

**Not all Citizens are Civil:
clarifying and mapping the actors
in Civil Society**

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Not all citizens are civil - clarifying and mapping the actors in civil society

Civil society? For me, civil society means skinheads throwing stones at Roma (gypsies); that's civil society where I come from.

(Remarks of Dimitrina Petrova, human rights activist from Bulgaria, speaking at the opening session of the 2nd CIVICUS World Assembly, Budapest, 1977).

1. Overview

As many have remarked, there has been a huge amount of attention paid to the concept and the practice of civil society, and civil society organizations in the last five years¹. Although the concept has been heavily studied, it is surprising to find that very large numbers of those involved in financing, analyzing, and working within civil society seem to take three assumptions for granted:

Firstly: that the “civil” part of civil society refers to the normative behavior of its members, and that this behavior is civil, civilized, compassionate, inclusive, altruistic, democratic, developmental. Organizations of civil society are therefore well worth encouraging and supporting.

Secondly: that the organizations which have become known as “NGOs²” (i.e. independently created non-profit relief and development organizations who act as intermediaries between those who support its work and those they aim to help) represent civil society and are the means by which civil society will flourish .

Thirdly: that civil society is in opposition to the State and the Market, and will flourish as the other two decline.

All of these assumptions need to be strongly questioned, and carefully analyzed. We must be clear about the flag under which so many people are mustering, and we need some tools to help us understand the different ways in which citizens associate and organize themselves. If we do not do this, we run the very great danger that “civil society” as a term will either be co-opted by a few, or that civil society will be exposed

¹ See the Introduction by John Burbidge to the important book “Beyond Prince and Merchant - citizen participation and the rise of civil society” ICA.1997. Published by Pact

² Following common usage, “NGO” is here used only in the form of the acronym. As an acronym it has a particular meaning which is explained in the text. The longer and fuller version “Non-governmental organization” is not very much help because it also includes for-profit businesses, and should be everywhere dumped in favor of “Civil Society Organization”

as unable to deliver as promised, and be devalued as a concept. The danger of “flavor of the month” is very real, and those of us inside the growing sector of civil society organizations need to be concerned about protecting its huge potential and policing its destructive elements. This paper is concerned with civil society organisations in the South and East - the developing world - and their involvement in development, and is addressed to practitioners who are working within civil society. It is a combination of a “reality check” on the current use of the terms “civil society” and “civil society organization”, and the suggestion of a tool that anyone can use when trying to “ground truth³” civil society in their own country. It is driven by a desire to re-affirm values as the most important element in the development of civil society, and by scepticism about the professed values of some of those involved⁴.

The last ten years have seen a fantastic growth of citizen’s power resulting from citizen’s associations and organized citizens activities, often springing from a desire to attain human and democratic rights which government had previously ignored, or to deal with citizen’s attempts to cope with the market forces that they encounter. The mainspring of these activities has been citizens themselves, while they have also been aided by supporters from outside their countries. This is all impressive, valuable, and worth supporting. It is important to encourage citizen’s organizations (particularly those of poor and powerless citizens) that enable their members to improve their lives, access the benefits of development, establish and protect democratic norms, and defend themselves against the excesses of the State and the Market. It is equally important to be conscious, however, of two other expressions of citizens power that have also been seen during the same period:

- the growth of citizens groups organized to forcefully and undemocratically dominate others,
- the growth of opportunistic people who use the organizational shield of “civil society organization” for their own self-interest.

They both shelter beneath the banner of “civil society”, with the result that the term has become loose and unfocussed. It is important to look more closely at the values of those who claim to represent “civil society”, and be prepared to encourage those who promote human creativity, civility, trust, and democracy, while identifying those who do

³ This useful term comes from the earth sciences. After you have seen all the satellite pictures and received all the remote geo-physical information available, the earth scientist has to visit the site personally, to “ground truth” what he/she has been told

⁴ What led me to write this article was the statement by the Bulgarian human rights worker that heads the paper, the work of Alan Fowler in helping UNDP to define their relation to civil society organizations (CSOs), the comments I received from participants at the 8th Anti Corruption Conference in Lima 1997 to my paper on NGOs and Corruption, the book “Beyond Prince and Merchant” edited by John Burbridge (ICA 1997, Pact Publications), and the confusion over CSOs evident in the CIVICUS assembly in Budapest in Sept 1997..

not.

2. Citizenry and Civility

At the risk of questioning the scholarship of those more highly educated than myself, the “civil” part of “civil society” does not reflect a normative attention to being “civil”, to “civility”, “civilization”, or any other words derived from that set of meanings. It refers to being a “civilian” and more so, a “citizen”⁵. It emphasizes the singularities and qualities of a simple citizen and the associations of such citizens in contradistinction to the qualities and associations of the State and the Market. It emphasizes that citizens have as much (if not more) contribution to make to the health of the Nation as the State and the Market. In Marc Nerfin’s original article⁶ which has been an inspiration for the recent interest in civil society, the Citizen is targeted as an important contributor to the Nation, contrasting and comparing the Citizen’s contribution to that of the Prince and the Merchant.

The point here is that citizens have a tremendous and often unrealized power to help themselves, and to organize together to achieve their own objectives. This potential is often unrealized when they are treated as objects of control or organization by the State, or when they are merely treated as consumers by the Market. Civil Society is the place where citizens can realize this potential: as Michael Bratton has suggested, civil society is that “sphere of social interaction between the household and the state which is manifest in norms of community cooperation, structures of community association, and networks of public communication”⁷. He further breaks this definition down into the following components:

- Norms of civic community, such as trust, reciprocity, tolerance⁸, and inclusion
- Structures of associational life, voluntary in nature and ranging from local , informal associations, to national and international political advocacy groups
- Networks of public communication, both print and electronic media, including faxes and email.

⁵ For a listing of those who have analyzed the origins and development of the term, please see the “Civil Society Toolbox” on Pact’s website ([http\www.pactworld.org](http://www.pactworld.org))

⁶ IFDA Dossier, 1988 “The Prince, the Merchant, and the Citizen” - now out of print.

⁷ “Civil Society and Political Transition in Africa” IDR Reports No. 6, 1994, quoted in “Beyond Prince and Merchant”

⁸ I take issue with “tolerance” as an attribute of a civil society organization, As will be seen later many citizens organizations are intolerant of each other.

3. What Civil Society Organizations do

Michael Bratton valuably describes how civil society and civil society organizations are organized, but does not say what civil society organizations do. Once we start looking at what civil society organizations actually do, we involve ourselves in a complex situation, and we start to challenge the common understanding of the term as it is used in the development community⁹. Civil society organizations can be involved in activities not immediately relevant to development, activities that are inimical to development, and activities that are pro-development (sometimes depending on your point of view). What is important is to identify those which have values useful to development. Membership of civil society is not, by itself, a valuable identifying characteristic for those who hope to improve the condition of the world. It must be followed by an examination of the values that are espoused.

Let us take these one by one:

Activities not immediately relevant to development

Those who have done detailed community examination of associational life almost anywhere in the world, usually find that recreational associations form the largest number of organizations in any one community. Organizations formed around such interests as football, chess, singing, dancing, drinking involve large numbers of people, and are a major part of peoples associational life. A close second is often those involved with religion - particularly personal worshiping, praying, and the social life that derives from associating with fellow believers. In many cases such associations, and the activities they carry out, have little direct effect on citizen's desire to improve their lives, access the benefits of development, establish and protect democratic norms, and defend themselves against the excesses of the State and the Market. Members of such associations, for instance, may play football, celebrate traditional festivals with dancing, attend church picnics, read the Koran together - without the association having any larger import in their lives.

Robert Putnam in his book "Making Democracy Work" suggests that even these activities are powerful forces for democracy. He suggests that the social capital of values and networks that enable coordination and cooperation (all useful for the development of democracy) are born and nurtured in such groupings. While this could be true, the activities of recreation and personal religious observances may also breed other kinds of behavior. We are familiar with bigoted and anti-social behavior from those involved in both sport and religion. Social exclusion and petty autocracy are equally possible values cultivated in these two spheres which are unlikely to lead to

⁹ CIVICUS first publication "Citizen's - strengthening Global Civil Society" suggested the following values for civil society - "solidarity, compassion, self-reliance, altruism, rejection of inequality, violence, and oppression"

democratic norms. As Michael Bratton tells us - we should not romanticize civil society.¹⁰

What such groupings do have, however, is the potential to be powerful actors in development, if they so mobilize themselves - even though this may be a long way away from their original purpose. Look at the example of an organization whose primary purpose is the observance of cultural ceremonies - an African traditional dance society - but which has become the arena in which HIV/AIDS is discussed, its effect on the people of that culture, and the behavioral changes needed to combat it. Other examples could be a football team, proud of its fitness, taking on an advocacy role for an anti-smoking campaign, a church women's club taking on the systematic care of orphans in the community, other church women's groups organizing self-help kitchens in slum communities. In Bangladesh it has been demonstrated many times that when natural disasters strike, alumni associations and Tagore poetry reading societies often take the lead in organizing first aid and relief for the victims - not organizations that readily spring to mind in discussions of disaster response.

Activities Inimical to Development

Parallel to the large number of citizens groups that have arisen to advance development goals throughout the world are equally large numbers of citizens groups which have arisen to autocratically and violently impose their will on others, deny others' rights, and ruin others lives. We have seen the effect of the tribal groupings of Rwanda and Burundi, the ethnic cleansing of the former Yugoslavia, and the rise of neo-nazi groupings in Europe. These are all organizations of civil society once we accept that "civil" means "belonging to citizens" and not "civilized". As the powerful speaker at the CIVICUS assembly noted at the start of this article pointed out - the most obvious way in which citizens associated in her part of Bulgaria was to throw stones at a persecuted minority (the Gypsies), and try to drive them out of their homes.

It is entirely possible that membership of an organization inimical to development can provide opportunities for people to learn and practice many of the qualities often associated with the benefits of civil society. An anti-immigrant skinhead gang member (or even a football hooligan gang member) is a volunteer who must learn to coordinate and cooperate with his/her fellows, trust them, organize networks of communication, and even organize at national and international levels. The Klu Klux Klan in the USA, in the past, exhibited many elements of social capital as it was a society which looked after its own members - even as it abused those who were not members. Once we move beyond a neutral sociological investigation of associational life, the most important aspect of civil society organizations from a developmental perspective is their values and what they stand for. It is not enough to claim that belonging to civil society is of value in itself - so do the skinhead gangs - we need to investigate the values of

¹⁰ Quoted in "Civil Societies and NGOs: expanding development strategies" InterAction Feb 95

organizations and how they translate such values into practice. Here we will find a very complex set of actors as we meet associations of citizens with conflictual beliefs and activities, and both legitimately held by civil society organizations - those for and against genital mutilation of women, those for and against abortion, as well as those for their group as owners of land, cattle, or water, and against anyone else who challenges them. The examples provided give a stark contrast between opposing groups, but the conflicts may not be so apparent : think of a community development group which prospers only at the expense of another group whose access to water, for instance, they have usurped.

Activities that are pro-development (sometimes depending on your point of view)

Civil society organizations can be found in favor of, and against, many different activities which form some of the basic activities of development practitioners. There are those for and against birth control: there are those for and against the provision of credit (particularly to women)¹¹: there are those for and against freedom of expression and other democratic norms, and there are those who are for and against independent organizations of civil society¹². A democratic society recognizes the rights of people to hold their own opinions and to associate around those opinions: not all such people are however promoting the development of the poor and powerless, even if they present themselves as organizations of civil society, and evidence of political pluralism.

Those interested primarily in encouraging development (and particularly the alleviation of poverty) want to encourage citizen's organizations (particularly organizations of the poor and powerless) that enable their members to improve their lives, access the benefits of development, establish and protect democratic norms, and defend themselves against the excesses of the State and the Market. There is no easy equation of "civil society" and "civil society organizations" with development or with democracy: legitimate citizens organizations can be formed both for and against democratic practices.

Each organization has to be considered separately, and those who claim to represent "civil society" should look at what citizens associations are actually doing in their country and ascertain whether they have common ground with them all. We cannot claim that civil society is only represented by the organizations that we like - this is rejecting the right of all citizens to associate as they think fit which is one of the fundamental pillars of civil society. Those who look to civil society to support development must ascertain that the organizations of civil society they are interested in are truly involved in

¹¹ CIVICUS News (1997) published a case study of a struggle in Bangladesh between two sets of civil society actors - Islamic fundamentalists who decried credit as usury (and credit to women as heresy) and Bangladeshi NGOs who pioneered and extended both.

¹² E.g. China, Burma and North Korea

improving the lives of the poor and powerless - it is naive and credulous to assume a priori that they are. Goran Hyden has noted some contrasts in his strong first chapter of "Beyond Prince and Merchant"¹³ "Civil Society Organizations may be places for egotistical pursuits. They may also be places in which authoritarian values are nurtured.(...) Many women argue that civil society associations remain sexist, and thus hamper participation by women in public affairs".

4. Do NGOs represent Civil Society?

Once we move beyond simply "citizens associations" which, as we have seen, involve a variety of different kinds of players, and move into the world of NGOs we are moving into the field of organizations which consciously and specifically have taken a normative choice in favor of development and democracy. NGOs, by definition, are set up to improve the conditions of society as whole, or certain groupings within society.¹⁴

NGOs lose, however, their status as citizen's associations in the sense that they are not membership organizations of the citizens and do not thus represent the citizens (unless they are mandated to do so by the citizens). NGOs are intermediary organizations of citizens who aim to benefit the poor and powerless, but are not themselves poor and powerless, and often have not been specifically invited to involve themselves in their affairs by the poor and powerless. They are usually formed by self-selected individuals who want to "do something" to improve the lives of those less fortunate than themselves.

Such is the confusion around the terms "non-government organization", "civil society organization", "NGO", and "CSO" (and the lack of commonly agreed definitions), that many people have accepted that NGO and CSO are the same¹⁵. This is dangerous because there are some important characteristics of CSOs that NGOs do not usually meet (e.g. a CSO must have some support base in its own country, and some financial and managerial autonomy) and at least one characteristic that makes an NGO different from a CSO (i.e. it is an intermediary organization). When we are trying to identify organizations which are based in and committed to the development of the poor and powerless in any particular country, it is sensible to know who we are dealing with. This requires some definitions:

Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

Such an organization is based in a geographical community and is an organization both

¹³ Chapter 1: "Building Civil Society at the turn of the Millennium"

¹⁴ Commonwealth Foundation 1995 : "NGOs - good principles and practice"

¹⁵ The words were used interchangeably throughout the 2nd CIVICUS Assembly in Budapest 1997

formed by its members and which attempts to bring benefits to its members. It is usually staffed by volunteers, small, informal, dependent on its own resources, democratically organized and aimed at the self-help development of its members. It is a mutual benefit organization, often based on the desire to improve its members incomes, and is usually composed of the poor and powerless. It can be indigenous, owing its existence to tradition or social entrepreneurs, or it may be induced, owing its existence to suggestions from people outside that community.

Peoples Organizations (POs) or Mass Organizations (MOs)

While the definition of CBO is fairly standard, the idea of a Peoples Organization is much less clearly agreed, and does not have a standard definition. What is meant is a mutual benefit organization above the level of a community i.e. one that has a reach beyond a community and yet whose members still gain the benefits of the organization. It could be a federation of CBOs, or it could be a Farmers Association, Women's Association, tribal association etc. A PO is usually composed of the poor and powerless generically, or some particular group of them, is usually registered formally, and democratically organized, although there are instances of autocratic governance.

Variations of Peoples Organizations, representing specialized groups of people connected by their employment, are Trade Unions, Chambers of Commerce, and Professional Associations, not all of whom obviously represent the disadvantaged.

NGOs

These are voluntary and not-for-profit organizations which set themselves up independently to improve the conditions of society as a whole or to improve the conditions of certain groupings within a society. They place themselves as intermediaries between those who support their work and those they directly target, and have the fiduciary responsibility to their donors to spend the funds that they attract on the programs that they have proclaimed. They are usually formally established in law, and may be local, national or international. They can work through directly providing services to their target, or through acting variously as a network, a federation of other NGOs, a research organization, or an advocate on behalf of its target group. They are public benefit organizations, not mutual benefit organizations: if they have members as part of their governance structure, such members are not the target of their work. They are organized according to the laws of the particular country.

In theory an NGO is an intermediary organization between supporters of its cause on the one hand, and the targets of its assistance on the other. The best situation is when existing CSOs have identified the value and expertise of an NGO and have invited it to work with them, thus legitimizing its work. Such CSOs are usually either Community Based Organizations (CBOs) or Peoples Organizations (POs). It is important for the legitimacy of the NGO that a CBO or PO should have invited an NGO to work with them, or have agreed to its involvement with them. If this is the case the NGO has a constituency who give it a legitimate right to involve itself in their lives. If this is not the

case the NGO can legitimately be asked to whom they are accountable and who has given them their mandate.

Legitimacy and Accountability

The legitimacy of the NGOs is not always so clear, however. In some cases the NGO has created the CBOs (and possibly also the POs) because the people who the NGO considered its target group did not have any existing groupings of their own. Such a situation is often the case in South Asia where the lack of organization of the peasantry is one of the fundamental problems of development. The NGO sees its first task as the organizing of the peasantry into groups which can then decide what they want to do to collectively improve their lives. The situation becomes confusing because the NGO to some extent represents the target group, but the target group are clients, rather than members of the NGO, and do not control it through their membership. NGOs who are concerned with accountability to their constituency have devised ways of listening to the grass roots and validating their work with such groups. Unlike membership organizations, however, there is no governance requirement by which NGOs must be accountable to the people they claim to serve. Legally they are accountable to the law, the governance structure (usually a Board), and the donor. Setting up some structure of accountability to the people is an option, rather than a requirement. There are increasing numbers of NGOs which do not consider it necessary to be so accountable.

NGOs, therefore, have difficulty presenting themselves as citizens associations, as CSOs, because they frequently have no mandate from citizens to do so. The best NGOs have the interests of the poor and powerless as their guides to their objectives, but they cannot be said to represent them democratically. It is common, however, for NGOs to present themselves individually and collectively as the representatives of civil society in their country, as well as being civil society organizations themselves. In one sense those who are citizens and have set up an organization can claim they are a citizens' organization - but they only represent themselves - no one else, unless they can prove otherwise. Unless they take the trouble to develop one, an NGO does not have a constituency by definition.

Goran Hyden, in his important opening chapter of the ICA book "Beyond Prince and Merchant" notes that, once we move beyond the position that any citizens organization is a civil society organization, and start to talk about values (as we commonly do for NGOs, CBOs, and POs) we need to make some normative assumptions. He identifies four characteristics of civil society organizations:

- “1. Autonomy - it should be independent of the state in terms of decisional competence, recruitment of leaders, and control of important economic and managerial resources

2. Democratic Structure - the organization should internalize values and practices compatible with democracy

3. Accountability - members must hold leaders accountable for their decisions and actions (NB this does not deal with non-membership organizations)
4. Open Recruitment - important for social and national integration”

He makes the point that a value based organization must demonstrate the values that it is trying to inculcate and promote in others. It cannot assume that people will give it the benefit of the doubt - in fact, quite the opposite - NGOs in the South usually have a bad press and a poor public image.¹⁶

5. Is Civil Society in opposition to the Government and the Market?

The functions, resources and ways of mobilizing resources are different in each of the three sectors of society, but they are of course linked by the fact that the functionaries in each of the sectors are citizens, and do not forget or give up their rights and interests as citizens simply because they work in Government or the Market¹⁷. In countries with new democracies, furthermore, all three sectors have a common interest in strengthening and preserving aspects of that democracy - like parliament, the rule of law, elections, and human rights. Before looking at the interdependence and complementarity of the three sectors, however, it is worth clarifying the ways in which they are different:

Clarifying the Functions

Government

The word “Government” is used interchangeably for “Regime” i.e. the political power, and Government meaning the bureaucracy, but it is sometimes important to distinguish between them. It is the function of the Regime/Government to rule and to govern: this involves the basic activities of enforcing the law, defending the borders, redistributing resources, and providing goods and services to the people. The Regime/Government mobilizes resources to do this by its control of the resources of the State, particularly its power to enforce the law.

Business

It is the function of the Market to make private profits: this involves transforming raw materials, adding value, and providing goods and services to the people. It mobilizes the resources to do this by trade and exchange, and by the institution of private property.

¹⁶ See “Losing the Moral High Ground - NGOs, corruption and misrepresentation” by Richard Holloway, 8th Anti-Corruption Conference, Lima 1997

¹⁷ This is not always true. In Bangladesh, Government officials were (and still are) forbidden from taking honorary positions on the Boards of NGOs, for example

Civil Society

It is the function of civil society to enable citizens to associate together, to hold the Government and the Market accountable to the people, and to improve the lives of the people. It mobilizes resources to do this through shared values and a shared commitment to action seeking its members own resources of time and money or gifted time and money. Enabling citizens to associate is the fundamental attribute of a Civil Society Organization (a CSO), while CBOs and POs concentrate on their own members resources , and NGOs concentrate on gifted resources.

The common feature in each of these three descriptions is that they all, in different ways, bring services to the people. They share also, by virtue of being organizations, a common interest (usually unstated) in keeping themselves in existence, and in sustaining (or increasing) their proportional power.

Government and Civil Society

It is perfectly possible to have complete antagonism between the Regime/Government and Civil Society when the Regime feels that it is playing a zero-sum game and that any advances for civil society will be losses for itself. This was the case in the old communist regimes and still continues in, for instance, Burma. It is, however, much more common these days for the Regime/Government to appreciate that it has some joint objectives with civil society, and that there is scope for working together. This is often found in the field of democracy and human rights, and in services to the grass roots.

The large number of post communist, and post one-party state countries have a desire in common with civil society to make democracy work, and so Regime/Governments often set up Electoral Commissions, Human Rights Commissions, an independent judiciary as well as making sure that the more usual aspects of the citizens interface with the Regime/Government work - like local government or parliament. These are part of the institutions of Civil Society, although they may have been set up by the Government. The role of citizens is to make sure that they are well served by these institutions, and to make sure that they keep up their standards - and the citizenry often set up Civil Society Organizations to do just that.

In the cutbacks on government expenditures in the social development sectors - particularly those occasioned by Structural Adjustment Programs of the International Monetary Fund, many government find themselves unable to continue their previous services to the people in health, education, and welfare. Increasingly they are looking to CSOs -usually NGOs - to provide such services with funding that they, as Governments, are not eligible to get, but which NGOs can access. While such services are set up by Government, they are services keenly relevant to civil society.

Business and Civil Society

In many cases the poor do not receive the attention of the forces of the market because of their perceived lack of buying power, as well as a misplaced concentration of business attention to the cities. NGOs, CBOs, and POs are committed to improving the standard of living of the poor, but have no desire to substitute for the forces of the market. NGOs may well take on some roles as providers of credit, fertiliser and seeds, for instance, but as soon as NGOs can persuade institutions of the market to provide them, they are happy to do so, keeping some part of their resources devoted to making sure that the terms of trade by which the poor engage with the market are not exploitative or dangerous. Business services for buying or selling can be completely congruent with civil society, unless, as mentioned previously, businesses exploit their position to impoverish the citizenry.

Increasingly the institutions of the market realize that islands of wealth in seas of poverty¹⁸ are not sustainable, and that businesses also have a stake in improving the livelihood of the poor. Not only is it enlightened self-interest for them, because those with disposable income are potential future customers, but they can also see that ameliorating the worst excesses of wealth polarization lends itself to greater stability, and that profits are more able to be made during periods of stability.

A further case can be made that institutions which allow citizens to become involved in the market as stakeholders in business, allows for greater accountability of business to citizens - stock exchanges can be an institution of worth to civil society.

6. Civil Society Institutions

Most observers would agree that there need to be a number of institutions in place before civil society can flourish. These are, it is suggested, The Judiciary, the Press, Parliament, Independent Accountability Organizations (like Election Commissions, Human Rights Commissions, Ombudsman, Offices of Consumer Affairs), the Stock Exchange, and Business Associations (like Chambers of Commerce). These are institutions which operate on the interface between Government, the Market and Civil Society. We also need to add, however, the Organisations of Civil Society or CSOs - Civil Society Organizations. They represent that range of citizens organisations which are born from the citizens themselves - not set up by Government or Business, but which need interaction with both in order to function optimally. Please see the schematic on the following page which tries to provide a map of civil society with details

¹⁸ I do not know the origin of this term, but it has gained currency as part of the regular speeches of the Prince of Wales, particularly in connection with his organization, the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum

of the different kinds of civil society institutions - within which are civil society organizations.

Governments, the Markets and Civil Society can each behave like the other at certain times, while being very distinctively different at others. The Government can, for instance, induce community based organizations, and can operate businesses (although the latter is not encouraged under the new market led paradigm): the CSOs can (and increasingly do) carry out social development functions for government, and can run enterprises to create income for the CSO: businesses can, in certain circumstances (like plantations or mines), behave like governments, they can also set up charitable foundations. The boundaries between the three sectors are fuzzy.

7. Mapping Civil Society: who's there, who's where, and how they relate to each other?

There are large conceptual similarities to be seen between the civil societies of different countries in the world, however differently they are played out on the ground. For those who are interested in civil society from a development perspective it is useful to have a guide to the kinds of organizations which are likely to be present in any country's civil society, on what basis they are present, and what questions you need to ask from a development perspective. Many research and development organizations have produced their lists of who they think is in, or not in, the civil society sector¹⁹. They are usually (with the exception of the work of the Nonprofit Sector Project of the John Hopkins University) impressionistic. The passage which follows (and the attached diagram) is an attempt to present a generic view of the common denominators of civil society organizations, together with some notes on the likely strengths and weaknesses of these civil society organizations as contributors to development and democracy. With such a diagram, and with such notes, organizations that want to support development and democracy can look for fellowship - and be warned about possible dangers.

As we have said before, the first broad categorization is between those organizations which are membership organizations (Mutual Benefit Organizations - this includes CBOs and POs) formed by members and formed to benefit those same members (like Churches, Political parties, Tribes, Trade Unions, Community Associations etc): and on the other hand, those organizations which are formed by public spirited people in order to help others or to act on issues of society as a whole (Public Benefit Organizations - which includes NGOs).

The distinction is important because the first kind of organization (mutual benefit

¹⁹ Examples are Synergos Institute "The Emerging Role of Civil Society : force for social development. 1995: GTZ "Organizational Palaces or Organizational Tents". Sulzer .1995: The John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project 1992 ff. There are many more.

organization) is formed by and is accountable to its members. If their members do not like what the organization is doing, they are able to change it. The recipients of benefits of the organization are the same as the membership and the governance of the organization.

On the other hand, the second type of organization (public benefit organization) sets itself up in order to be useful to others, and its mandate comes from the common perceptions and values of certain citizens. The organizations are governed by citizens who are assumed to be public spirited, but they are accountable to their governance structure, not to those who benefit from their services. They may act in the interests of certain groups in society, but they are not necessarily mandated by them to be their representatives.

The third grouping represents the charlatans, the spurious organizations, the pretenders. Such individuals or organizations pretend to be organizations of civil society (either mutual or public benefit) but in fact are either fronts for the activities of individuals who are trying to benefit themselves, or are fronts for the Government or Market sector who are pretending to be CSOs in order to benefit themselves.

Mutual Benefit Organizations

1. Religious Groups

In this section are identified associations which benefit the members of a particular religious grouping (but not a religious group whose activities benefit all - for this see B 3). A common religious faith is a frequent cause for the formation of a mutual benefit organization, and may be of great service to its members. It can also be a basis for extremism, intolerance, and violence towards others. It is also possible that the organization can be led autocratically, particularly if the leader claims divine guidance for his/her behavior.

2 . Indigenous Community Based Organizations

These refer to indigenous organizational forms which reflect the interests of all the people who belong to a specific geographical community. Such organizations are often seen as informal from the modern sector perspective, but are extremely important and formal from the perspective of the indigenous people. Examples may be age sets amongst pastoral people in Africa, savings clubs (arisan) amongst Javanese, burial societies (eder) amongst Ethiopians, associations concerned with ceremonial duties. They may be much less formal, like joint work parties which are organized at village level to cultivate land for some common purpose, or to deal with some common problem like a broken bridge.

In theory such associations are immensely valuable for development purposes since they already exist, command peoples involvement, and are covered by local resources.

They may, however, involve activities that are harmful to women or harmful to minority groupings who do not belong.

3. Induced Community Organizations

By induced organizations are meant those forms of organization that have been introduced from outside the area of operation, set up by outsiders, and endorsed or participated in - to different degrees - by local people. The intention of most induced organizations is that they will become accepted, absorbed and "mainstreamed" into peoples lives so that they indeed become indigenous - rather than continuing to be considered as introductions from outsiders. The development of community level associations for development purposes is a very common activity world wide. It is often linked to the search for beneficiary participation - i.e. to get those who are intended to benefit from a development program to form membership organizations which will take a large measure of responsibility for the program. The difficulty is frequently that the benefits (and thus the beneficiaries) depend on some outside resources (either government or non-government) and the organizational form often only lasts as long as the resources flow. Where outside resources are a part of the induced CBO, its introduction may well also induce internal strife in the community as people jostle to get access to those resources.

4. Ethnic Organizations

While in theory it seems that an ethnic organization would be a form of PO based on a homogenous group of people and, with central direction and discipline through the traditional leaders, would be able to effect important development benefits, tribes have mostly been seen as destabilizing, and destructive in the development process. Tribal rivalry has often produced violence, as have attempts by one tribe to confine as many of the developmental benefits as possible to itself. One sub-grouping within ethnic organizations which has been particularly beneficial to its members are the organizations of same language groups in the towns and cities which help newcomers get established through introductions, loans, jobs, and accommodation. Ethnic organizations may also practice and condone traditional behavior which is sexist, harmful to women, and physically unhealthy.

5. Political parties

Some would say that political parties are "governments in waiting" and thus should not be included in the civil society sector, but, at the same time, before they succeed in being elected to government, they are a powerful organizational form of association of citizens with a common interest or set of values. Some would say that most political parties encourage exclusiveness and rivalry - particularly forms of behavior which aim to acquire state benefits for themselves to the exclusion of others. There is an ongoing debate as to whether political parties are the most suitable way of promulgating different political opinions.

6. *Employment Related Associations*

These represent all the organizations which are representative of people by virtue of their employment. At the one level there are Trade Unions i.e. the associations of modern sector workers, while at another level are the modern sector employers' associations - the Chambers of Commerce. Together with these we can include the professional associations of Dentists, Engineers, Doctors, Teachers etc., and the less formal associations of the self-employed e.g. fishermen, weavers, potters etc. It is quite common for these kinds of associations to be targeted by political parties or governments to gain their political allegiance - but it is also common for them to be units of independent thinking and behavior.

7. *Cooperatives*

Just as political parties may be better represented under Government, cooperatives may be better represented under the Market. In fact, all too often, they become government offices. In theory Cooperatives are associations of people who join together to do different kinds of business in a collective spirit. They have huge development potential, but in country after country the potential has been unrealized because they have been forcibly managed under a Government ministry, and have become, in effect, government run businesses.

8. *Peoples Organizations*

This covers a wide range of kinds of associations: one the one hand it could be a federation of a large number of CBOs which have joined together at a sub-regional, regional or national level. On the other hand it could represent a "functional" category like women, or the disabled, or farmers. Finally it could represent an issue based organization based on opposition to child labor, or dams, or corruption. Such membership based organizations have huge development potential, the caveat being that they, like Employment based organizations, are often the target for co-option by Government.

9. *Recreational/Cultural Organizations*

As has been mentioned before such groups have development potential in the field of social mobilization, but are for the most part not involved in development activities

B. *Public Benefit Organizations*

1. *Private Philanthropic Organizations*

These are organizations set up by richer members of the community, or rich individuals who would like to provide resources to be used by citizens or particular sub-groups of citizens (like those who live in the home town area of the benefactor). Often such organizations have a strong charitable (as opposed to developmental) perspective and may include a strong component of public relations for the benefactor and his/her family.

2. Public Philanthropic Organizations

These organizations have been set up for the public good by an individual, group of individuals, companies, or the government to act as direct implementing or grant making foundations to those who come within the terms of the foundation's charter. They may also be organizations (like the service clubs of the business community) who themselves want to be implementing organizations providing development services to the identified target group (e.g. the blind, or those with polio). Such organizations are valuable because they put the decision making about what should be supported into the hands of people in the South, instead of external donors²⁰

3. Religious Organizations

In this case we are dealing with an organization that is based on religious principles, or a religious organization, but which does not limit its benefits to those who are from that particular religious organization (in comparison with membership based religious organizations - see A 1 above)

4. Civic Organizations

Such organizations are mainly watchdog organizations set up at the time of the transition to a democratic state who are concerned to monitor the situation of democracy, sometimes to encourage greater use of democratic practices amongst the citizens, and to advocate and lobby on specific issues connected to democracy - like human rights. Such organizations are often very vocal and because of the high profile of this kind of work, are seen by the public and by Government to represent the NGO sector, even if they are only, in fact, working on one issue. Such organizations also attract the attention of the Government who tend to see them not as legitimate expressions of citizens' interest in matters of democracy and governance, but as refuges for the political opposition hiding behind the facade of an NGO.

The other question with such bodies, as with development and welfare NGOs, is who they represent - what their constituency is. A number of the civic associations represent the small number of people who make up their staff, and little else. They are perfectly

²⁰ See "The Unit of Development is the Organization, Not the Project" by Richard Holloway. John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. 1997

and legitimately entitled to express their point of view, but claims to represent a larger constituency need to be checked.

5. Development and Welfare NGOs

These are organizations started by citizens with an intention to improve the situation of other groups of disadvantaged citizens, or to improve a situation that affects the whole country - like pollution or corruption. They are usually legally registered under the laws of the country, have a formal governance structure and paid staff. The fields in which they work are usually Health, Education, Agriculture, Self-employment, Family Planning, and Family Welfare, Community Development, and Women's Issues. They are also branches of foreign NGOs working in the country which are registered in their home countries, but which have agreements with the national Government to work there. Such organizations are usually larger and have access to more resources, but generally work in the same fields as the national NGOs.

As has been said previously, NGOs are intermediary organizations who collect resources from one group of people who support the work that the NGO is doing and intends to do, in order to provide services to another group of people who are targeted because of their poverty or powerlessness. They may have a membership structure for governance purposes, but they are not a mutual benefit organization - benefits do not go to these members. In an increasing number of cases the resources which are used by NGOs are from other countries, outside the home country of the NGO, and it may well be that the NGO has little support organized in its own country. Some NGOs have built up their own resources from local fund-raising, from selling their services, cost recovery, and investments.

In the best of cases NGOs go through exercises of identifying the needs of the targeted people, involving their participation in their work, involving them in deciding and defining what the NGO should do, and in designing and implementing programs which respond to the felt needs of the people. When they operate in such a fashion then it is clear that they have a constituency which is supporting their work, and that they have a mandate from the people that they want to help. There is nothing, however, which forces an NGO to work in this way, and an increasing number of NGOs decide on their own what programs they want to undertake without getting the participation of the people. If they are able to persuade a donor (or donors) to fund them to carry out such work, they may operate autonomously. The assumption made by many that NGOs are closer to the people's real needs may well be true in many cases, but has to be checked out on a case by case basis since some NGOs have been set up as a means of self-employment, and do not work on a participatory basis with the target people²¹.

²¹ See "NGOs - losing the Moral High Ground - corruption and misrepresentation" by Richard Holloway, 8th International Anti-Corruption Conference.

Development and Welfare NGOs can work in a variety of roles, none of which are exclusive of the others:

- (i) **Implementing:** here an NGO's main work is carrying out grass roots activities. They are usually organized on a "project" basis - which means a time limited period with a pre-agreed budget. This is usually to fit in with the administrative convenience of the donor.
- (ii) **Advocacy:** here the NGO's main work is not carrying out grass roots activity, but trying to change public policy in respect of the work that is the main interest of the NGO.
- (iii) **Networking:** here the main activity of the NGO is coordinating other NGOs which work in a particular sector or field of work.
- (iv) **Research NGOs:** here the main activity is research into issues which are important to the NGO - often linked to an advocacy function
- (v) **Umbrella NGOs:** here the purpose is to provide a coordinating and representative role for NGOs - usually in respect of the government.
- (vi) **Federations:** Here NGOs in one area or sector federate together for certain purposes which they can best carry out through greater numbers. It could also be that NGOs interested in a particular issue federate together with certain specific joint objectives in connection with that issue.

6. Non-profit companies

While it is usual for NGOs to operate through the medium of grants both as recipients of grants from others, and makers of grants (directly or indirectly) to the target group, some organizations prefer to operate solely on the basis of loans. - particularly for self-employment. Such organizations are set up as non-profit companies and operate as businesses with the exception that any profits are re-invested in the business.

C Private Benefit Organizations²²

²² Called "NGO Pretenders" in Alan Fowler's book "Striking a Balance" Earthscan.1997. Much of this section is indebted to his work.

1. BRINGOs

This refers to Briefcase NGOs which means people who masquerade as NGOs by dealing in the currency that the usual financiers of NGOs value - proposals for projects which they keep in their briefcases. They have no organization behind them, and no constituency. If the proposal is agreed, they may either disappear with the first installment, or put together whatever minimum is required to keep the donor happy while pocketing the majority.

2. CRINGOs

This refers to criminal NGOs who are using the legal form and structure of an NGO to indulge in criminal activity. This is likely to be smuggling or phony tax-free imports. They are shell companies who do not attempt to do any useful development work.

3. Pretend NGOs

This section refers to a variety of organizations which misrepresent themselves:

- a. those in Government or Business who have, often legally, set up an NGO with a developmental purpose, but which fails the test of being a genuine NGO because its governance is not independent - being under the control of a Government department or a business.
- b. politicians NGOs which are set up to divert resources to the politicians home area to secure peoples loyalty, or set up to confront another genuine NGO - particularly one working on civic issues.
- c. GONGOs - government organized NGOs which are using the legal form of an NGO in order to carry out Government's own plans for which they cannot find other funding.
- d. DONGOs - Donor organized NGOs which are setting up shell NGOs in order to carry out their own programs without the complexity of having to negotiate with indigenous NGOs.

8. Conclusion

This overview of the map of Civil Society Organizations is intended to clarify, on a practical daily basis, the range of organizations that are in existence in civil society and which are involved in, or have the potential to be involved in, development. As has been shown, however, there is not only a great variety of civil society organizations, but that being a civil society organization is not, by itself, any qualification for involvement in

good development work. Each organization's values, practices, and principles needs to be examined since the fine work of many committed and effective NGOs, CBOs and POs has been tarnished by the tawdry work of those who have been attracted by the resources available to the NGO sector - more than attracted by the opportunities that these funds provide for doing valuable development work.

Too frequently has civil society been understood to mean the limited number of NGOs operating in a particular country. There is a huge and interesting variety of other kinds of civil society organizations which have the potential to alleviate poverty and empower the powerless. With this map the reader may be able to identify some of this variety, and will be acquainted with some of the points that need to be raised when considering collaboration with them.