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# Globalization, Civil Society, and Democracy?: An Organizational Assessment

by John Barkdull and Lisa A. Dicke

As globalization has advanced, citizens, activists, and scholars have expressed increasing concern that the growth of corporate power and the blurring of national boundaries have created a global democratic deficit. “For a range of common problems, the world has no formal institutional mechanism to ensure that voices representing all relevant parts are heard in the discussion.”<sup>1</sup> National governments can no longer control the forces that affect the welfare of the citizens they represent. They turn to multilateral organizations to manage acute global problems, removing the locus of decision-making authority further from average citizens. Decentralized global markets provide no mechanism for collective public choice, and corporations hold unchecked power to affect citizens’ jobs, incomes, communities, and environments. Meanwhile, many new democracies around the world struggle to consolidate and stabilize their institutions of government as well as cope with the burdens imposed by globalization. Some young democracies have already faltered, and others are facing crisis. Against these serious challenges, is there a means for channeling truly global, democratic voices?

One means that has been proposed for confronting the challenges posed by globalization is through the networks of relationships and institutions that comprise civil society (see table 1).

As shown in table 1, civil society occupies that sphere of public activity that lies between the individual and the state and corporations.<sup>2</sup> It encompasses the public associations that lie outside the state and for-profit corporations and includes dyads, informal social ties, grassroots associations, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations, small groups, churches, and fraternal and civic clubs.<sup>3</sup> Korten among others argues that many of the entities that comprise civil society are already coalescing around a “shared vision of a world of diverse cultures and just and sustainable communities

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living in balance.”<sup>4</sup> In particular, “citizen groups are reaching out to form national and international alliances committed to transformational changes aimed at addressing root causes of the growing global crisis.”<sup>5</sup>

Table 1. Composition of civil society

CIVIL SOCIETY							
Individual	Dyads or informal social groups	Voluntary grassroots associations	Small, formally organized associations, not legally recognized but with formal leadership structure	Small, formally organized and legally recognized associations with formal leadership structure	Large, formally organized, and legally recognized entities with formal leadership structure	Networks composed of any combination of these entities	State Actors Corporations

In this article, we consider whether one manifestation of civil society, namely, the formally organized, nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NPOs/NGOs), offer realistic means by which global, democratic voices could be effectively channeled. Broadly speaking, NPOs share six defining characteristics: 1) they *are* organizations—i.e., they are institutionalized; 2) private—they are separate from government; 3) nonprofit distributing—they are not dedicated to generating profits for their owners and surplus revenues must be plowed back into the basic mission of the agency; 4) self-governing—they are equipped to control their own activities; 5) voluntary—they are non-compulsory and involve some meaningful degree of voluntary participation; and finally, 6) they are of public benefit, that is they serve some public purpose and contribute to the public good.<sup>6</sup> Lindenberg and Bryant define NGOs as having the following four features: 1) provide useful (in some specified legal sense) good or service, thereby serving a specified public purpose; 2) are not allowed to distribute profits to persons in their individual capacities; 3) are voluntary in the sense that they are created, maintained, and terminated on the basis of voluntary decisions and initiatives by members or a board of directors, and lastly; 4) exhibit values-based rationality, often with ideological components.<sup>7</sup> As there is considerable overlap in these definitions, in this article we use the terms NPO/NGO interchangeably.

By focusing on the organizational segment of civil society, we do not mean to imply that the other segments are irrelevant or unimportant. The social capital generated through small group interactions, for example, is important for building trusting relationships and cooperative ventures. And promoting the public good or affecting political change is certainly possible through the efforts of a dyad. Most political agendas are pursued through organizational means, however. And although we applaud the vision of a just and peaceable world governed by free people participating in their futures and strengthening communities in ecologically healthy ways, scrutiny of the organizational foundation for the emergent social movement that Korten describes has not been sufficient. Specifically, we believe that too little

attention has been paid to organizations *qua* organizations and what it takes to support, mobilize, and sustain them. Although nonprofit associations may be expanding worldwide, marshaling them for progressive (or any other) purposes requires, at minimum, a realistic appraisal of their capabilities, stability, and the issues and factors that affect them. In this article, we identify and discuss six issues and factors that we think deserve attention (see table 2). To frame our discussion, we provide an overview of the concerns raised by globalization, followed by a profile of the factors and issues identified. We conclude the article with a discussion of strategies that NGOs might adopt to help maintain their autonomy so that they are better able to serve as vehicles for cultivating and expressing democratic concerns.

Table 2. Organizational factors and issues affecting NGOs

1) Is the development agenda donor driven rather than representative of grassroots concerns?
2) Does the concentration of financial resources on a few major NGOs limit broad-based participation by less funded NGOs?
3) Is excessive bureaucratization undermining the democratic integrity of civil society organizations?
4) Has fundraising supplanted the mission as NGOs and INGOs strive to compete in the organizational marketplace?
5) Are NGOs at risk of co-optation by the same global actors they seek to hold accountable?
6) How much of civil society is supportive of democratic principles?

## GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRACY

What is globalization? Definitions vary. Globalization is a comprehensive term for the emergence of a global society in which economic, political, environmental, and cultural events in one part of the world quickly come to have significance for people in other parts of the world. Globalization is the result of advances in communication, transportation, and information technologies. It includes the “increasing spread of NGO governance structures, resource acquisition, information sharing, staff, and service delivery across national boundaries.”<sup>8</sup> Globalization also includes “political, technological, and cultural forces” and an ideology that “defines basic expectations about the roles and behaviors of individuals and institutions.”<sup>9</sup>

The concept of globalization is one of those inherently contested concepts in social inquiry that does not lend itself to precise definition.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, certain salient phenomena in world politics can be identified that constitute the multifaceted process of globalization (see table 3).

Table 3. Factors associated with globalization

Factor	Example(s)	Effects
Technology	Jet aircraft, container cargo ships, telecommunications	Time and cost of moving people, goods, information
Integration of global markets	Decrease in tariffs, regulations, capital controls, domestic ownership rules	Increase in movement of goods, capital, creation of global assembly line
Convergence	Increasing similarity of political and economic institutions in different countries	Triumph of western, liberal model
Culture	Popular cultural symbols Mickey Mouse, Coca-Cola, "anime," adoption of English as the world's business language	As McWorld increases, there are decreases in indigenous, local culture

Globalization produces both benefits and costs. Its strongest advocates argue that global and free markets can more equitably determine the allocation of production, goods, income, and jobs. From this perspective, globalization generates the greatest achievable economic growth, which in turn provides the means for addressing poverty, providing education and health care to all, alleviating the impact of inequality, and cleaning up the environment. Free markets are said to undercut authoritarian regimes and spur the development of democratic institutions. Human rights are best protected in societies in which property rights are secure and incomes are high enough to remove the threat of destitution. Economically secure citizens are able and willing to engage in political activity, and they have the education and access to information to do so effectively.

Critics argue that globalization threatens human welfare, ecological balance, and democracy. The relentless corporate quest for profits results in falling wages and worsening work conditions around the world:

*The consequences of the economic development/growth agenda have been disastrous... each addition to economic output results in a comparable increase in the stress that humans place on the earth's ecosystem, deepens the poverty of those whose resources have been expropriated and labor exploited to fuel the effects of growth, and accelerates the destruction of nonhuman species.<sup>11</sup>*

To keep their jobs, workers must accept low wages and benefits, as well as onerous work conditions, or footloose companies will move their operations elsewhere. In addition, governments must be ready to reduce regulatory and tax burdens to attract and keep corporations from moving to pollution havens and other areas that will cut corporate costs drastically. Reductions of regulatory and tax burdens are used to attract and keep corporations from moving to pollution havens. These public subsidies rob funds that could go to schools and health care. The multilateral institutions that have been created to manage the global economy serve the interests of the dominant corporations. These organizations are closed to public scrutiny and influence and promulgate rules that free corporations from accountability. National governments cannot correct the balance because they have lost the ability to manage a global market that operates largely beyond their reach. As Richard Falk observes:

*the principal danger to world order is no longer the absolute security claims of the sovereign state, but rather the inability of the state to protect its own citizenry, especially those who are most vulnerable, in relation to the workings of the world economy, or to mount a sufficient defense of longer-term sustainability in the face of various threats to eco-stability.<sup>12</sup>*

Further, the loss of culture is not simply a matter of art and music, as important as these are. Culture embodies ways of life, complex patterns of relating to humans and to nature that have been built up over countless generations. Losing cultural diversity can also mean losing ecological diversity as the folk knowledge that supported ecologically balanced relationships between human society and environment disappear under the onslaught of commodities, entertainment, and advertising.<sup>13</sup>

Globalization is not inevitable, of course. Some countries have taken steps to resist it by closing their borders to outside trade, for example, but it would be an overstatement to suggest that globalization has not had a significant impact in many parts of the world. Given the prevalence of globalization, then, and the often apparent impotence of states and multinational organizations, such as the United Nations, to check the threats posed by globalization, what are the alternatives?

## THE RISE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Can the negative effects of globalization be countered by mobilizing the institutions of civil society? As defined earlier, civil society constitutes the sphere of public activity that lies between the individual and the state and corporation (see table 1). It refers to the civic network of voluntary associations observed by Alexis De Tocqueville in 1831 in the United States, and the bonds that are crucial for citizens to deliberate and enact collective choice noted by Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*.<sup>14</sup> Today, civil society is typically understood to encompass those associations that lie outside the state and the corporation. Thus, the various arms of governments and for-profit enterprises are excluded.<sup>15</sup> A strong civil society displays dense networks of such groups and organizations, with most people identifying with at least some of these. In a weak civil society, few such ties exist, individuals feel alienated, and the state may penetrate voluntary associations to serve its own ends. To be sure, society has changed significantly since De Tocqueville's and even Putnam's days but the argument remains. Although social complexity and globalization have increased with staggering potency, citizens also have become more technologically savvy and capable. They are more educated and can take advantage of technology to create and maintain associations.

Indeed, attention to civil society has renewed recently because citizens acting through voluntary associations seem to have had such a large hand in the demise of the socialist bloc. Civil society kept ideas of freedom alive through discussion groups, clandestine literature, oppositional trade unions, environmental groups, and other grassroots organizations. When weaknesses began to show in the eastern European nations, and ultimately in the Soviet Union, civil society groups were ready to press

for reforms to open their societies. Without the Soviet guarantee, the socialist governments of Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, East Germany, Poland, and the Baltic states could not resist popular pressure for rapid reform. In the end, they could not reform quickly enough and Soviet-era socialist governments fell from power. Hence, even against a modern state equipped with all the latest tools of social control, civil society prevailed. If so much could be accomplished in totalitarian societies, then certainly civil society could help to ensure liberty and revitalize politics in the open societies of the west. Even more, perhaps civil society could enable democratic transitions in other areas too—Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Everywhere one looks, civil society seems to offer hope for democratic renewal against the encroaching forces of too powerful states and unaccountable corporations.<sup>16</sup>

### GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

How does the experience of civil society in recent democratic transitions relate to globalization? The apparent efficacy of civil society in domestic politics led some analysts to ask whether a similar force could arise in global politics.<sup>17</sup> As noted, globalization has created serious challenges to democracy as corporate power has increased, markets have decentralized and lack regulation, multilateral organizations usurp the powers of national governments, and policy problems escape almost all political jurisdictions. The structural problem for democracy is that no government exists to which citizens can direct their policy demands. The United Nations is far short of a world government, and no other international organization aspires even to the United Nation’s level of global legitimacy and representation. If national governments have lost relevance and global government does not exist, then where are citizens to turn for redress?

In the remainder of this article, we consider the primary organizations that have been proposed as a means for empowering nonstate actors and channeling democratic voice, namely, the small and large, formally organized NPOs and NGOs. These organizations do not constitute civil society in its entirety but rather represent a subset of civil society (see table 4).

Table 4. Subset of civil society organizations

Civil Society Organizations			
Voluntary, grassroots associations	Small, formally organized associations, not legally recognized but with formal leadership structure	Small, formally organized and legally recognized associations with formal leadership structure	Large, formally organized and legally recognized entities with formal leadership structure

Nonstate actors need not be formally or legally recognized by a government, but many individuals recognize the benefits of institutionalized, collective action including leadership, direction, and power in numbers. Their shared normative concerns are able to be more effectively channeled when there are others that are able to contribute to their causes. In addition, obtaining funds to get out the message is easier when an organization has formal, legal status, and various liabilities can be minimized if a group decides to seek legal status by incorporating.

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**For the most part, global civil society has been viewed with considerable hope, but with little critical perspective.**

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For international relations scholars, the main questions have focused on whether global civil society was in fact growing in scope and influence and how it contributed to global governance. For the most part, global civil society has been viewed with considerable hope, but with little critical perspective. We hope to begin to remedy this situation by bringing attention to pertinent organizational issues that we think may impact on the “civil society vision.” Although we cannot provide answers to all of the questions we raise, we encourage scholars of both international relations and NPOs to turn to the important task of assessing the organizational components that this vision will require so that effective strategies for doing so may be devised or alternatives generated.

## QUESTIONS CONCERNING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

*Issue 1: Is the development agenda donor driven rather than representative of grassroots concerns?*

The question raised here is one of local autonomy. To what extent are NGOs able to retain control of their policy agendas when receiving outside resources? Is policy derived from the grassroots (bottom-up), or are the strings attached to donor funding, which directs or redirects policy agendas in fundamental ways? The question is important to consider when one recognizes that development changes at the World Bank and in the foreign policy community have had more than negligible effects on programs that have successfully attracted their funding. Under civil society theories, people in grassroots organizations must be able to set and control their agendas if they are to successfully influence the international financial institutions (IFIs), international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), and government entities that operate at the global level. Yet, research from other settings gives reason to question whether this is occurring. Clearly, some of the policy agendas that have been adopted by NGOs in recent years do not seem to reflect the most pressing needs of local citizens. In Eastern Europe, for example, Western donor interest in the trafficking of women is said to have driven local NGOs to adopt this as their concern even though it was not important to most Polish and Hungarian women.<sup>18</sup> Donor-driven agendas



in all policy areas are likely to face similar challenges. The general problem is that agendas that are donor driven shape local NGO activity and could undercut, rather than enhance, responsiveness to popular needs and demands.

*Issue 2: Does the concentration of resources on a few major NGOs limit broad-based participation by NGOs with less financial capability?*

Most financial resources enjoyed by nonprofit organizations are targeted at a handful of major groups rather than evenly distributed across the diverse spectrum of NPOs and NGOs.<sup>19</sup> Does this concentration of resources diminish the potential of the thousands of community groups that comprise the “backbone” of civil society? Possibly so. In the United States, for example, funding from government contracts and umbrella organizations such as area United Ways tend to flow to large, uncontroversial agencies.<sup>20</sup> The unfortunate consequence is that over time outside money may create a pecking order with well-established organizations maintaining a distinct advantage over those lacking track records. Although donors have good reasons to fund organizations with proven performance records, the result is that efficiency may incorrectly be equated with quality. Highly efficient organizations do not necessarily represent local interests or the preferences or needs of the poor. In addition, large organizations may expand the scope and reach of their activities, perhaps pushing smaller but more representative organizations out of existence. This could lead to the creation of monopolistic service organizations, and they may pursue organizational interests rather than retain their development mission.

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## **The bureaucratization of the largest NGOs raises significant concern about their democratic integrity.**

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*Issue 3: Is excessive bureaucratization undermining the democratic integrity of civil society organizations?*

As the major NGOs have grown, they have become more hierarchical, bureaucratic, and professionalized. The bureaucratization of the largest NGOs raises significant concern about their democratic integrity. Bureaucratic organizations adopt hierarchical structures to centralize decision making and the direction and flow of information.<sup>21</sup> Although this may enhance administrative control, the design is not particularly democratic. Those at the apex of the organization control participation and allow it at their discretion. Bureaucracies also foster inequality among organizational members and create distance between those who initiate policy and those who are affected by it.<sup>22</sup> Bureaucratic organizations produce “red tape”—rules, regulations, and policies—useful for establishing consistency in products and services and internal accountability. However, red tape inhibits creativity and can lead to the development of a rigid and risk adverse workforce that seeks to defend their own entrenched interests rather than assisting their clientele.<sup>23</sup> Typically, important posts are filled by individuals with professional credentials in law, accounting, public

administration, and the like. These well-compensated professionals are powerful, for they have specialized knowledge, but their professional value systems may be very different than the constituency of poor they are to serve.<sup>24</sup> Professionals in large bureaucracies also have access to government and IFI officials and considerable influence on the development of policy agenda. Meanwhile, many more small organizations struggle with limited resources and limited ability to influence the policy environment. Donors prefer to direct funds to the bureaucratized organizations with skilled professional staff that can meet their management and reporting requirements. "The reluctance of donors to make resources available to these [small] organizations to develop managerial and professional skills has merely reinforced the gap within the sector," and partnerships between small and large NGOs only threaten to limit the "diversity, responsiveness, and innovation that used to be an essential part of the NGO experience."<sup>25</sup> Global civil society organizations operating at all levels have adopted the bureaucratic form to some extent, which can work against maintaining democratic representation and undermine certain types of accountability.

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**This raises the question as to whether fund development has supplanted the service mission as the organization's primary task.**

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*Issue 4: Has fundraising supplanted the mission, as NGOs strive to compete in the organizational marketplace?*

NGOs raise money through a variety of means, including appeals for direct donations, foundation and government grants, contracting activities, sales of goods and services, interest on loans, and market-based activities. They may also partner with for-profit corporations to form a public-private partnership. The forms of these arrangements may include mergers, the transformation of inside organizations into affiliates with their own national boards and sources of funds, the formation of entirely new partnerships, loose alliances, network memberships, and negotiated partnerships.<sup>26</sup> Because NGOs cannot raise revenues by taxation or other coercive means, they must engage in fund development activities or watch their organizations wither and die. This raises the question as to whether fund development has supplanted the service mission as the organization's primary task. The problem may become especially acute for smaller organizations that lack reliable sources of funding and have small staff with many competing responsibilities.

*Issue 5: Are NGOs at risk of co-optation?*

The growth in the number of NGOs worldwide has been stimulated in part by an increasing use of bilateral and multilateral resources. These resources include funding organizations such as the World Bank and regional development banks, USAID, the Office of the UN High Commission for Refugees and the World Food Programme, among others. In addition, some NGOs have attracted corporate

donations or established partnerships with corporations.<sup>27</sup> Although NGOs gain capability, they may risk co-optation. Co-optation is the “process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-making structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence.”<sup>28</sup> Global actors may attempt to induce this process of absorbing new elements to ensure that their policy agendas are enacted. For instance, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have outreach programs, ostensibly to incorporate civil society organizations into the decision-making process. The incentive for the IFIs and other entities to undertake such programs is to identify “worthy” partners and to lend legitimacy to their policies. International NGOs gain recognition and access by participation. Yet, the drawback is that to maintain access, NGOs may avoid controversial opposition to IFI policies, and their very participation in these outreach programs also serves to legitimize IFI policies, even those the NGOs oppose. Moreover, co-optation of local and national NGOs can emerge from relations with the state. Indeed, the paradoxical experience of Chilean NGOs has been that they moved from an oppositional position to a supportive stance as Chile democratized. Rather than continue to provide a democratic voice for the citizenry, these NGOs became “more distanced from the grassroots movements” while developing “more intimate links with the state.”<sup>29</sup>

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**It is doubtful that the emergence of a global civil society is likely to simply evolve and pursue a democratic or progressive agenda.**

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*Issue 6: How much of civil society is supportive of democratic principles?*

Our final question draws attention to an oversimplification often made about civil society. Civil society, including NPOs and NGOs, is often conceptualized as necessarily altruistic or supportive of progressive ideals. But civil society is a complex and contradictory phenomenon. In all societies, antidemocratic elements of civil society exist as well as those supporting democratic and progressive politics. Although an organization might provide valuable social support for the poor and disenfranchised and may even enjoy considerable popular support, it may not have a democratic orientation. Unless one adopts a normative orientation that allows only those groups with a certain set of progressive values to count as civil society, it remains necessary to research rather than assume the relationship between civil society and democracy.<sup>30</sup>

In sum, there are many reasons to question civil society’s ability to provide democracy in countries buffeted by globalization. The problem is that civil society organizations remain organizations. As such, they are prey to all the pitfalls facing organizations in other sectors of society. Thus, they can lose sight of their missions, and they can lose touch with the people they purport to serve. Elected officials have good reason to question whether NGOs ought to have greater democratic credentials than they do. In what sense, that is, are co-opted, money-seeking, hierarchical, large

organizations more representative than the officials of government? Unfortunately, raising this question could lead to the depressing assumption that no effective voices for popular will can ever exist. However, this is neither our intent nor our conclusion.

### DISCUSSION: CAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS SERVE TO HELP CHECK THE NEGATIVE FORCES ASSOCIATED WITH GLOBALIZATION?

What is to be done? Several scenarios could unfold.

One is to allow global free markets to determine the allocation of production, goods, incomes, and jobs. The benefits of global free markets could be enjoyed regardless of the consequences. The problem, of course, is that this approach does nothing to strengthen democracy, alleviate global inequities, or address other negative externalities associated with globalization.

A second approach is to continue to hope that the growth of global civil society will somehow evolve and ensure the representation of the democratic aspirations of people around the world. A variety of theoretical perspectives could be marshaled to support this scenario. Solidarity, for example, which includes the recognition of interdependence and a willingness to help others in order to help oneself is one perspective that could lend credence to this hope. In addition, theories associated with the limitations of the market, the inherent limitations of governments to respond to market failures, the need that democratic societies have to promote cooperation among individuals, the value that is attached to pluralism and freedom, and theories of caring, altruism, and stewardship that are predicated on the willingness of human beings to reach out to others in need are others that could be similarly employed.<sup>31</sup>

Although theoretically justifiable, it is doubtful that the emergence of a global civil society is likely to simply evolve and pursue a democratic or progressive agenda. Social change requires more than theoretical possibility; it requires concerted action. Organizational actors who are privileged by current institutional arrangements are unlikely to relinquish their power and they have means for discouraging opposition: layoffs, demotions, severing of vendor ties, etc. Likewise, mobilizing people who may have only a passing interest in global affairs and who are poor and perhaps illiterate presents an additional set of operational challenges. Under these circumstances, it might be easy to conclude that against the growing power of the global market, multinational corporations, and the states that support them, democracy has little chance of prevailing. NGOs and activists in developed countries may be sympathetic to the interests of people living in less developed nations, but they may be no more democratic or reliable in upholding the local interests of these people than officials in multilateral corporations. "There is a general tendency among international assistance agencies to ignore local circumstances and histories."<sup>32</sup> Although the World Wildlife Fund or Amnesty International may appear to be more democratic than private multinational companies, as we have shown, organizational factors can cause any organization to be as distant, unresponsive, and removed from the grassroots as IFIs and foreign policy agencies.

Table 5. Strategies for addressing organizational challenges

Issues	Primary concerns	Is condition present?	Strategies	Methods available
Is the development agenda donor driven rather than representative of grassroots concerns?	Autonomy Accountability	Yes	Funding diversity Internal audits Environmental scans	Yes Yes Yes
Does the concentration of financial resources on a few major NGOs limit broad-based participation by less funded NGOs?	Limited access Limited participation Limited influence	Mixed	Redistributive policies Fundraising Skill/capacity building Leadership	Yes Yes Yes Yes
Is excessive bureaucratization undermining the democratic integrity of civil society organizations?	Unrepresentative	Unclear	Internal audits Restructuring Advisory boards	Yes Yes Yes
Are NGOs at risk of co-optation by the global actors they seek to hold to account?	Autonomy Accountability	Yes	Funding diversity Internal audits Environmental scans	Yes Yes Yes
Has fundraising supplanted mission as NGOs strive to compete in the organizational marketplace?	Goal displacement	Unclear	Internal audits	Yes
How much of civil society is supportive of democratic principles?	Overgeneralization	Unclear	Presumption of mixed sector	Yes

So, realistically, can anything really be done? We believe that there is reason for hope, but recognize that our position represents a “most difficult route” scenario. A final option is for civil society organizations to address head-on the issues that we have raised. Obviously this is a tall order. Nonetheless, there are levers for inducing change and meeting the challenges.

One democratically motivated organizational strategy already underway is sponsored by the Concord Project, an international research and action program organized for the purpose of bringing together people with fundamentally opposing views to promote civil society.<sup>33</sup> Among their organizational strategies is the promotion of overarching values that unite rather than divide participants—an approach advocated widely in recent years by nonprofit and organizational culture scholars.<sup>34</sup> Building coalitions requires strong leadership, a shared vision, and the ability to manage conflict. Community leaders with a willingness to champion democratic values, mobilize and sustain community support, and challenge NGOs that purport to, but do not, legitimately represent local interests must be identified and others trained. This can be an extremely arduous process but it is not impossible. The democratic ideology, a belief that inequality, exploitation, and inequity are wrong, is a powerful message that can build interest, volunteerism, commitment, and solidarity among people. Other strategies are shown in table 5, and discussed below.

*Is the development agenda donor driven rather than representative of grassroots concerns? Are NGOs at risk of co-optation by the same global actors they seek to hold accountable?*

Although each of these issues represents a separate concern, the common

problems they introduce include loss of organizational autonomy, unintended policy shifts, and hijacked agendas. NPOs are at the highest risk of succumbing to these undesirable outcomes if they are too dependent on the revenue from any single funder or do not scrutinize funding opportunities to ensure alignment with their mission. Organizations can resist these problems by diversifying their funding portfolios early on to avoid the fiscal crises that frequently precipitate entry into ideologically mismatched partnerships. Identifying partners for purposes of obtaining or sharing resources also requires a careful stratagem. Simple tools and methods for creating strategic plans, raising funds, finding kindred partners, and building coalition networks are widely and readily available.<sup>35</sup>

Operations such as strategic planning can be complex, cumbersome, and time-consuming but such activities can help organizations revitalize themselves and adapt to changing environments.<sup>36</sup> Strategic planning requires organizations to build commitment by engaging key stakeholders, including clients and community leaders. Thus, strategic planning includes not only board members and executives but also “numerous other parties including staff, volunteers, and external stakeholders.”<sup>37</sup> The involvement of all of these can help an organization become more open, responsive, and accountable.

Organizations should also routinely conduct internal audits of their board composition and programmatic activities. Board reviews can be used to help ensure representation or identify agency capture. Programmatic audits can help organizations determine if they are straying from their missions or investing disproportionately in only tangentially related activities. Fund development and internal audit committees can be established to carry out these activities.

*Does the concentration of financial resources on a few major NGOs limit broad-based participation by less funded NGOs?*

The number of NGOs is increasing but the extent to which their access to important policy arenas has been blocked is not known. If participation is obstructed, however, addressing the problem could take a variety of forms. One solution would be a redistribution of resources to allow all organizations to compete on a more level playing field. This could be accomplished through government regulation or tax policies, public donations, or investments in skill and capacity building for less funded NGOs to help them more successfully compete for private funding. Creating additional opportunities for underfunded and underrepresented NGOs to access public funding is another option. This would require, at minimum, a leadership champion.

While not uncontroversial, one example includes President George W. Bush's championing of Section 104 of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA PL 104-193). Often referred to as “Charitable Choice,” Section 104 allows faith-based service providers to use religious criteria when hiring staff, to maintain religious symbols in areas where programs are administered, and to use faith-based concepts in providing services. In a major departure

from prior practices, Section 104 also encouraged government agencies to partner directly with sectarian organizations, including those that are pervasively sectarian, to provide a wide array of social services. The policy was justified, in part, on the grounds that faith-based organizations had been discriminated against and had encountered barriers not required by the First Amendment, and thus unfairly were denied access to government funding opportunities, namely government contracts.<sup>38</sup> Although findings suggest that faith-based organizations have been slow to seek out government contracts, Section 104 does provide greater access for them. Under less controversial conditions, over time, or in other policy areas, access and participation levels might be higher.

*Is excessive bureaucratization undermining the democratic integrity of civil society organizations?*

Bureaucracy as an organizational form is highly undemocratic. Decision making emanates from a hierarchical organizational apex, and superior/subordinate chains of command are adopted to ensure compliance with downward-moving directives. It is a structure that is much maligned, yet copiously replicated. As organizations increase in size or the scope of their activities multiplies, they become unwieldy. Bureaucracy provides organizational leaders with a means of control. Under conditions of excessive bureaucratization, work processes are overly rigid with workers functioning as virtual automatons.

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## **While bureaucratization is inherently unequal, it also introduces equity.**

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Paradoxically, while bureaucratization is inherently unequal, it also introduces equity. Standardization, for example, helps to ensure fairness, consistency, and procedural due process. Many NPOs applaud the professionalism that has resulted from the adoption of bureaucratic structures and directives. Organizations need not become excessively rigid and antidemocratic, however. Government reforms in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and other countries have shown that by flattening organizational hierarchies, decentralizing, empowering front-line employees, and creating additional opportunities for transparency and community input, their organizations can be more flexible and responsive.<sup>39</sup> Although there are expenses associated with the reforms, participatory accommodations are achievable and NGOs can seek to temper excessive bureaucratization by incorporating democratic features.

*Has fundraising supplanted the mission as NGOs strive to compete in the organizational marketplace?*

As mentioned at the outset, NPOs and NGOs are nonprofit distributing, i.e., they are not dedicated to generating profits for owners and surplus revenues must be plowed back into the basic mission of the agency. Mission (above all other concerns) is what sets NPOs/NGOs apart from government or profit-seeking organizations.

Nonetheless, all organizations need resources to carry out their activities. Most nonprofit executives would not admit to supplanting their mission in order to raise funds but most report that fundraising is a priority for their organizations. Findings from the Listening Post project (a joint initiative headed by the Center for Civil Society Studies at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies), for example, show that 90 percent of 249 surveyed nonprofit executives reported fiscal stress in their agencies, with over half reporting severe or very severe stress.<sup>40</sup> When asked to identify their major operational priorities, financial self-sufficiency was among the top two responses given. By contrast, fewer than 10 percent cited “preserving our ability to reach or serve those least able to pay” and fewer than 5 percent claimed “maintaining our advocacy/civic engagement role.”<sup>41</sup> It is easy to understand why. NPOs must compete for funds, and managing revenues effectively is essential to their survival. Many individuals serving on NPO boards of directors are selected for their business savvy and ability to raise funds. However, the professional values of these individuals may or may not be aligned with the substantive mission of the NPO. Yet, concern for mission should not be outweighed by concern for revenues.

How can NPOs manage both? One strategy is to screen potential board members for both professional skills and a commitment to the organization’s ideals. Such individuals are probably less likely to compromise mission in pursuit of revenues. Screening matrices designed for these purposes are readily available.<sup>42</sup> Finally, organizations must diversify their funding portfolios. Raising funds should be only one part of a well-rounded business plan. In addition, organizations should not overlook their volunteer base as a source of funds since they are major financial contributors to NPOs. Developing a strong volunteer base can help an organization derive funds from those who are most likely to have a keen interest in the mission of the organization.

*Finally, how much of civil society is supportive of democratic principles?*

Demographic research that could precisely map the composition of the NPO/NGO sector is probably a pipedream. For our purposes, however, it is not necessary. We already know that some NPOs and NGOs are committed to promoting democratic principles while others are not. Here, the strategy is simply to lay to rest the myth that the NPO/NGO sector is a homogeneous collection of altruistic, public-minded organizations. Those who envision the NPO/NGO sector as a vehicle for combating the ills of globalization must recognize the diversity of the sector and the pressures that such organizations face. Failure to do so is to risk being blindsided by opposition from “within.”

## CONCLUSION

With all of the challenges facing NPOs/NGOs in today’s world, we might conclude that democracy is either unachievable or irrelevant. Instead, performance should guide our judgments. Are the poor less in misery? Are all segments of society becoming



healthier? Is education available to all classes and groups? Are women brought into society as equals, educated, and afforded access to responsible jobs? Has violence in the home declined? Are children able to enjoy their youth, to learn, and to grow into healthy adults? Are those suffering from drug and alcohol abuse receiving appropriate treatment and attention? Is the environment receiving proper protection and is resource use sustainable? Although we might be persuaded that improvement on these dimensions matters more than whether the nation's political system displays the attributes of representative democracy, we do not take this position.

Performance matters, but so too does respect for local culture, autonomy, equality, representation, and participation. To give up on democracy would be defeatist. There are no easy solutions to the thorny problems globalization has produced. Global civil society does offer a viable alternative to the current global system, a system characterized by the preponderant influence of the state and the multinational corporation. Yet, a democratic global civil society will not simply emerge without attention to organizational concerns and committed leadership. This means that democratizing the organizations of global civil society is essential. The organizational problems that we have cited, problems that reduce accountability and legitimacy of civil society groups, are issues that have been addressed before. Certainly, these organizational challenges will always exist. They can only be managed and mitigated, not fully eliminated. Nevertheless, nonprofit organizations in the United States and in other countries have managed and mitigated them. These lessons can be learned and applied to the groups and organizations that constitute global civil society.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Zedillo Panel. United Nations General Assembly. 57<sup>th</sup> Session, New York. 2002. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/exrel/events/statements/unga57/globalzn.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Steven M. DeLue, *Political Thinking, Political Theory, and Civil Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman Publishers, 2002), pp. 10–11.

<sup>3</sup> Lester M. Salamon, *America's Nonprofit Sector: A Primer*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Foundation Center, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> David Korten, *Globalizing Civil Society: Reclaiming Our Right to Power* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Korten, *Globalizing Civil Society*, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> Salamon, *America's Nonprofit Sector: A Primer*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Lindenberg and Coralie Bryant, *Going Global: Transforming Relief and Development NGOs* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2001), pp. 5–6.

<sup>8</sup> Lindenberg and Bryant, *Going Global*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Kettl, "The Transformation of Governance: Globalization, Devolution, and the Role of Government," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 60, no. 6, 2000, pp. 488–497.

<sup>10</sup> See inter alia Scholte, Jan Art, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Korten, *Globalizing Civil Society*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Falk, "Global Civil Society and the Democratic Prospect," in Barry Holden, ed., *Global Democracy: Key Debates* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 169.

<sup>13</sup> For an excellent discussion of the debate over globalization, see Mark Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2000). See also John Barkdull, "Globalization and Environmental Policy," *Seton Hall Journal of International Relations* vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 21–38.

<sup>14</sup> Robert D Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon &

Schuster, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> An exception to this depiction of civil society is O'Connell's 1999, uncharacteristically broad definition that includes the interactions of individuals and communities *with* state actors, governments, and businesses. For purposes of this article, a more typical definition that excludes state and corporate actors is adopted.

<sup>16</sup>Michael Walzer, ed., *Toward Global Civil Society* (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995).

<sup>17</sup>Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "Reconstructing World Politics: The Emergence of Global Civil Society," *Millennium* vol. 21, no. 3, Winter 1992; Paul Wapner, *Environmental Activism and World Civil Politics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup>Patrice C. McMahon, "International Actors and Women's NGOs in Poland and Hungary," in Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn, eds., *The Power and Limits of NGOs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 43–48.

<sup>19</sup>David Wagner, *What's Love Got To Do With It?* (New York: The New Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup>Theresa Funciello, *Tyranny of Kindness: Dismantling the Welfare System to End Poverty in America* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup>James D. Thompson, *Organizations in Action: Social-Science Bases of Administrative Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

<sup>22</sup> See especially Joan Acker, "Gendering Organizational Theory," in Albert J. Mills and Peta Tancred, eds., *Gendering Organizational Analysis* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1992), and Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); also David E. Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector* (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992).

<sup>23</sup>Albert E. Gore, *Creating a Government That Works Better and Costs Less: Report of the National Performance Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993); Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1957).

<sup>24</sup>Montgomery VanWart, *Changing Public Sector Values* (New York: Garland, 1998).

<sup>25</sup>Aroma Goon, "Civil Society and Social Empowerment," in Mizan R. Khan and Mohammad Humayan Kabir, eds., *Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Academic Press, 2002) p.148.

<sup>26</sup>E. S. Savas, *Privatization and Public-Private Partnerships* (New York: Chatham House, 2000).

<sup>27</sup>Marc Lindenberg and Coralie Bryant, *Going Global: Transforming Relief and Development NGOs* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup>Philip Selznick, "Foundations of the Theory of Organization," in *Classics of Organization Theory*, 5th ed., in Jay M. Shafritz and J. Steven Ott, eds., (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt, 2001) p. 132.

<sup>29</sup>Lucy Taylor, "Market Forces and Moral Imperatives: The Professionalization of Social Activism in Latin America," in Jean Grugel, ed., *Democracy without Borders: Transnationalization and Conditionality in New Democracies* (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 145.

<sup>30</sup>Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde, "Rethinking Civil Society," *Democratization* vol. 10, no. 3, Autumn 2003, pp.1–14; John Barkdull and Lisa A. Dicke, "Rethinking Global Civil Society," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association-West, Las Vegas, Nevada, October 12, 2003.

<sup>31</sup>J. Steven Ott, *The Nature of the Nonprofit Sector* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); Lester Salamon, *American's Nonprofit Sector: A Primer*, 2nd ed. (New York: Foundation Center, 1999); Roger Lohmann, *The Commons* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1992); Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1993); C. D. Batson, *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social Psychological Answer* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991); Alan Wolfe, "What is Altruism?" in *Private Action and the Public Good* in W. W. Powell and E. S. Clemens, eds., (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 1998); Natan Sznajder, *The Compassionate Temperament: Care and Cruelty in Modern Society* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

<sup>32</sup>Mark Leopold, "Trying to Hold Things Together?: International NGOs Caught Up in an Emergency in North-Western Uganda, 1996-1997," in Ondine Barrow and Michael Jennings, eds., *The Charitable Impulse: NGOs and Development in East and North-East Africa* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2001), pp. 94–108:106.

<sup>33</sup>Barbara Nelson, Linda Kaboolian, and Kathryn A. Carver, *The Concord Handbook: How to Build Social Capital Across Communities*. (Los Angeles: UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Examples include: Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest* (San Francisco: Berrett-

Koehler, 1993); Thomas H. Jeavons, "Ethics in Nonprofit Management: Creating a Culture of Integrity," in R. D. Herman, ed., *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), pp. 184–207; Terry L. Cooper and N. Dale Wright, eds., *Exemplary Public Administrators: Character and Leadership in Government* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992); James Lukes, *Catalytic Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998); Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1992); Montgomery VanWart, *Changing Public Sector Values* (New York: Garland, 1998).

<sup>35</sup>Jennifer Alexander, "Adaptive Strategies of Nonprofit Human Service Organizations in an Era of Devolution and New Public Management," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2000, pp. 287–303; Lisa Dicke and J. Steven Ott, "Post-September 11 Human Resource Management in Nonprofit Organizations," *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, vol. 23, no. 2, June 2003, pp. 97–113; Simon Fisher et al., *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2000).

<sup>36</sup>Michael Allison and Jude Kaye, *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1997).

<sup>37</sup>John E. McClusky, "Re-thinking Nonprofit Organization Governance: Implications for Management and Leadership," *International Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 539–560: 547.

<sup>38</sup>Sheila Suess Kennedy and Wolfgang Bielefeld, *Charitable Choice: First Results from Three States* (Indianapolis, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Edward C. Weeks, "The Practice of Deliberative Democracy: Results from Four Large-Scale Trials," *Public Administration Review* vol. 60, no. 4, July/August 2000, pp. 360–372; Jerrell D. Coggburn, "Deregulating the Public Personnel Function," in *Public Personnel Administration: Problems and Prospects*, 4th ed. Steven W. Hays and Richard C. Kearney, eds., (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003).

<sup>40</sup>Lester M. Salamon and Richard O'Sullivan, *Stressed but Coping: Nonprofit Organizations and the Current Fiscal Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, January 2004), p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Salamon and O'Sullivan, *Stressed but Coping*, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup>Margaret Harris, "Clarifying the Board Role: A Total Activities Approach," in Dennis R. Young, Robert M. Hollister, Virginia A Hodgkinson, and Associates, eds., *Governing, Leading, and Managing Nonprofit Organizations: New Insights From Research and Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), pp. 17–31.