance itself has also been rearranged. The Bretton Woods international financial institutions (IFIs), namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have become instrumental in the imposition of the neo-liberal model and the promotion of free capital mobility. Strongly supported by the USA and the advanced economies, the IFIs have also received an exclusive position apart from the rest of the UN organisational architecture; a clear mandate and required resources to promote hierarchical global economic governance, insulated from democratic grievances.

However, at the turn of the Millennium, the “Bretton Woods paradigm” and its optimism concerning eradication of poverty, through developing countries’ embracement of a GATT/WTO driven international

trade regime (Thérien 2005), has been put increasingly in question. An alternative “UN-paradigm” (Thérien 2005), which is informed by a different understanding of the nexus between global liberalisation and poverty, inequality, deterioration of social conditions, human and labour rights, has been initiated by several funds, commissions and agencies affiliated to a complex and disjointed UN scheme under the ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) co-ordination mechanism. This includes the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), the ILO (International Labour Organization), the UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) and the OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) in collaboration with the IOM (International Organisation for Migration). These multilateral agencies, within their overlapping mandates to promote human development, labour rights and social justice, have in the course of the 1990s elaborated a comprehensive theoretical and policy framework for the promotion of the social dimension of globalisation.

A discussion on the international labour standards, devised and supervised by the ILO, has played an important role in the development of this alternative discourse on globalisation, especially following the establishment of the WTO. In order to redress a repeated decline with respect to an inclusion of social clauses into WTO negotiations, and the exclusion of the ILO from these negotiations, the UN General Assembly decided, however, in June 2000 to commission the ILO the task of formulating a comprehensive global employment strategy. The ILO, given a golden opportunity to restore its derailed position within the global governance framework, reaffirmed its mandate to promote social justice through forging a “Decent Work Agenda” (DWA), formulated by its Director General Juan Samovia in the *Decent Work Report* (ILO 1999).

According to the Report, the ILO’s primary goal is “to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity” (ILO 1999). The DWA corroborated the basic principle of the ILO Constitution. It stands for the “de-commodification” of labour, and it reaffirms the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The Declaration affirms eight core conventions that ensured *freedom of association, recognition of collective bargaining, elimination of forced labour,*

*prohibition of child labour, elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation, and right to income.* These rights are also linked to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1995 World Social Summit Declaration and Commitments.

Besides these ambitious goals and strategies, the DWA goes beyond the assertion of a universal social floor of economic globalisation and opens a dialogue with global social movements and NGOs (ILO 2001). *Decent Work and the Informal Economy* (ILO 2002) is one of the most significant and challenging reports. Its preparation and the endorsement involved heated debates between academics, feminist activists, NGOs, as well as trade unions, governments and employers (Chen, Vanek and Carr 2004). Accordingly, the ILO defined its goal as the promotion of “*decent work along the entire continuum from the informal to the formal end of the economy, and in development-oriented, poverty reduction-focused and gender-equitable ways*” (ILO 2002, p 4).

In pursuing these strategic goals and the overall organisational objective to reinvent itself as a main forum for social policy dialogue, the ILO launched several other global initiatives. They have come to structure a discourse of global justice, solidarity and fair globalisation configured around the concept of decent work, alternative cognitive and normative frames in support of alternative policies aimed at a discursive reconfiguration of the global order. On the highest level, the ILO initiated the WCSDG (The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation) that produced its final report, *A Fair Globalization*, in 2004 (WCSDG 2004).

Another initiative concerns migration as an increasingly important global phenomenon, and building the GMG (Global Migration Group) together with the IOM (the International Organization for Migration) and several other UN agencies, complementary to UN initiatives in the field of migration. The UN Secretary General also launched the GCIM (Global Commission on International Migration) that presented its report in 2005 (GCIM 2005). In 2006, a UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development endorsed the global, informal and government-led consultative process Global Forum on Migration and

Development (GFMD) with the goal to promote shared policy frameworks in the field of migration. Concomitantly to this venture, the ILO initiated the elaboration of a “non-binding multilateral framework for a rights-based approach to labour migration and the establishment of a dialogue on migration in partnership with international and multilateral organizations”, published in 2010 (ILO 2010).

*Big words – low real impact*

However, universal UN and ILO declarations, conventions and recommendations have, to a great extent, proved toothless since they are not backed up by effective sanctions. The most conspicuous case of the lack of political will to protect migrant workers rights is the fact that the Migrant Workers Convention has been initiated in 1980, adopted in 1990, started to be ratified in 1998, coming into force in 2003 with 30, mostly sending, countries having ratified it. On the contrary, we have seen a turn towards the “securitisation” of migration regimes that is focused on the construction of border control mechanisms. Furthermore, evidence has confirmed the trade related regression of labour standards and migrants workers’ rights, especially in low-skilled labour intensive export industries both in developing and advanced economies (Arestoff-Izzo et al 2007; OECD 2007).

Several important explanations for such a low real impact of the human rights, labour standards and the Decent Work Agenda have been identified: a plethora of documents, reports and parallel standards without real impact; the lack of organisational capacity, legitimacy and political power of the main actors (ILO, UN-based institutions, trade unions, NGOs) to promote the agenda and the organisational competition for legitimacy; DWA has been formally supported but not pursued by governments; coherent and integrated policy approach has not been embraced by governments.

Thus, although this alternative UN paradigm to development and globalisation has been taken into consideration by the most powerful actors – the G20, the EU, the WB, and the IMF – the emerging global governance has been, and still is, marked by an *asymmetric dualism*. This dualism reflects normative asymmetries informed by neo-liberalism and

the related subordination of global governance to the supremacy of a free trade regime and the canon of the free movement of capital.

This brings us to the actual lack of *accountability* of an emerging global governance regime, and the need to implement *inclusive accountability* that indicates the democratic requirement that representatives be accountable “*to all those subject to their decisions*” (Lafont 2010, p 195). So the question of “inclusive accountability,” even to those non-citizens that lack political representation, can be translated into an issue concerning mechanisms and tools that could guarantee accountability to all decision takers. This understanding of accountability, Lafont further claims, could also address the evident failure of a state-centric approach to human rights to conceive non-state actors’ (TNCs and multilateral organisations such as the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF) responsibility for the protection and respect of indivisible human rights (Lafont 2010). Setting up a workable model for codification and institutionalisation, reconceptualising human rights in terms of an accountable global social policy with migrants’ rights and labour rights as essential pillars, cannot be left to the currently asymmetric global governance regime, nor to the initiative of concerned national governments or regional bodies like the EU or the NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). It will hardly come about without being impelled and underpinned by a multifarious social countermovement to neo-liberal globalisation.

### **Trade unions, NGOs and social movements**

Several implementation tracks can be identified in the processes related to the promotion of DWA and migrant workers’ rights (Likic-Brboric 2007):

- lobbying and advocating for the ratification and realisation of the Decent Work Agenda, core labour standards and migrant-specific conventions and recommendations;
- promotion of labour standards and social clauses through trade-related instruments, such as unilateral, bilateral and regional trade agreements;
- voluntary codes of conduct and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).



The above presented practices of implementation of global human rights claims, DWA and migrants' rights have two common traits: the lack of enforcement and implementation, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, their mobilising potential (Faist 2009, p 27). The related question and problem is connected with transnational strategy and actual organisational capacity of non-state multilateral actors: trade unions, international NGOs, academic communities, and civil society at large. It will hardly come about without being impelled and underpinned by a multifarious social countermovement to neo-liberal globalisation.

Basically, two venues of action have been pursued: one towards empowerment of the "precariat," a term here understood to denote a disposable labour force without basic rights and security; and another concerned with governance of the production value chain, where the role of the multilateral agencies, TNCs and the state is put in focus. Concerning the former, there has been a divide between trade unions and NGOs. The trade unions, on the one hand, were criticised for bureaucratic style, nationalism and exclusion of those in the most precarious situation in terms of citizenship and labour market position, while praised for organisational capacity and internal democracy (Eade and Leather 2004). However, the mobilisation of trade unions against criminalisation of illegal immigrants in rallies across the USA and several European countries points towards a change in the trade unions' practices and attitudes.

DWA has proved to play an important role as a common platform for unification and consolidation of the International Trade Unions Confederation, ITUC, in 2006. The promotion of the DWA has improved unions' multi-level organisational capacity to act both locally and globally and to develop new forms of mobilisation and alliances with the CSOs (Schmidt 2007). Furthermore, the new international labour social movements and their mobilisation for migrants' rights have also proliferated both at local and transnational level, bringing about a hope of a global "countermovement" (Munck 2007; Burawoy 2010).

The NGOs, on the other hand, were praised for flexible organisation while criticised for a lack of coordination and for a focus on poverty reduction that disregards employment issues (Eade and Leather 2004). Issues of employment and working conditions have, nevertheless, been

addressed by, for example, the WIEGO research network in the policy handbook *Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender in Poverty Reduction* (Chen, Vanek and Carr 2004). Another initiative was launched by PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants), an umbrella NGO located in Brussels. The report *Ten Ways to Protect Undocumented Migrant Workers* (PICUM 2005) calls for civic and trade unions' engagement in the promotion of human and workers' rights of undocumented migrant workers, and their empowerment through a reformulation of EU integration policies and the European Social Inclusion Strategy. Recently, DWA was launched as the main platform of *Solidar*, a European network of 52 NGOs from 25 countries that campaigns for Social Europe, labour and migrants rights.

Last but not least, the DWA played a prominent role for mobilising migrants in the preparatory work preceding the 2008 meeting of the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD). The report states that a rights-based approach to migration is not merely addressing rights "related to migrants and migration, but also to broader principles such as the right to development and the decent work agenda. The goal of such an approach is to ensure sustainable development while preventing the exploitation of those who move to live and work abroad" (MFA 2009, p 17). In conjunction with the promotion of migrant workers' rights, the importance of organising and including migrants themselves into the development debate has been acknowledged (Piper 2009). In fact, the openness and plurality of the PGA network (Peoples' Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights), together with the transnational mobilisation informed by a strong critical perspective on neo-liberal globalisation, might preclude the possibility of co-opting the tedious preparatory work to reframe migration and development nexus and, thereby, help to halt our current wave of commodification and precarisation of labour.

However, with all the enthusiasm that social mobilisation harbours, a dose of caution is in place. As phrased by Burawoy (2010, p 312):

[o]ptimism today has to be countered by an uncompromising pessimism, not an alarmism but a careful and detailed analysis of the way capitalism

combines the commodification of nature, money and labor, and thereby destroys the very ground upon which a “counter-movement” could be built.

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What is global civil society, and what role does it play in world politics? Some see grassroots organising transnationally, whereby marginalised groups pressure states and corporations towards increased democracy and respect for human rights. Others hold that global civil society actors are instruments in a neo-colonial exercise of power over the global South, serving Northern values and political or economic interests.

This volume discusses the multifaceted character of global civil society, constituting a political space where a diversity of actors struggle over values and aims, and where power and resources are unequally distributed. It also addresses how the space changes character with new global actors such as the BRICS countries, and with the waged War on Terror. The volume authors – academics as well as development practitioners – describe civil society actors from across the world and various forms of transnational politics, displaying the complex and sometimes contradictory relations of power that are at play.

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