Journal of Human Development: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal for People-Centered Development

Civil Society and Accountability

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Published online: 03 Aug 2010.

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Abstract   This paper addresses the question of whether trust in civil society groups is justified when it comes to giving voice to the poor. It addresses the issue of accountability as it relates to civil society, defining 'moral' accountability as an organization's accountability towards the people it was established to help, and procedural accountability as internal management. It draws a distinction between civil society and non-governmental organizations, and argues that the contradiction between 'moral' and 'procedural' accountability applies primarily to non-governmental organizations, a subset of civil society. Beginning with an overview of the concept of civil society and the relevance of voice, it develops a typology of civil society actors to clarify different forms of accountability, and concludes with policy recommendations.

Key words: Accountability, Civil Society, the State, Non-Governmental Organisations, Governance, Management

Introduction

It is a paradox of the contemporary period that, at a time when more and more states all over the world have adopted democratic forms and procedures, there is decreasing trust in elected officials and politicians. This lack of trust is reflected in growing political apathy, declining membership in political parties, and low voter turnout in many elections. At the same time, however, there appears to be more trust in civil society groups, which are often, wrongly in my view, equated with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These groups, which are supposedly independent of the state and of big companies, are not elected; they are voluntary groups composed of committed individuals. They have become much more publicly prominent in the past decade and are often seen as the expression of public morality.

This paper discusses whether this trust is justified in relation to the world's poorest people. There is, now, a growing literature on NGO management and the problems of accountability (Edwards and Hulme, 1992, 1996; Fowler, 1997; Hulme and Edwards, 1997; Anheier, 2000; Lewis, 2001). Much

of the literature distinguishes between internal and external accountability, or between functional and strategic accountability (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). Internal or functional accountability relates to internal management practises and responsibility for resources. External or strategic accountability, sometimes called political responsibility (Jordan and Tuijl, 2000), is about accountability towards the beneficiaries, the people that the NGO is trying to help; it is about the extent to which an NGO remains true to its stated mission or goal. I use the term moral accountability to refer to external or strategic accountability, or political responsibility, and the term procedural accountability to refer to internal or management accountability.

It is often said that civil society groups have a 'voice not a vote' (Edwards, 2000). They are not representative and do not claim to be representative. Their internal forms of management are irrelevant to their role in the public arena since what matters is what they have to say not whether they are internally democratic or representative. The problem arises, however, when there are conflicts between internal and external accountability, political and management imperatives. There are cases, in the humanitarian field, for example, or in the case of biotechnology, where NGOs have used their 'voice' to convey misleading information, which has the effect of mobilizing political and indeed financial support. There are other cases where groups claim to represent the very poor in order to raise funds from outside donors.

In this paper, I argue that contradiction between moral and procedural accountability applies primarily to NGOs, a subset of civil society. While this is a relevant, if narrow, issue, the accountability of civil society as a whole has more to do with the overall meaning and composition of civil society. To develop this argument, I shall start with a brief historical overview of the concept of civil society and the relevance of different meanings to the notion of 'voice' as it relates to poor people. In the second part of the paper, I shall outline a typology of civil society actors that might be helpful in clarifying different forms of accountability. And in the final section, I will draw some conclusions and policy recommendations about the accountability of different types of civil society groups.

What is civil society?

The contemporary term 'civil society' has its origins in the early modern period, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The term, of course, had appeared earlier. Like all Western political concepts, it can be traced back to Greek political philosophy. Aristotle talked about *politike koinona* (political community/society) to refer to a rule-governed society in which the ruler puts the public good before his (not usually her) private interest. The term was translated into Latin as *Societas Civilis*.

The renaissance of the concept in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was inextricably linked to theories of individual rights and the idea of a social contract. What was new about the early modern usage of the term was the assumption of human equality, drawn from Christianity. A civil

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society was a society where individuals come together to make a social contract and the outcome of that contract is expressed in the rule of law and the existence of a state, which is also subject to the law. Juridical equality applied both to rulers and the ruled. "When a King has dethroned himself and put himself in a state of war with his people", wrote John Locke, "what shall hinder them from prosecuting him who is King, as they would any other man, who has put himself in a state of war with them?" (quoted in Goldwin, 1987, p. 507)

At that time, there was no distinction between civil society and the state. A civil society was more or less the same thing as a political society. Civil society was contrasted not with the state, but with other kinds of society — despotic empires, for example, or the state of nature. In particular, a civil society was a peaceful society, a society in which people treated strangers with civility, in contrast to other violent and 'rude' societies.

The Scottish enlightenment thinkers were to augment the concept with their emphasis on the importance of commercial society. They saw the market as the condition for individualism and the existence of a civil society. But they still understood civil society in much the same terms as a rule-governed society based on the consent of individuals in contrast to the state of nature, where there were no rules, or with despotic systems where rules were imposed through coercion. The removal of fear from everyday life provided the conditions for economic exchange based on contract instead of coercion, and for the public use of reason — freedom (see Ferguson, 1995).

It was Hegel who was first to use the term as something distinct from the state. Hegel, who was strongly influenced by the Scottish political economists, defined civil society as "the realm of difference, intermediate between the family and the state" (1996, pp. 185–186). In other words, civil society was equated with the economy. Hegel used the term "bourgeois society" (*Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) and this was the definition to be taken up by Marx and later nineteenth-century thinkers. For Hegel famously, civil society was "the achievement of the modern world … the territory of mediation where there is free play for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of birth and fortune, and where waves of passion gush forth, regulated only by reason, glinting through them" (quoted in Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999, p. 3). Thus, the state was viewed as a mediator, resolving the conflicts of civil society; the civil servants were the 'universal class' acting in the public interest.

Marx and Engels were to take up the Hegelian concept of *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* and to emphasize the role of the economy. According to Marx, the "material conditions of life. are summed up by Hegel after the fashion of the English and the French of the eighteenth century under the name 'civil society'; the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy" (quoted in Bobbio, 1988, p. 78). Unlike Hegel, however, Marx and Engels argued that the state was subordinate to civil society; they saw the state as an instrument or apparatus in the hands of the dominant classes. Civil society was the "theatre of history … Civil Society embraces all the material relations of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive

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forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage and, hence, transcends the State and the nation, though, on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality and inwardly must organise itself as state" (quoted in Bobbio, 1988, p. 82).

In the twentieth century, the content of the concept has been further narrowed to forms of social interaction that are distinct from both the state and the market. Writing in prison, the Italian Marxist Gramsci called into question the economism of the Marxist definition of civil society. According to Gramsci, it is not 'economic structure' as such that governs political action, but the 'interpretation of it'. Thus, the 'theatre of history' is not the story of economic development, but of ideological and cultural struggles. Gramsci drew an important distinction between coercion and consent, domination and hegemony. Bourgeois society had established a powerful set of norms and institutions to sustain the hegemony of bourgeois rule based on the consent of the working classes. Whereas capitalism was overthrown in Russia through the capture of the state, this was not possible in the West where "there was a proper relation between state and civil society, and when the state trembled, a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed" (quoted in Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 209). Hence, he was to emphasize the need for political activism in the realms of education, media and other institutions of civil society.

In contemporary usage, it is possible broadly to distinguish three different versions of usages of the term.

The first version is what I call the 'activist' version. This is the version that initiated the contemporary revival of the term in both Latin America and Eastern Europe. The term emerged simultaneously in the 1970s and 1980s, and as far as I know without any communication, in these two regions as a way of describing the efforts to create autonomous public spaces in the context of authoritarian states — military dictatorships in Latin America and totalitarian Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In Latin America, the intellectuals who used the term were strongly influenced both by Gramsci (via the Spanish and Italian Communist parties) and by the ideas of liberation theology — the notion of the conscientization of the poor, overcoming the 'culture of silence' (Howell and Pearce, 2001; Lewis, 2001) In Eastern Europe, the term arose out of the failure of the Prague spring and the loss of faith that any change could come 'from above' or through overthrow of the regime. The idea was that instead of trying to change the state, it was important to change the relation between state and society, to create self-organized institutions, independent of the state that could challenge the reach of the state (Michnik, 1985). Terms like 'antipolitics' (Konrad, 1984; Havel, 1985) or 'living in truth' (Havel, 1985) expressed the same idea. In both cases, these new autonomous spaces depended on transnational links, and this was even before the advent of Internet. It was both the existence of formal international instruments like the Conventions on Human Rights or the Helsinki Agreement and the links with peace and human rights groups in Western countries that helped to open up spaces in these countries (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Kaldor, 1991)

This understanding of civil society was to be taken up by intellectuals in Europe and the US, as well as other parts of the world, especially India, to mean the 'new politics' (Arato and Cohen, 1995; Kothari, 1989). It referred to the idea of a realm outside political parties where individuals and groups aimed to democratize the state, to re-distribute power, rather than to capture power in a traditional sense. It was associated with the so-called new social movements that emerged after 1968, concerned with peace the environment, women, human rights, and so on. It involved an effort to create a public space where individuals can act and communicate freely, independent of both the state and capitalism. According to the German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas:

> The expression 'civil society' has in the meantime taken on a meaning different from that of the 'bourgeois society' of the liberal tradition, which Hegel conceptualised as the 'system of needs', that is, as a market system involving social labour and commodity exchange. What is meant by 'civil society' today, in contrast to its usage in the Marxist tradition, no longer includes the economy as constituted by private law and steered through markets in labour, capital and commodities. Rather, its institutional core comprises those non-governmental and non-economic connections and voluntary associations that anchor the communication structures of the public sphere in the society component of the life-world. Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organisations, and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in private life spheres, distil and transmit such reactions to the public sphere. The core of civil society comprises a network of associations that institutionalises problem-solving discourses of general interest inside the framework of organised public spheres. These 'discursive designs' have an egalitarian, open form of organisation that mirrors essential features of the kind of communication around which they crystallise and to which they lend continuity and permanence. (Quoted in Ehrenberg, 1999, pp. 222–223)

The second version of the term 'civil society' can be described as the 'neo-liberal' version. This version is much associated with ideas about the 'third sector' or the 'non-profit sector' that developed in the US in the 1970s and 1980s. (Etzioni, 1961, Salamon and Anheier, 1996). The idea is that, in the US, there is a group of organizations that are neither controlled by the state nor the market, but which play an essential role in facilitating the operation of both. This concept owes much to the Tocquevillian emphasis on associationalism and is linked to neo-liberal ideas about minimizing the role of the state. NGOs, non-profit organizations (NPOs), charities and voluntary associations are more flexible and innovative than the state. They can substitute for the state, in providing social services, for example; they can check abuses of the state and poor governmental practises; and they can call corporations to account. The ideas of Robert Putnam about social capital

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and of Francis Fukuyama about trust are in line with this version of civil society — the notion that trust and social interaction are essential ingredients of good governance and properly functioning markets.

It is often argued that it is this version that was taken up by Western donors in the early 1990s. Civil society was needed as a cushion against the shocks associated with structural adjustment, to provide a social safety net, for example, at a time when public services were being cut, and to foster good governance. Market failures and economic crises like those in Asia were attributed to failures of governance, especially corruption. Civil society, it was hoped, could correct this.

A third version of civil society is the 'post-modern' version. The revival of the term civil society has been criticized by anthropologists from a relativist position. Both activist and neo-liberal versions, it is contended, are a Western discourse. Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) talk about the way civil society has become a 'neo-modern' myth, with its own legitimizing narrative. They talk about the "archaeology" of civil society "usually told, layer upon layer, as a chronological epic of ideas and authors" starting with an "origin story" in the late 1700s. Outside Western Europe and North America, it is contended, civil society, in the sense of individual rights and voluntary associations, never extended much beyond a few capital cities (Hann and Dunn, 1996; Mamdani, 1996; Koonings and Krujit, 1999). Yet there exist various traditional and neo-traditional organizations, based on kinship or religion, that remain autonomous from the state and offer alternative sites of power or autonomous spaces. In Iran, for example, "various religious and bazaar institutions and groupings, under powerful mullah patrons, and the duality of state power between the presidency and the spiritual leadership, constitute some plurality of power as compared with neighbouring states" (Zubaida, 2001, p. 244)

It is usually argued that these groups cannot be included in the concept of civil society because they may be compulsory associations and they are often mechanisms for social control, especially the oppression of women. But the post-modernists suggest that there cannot be an arbitrary division between 'good' westernized civil society and 'bad' traditional uncivil society.

Thus, the post-modern version of civil society would argue for a more culturally sensitive concept, which involves various national and religious groupings and a contestation of narratives. The Turkish Islamicist Ali Bulac, for example, promotes the idea of a civil society characterized by self-governing communities based on religion, with a minimalist state. This idea, which has parallels with the Ottoman millet system, involves tolerance of different religions and indeed secularism but, at the same time, it lacks the individualism of Western models of civil society since the individual is bound by his/her community. As Zubaida points out, this notion represents an "odd mixture of communitarian corporatism and libertarianism" (2001, p. 238).

Underlying these different meanings, both historically and in the contemporary period, there is, I would contend, a common core of meaning. Civil society always meant a rule governed society based on the consent of individuals. In the early versions, the term referred to the whole of society

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including the state. Different meanings of civil society, I would argue, reflect the different ways in which consent was negotiated and reproduced. Civil society could be described as those organizations, groups and movements who are engaged in this process of negotiation and debate about the character of the rules — it is the process of expressing 'voice'. In the nineteenth century, it was the 'voice' of the bourgeoisie that was shaping the liberal state; hence the identification of civil society as bourgeois society. With the rise of labour movements, the terrain shifted to struggles of worker organizations in relation both to the state and to capital; at that time, political parties could also be viewed as part of civil society. By joining a trade union or a political party, the 'voices' of individual workers could be heard.

Today civil society is transnational, engaged in a process of debate and negotiation with governments, companies and international organizations. Moreover, the groups involved have extended beyond urban elites to include women, indigenous groups and other excluded people. The differing contemporary meanings, I would argue, reflect different political perspectives about the goals of the process of negotiation. For the neo-liberals, the goal is to export the Western, or even more specifically the American, model of governance. For the activist, the goal is emancipation, a radical extension of democracy in the West as well as the South, a goal that is linked to notions of global justice. The post-modernists are sceptical about the goal-oriented nature of modernity; they would see the contestation that is currently taking place on a global scale as a way of breaking with grand narratives, teleological political projects that were associated with nation-states. The rise of the Internet allows for a riot of virtuality and for a denial of the existence of something called the real.

In my view, civil society has to include all the groupings that are included in the different versions — the relatively passive 'third sector' of the neo-liberal version, the social movements of the activist version, as well as the neo-traditional groupings of the post-modern version. It is true that the neo-traditional formation may not provide a voice for individuals because of their communitarian nature and, indeed, may engage in various forms of coercion and violence. But actually existing civil society has to contend with these troublesome and contradictory issues; if it is to be an inclusive concept, it has to include the exclusive. For the purposes of this report, the goal is closest to the activist version — the emancipation of the poorest people. But the degree to which civil society expresses this goal (that is to say, constitutes a voice for the poorest people) can only be investigated by including all these various groupings. What James Putzel (1997) calls the 'dark side of social capital' has to be incorporated as well.

The actors of civil society

There is, today, a proliferation of language used to describe the non-state actors in global politics: social movements, NGOs and NPOs, advocacy networks, civil society organizations, public policy or epistemic networks, to name but a few. In what follows, I shall distinguish four ideal types, in a

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TABLE 1. Types of Civil Society Actors

	Social movements	NGOs	Social organizations	Nationalist and religious groups
Mission	Emancipation of the poor and excluded	Development and humanitarian relief	Protection and promotion of members interests	Empowerment of national and religious groups
Activities	Protests, demonstrations, mediatique events	Service provision and advocacy	Service provision, lobbying	Mobilization through media, religious organizations, and sometimes violence
Social composition	Activists, committed individuals, students	Professional staff	Workers, farmers, employers, local communities, displaced persons	Newly urbanized groups, peasants
Forms of organization	Loose horizontal coalitions, network	Ranges from bureaucratic and corporate to small-scale and informal	Ranges from vertical and hierarchical to informal networks	Vertical and hierarchical although can involve networks of tightly organized cells, charismatic leadership

Weberian sense. They are not actually distinct types since they overlap with each other. But they are useful for thinking about different forms of accountability. Table 1 illustrates these four types.

Social movements

The first type of civil society actor is social movements. Like civil society there is a range of definitions of social movements, but it is generally agreed that social movements are organizations, groups of people, and individuals, who act together to bring about transformation in society. They are contrasted with, for example, more tightly organized NGOs or political parties. The social movement theorist Sydney Tarrow says that social movements are an "invention of the modern age and an accompaniment to the rise of the modern state". At the base of all social movements are what he calls "contentious politics" — action, which is "used by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 3)

Social movements rise and fall. Their success depends both on their capacity to mobilize and on the responsiveness of authorities. To the extent that authorities facilitate protest, then social movements are 'tamed', integrated into the political process and institutionalized. 'Taming' is not just about access; it is about adaptation on both sides. The authorities accept part of the agenda of protest; the movements modify their demands and become respectable. To the extent that authorities repress protest and reject demands, social movements are marginalized and may turn to violence.

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Tarrow talks about cycles of contention; although the endings may differ, social movements do always come to an end:

> Each time they appear, the world seems to be turning upside down. But just as regularly, the erosion of mobilisation, the polarisation between sectors of the movements, the splits between institutionalisation and violence, and elites selective use of incentives and repression combine to bring the cycle to an end. At its height, the movement is electric and seems irresistible, but it is eroded and integrated through the political process. (1998, p. 175)

In the twentieth century, it is possible to talk about three waves of social movements. The first wave was labour and self-determination or anti-colonial movements. The second wave was what theorists of social movements call 'new' social movements. These are the movements that emerged after 1968 and were contrasted with the first wave of 'old' movements. The third wave is the most recent and is often described as the 'anti-globalization' movement, even though only a minority of activists actually wants to reverse globalization.

The 'new' movements after 1968 were concerned with new issues — human rights, gender, third world solidarity, the environment or peace. In Europe and North America, they were less concerned with social justice than 'old' movements, although this was not true of movements in the South where concerns about the environment or the position of women were directly related to development issues. They expressed the political frustrations of a new educated middle class or brain workers — Information and Communications Technology (ICT) specialists or the caring professions (doctors, lecturers, social workers) generated by post-industrialism and the welfare state (Touraine, 1981). In contrast to the hierarchical mass membership organizations that were characteristic of 'old' movements, they pioneered new forms of horizontal organization and new forms of protest, making use of the media, especially television. Whereas the 'old' movements aimed at persuading states to act and in the process helped to strengthen them, the 'new' movements are much more concerned about individual autonomy, about resisting the state's intrusion into everyday life (Melucci, 1988, 1996). Claus Offe has argued that the 'new' movements represent a demand for radical democracy: "Among the principal innovations of the new movements, in contrast with the workers' movement, are a critical ideology in relation to modernism and progress; decentralised and participatory organisational structures; defence of interpersonal solidarity against the great bureaucracies; and the reclamation of autonomous spaces rather than material advantages" (quoted in Della Porta and Diani, 1999, p. 12)

It is sometimes also argued that the 'old' movements are 'national' in contrast to the cosmopolitan character of the 'new' social movements. But the 'old' movements were not originally national. The labour movement was always an international movement. The first international of labour was held in 1864; workers travelled to different countries to express solidarity with their fellow workers from the late nineteenth century onwards; the Inter-

national Federation of Trades Unions was founded in 1901. Self-determination or anti-colonial movements always appealed to universalistic conceptions of rights. The identification of 'old' movements as national is the consequence of the cycle of contention. 'Old' movements did primarily address the state, although not exclusively, but it was through the state that 'old' movements were 'tamed'. These movements were transformed into political parties and, in the case of trades unions, into negotiating partners for states and employers at a national level. The mass character of the 'old' movements, their vertical and hierarchical forms of organization, are all perhaps explainable in terms of the organizational norms of industrial, bureaucratic and military society.

It can be argued that the growth of NGOs in the 1990s in part reflected the 'taming' of the new social movements. In contrast to 'old' social movements, they were 'tamed' not within a national framework, but within the framework of global governance, as I shall argue later. The third wave of social movements, which emerged at the very end of the century, can be viewed as a reaction to the 'taming' of the second wave. It involves a revival of the pre-occupations with social justice characteristic of the first wave but makes use of many of the methods of the second wave. It brings together elements of the 'new' social movements and their 'tamed' successors, NGOs, concerned with women's issues, development or the environment. It involves students and brainworkers, like the second wave movements. But it also embraces landless peasant movements, as in Brazil, and indigenous people's movements like the Zapatistas, or the tribal people in India. It also includes a 'new' labour movement encompassing: international trade union federations, who have been forced to reform after the Cold War when their activities were hamstrung by ideological divisions; new social movement unions in Brazil, South Africa or Korea; new forms of labour organizations like homeworkers in India or African township traders; as well as labour-oriented grass-roots groups and NGOs in various parts of the world.

Non-governmental organizations

NGOs are organizations; that is to say, 'purposeful, role-bound social units' (Fowler, 1997, p. 20). They are voluntary, in contrast to compulsory organizations like the state or some traditional, religious organizations, and they do not make profits, like corporations. It is sometimes said that they are 'value-driven' organizations (Brett, 1993). In fact, values like public service, for example, or wealth creation are also important for states and for corporations. Rather, it could be said that, in any organization, both internal relationships and relations with external actors are regulated through a combination of coercion, monetary incentives, and altruism (or values). In the case of NGOs, the latter is relatively more important.

There is a bewildering array of terms used to describe this type of organization. The term NGO is most commonly used in the development and international relations literature. The term was first used in Article 71 of the UN Charter, where the Economic and Social Committee is empowered "to make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental

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organisations which are concerned with matters in its competence" (Gord-enker and Weiss, 1996, p. 22). The term NPO is more widespread in Japan and the US, and is often used in the economics and sociology literature; it tends to be used when the concern is to classify or categorize sections of the economy or society. In Britain, the terms most widely used are 'voluntary associations' or 'charities', reminiscent of the philanthropic tradition. More radical writers, especially those in the social movement tradition, prefer the term Civil Society Organization, which defines these organizations in their own right and not in contrast to something else (governments or corporations). The term Civil Society Organization has the advantage of emphasizing the public nature of these organizations.

NGOs are not new. In many countries there has been a long tradition of voluntary philanthropy, and associationalism. International NGOs (INGOs) were already established in the nineteenth century. The most famous examples are probably the Anti-Slavery Society (1839) and the International Red Cross (1864). By 1874, there were 32 registered INGOs and this had increased to 1083 by 1914, although not all survived (Chatfield, 1997). INGOs were instrumental in setting up international institutions, during this period, many of which began as non-governmental institutions (Charnowitz, 1997). They also influenced treaty making, particularly in the case of anti-slavery, and many of the techniques that INGOs use today were pioneered during this period, particularly parallel fora at inter-governmental conferences.

The number of INGOs increased during the post-war period not only under the stimulation of new social movements, but also as former missionaries and colonial administrators sought new occupations. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, their influence was constrained by the Cold War and the statist character of many of the post-war international institutions. It was not until the 1970s that the opening up of access for 'new' social movements to local and international institutions led to the proliferation of both NGOs in general and INGOs in particular. Initially, this opening up applied mainly to 'soft' issues that did not seem to engage directly with the ideological conflict, mainly the environment and women. The Stockholm Conference on Environment and Development in 1972 marked the beginning of the parallel summit as a way of organizing global civil society organizations on particular issues. Likewise, a series of world conferences on women helped to galvanize women's groups: Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995 (Chen, 1997).

By the 1980s, development and humanitarian NGOs also began to be seen as partners for governments and international institutions for a variety of reasons; their local knowledge, the need to bypass ineffective or authoritarian governments, and, in particular, the need to find ways to implement structural adjustment packages. A number of writers stress the importance of the 'New Policy Agenda', which came to prominence after the end of the Cold War, and which combines neo-liberal economic strategy with an emphasis on parliamentary democracy. NGOs were seen as an important mechanism for implementing this agenda. They can provide a social safety net without

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extending the role of the government. They can provide training in democracy and citizenship. They can check abuses of the state and poor governmental practises. And they can push corporations towards an agenda of social responsibility. Concepts like 'social capital' (Putnam) or 'trust' (Fukuyama) contributed to the new found enthusiasm for NGOs both by development institutions like the World Bank and in the peace and human rights field.

These openings have encouraged institutionalization and professionalization, the transformation of social movements into NGOs or INGOs. During the 1990s, registered INGOs increased by one-third, from 10 292 to 13 206 and their memberships increased from 155 000 to 263 000 over the same period (Global Civil Society, 2001). Funding by official agencies and private foundations have led to the development of a market for NGOs, in which donors influence the culture and management style of NGOs, and successful NGOs transform themselves into a kind of oligopoly. OECD figures show that, by the end of the 1990s, some 5% of all official aid is channelled through NGOs, with differing shares for different countries. Some 85% of Swedish aid is channelled through NGOs and some 10% of UK aid.

The growth of NGOs has been described by Lester Salamon as the 'global associational revolution'. The Johns Hopkins Survey of the non-profit sector in 22 countries showed that this sector had contributed significantly to employment growth in the 1980s and 1990s. The sector accounted for some 5.1% of total employment in the countries surveyed and some 10.4 million volunteers, bringing the total to 7.1% of total employment (Anheier, 2000). NGOs vary from large-scale NGOs organized both on corporate lines and on bureaucratic lines to small-scale local NGOs. Some of the biggest NGOs are in the development and relief field, where there are some eight market leaders, each with a budget of roughly $500 million a year; they include famous names like Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children or CARE (Hulme and Edwards, 1997).

NGOs undertake a wide variety of tasks, not of all of which are captured by the headings 'advocacy' and 'service provision'. Service provision includes relief in emergencies, primary health care, non-formal education, housing and legal services, and provision of micro-credit as well as training to other service providers. Advocacy includes lobbying as well as public mobilization and campaigning around particular issues like debt relief or the Tobin tax or protection of forests. And then there are a range of activities, which can be included under both headings like monitoring compliance with international treaties, particularly in the human rights field, conflict resolution and reconciliation, public education and the provision of alternative expert knowledge. Korten suggests that development NGOs follow a typical cycle, moving from concern with immediate relief, to projects concerned with local development, to advocacy relating to the wider institutional and policy context. But others have argued that the cycle may work the other way round as 'new' social movements acting primarily as advocates transform themselves into service providers to gain credibility among local populations or as a way of ensuring their survival (see Lewis, 2001). Service provision has become more important in the 1990s as donors have contracted or

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encouraged NGOs to fill the gaps created by the withdrawal of the state from many public services.

NGOs, as a consequence both of their 'tamed' character and of their experience as service providers, are able to act as interlocutors on issues with which new social movements are concerned. In addition, many have built up expert knowledge on particular policy areas, which enables them to challenge the official experts. This is why think tanks and international Commissions should be included in this category. Like many of the NGOs, think tanks are a source of alternative expert knowledge. International Commissions are another 'taming' device in which independent groups of prominent individuals and experts are brought together to produce reports on issues of global significance. The Brandt and Brundlandt Commissions pioneered this approach on development and the environment, respectively. In the 1990s, this type of commission has proliferated — for example, the World Commission on Dams.

It is sometimes argued that NGOs and think tanks are predominantly Western or Northern. It is certainly true that the culture and organization of NGOs has been influenced by Western models and that much funding is Western. But it is also the case that NGOs are a worldwide phenomenon and some of the largest NGOs, like the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, are to be found in the South. In the 1990s, a new phenomenon has been the emergence of global networks, which involve NGOs, social movements, as well as grass roots groups coming together to campaign around particular issues, like land mines or HIV/AIDS. The distinction between Northern and Southern NGOs is conceptual rather than geographical. It is a distinction between NGOs who are outsiders and, at the same time, are closer to the policy-making community as well as to the sources of funds, and those NGOs more rooted in the local environment.

There are wide differences among NGOs concerning their forms of organization — formal versus informal, hierarchy versus participation, networks versus federations, centralized versus decentralized, not to mention differences of organizational culture. Some NGOs are membership organizations; others are governed by boards or trustees. Moreover, the meaning of membership varies. In Amnesty International, for example, the members are the 'owners' of the organization and determine its decision-making. By contrast, the members of Greenpeace are more like supporters passively donating money and numbers. Some NGOs organize themselves on bureaucratic principles; others are more corporate in management style. Transnationalization and the growing use of ICT does tend to favour decentralized, network-type organizations.

Social organizations

The third type of civil society actor is what I call 'social organizations'. Properly speaking, they should be included in the category NGOs since they are value-driven, voluntary, non-profit organizations. But I have counted them as a separate category because their aims, internal organization and funding

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differ from what we typically consider to be NGOs. By social organizations, I mean organizations representing particular sectors of society defined in social terms rather than in cultural or religious terms. Thus, this category typically includes professional organizations (societies of lawyers, doctors, employers, trades unions or farmers) community groups of women or youth, for example, as well as groups of disabled people, displaced persons and refugees, homeless people, landless labourers or groups of tribespersons. These organizations rarely receive outside funding and are largely dependent on the resources of members. Many of these groups represent poor people and, thus, their goals are similar to those of the development and relief NGOs. But the goals are concrete, expressed in terms of the interests of members, rather than abstract. Social organizations are not new even in the South; they can be traced back to the guilds and trade associations of the Middle Ages, which existed in urban areas in the Middle East and Asia as well as Europe even if their voluntary nature was less assured.

Social organizations could be said to be mutual benefit organizations in contrast to the solidaristic character of NGOs. Solidaristic NGOs are organizations whose staff and members care about the poor and the deprived but do not represent or comprise the poor and the deprived. Thus, Oxfam was established to help poor people in the Third World; Amnesty International was established to help political prisoners. Social organizations are formed for the mutual benefit of the members like, for example, the Self-Employed Women's Association in India. Professional societies are typical mutual benefit organizations.

This type of organization is an expression of the structure of society and it changes as society changes. The period of the 1990s has been a period of rapid structural changes both because of globalization and International Monetary Fund policies and because of rapid technological change especially the introduction of ICT. Many of the traditional social organizations have been eroded and their political links broken; this is especially true of trades' unions and farmers organizations. On the other hand, new organizations have been developing to defend the rights of the victims of rapid structural change, although these, of course, are as yet weak. Such groups include movements of people in areas threatened by dam construction, like the Narmada valley, new organizations of informal workers as described earlier, organizations of refugees and displaced persons like the Srebrenica women.

National or religious movements

The fourth and final category is national or religious groups. These are organizations based on particular sections of society, defined in terms of culture, kin or religion. Although numbers are not available, these groups and movements have increased dramatically during the 1990s, and in many countries they have reached positions of power. They are sometimes described as neo-traditional groups although they have generally been reconstructed in the context of globalization and with the use of Internet and other new technologies. In some respects, these movements are similar to

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'old' social movements, in that they are often mass movements, which include workers and peasants as well as the middle classes, and they are organized in traditional hierarchical ways, often with charismatic leaders. But they differ from 'old' nationalist movements, movements for self-determination, in certain important ways. First, they tend to be movements based on exclusive identity politics; that is to say, they are claims to political power on the basis of a label, generally ethnic, which excludes and is indeed hostile towards others with a different label. Self-determination movements were about democracy, participation and rights not about ethnicity or religion, about inclusion within the framework of a nation-state. Or they are movements based on exclusive missionary politics; that is to say, claims to political power on the basis of religious practise, which also excludes others with different or non-religious practises. Both types of group tends to be authoritarian and backward looking, a reaction against modernity, as opposed to 'old' movements that saw themselves as agents of progress, building the modern state. Indeed, in many cases, the new nationalist and religious groups are ways of mobilizing against democracy and openness.

There are, of course, exceptions. Nationalist movements in places like Scotland or Transylvania aim to decentralize democracy, they are organized in a much more participatory way and are much more inclusive, although they have their fundamentalist wings. Or there are groups, like in Turkey and indeed Bosnia, who do not necessarily claim political power, but want to organize society along communal lines.

They differ from 'old' nationalist movements in other respects as well. In some cases, like Al-Qaeda, they are organized as horizontal networks rather than vertical mass movements, with tightly organized cells. Moreover, they have adapted some of the methods of the 'new' social movements. They engage in symbolic politics; epitomized in the destruction of the World Trade Towers. In particular, they make use of the media, particularly television, radio, and videos. Videotapes are a particularly important form of dissemination; cassettes of Bin Laden's speeches circulate throughout the Middle East. And they organize transnationally; powerful Diaspora groups often lobby on their behalf in centres of power, both national and international.

Religious and national groups tend to be populist and they succeed in reaching out to poor people in a way that neither the 'new' social movements nor the NGOs have been able to do. Nationalist movements were always middle-class movements, especially in the nineteenth century. As yet, insufficient research has been undertaken on the new movements, but it seems clear that membership tends to be composed of newly urbanized middle classes, fearful of losing the gains that have come with economic growth in recent years. A particularly important group of adherents are young men, students or unemployed frustrated by the lack of opportunities and the exclusions of a globalized world. Nevertheless, it does seem also that, in many places, these groups and movements have succeeded in relaying a populist message and reaching out particularly to the countryside. Television, videos and radio have been particularly important in this respect in mobilizing a rural population unused to reading. These groups provide a sense of

ontological security in a society that is rapidly changing, although it is a form of security based on belief and fear rather than material conditions.

As for human development goals, these neo-traditional groups are mixed. Many nationalist or communalist movements are neo-liberal. This is true of the BJP in India, Jorg Haidar in Austria or the Northern League in Italy. Many, particularly Islamic, groups provide social services and humanitarian relief and, indeed, dependence on these organizations is also a method of recruitment. Many are linked to criminal activities of various kinds and their socio-economic strategies are indefinable.

These different types of actors correspond roughly to different understandings of civil society. Thus, the neo-liberal version of civil society largely consists of NGOs. The post-modern version includes religious and nationalist groups. And the main focus of the activist version is social movements and social organizations.

Moral and procedural accountability of civil society actors

Broadly speaking, moral accountability arises from the mission of the civil society actor. Who is responsible for ensuring that the activities are designed to fulfil the mission? Most civil society actors have some sort of procedural accountability, which depends on the social composition of the group, forms of funding and the type of organization. To what extent do mechanisms of procedural accountability help to ensure moral accountability? All of the civil society actors already described are engaged in a debate about how to help the poor and deprived; in that sense they constitute or they claim to constitute a voice for the poor and deprived. But the balance of these two types of accountability varies for each of the different types, and this has implications for the balance of different voices.

The 'anti-globalization' movement is the main contemporary social movement. It is composed of a range of groups, social organizations, NGOs, and committed individuals. It involves many different voices, ranging from far-reaching radicals, who propose the abolition of global institutions or, more positively, the free movement of labour, to reformists campaigning about Third World debt or in favour of a Tobin tax. The shared mission is global solidarity, justice for the world's poor, although there are many differences about how this is to be achieved. Although individual bits of the movement may have their own procedural accountability mechanisms, the main procedural mechanism is rough and ready, as with all social movements — the capacity to mobilize. The movement depends on its capacity to mobilize; that is, on the extent it is seen to be fulfilling its mission. Since the movement depends largely on the voluntary energies of those engaged in the movement, these can easily be withdrawn.

It is often argued that the 'anti-globalization' movement is largely composed of middle-class Northern groups, whose ideas do not necessarily accord with those in the South. It is true that INGOs are predominantly based in the North but the anti-globalization movement does not primarily consist of INGOs. It is also the case that most of the participants in parallel summits, the

most visible moments of the anti-globalization movement, are from industrial-ized countries (Global Civil Society, 2001). This is largely because most parallel summits take place in Europe. But this is changing; in 2001, some 28% of parallel summits took place in Latin America (Global Civil Society, 2002). Of special importance has been the World Social Forum in Porto Allegre; in 2002, there were some 50 000 participants mostly from Latin America.

In addition, it is argued that the participation of groups through the Internet only reaches a small minority since the poorest people, by and large, do not have access to the Internet. However, reports of every day civil society events, such as demonstrations on issues of social justice — for example, in Argentina against structural adjustment packages, in India or the Philippines about dams — indicate that these are larger and even more frequent in the South (see chronology in Global Civil Society, 2001).

The accountability of NGOs is more problematic. The problem arises, fundamentally, from the solidaristic character of NGOs, the fact that donors are not the same as beneficiaries. This contrasts with other types of organiza-tions. Governments, for example, receive taxes in exchange for the provision of public services; in theory, at least, the citizen is both donor and beneficiary. Through elections and parliamentary scrutiny, the government is called to account for its behaviour. Companies receive payments in exchange for goods and services, and they receive funding for investment in exchange for interest and dividend payments. The customers, banks and shareholders are both donors and beneficiaries.

This is not the case for NGOs. Most NGOs have internal management structures. They have boards, executive committees, and directors, to whom the staff reports. But they also have responsibility to external actors. They have to account for the use of financial resources to donors. And they are responsible to their beneficiaries, the people they are supposed to help. And finally, public opinion is also important for the survival of NGOs; how they are reported in the media is an important mechanism for generating resources. Thus, unlike governments and companies, NGOs have no 'bottom line'. Governments are responsible to their electorates — they can be voted out of office. Companies depend on profits to survive.

During the 1990s, there has been a rapid growth of NGOs, who provide services and who are funded by Northern donors. This has given rise to the charge that NGOs do not necessarily serve development goals.

First of all, it is argued that growing dependence on particular donors may distort the priorities or mission of NGOs; indeed, in some cases, NGOs have been described as parastatal organizations, or government subcon-tractors. Since NGOs can bypass formal state mechanisms of accountability and, at the same time, substitute for state functions, this could potentially reduce rather than enhance the power of citizens. Bangladesh, where NGOs have become such important actors, has been described as the 'Franchise State' (Wood, 1997). It can also lead to a damping down of the advocacy role of NGOs since NGOs are fearful of losing their sources of income; in Afghanistan, for example, no American NGO even questioned the official air drop of humanitarian supplies, although European NGOs did so. Advocacy

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may also be weakened because powerful government-funded NGOs may displace local community groups or social organizations, as has been observed in Latin America and India (Allano-Lopez and Petras, 1994). In extreme cases, it is argued that NGOs are merely the 'handmaidens of capitalist change', with little serious concern for effective poverty alleviation strategies. They are seen as the "modernisers and destroyers of local economies", introducing Western values and bringing about "economicide". (For a discussion of this perspective, see Lewis (2001, p. 32).)

Likewise, there is a newly emerging relation between NGOs and companies. As part of the new commitment to social responsibility, companies undertake social and environmental programmes through subcontracting NGOs. It is sometimes argued that NGOs who implement this type of programme are contributing to what is essentially a public relations exercise where 'good works' conceal the longer-term strategic damage inflicted by the companies. According to this line of argument, oil companies in Nigeria and Angola, for example, undertake this type of programme, while at the same time oil revenues are fuelling conflict and oil exploitation, however well managed, is contributing to environmental degradation.

Second, the growth of the predominant type of Northern NGO has led to an intense competition among NGOs — an emerging 'marketplace of ideas, funders, backers and supporters' (Lewis, 2001, p. 199). To sustain themselves financially, NGOs need to identify a market niche, and to distinguish the NGOs brand name from others. This contradicts the co-operative practises, which ought to and often do take place as a consequence of the normative character of the mission, the value-driven nature of NGOs. As Fowler puts it: "Increasing market profile and income share is now a common concern of Northern NGDO's [non-governmental development organisations] fundraising; overstating impact is widespread; distortions in fund-raising images are a frequent complaint of NGDOs from the South and East; and the lack of transparency is a source of disquiet in development circles and the media" (1997, p. 30). A particular problem arises from the dependence of NGOs on media coverage. There is a tendency to exaggerate crises in order to mobilize public support, as in the case of Greenpeace and Brent Spa or the crisis in Eastern Zaire in 1995.

The third type of actor is social organizations. Since they are mutual benefit organizations, their concerns about issues of social justice are likely to coincide with the concerns of their members. Thus, for this type of organization, there is a clear correspondence between procedural and moral accountability. Obviously, these organizations are sectoral and their concern is with their members not with all members of the community. Hence their behaviour will depend on the type of group they represent, the coalitions in which they engage, and the dialogue and discussions both externally and internally that help to change strategy. The organization representing the women of Srebrenica is interesting in this respect. Initially, it was strongly influenced by the Islamic nationalist party, who tried to use the women for propaganda purposes. But over time, the organization has come to recognize that the best interests of its members is served through co-operation with

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other displaced groups, even if they come from different nationalities (Freizer and Kaldor, 2001).

The fourth actor is national and religious groups. Of course, there are religious groups like Christian Aid or the Aga Khan Foundation whose behaviour is not different from other NGOs. The 'new' nationalist and religious groups are those that have reconstructed tradition in the context of globalization. The mission of these groups is national or spiritual and, presumably, this reflects the concerns of its members. But forms of procedural accountability are murky. Typically, these are vertically organized, under the leadership of individuals, spiritual and/or charismatic leaders. These are communitarian movements, where the community comes before the individual and where there is not much space for individual influence in determining the overall interests of the community. Particularly, in the case of religious groups, these interests depend on scriptural interpretations of priests and mullahs. In addition, funding imperatives may allow for disproportionate influence from particular groups, in the Diaspora, for example, or for the justification of action that may not seem to accord with the mission — drug trading, for example, or loot and pillage.

It can be argued that, during the 1990s, NGOs and national and religious movements were the strongest actors in civil society. The anti-globalization movement only became significant towards the end of the decade. Social organizations were weakened by structural change. Both the growth of NGOs and the growth of national and religious groups have to be understood as one component of the process of globalization. NGOs were actively encouraged by global institutions as a way of coping with the process of structural change. The growth of national and religious movements can be understood as a reaction to the insecurities that accompanied structural change as well as the failure and decline of earlier emancipatory project that appealed to ordinary people like socialism or post-colonial nationalism. In other words, neo-liberal and post-modern versions of civil society and activist concerns were weakest. Moreover, as I have argued, these two types of civil society actors (NGOs and nationalist and religious groups) are, perhaps, the least accountable to the poorest people. The NGOs aim to help the poorest people but their methods are more determined by donors than poor people themselves; they cannot represent the 'voice' of the poor. National and religious groups may have a greater claim to represent the 'voice' of the downtrodden but they give greater priority to identity than to poverty reduction.

What then can be done to increase the accountability of civil society actors to the poorest people? The implication of the argument so far is the need to strengthen activist understandings of civil society. This is both a cognitive exercise, involving a rethinking of the normative meaning of civil society, and a practical task in enhancing the voice of social movements and social organizations. How might this be done?

First it is important for global institutions, international institutions and governments not to privilege NGOs in debates about social justice. NGOs are the respectable end of civil society; they can engage in the institutional

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discourse and, indeed, contribute knowledge and ideas. Dialogue with social movements and social organizations is a way to increase the voice of poor people, even though such a dialogue is more difficult and contentious. NGOs find it much easier to use the discourse of the institutions and, for this reason, are able to act as interlocutors for other civil society actors, but they should not be privileged. This difficult dialogue with the anti-globalization movement was beginning after Genoa but has been halted in the wake of September 11; it needs to be revived.

There have been plenty of proposals for a 'structured voice' for civil society groups. In my view, what is important is not so much the particular forum for dialogue, but rather the culture and political commitment to such a dialogue. There is a tendency not to take seriously the difficult and radical groups. But it is they who have to be brought in to the dialogue even if it involves confrontation rather than civilized conversation.

There is always a problem about who to involve in such a dialogue. But there could be mechanisms developed through which the various civil society groups decide themselves who should 'represent' them, rather than having the institutions pick and choose. This does not preclude handpicked participants at seminars or workshops designed for particular purposes. But it would mean that the core of the dialogue would be initiated through a bottom-up rather than top-down process.

Second, mechanisms need to be developed to regulate the activities of NGOs. NGOs do have important skills and experience to offer and it would be a pity if disenchantment with the accountability process reduced their role in development and relief. There have already been many proposals in this vein in the NGO management literature. Michael Edwards, in particular, has useful suggestions for self-regulation, while Anheier emphasizes the importance of developing grievance mechanisms.

The most important way to increase the accountability of NGOs is to bring donors and beneficiaries much closer together. There are several possible ways this might be achieved. One is to involve beneficiaries in performance assessment. Fowler proposes 'interpretative' rather than 'scientific' forms of assessment. This means assessments based on the subjective opinions of the various stake-holders — donors, staff, boards, beneficiaries and outside evaluators — in contrast to the formalistic 'logframes' of donors. Oxfam has introduced Assemblies to debate the future of the organization. Another mechanism is the process known as 'social audit', in which the various stakeholders are involved in negotiating and periodically assessing a set of criteria through which the NGO or project should be judged; this is an approach adopted by the UK NGO Tradecraft (Zadek and Evans, 1993). The UK's contribution to the New Enhanced Partnership for Africa is being undertaken on a similar principle, with aid guaranteed for 15 years on the basis of negotiated targets that will be periodically re-assessed.

Another method is participatory budgeting; finding ways in which beneficiaries can be directly involved in funding decisions, especially in the case of large institutionalized donors. Porto Alegre in Brazil offers an interesting example of ways in which community groups can be brought into the

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budgetary process not as a substitute, but as a supplement to formal processes. Likewise in South Africa, some local governments have established forums, which allow for institutionalized consultation with local community groups.

There are, of course advantages to diversity in funding; there are imaginative individual donors who support innovative projects. But large institutional donors could try to develop ways in which at least part of the money they disburse is controlled or influenced by the people they are trying to help.

Third, the 'voice' of national and religious groups should be expressed. These groups have to be involved in a dialogue both with the institutions and with other civil society actors. There is a dialogue among social movements, NGOs and social organizations but the national and religious groups tend not to be part of this dialogue. How should the neo-traditional groups be included? One problem is that their concerns are with religious and national goals not with human development. Herein lies a dilemma. What if it turns out that the poor want Islamic rule rather than human development? That viewpoint has to have space to be expressed. Those of us, who have faith in reason, would argue that, given a free communicative space, a conclusion would be reached favourable to human development. However, excluding that viewpoint could lead to its opposite — the spread of oppressive national and religious regimes.

But how is this space to be created? The neo-traditional groups usually have no internal democracy. If the neo-traditional groups are free to choose who speaks on their behalf, it will be the 'reliable' people in leadership positions not those who might be swayed by discussion. This is why it is so important that a dialogue among civil society groups take place, since these groups are more able to engage the grass roots than governmental institutions.

Moreover, the issue of violence needs to be addressed. This is not only a problem for the national and religious groups. Violence is unfortunately a form of voice. It is also a way of suppressing voice. In Seattle, Prague and Genoa, violence catapulted the anti-globalization protests into the public eye and acted as a kind of shock tactic to donors and corporations. There are plenty of similar examples elsewhere. In Kosovo and Macedonia, for example, the issue of Albanian rights was not taken seriously until guerrilla groups appeared on the scene. Since September 11, much more attention has been paid to Islamic grievances. On the other hand, violence discredits moderate voices. Violence is polarizing and squeezes those who seek more democratic ways of expressing discontent. Violence has to be dealt with not just through criminal procedures, but also through strengthening non-violent forms of voice. How this can be done needs to be included in the dialogue.

One of the reasons that there is less trust in politicians and elected officials is that debates at a national level no longer determine policy, that important decisions that affect everyday life are taken at both global and local levels. How is it possible to develop mechanisms through which the poorest people feel they have a say in how these decisions are taken? Civil

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society is not a substitute for formal democratic processes; rather, it is a way of strengthening the substantive character of democracy, of developing a political culture at a global, as well as national and local level, through which those who are formally responsible for making decisions are responsive to the needs and concerns of the poorest people.

Civil society has become the buzzword of the 1990s but it has tended to be equated with NGOs. I have tried to argue that other types of civil society groups and other understandings of civil society need to be taken seriously as well. In the wake of September 11 this is no longer just a goal to be pursued by those who care about the poor, it is an imperative if we are to live in a relatively non-violent world.

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