development dialogue

Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

Boiling Point » Can citizen action save the world?

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About the author

Kumi Naidoo is the Executive Director of Greenpeace International and has been involved with the fight for justice and equality for over 30 years, both in his native South Africa and at an international level.

Kumi was active in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa as well as pursuing gender equality and labour rights. He has worked as a re-searcher, journalist, university lecturer, and youth counsellor over the years. From 1998 to 2008 he was the Secretary General of CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

As well as his role within Greenpeace, Kumi is the Chair of the Global Campaign for Climate Action (GCCA) (www.tcktcktck.org) and the Co-Chair of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) (www.whiteband.org), two of the largest coalition organisations in the environmental and development spheres respectively.

Kumi is a Rhodes Scholar and holds degrees in politics and law. He has a doctorate in political sociology from Magdalen College, Oxford University and has published several articles over the years on NGOs, civil society, youth and resistance politics in South Africa.

Kumi was appointed by the UN Secretary-General to the Panel of Eminent Persons on UN Civil Society Relations in 2003 and has served on a voluntary basis on the boards of several non-profit organisations including the Global Reporting Initiative, Partnership for Transparency Fund, Food and Trees for Africa, and the Association for Women's Rights in Development.

Acknowledgments

This publication would not have been possible without the help and collaboration of so many individuals and groups whom I have met over the years and who assisted me directly in my research and writing. There are too many names to list here but please know that you have all been invaluable friends, colleagues and travellers with me on the journey I have taken and I will eternally cherish your contribution. In particular, I would like to thank the members, staff and board of CIVICUS for their encouragement and for offering me a writing sabbatical to enable me to undertake this challenging task. I am also grateful to all those I have worked with in various struggles for justice since I became an activist at the age of 15. They have enriched my life in ways that words cannot sufficiently describe and many of the perspectives shared here were developed through engagement and learning from so many grassroots activists that I have been privileged to have worked with over the years.

I would like to thank the Carnegie UK Trust for hosting me in the UK and assisting me with my research and writing. In particular I would like to thank all the staff at Carnegie and three brilliant interns – Kora Andrieu, Jesh Gilnert and Tom Ward – whose background research for the chapters on conflict, accountability and religion was extremely helpful. To my friend of two decades, Valerie Lipman, who offered me her home as a base to work from, and for her input into different parts of the volume I am deeply grateful.

My sincere thanks go to Manish Joshi who both assisted me throughout this work and exhibited faith, when my own was failing, that I would be able to complete this effort notwithstanding some of my volunteer roles intervening.

Rachel Howard, Anthony Fletcher and Eilidh Whiteford made critical contributions to helping me express myself more coherently. Wendy Davies brought to the final frenetic stages a watchful eye over the editing process, with calm and professionalism as I repeatedly missed deadlines.

I reserve special thanks for Sharon Johnson, a friend and kindred spirit who helped me in more ways than I can describe, particularly as I came off my hunger strike to begin the writing process. She provided

me with a place to share my thoughts and with valuable input and in-sights – I will forever be in her debt.

Further thanks are due to the Centre for Sustainable Development at Uppsala University. Mia Melin organised a short visiting researcher appointment, which helped me reconnect with Henning Melber, the Executive Director of the Dag Hammarjsköld Foundation, which I am pleased to publish this effort with. One of my key concerns was to ensure that what I wrote would be accessible to those that might not have resources to buy a commercially developed publication. The fact that this volume is available as a free download means that accessibility will not be a problem.

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to the memory of my late mother who left us 30 years ago and whose memory is one of the driving forces in my continued fight for justice and equality. Last and certainly not least I would like to thank my family and friends for all the support, guidance and encouragement they have given me over the years.

Kumi Naidoo

Preface

Henning Melber

> In the twenty-first century, the world is faced with threats of global scale
> that cannot be confronted without collective action. Although global gov-
> ernment as such does not exist, formal and informal institutions, practices,
> and initiatives – together forming 'global governance' – bring a greater
> measure of predictability, stability, and order to trans-border issues than
> might be expected.

This quote is from the back cover blurb of the recently published, penulti-
mate (14th) volume in the United Nations Intellectual History Project Se-
ries (Weiss/Thakur, 2010). It could well be the blurb on the back cover of
this volume of *Development Dialogue*. While the focus in the UNIHP vol-
ume is on global governance and the UN, ours is on global governance and
the role of citizen action.

As UN history has shown during the last 60 years, the normative frame-
works established as beacons for global governance – dating back to the
Convention for the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Geno-
cide (adopted as the first of its kind in December 1948, and with more votes
than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) – do not always conform
with what 'We, the people', to use the opening words of the Preamble to
the UN Charter, would expect. The Charter displays all the ambivalences
and ambiguities of politics that have continued on a global scale since then
and can be seen as 'a mixture of Great-power hardheadedness and a series
of more or less idealistic notions about the future' (Urquhart, 2010). While
the arena is more or less demarcated, the question as to who executes the
power of definition leads to different answers, from case to case (if it results
in clear answers at all).

UN ideas have not always been 'ahead of the curve' (Emmerij/Jolly/Weiss,
2001), in terms of meeting global challenges through demands for action as ar-
ticulated by social movements. Instead, these have far too often remained un-
noticed or ignored, or have fallen by the wayside. Citizen action, in the form of
participation by civil society agencies and social movement activists in some
of the more spectacular global summits, especially since the 1990s, has shown,
however, that once the UN system is willing to create an arena, the people
seek to use it to promote their interests.

Nora McKeon (2009) observes as a conclusion of her case study that since
the 1990s there has been a visible trend within the UN system of opening

up to civil society voices. The global summits are the most obvious of these new arenas for exchange between the so-called first, second and third UNs (see, on the definition and interaction, Jolly/Emmerij/Weiss, 2009: 32-47). At the same time, however, this new degree of permissiveness might lead to the illusion that it results in a lasting impact on UN-related decision-making processes. However, despite some significant exceptions, this is hardly (yet) the case, as McKeon (2009: 2) suggests:

> [This interaction] has failed thus far to move from generic and often episodic participation to meaningful incorporation of these actors into global political process. The bases for such incorporation are far more solid than they were a decade and a half ago, particularly in terms of the structures and capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the thickness and quality of their networking. At the same time, however, the geopolitical and economic powers that have underwritten the neoliberal agenda that these civil society actors contest are more determined than ever to defend their interests. The challenge before the UN is to provide a terrain – or rather a series of intercommunicating terrains – on which meaningful confrontation and negotiation can take place, as it did 60 years ago when the Universal declaration of Human Rights was crafted around a table fractured by the cold war. The political context and the cast of actors have changed, but the significance of this role and the urgency of assuming it masterfully and authoritatively are unaltered.[1]

Bridging the gaps, reducing the divisions and giving the necessary space to the 'third UN' remains an ongoing task, which requires sensitivity and commitment from all sides. Herein, precisely, lies the value of the stock-taking exercise from a citizen-action perspective, presented by Kumi Naidoo on the pages that follow. Despite his judgment that the UN 'is, on closer examination, culpable of a deeply disturbing democratic deficit', he later on concedes, that 'it has become imperative for civil society to participate in global decision-making processes, provided for in the consultations on summit meetings and conventions of the UN, as well as by UN development agencies'.

This approach, which blends pragmatism with principles, and seeks to have an impact on policy processes, corresponds with the increased participation of all sorts of civil society actors in collective mobilisation, the aim of which is to exert pressure on and influence in the dominant socio-political spheres. But as Coicaud (2007: 300) concludes, such strategies are confronted with dilemmas, as the commitment of these actors 'to a progressive agenda at home and abroad is destined to encounter tensions, if not clash, with the

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1   The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation seeks to strengthen such initiatives through some of its published work. See other titles in the *Development Dialogue* series as well as the occasional paper series *Critical Currents*. All publications are accessible on the Foundation's web site (www.dhf.uu.se).

realities of political life', which forces us 'to compromise and pursue ideals in the midst of constraints'. As he further concludes, however: 'This is not a unique situation. After all, any actor, or any institution for that matter, eager to improve people's living conditions, whatever the field of intervention, is destined to face this state of affairs. The real test of fortitude and integrity is not to allow expedience to take over the pursuit of the good, but to balance the two' (Coicaud, 2007: 300f.).

Kumi Naidoo is aware of the landmines when seeking to navigate between the pragmatism of alliance-building that he advocates and the risks of compromising on essentials. But self-fulfilling prophecies do not bring advancements. Rather, they allow one to remain in a somewhat uncomfortable comfort zone through the choice of abstention, and to cultivate further one's own convictions rather than testing them against other political and social realities through interaction and engagement. This is purism or sectarianism, which are a long way from the strategic approach adopted by Kumi Naidoo and others who are not afraid to enter the minefields of negotiation with opposing interests, in search of commonalities that foster the advancement of their own causes. This of course does not mean always compromising, or entering into dialogue at all costs. Certain principles cannot be sacrificed or abandoned on the altar of 'reason'.

Although at times caught between a rock and a hard place, civic-driven change (Fowler/Biekart 2008) is on the agenda of global governance matters. These cannot be left to any superpowers with hegemonic ambitions, neither to a G7, G8 or G 20, nor even to the first UN in its totality (that is, its member states as represented by governments – often not even elected by the majority of people they claim to represent). Nor can the second UN (the organisation as represented by its staff members) be entrusted to respond to the global concerns of the people, who are not visible or able to express their interests within the UN fora to which the governments of the member states have exclusive access. This touches on the latent tension between national interests and international solidarity (Coicaud/Wheeler 2008), to which a UN system has to respond if it wants to become more meaningful rather than less relevant.

This tension also includes the conflict between the notions of particularism, cultural relativism and universalism when it comes to values and norms and practices in the reproduction of societies and their inherent political-ideological as well as religious belief systems. Kumi Naidoo touches on the need to walk a thin line among others on secular and religious civil society dynamics in a manner that also has relevance for any other kind of interaction and dialogue. He advocates engagement on almost all fronts, be it with elements of the so-called private sector, a course of action often dismissed outright by others (he himself decided, for example, to fly from the World

Social Forum in Nairobi to the World Economic Forum in Davos to participate in a panel debate there in January 2007) or – as argued in Chapter 5 of this volume – with religion (often dismissed, in the words of Karl Marx, as the opiate of the people).

True, there is no reason for blind trust in such engagement. But according to Kumi Naidoo there is also no alternative to seeking the broadest possible alliance with all who care about the future of this world and its people. As he maintains, 'there is a common humanist element in all moral systems, secular and religious'. To act in denial of this insight is to lose opportunities for exchange and dialogue that could lead to more common ground in pursuance of the further advancement of human rights.[2] He consequently pleads for an engagement 'based on a genuine understanding of difference, and mutual respect. If religion is not given the appropriate space and motivation to engage, then we deny religious organisations the opportunity to act morally. This is what happens when religion is demonised and secular civil society acts with explicit disregard and moral superiority within the social space where both have an equally legitimate concern.' Instead, he asks us to 'recognise the validity of plurality in society'. He clarifies that 'this does not mean that secular citizen action cannot address morally questionable practices within religion, and push for change through dialogue. It is paramount, however, that engagement is sought and dialogue is based on grounds of mutual respect and understanding.' The same principled approach also applies to other agencies and groupings which are normally looked at with suspicion if not contempt.

Such dialogue might bring about more in terms of social transformation and alliances than expected, without being co-opted and betraying the values one is committed to. As Camillleri (2002: 281) concludes:

> Civil society, in its diverse functional and geographical manifestations, the rapidly internationalizing intellectual communities which it spawns, the expanding international bureaucracy, and to a lesser degree the state, or at least particular states and fragments of states, are the major sites from which will be drawn the participants of the emerging global dialogue envisaged here. Such a dialogue will be mediated not only or even primarily

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2   The controversy provoked by the various cartoons depicting, and sometimes ridiculing, the prophet Muhammad, claimed as a right of freedom of expression in Western democracies, is a particularly contentious issue and shows the flip side of claiming the moral high ground and superiority over the convictions or beliefs of others. In Sweden, this has escalated in the ongoing dispute around the artist Lars Vilks, who depicted the Islamic prophet as a stray dog (see for a comprehensive overview http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lars_Vilks_Muhammad_drawings_controversy). An enlightened Muslim view on a controversy sparked by the South African cartoonist Zapiro has been expressed by Na'eem Jeenah in an article entitled 'Muslims do have a sense of humour' (*Mail & Guardian*, 28 May 2010; see http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-05-28-muslims-do-have-a-sense-of-humour).

by words, but also by actions and above all by symbols. While one might expect the dialogical project to resonate most sharply with those situated at the margins who have borne the main costs of globalization – in the North and in the South – we should not be surprised to find that it will also strike a responsive chord with a great many diplomats, generals and corporate managers who have come to see the value of more effective international regulation and more participatory decision-making institutions. Here, the challenge is to build bridges between these different agents and sites, effective channels of communication, and suitable fora where differences of perspective and emphasis can be productively negotiated. The strategic aim must be to maximize the number of participants, expand in ever-widening circles the arena of negotiation, and enhance the quality of the dialogue. The process itself will be at least as important as the outcome.

Such a strategic aim corresponds with the approach advocated by Kumi Naidoo in the pages to follow. It also reflects the understanding as practised in the networking strategy and approach of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, which – as one of our mottos claims – seeks to be a facilitator for minds to meet in pursuance of 'Another Development'. We trust that the publication of these timely reflections of a prominent global citizen actor will help strengthen such purposes and increase the impact that 'we, the people' have on global governance – for the people.

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Introduction

Context

While writing this reflection on the role of ordinary men and women in working for justice in the world, I have been aware that the act of writing is a privilege. There are still hundreds of millions of people who cannot read or write. Those who are able to read and write may not have the luxury of time to capture their thinking on paper. Others live in repressive societies where the act of writing, especially where it opposes the views of those in power, can mean death.

Furthermore, I am writing in English, and while some might say this is the global language, only a small proportion of people in the world can read English. Whilst it is my hope that this work will be translated, I am aware that countless conditions restrict my ability, in a global context, to reach a truly comprehensive audience. Given my awareness of this, and despite these restrictions, I decided to use a language that is easier for people who are not involved in any form of citizen action, so that they might be moved by their power to make a difference. As you will see, rising to this challenge is easier said than done.

When I began thinking about the content of this volume in July 2008, I set out to write a practitioner's guide to citizen activism, based on my own experiences over the past 30 years. I had expected a relatively narrow readership of civil society actors, policy-makers and so on. But the more I spoke with people all over the world, from all walks of life, the more I realised that a different kind of work was needed. It became apparent that my own particular experiences are interesting, and potentially helpful. However, of far greater value is a set of propositional ideas that people can act on, using history as a backdrop, to help them tap into the future potential of the power of citizen action.

The next challenge was to consider whether to take an academic or an activist approach. In order to generate the momentum required to face the challenges of this decade, we need to provoke grassroots members of citizen groups and ordinary men and women to grasp the context of a range of urgent issues and the possibilities of solving them. An approach born out of academia would duplicate much of the writing that already exists and would in all likelihood fail to enthuse a new group of citizens, those waiting in the wings for a framework that might help them begin to make an impact on their communities, their countries and the world as a whole.

Having spent my teenage years and all of my adult life in social and political activism, I have learnt two important lessons. First, ordinary people have to get involved. History shows us it is not the actions of ordinary people that lead to catastrophes like war and conflict. Terrible things happen when decent men and women stand by and *don't* speak out. I make a single exclusion: in some countries where there is, or has recently been, large-scale conflict there is less scope for the rights of association many of us enjoy. This exception will be covered in more depth in the chapter on conflict and post-conflict situations.

My own first act of resisting injustice was in 1980 as a 15 year old, standing up for the right to equal education in apartheid South Africa. I helped create Helping Hands, a grassroots organisation seeking to engage young people from the streets of my local community in Chatsworth, Durban, in useful activities. We knew nothing of the donor grant-making process, so we ran the organisation through community fundraising, which certainly made us independent and more flexible than those waiting for resources from elsewhere. I went on to become more involved in community activism and a few years later became an active member of the United Democratic Front, a political organisation not validated by the government of the day, but closely aligned with the banned African National Congress (ANC) in exile. As a student activist leader, I attended a racially designated Indian education institution, which was in itself an injustice. The social engineering of apartheid promoted racially specific identities and – even further – African linguistic or 'tribal' identities. Repression reached a climax within the country during the State of Emergency in the mid-1980s. I found myself, like so many others, on the run from the police. The experience of struggling for justice in the context of repression helped me to understand sacrifice and risk. Coming to terms with that at a young age meant I had to assess the price I was prepared to pay. Decisions like foregoing a well-paid job or sacrificing leisure time were not such a big deal for my generation back then. Knowing that death is a possible outcome of one's actions fuels one's ability to fight both active and indirect repression. Unlike so many comrades in the struggle for a free and equal South Africa, I had the benefit of attending Oxford University during my years in exile. This gave me the academic background to support my experiences, something which helps me to attest to the saying that 'practice without theory is blind; theory without practice is sterile'.

My own identity was shaped by the social and political circumstances in which I found myself through birth, the result of belonging to a particular time and place. Today the case for young people, even

in so-called democracies, is quite different. Globalisation, combined with a lack of faith in national political constructs, has had a significant impact on how young people, now and in the future, see their own identities. Already, young people in many parts of the world are detaching themselves from national identities. Their horizons are constantly broadening. In Europe, for example, trends suggest a significant strengthening of European Union (EU) identity. This is not startling. From a young person's viewpoint, even the most anti-corrupt, efficient national leadership can be seen to lack leverage or control in the context of global political constructs, unless the government is a member of the Group of 20 (G20) nations that has recently come to dominate decision-making on a global level.

So how do we identify ourselves and, consequently, our roles today? Where do we find our role in the face of the current convergence of large-scale crises? Where do we apply citizen energy? Firstly, it is important to accept the notion that civil society cannot be strengthened in a vacuum. It must be achieved in the context of real people and real problems. CIVICUS, the organisation I led for almost 10 years, one of the largest civil society networks in the world today, is not agenda-specific for exactly this reason. CIVICUS was built upon the belief that we must unleash the power of people, not as clients or beneficiaries, but as full-blown citizens. Today the lottery of where one is born substantially determines one's life chances. So we end up with grave injustices delivered to part of the human family on the basis of geographic location. For example, the people least responsible for the carbon emissions from the industrial revolution onwards are those most vulnerable to climate change and least able, with current resources, to mitigate and adapt to a low carbon future. This is purely because developing countries are outside of the global power bases and therefore cannot deliver the scale of change needed.

If we don't get it right, history will judge this generation harshly, as the worst tenants the planet has known, a generation which failed to hand the planet on to the next in a sustainable fashion, driving it towards a literal boiling point.

I've called this volume *Boiling Point* for several reasons. Firstly, if we don't get it right, history will judge this generation harshly, as the worst tenants the planet has known, a generation which failed to hand the planet on to the next in a sustainable fashion, driving it towards a literal boiling point. However, there's an emotional boiling point in wider civil society across the world too. I have witnessed an increasing level of frustration and anger which must be addressed. Impatience is growing towards the injustices people are forced to live with. Unless citizens are able to take a more active role in society so that democracy works to arrive at justice for the population and planet and not only for the elite, the democratic gains that have been made will become increasingly hollow and society ever more fragmented, leading to a well of frustra-

tion and a gathering storm of discontent among those whose lives are lost to an alienating deprivation. Indeed, the signs of this discontent and frustration are all too painfully visible – in, for example, the food riots that took place around the globe in 2008, challenges to political authority in Burma/Myanmar, Thailand and elsewhere, and the mushrooming of localised, often violent, protests in various municipalities in South Africa, demanding basic services such as water and sanitation.

Overview

In working on *Boiling Point* I have sought to address the multiple issues faced by practitioners working within civil society, and the challenges faced by civil society. In many ways the volume is an examination of the functioning of democracy, and the way in which civil society steps in where democracy no longer serves the purpose it sets out to do, something I have referred to as the democratic deficit. In the opening chapter, I look at the issues surrounding the democratic deficit, noting that:

> Those of us who live in the so-called democracies of both the global North and the global South labour under the assumption that democracy fundamentally exists and that our notion of democracy, more or less, works. Those who live and labour in authoritarian and politically broken states broadly believe the others are lucky to live in democracies where they are entitled to vote, to be heard and to form citizen-led organisations. I'd like to challenge both of these assumptions with a view to making us better at democracy, better at opening spaces for civil society to flourish, better at making informed decisions about who should govern and lead.

This approach leads us to re-examine the saying, 'Think globally, act locally', and come up with an additional mandate: 'Think locally, act globally'. This saying highlights the importance of engaging citizens at a local level in the process of civil society, the only way in which ordinary people can generally have an impact on both their local issues and the vast, global issues of poverty, climate change and injustice, a message emphasised in the chapter's conclusion:

> So could this not be the ideal time to re-think and re-examine the role a strong and vibrant civil society could play in navigating societies through this perfect storm? Highlighting the huge potential, [Michael] Edwards maintains that 'civil society is simultaneously a goal to aim for, a means to achieve it, and a framework for engaging with each other about ends and means' (Edwards, 2004:110). If this is true, there is one key element of society that needs to be in

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place: actively engaged citizens who have the means, the empow-
erment and the willingness to participate in state matters…

In the second chapter I analyse the occasionally intimidating issues of
change, and mechanisms required to instigate it. The chapter intro-
duces the notion of working on three different levels – macro (gov-
ernance changes), meso (policy changes), micro (implementation and
delivery of social services) – and explores the way in which these lev-
els interact with one another. I consider an understanding of this to
be an essential aspect of civil society strategy. Furthermore, this ap-
proach is an essential tool in the creation of a truly democratic society,
allowing citizens to interact with local communities, but also govern-
ments and large-scale organisations in a progressive, integrated man-
ner. As noted in the second chapter:

> Democracy should entail the participation of all sections of society in
> the decision-making process and the formulation and implementa-
> tion of policies. Participatory democracy therefore gives a 'voice to
> the voiceless' and provides an opportunity to contribute towards de-
> cision-making and policy creation. But it can go further. Democracy
> can and should be practised in those global and large-scale region-
> al constructs that constitute the predominant levers of change for
> some of our biggest social and environmental problems. This is how
> I would define 'participatory governance'. When all is said and done,
> how effective civil society is at a governance level is likely to define
> how effective it can be at the policy and service delivery levels too.

The third chapter examines the notion of accountability. If civil soci-
ety is to play the critical role it needs to play, its organisations, which
are almost exclusively voluntary, need to rise to the challenge of ad-
dressing the issue of their own public accountability, even as it also
calls for accountability from governments, business and intergovern-
mental organisations such as the World Bank:

> In reality, these dimensions of accountability – the ethical, func-
> tional and constituent stakeholders – intertwine and overlap. For
> example, through the ethical ideal of democracy, we come to re-
> alise that a government should be responsive to the constituents,
> who are the citizens of the state. This, in turns, leads to rules being
> put into place for elections, which become the functional basis for
> accountability in practice.

Accountability is more than just a box-ticking exercise, it's a key
aspect of the philosophical and ethical platform from which civil

society can exercise its duties towards the implementation of progressive change. The chapter examines various applications of accountability, both in practice now within civil society, and on a more theoretical basis. However, the key point remains that without proper modes of accountability, civil society undermines its own position to make a vigorous critique of organisations it is seeking to influence, reform or even transform.

Having looked at the conditions and mechanisms that guide the way in which civil society interacts at the micro, meso and macro levels, I then take stock of the interaction of civil society within the context of two specific and influential communities.

With regard to the business community, I argue that both civil society and business need to reinvent their relationship:

> Historically, civil society has had a non-functioning relationship with the business community, frequently seeing business groups as contributing to the problems they need to overcome. The main relationship, if any, was through the cheque book, and the motivation for the business organisation's donation was either to meet corporate social responsibility (CSR) targets, reduce taxation through tax breaks or to provide the business with some good public relations – a fundamentally shallow interaction.

...business people are citizens too.

This negativity needs to be overcome, so that civil society can create a working context in which to challenge business to face up to its responsibilities towards the planet:

> ...business people are citizens too. They have a personal investment in the interests of a habitable future for our planet. The description of 'habitable' refers not just to climate change and the fact that business has obligations in that arena, but also to the overall harmony and well-being of everyone, the ability of all to contribute to society. This wider challenge must be partly met by businesses of all sizes if they are to grow and prosper.

The global financial crisis has illustrated that there are fundamental problems with how business is conducted. Various opinion polls, such as those conducted by GlobeScan, show that the level of public trust in businesses is decreasing. The conduct of big corporations in the energy sector, has not only shown that they are largely still addicted to dirty energy options but also that they have invested huge sums of money in attempts to undermine climate science and confuse public opinion on

climate change, in similar ways to those adopted by the tobacco industry in previous decades. Chief executive officer (CEO) and senior management compensation and bonuses, the drive for short-term results, the abdication of responsibility by governments for providing proper regulation and several other features of business are becoming more indefensible by the day. The manner in which we measure growth is also a problem. We have growth without equity and essentially jobless growth. Business is often driven by how to reduce employment rather than how to create it. Witness for example, the tendency for share prices of companies to go up when there are large numbers of workers who are fired. What then should be the relationship between progressive civil society and business? In many ways the challenge for both sides is to find a way to engage in dialogue, and build from there to harness the vast resources business can bring to bear on the problems of today, while challenging at the same the disproportionate influence that business wields in national and global decision making. This is a message which is echoed to a certain extent in the chapter dealing with religion:

> When secular civil society organisations look at religious communities, they have to take into account one very fundamental thing, which is that, whether they like it or not, religious institutions have the widest reach in terms of membership, resources, depth of commitment and so on. If you are trying to wage any campaign, such as on climate change and poverty eradication, then you have to deal and engage with these institutions and these contradictions.

The message is straightforward: secular civil society cannot afford not to work with religion, any more than it can afford pretend business does not wield the power and influence that it does. The differences that are inevitably going to arise between a secular approach to the issues facing the planet and a religious approach have to be allocated a space where they can be engaged with. I have seen the way in which the church in South Africa, and Archbishop Tutu in particular, has recognised the necessity to reject religious orthodoxy with regard to contraception, so as to participate in the fight against HIV and AIDS. This is the kind of accommodation that secular civil society and religion have to reach, because the issues facing both are too big not to. The reach of religion is so vast that its support can help to instigate large-scale rapid change, so long as we can find ways to work together. History of course is replete with inspirational roles played by the religious community in various struggles for social, economic, environmental and gender justice.

This point leads on to the next chapters, which address three of the key issues that I believe civil society urgently needs to confront. The first of these is poverty. In the chapter on poverty, I have attempted to show how the issue needs to be addressed on the macro, micro and meso levels. As we noted, there is a sad tendency for the fight against poverty to become fragmented, with organisations becoming absorbed in delivering services on a micro level, and failing to realise that they also need to address the issue on a meso and macro level. This goes further, with a failure to realise that the issue of poverty crosses over directly to the issue of human rights and justice. Perhaps the exacerbated crisis we now face is also an opportunity to change and advance our thinking in this regard:

> We have at the moment what some of the big on-line campaigners call a 'crisi-tunity'. This means using crisis as an opportunity to force the debate to move from looking inward to one that looks outward; an opportunity to turn accepted thinking on its head and come up with new, achievable alternatives. If we break down the silos and centre the debate on a joined-up approach where human rights, human development and human security are seen as the interdependent tenets that they are, we might just come up with totally new constructs that work.

Whilst recognising the completely distinct aspects of the campaign against poverty and the campaign against climate change, I have also sought to emphasise ways in which focussed engagement on these issues will reveal that there are overlaps which need to be exploited in order to generate momentum for both campaigns:

> We've talked about learning from the challenges of anti-poverty activism, but there is also much we can learn from the successes of the anti-poverty and the environmental movements. Both have done a great job in recent times of broadening public consciousness around their issues. For example, the Global Campaign for Climate Action (GCCA) mobilised over 15 million people via their website, www.tcktcktck.org, in the run up to the Copenhagen climate summit.

> Now we have an obligation to make sure that the largest possible numbers of people are able to participate in these struggles, and to ensure there are creative, innovative, challenging and even enjoyable pathways to participation around the poverty and climate change challenges. At the same time, we should recognise this as an opportunity to bring together the interdependent agendas of the two, rather than seeing them as competing and quite different struggles.

Another common factor in the struggles facing civil society is the issue of incrementalism. Put simply, the problems we are facing are too serious to be approached piecemeal, or though small steps. There is no longer time for this kind of approach:

> Our usual approach – taking baby steps on a journey that we hope will lead towards substantive and breakthrough change – simply won't get us anywhere near the results we need in the time we have. It's time for a new paradigm, one that encompasses a new, green economy, sustainable and decent jobs, and promotes sustainable practices by governments, business and citizens from all walks of life. The choice is simple: we all get it right and survive; or we get it horribly wrong, we fail to act and everything else becomes academic after that. If we fail, it won't matter if you're from the global North or global South. Our fates will be sealed together,

The chapter on conflict addresses another of the key threats currently facing the planet. Again, I look at the way in which civil society, free from the constraints of short-termism that shackle more ambitious and transformative initiatives, can help societies afflicted by conflict towards meaningful recovery and reconciliation, something I have come to understand at first hand from my work in civil society during the transition from apartheid in South Africa.

> Ultimately, peace and stability are sustained on the shoulders of people and communities alone, not by state political actors. To that extent, reconciliation and the rebuilding of civil society after conflict should be seen as a local, long-term process, not an immediate goal. Creating political institutions might take six months. It might take six years to create a viable economy. But it will probably take 60 years to create a genuinely civil society. It is the most difficult, but also the most important task ahead. Recent events in Iraq have proved this: civil society is the hardest thing to bring about.

The final chapters look at groups on the margin of society. These are groups which civil society seeks to aid, but they are also groups which demonstrate the way in which society has most to learn from those on its margins and how in actual fact it is those at the margins who make up the majority. Civil society can help to facilitate and feed this process. In the case of youth, the game-changing energy that young people can provide is something that can create the kind of paradigm shifts we desperately need. As noted in the chapter, young people are aware that they are the ones who are inheriting the crises created by centuries of abuse of the earth's resources. They realise drastic solu-

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tions are needed, as in many ways they have the most to lose. This was highlighted to me at the G8 summit in L'Aquila, Italy, in 2008 when I joined up with a youth delegation that was making a presentation to the UK prime minister, Gordon Brown. Members of the delegation were wearing a T-shirt which read, 'How old will you be in 2050?'

> The truth is that…despite all the challenges that young people face, it is they who offer the greatest scope for innovation, have the greatest courage, and who are capable of an amazing amount of voluntary energy and effort. Young people are increasingly aware that they do not need to inhabit the fringes of public life.

The chapter on marginalised people also focuses on elderly people and indigenous groups:

> Today we measure the progress of human society largely on the economic achievements of those who are already relatively privileged. In the coming decades, humanity has to learn to judge itself on the progress of those who are most socially excluded. For democracy to have any value, policy-makers and civil society organisations must address the issue of justice for socially excluded marginalised groups.

Central to this must be the ongoing and elusive quest for full gender equality. Assessments of the state of gender equality on a global basis make a mockery of democracy, a human rights culture and social justice.

The driving narrative of *Boiling Point* is that we live in a world of deep injustice. Many injustices thrive in democratic societies and democracy is becoming meaningless for far too many people in the world. For example, according to the Global Call to Action against Poverty (www.whiteband.org) every single day about 50 000 men, women and children die from preventable causes such as malaria, tuberculosis, AIDs and hunger. This is not simply a stain on the conscience of humanity. This is a daily passive genocide or a daily silent tsunami. If democracy has theoretically grown since the fall of the Berlin Wall, why do we still see so much suffering? What the majority of people in the world want from democracy is primary education, accessible health care, decent work, clean water to drink, enough to eat, and so on. Huge resources are thrown at issues without the appropriate level of engagement between governments and citizens. Citizens are not just voting banks. Governments could start to build social capital by simply listening. More social intercourse through organised expres-

If democracy has theoretically grown since the fall of the Berlin Wall, why do we still see so much suffering?

sions of civil society is in itself the best anti-terror mechanism, because when people are included, freedom of expression exists in the public domain and dissent is not forced underground.

Back in 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down, the world felt optimistic about democracy's future; many anticipated more money would be freed up for social expenditure, since less would be needed for arms and military expenditure. Instead, spending on arms has increased. Even in Africa where so many people, particularly women and children, are mired in lives of poverty and despair, leaders can find money for war, but cannot use even a fraction of the military expenditure that would be needed to overcome human suffering. Was this the vision we shared 20 years ago?

Our sense of human identity derives from contact, as in the African notion of *ubuntu*, an ethical or humanist philosophy focusing on people's allegiances and relations with each other. The word has its origin in the Bantu languages of southern Africa. *Ubuntu* is seen as a classical African concept and is best expressed by the proverb, 'I am because you are', or, in the words of Nelson Mandela, 'We are only human through the humanity of others'. This means that injustice meted out to one person affects everyone. Too often I have observed that if we have not experienced an injustice, it is hard to realise the full emotional impact of its degradation. In our pre-high-tech world, face-to-face interaction was how we had contact. How we absorbed and understood issues was limited by the degree of contact we had. Today we interact virtually with people and organisations that shape our consciousness from a multitude of distant places. Globalisation has benefits, one of which is the ability to touch and be touched by the wide spectrum of issues and needs that affect humanity.

Recognising the way in which globalisation is changing the world, we are confronted with the challenge of how to develop mechanisms which enable us to act as global citizens in order to generate positive change. We cannot rely on those in power; rather, the keys to a just society lie within the reach of us all as citizens. We all have the potential for action that can bring the transformational change needed for society and restore our harmony with nature. Whatever our role or context, whether we are in business or a young person, whether in an industrialised country or a society recovering from conflict, the power to improve society lies in our willingness to engage in thoughtful action.

Chapter 1 »
Citizen action and the
democratic deficit

In the convergence of multiple crises we face globally today, we find ourselves in a perfect storm. This situation is not an accident. It is a direct result of misguided human action, compounded by a lack of thoughtful leadership, deepening inequality and the widening chasm that is the divide between the global North and the global South. Many decent men and women are trying to respond to each of the crises globally, nationally and locally. They are trying to help victims on the ground in places where they are needed, challenging policies and how these policies are made. The purpose of this volume is to examine why, with all this citizen energy, there is not the level of success needed to adequately address the problems we face globally.

Demystifying where we are both as a planet, and as the human race, is a good starting point. The reality is that all the constructs we currently accept as fact – governments, non-governmental and other non-profit social organisations, businesses large and small, global and regional supranational organisations like the UN and the EU, even financial markets – are all man-made and therefore vulnerable to change. Now that every single one of the accepted constructs has shown itself to be flawed at a very fundamental level, new constructs must and will emerge. I don't purport to know what the new world order will look like. It might take many shapes and forms and I'm certainly no fortune teller. But what I do know is that wholesale change is now inevitable. Rather than attempting to predict the new endgame, today's challenge is to declare ourselves part of the emergence of these new social, political, economic and business constructs. I hope to provide some thought leadership on optimistic solutions – for civil society to work towards the creation of new and better spaces in which to operate, and for political leadership to enable this process, not for political gain, but because they can do better if their citizenry is more engaged.

All too frequently, when the problems are on a large scale, people look to governments to propose solutions. More often than not, they are disappointed, finding the solutions proposed to be inadequate and based on political compromise. When governments do propose change on the massive scale we now need, they end up being voted out before their strategies are enacted, irrespective of whether their strategies are

good or bad, purely as a result of the cycles of election politics. Governments in democracies are forced by time-bound political systems to be tactical, looking no more than four or five years ahead. Businesses, on the other hand, may look 20 or 30 years ahead but are held back by shareholders who want to see a quick and extremely high return on their investments. Citizens have a longer-term perspective. We look generations into the future. So it is citizens, most of all, who have a vested interest in the nature of change that takes place and how this change should shape the world we live in.

It is time for ordinary men and women to rise to the challenges represented by the crises of financial systems, food prices, climate change and the frightening overall environmental crisis, poverty and inequality, paying particular attention to gender issues, and also being sensitive to issues of disability, age, sexual orientation and so on. The questions include: How do individuals, groups and communities respond? Where do we ordinary people fit in? Where is our power base and how do we activate it? The answers to these questions are complex and simple at the same time. After three decades of activism, fighting for justice in many spheres, and after many months of reflection, I honestly believe there is much that can be achieved. Ordinary people from all walks of life must use their immense collective weight to speak truth to those in power. This will be true democracy at work.

The current globalised context: Unleashing the power of people

The forced exodus of 10-12 million African people during the 300-year period when the slave trade flourished is one of the ugliest and least understood facts in global history. Initially, the voices of dissent against the slave trade were few and disparate. Gradually the movement grew and the disparate voices eventually became a global movement that ended the legalised kidnapping, trading and degradation of human beings as slaves. The realisation that true democracy results in justice being served, and that it is only when ordinary people get involved on a sustained basis that true democracy exists and works, became the mantra of my personal journey and remains so today.

Where do we ordinary people fit in? Where is our power base and how do we activate it?

In one of my first leadership roles as the founding president of the Helping Hands youth movement in Durban, I learnt the importance of enabling participation and allowing people to make mistakes. Initially, I approached my role as one of stepping in if I thought something was not happening or not happening fast enough, but soon realised that my ultra results-orientated approach was harmful to shared leadership, empowerment and learning.

My concern is with change – large-scale positive, meaningful and enduring change – and how we can get there. If we energetically address our failures, I believe we will find new ways to approach and combat the urgent problems we face. I also firmly believe that human energy and ingenuity employed on a large scale can bring about the human security and human development we need to make our world a better place for everyone. It is my hope that this volume will inspire activists, citizens, young people, voters from all over the world, to embrace the fact that we need to change and to engage with the development of new and better constructs that will create a sustainable future for generations ahead. Therefore it is necessary that we set out early on what the 'democratic deficit' means and how it can be overcome with considered responses.

Sadly, all over the world voter levels are declining; yet at the same time, there is an encouraging increase in the numbers of citizens involved in social movements. It would be naïve to ascribe the decline in voter participation to apathy. It is a direct result of a lack of faith in political institutions, leadership and processes, a trend which is evidently bad for democracy. The involvement of individuals in social movements is necessary and positive, but it does not replace the need to exercise one's democratic right to vote. A just and healthy society needs both good government and a strong, vibrant civil society.

It is not a matter of one or the other. Today civil society is put under huge pressure to make strategic choices about how to use its resources at the local, provincial, national and global level, as well as through the increasingly important regional institutions. Whether it be the European Union, Mercosur in Latin America or the African Union, what is clear, especially for developing countries, is that if we do not think very seriously about political and economic integration, we do not stand a chance in this increasingly competitive world. For a decade now, I have joked that if Europe can have the 'Euro' I do not see why Africa cannot have an 'Afro', not the hair style but a common African currency. The drive towards European Union integration was fuelled by the realisation of the European political elite that their member states do not stand a chance of prospering as individual states in light of the emergence of economic power of what we now call the BRIC countries: Brazil, Russia, India and China. They had to organise themselves to ensure their future strength as a collective of states.

Rethinking civil society in the globalised world requires careful consideration of how we use our energies to create the kind of changes that we actually need. Most of the global institutions that we have to

engage with are rooted in the geopolitics of 1945, particularly the In-
ternational Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations.
The United Nations, considered to be both the most democratic and
accessible of these organisations, is, on closer examination, culpable
of a deeply disturbing democratic deficit. Five nations have a per-
manent seat and power of veto on the UN Security Council, two of
which are France and the UK. Given the population size of these two
countries, comparatively speaking there is no contemporary justifica-
tion for them to have this elevated status. Perhaps there was a logic
in awarding France and the UK this enormous power in 1945 since
at that time they ruled over many subjects in their various colonies,
but today the only justification of their veto rights is the fact that they
possess weapons of mass destruction in the form of nuclear weapons.
However, if ownership of potential destruction is the new criterion
(which I'm certainly not advocating), then why aren't India, Pakistan,
Israel and even North Korea there?

All of these accepted global institutions set up in the aftermath of the
Holocaust and World War II now suffer from a legitimacy deficit, a
democratic deficit, a coherence deficit and compliance deficit. To illus-
trate compliance deficit, I would refer to their huge, expensive, global
summits on various issues, which require some level of global political
consensus to be reached. As fast as the ink dries after heads of states sign
up to the various Declarations, they forget their commitments, or they
strategise as to how to diminish their commitments. This may appear
to be a cynical view. But take a look at the outcomes of recent inter-
governmental meetings – the G8 summits, the Kyoto Protocol, various
UN summits on gender equality – one would be extremely lucky to
subsequently find even a 25 per cent compliance rate.

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Societies are served best when a diversity of opinions is allowed to
flourish. Even if conventional mainstream opinions turn out to be
right, having opposition views ensures necessary checks and balances
are applied. In September 2001, when George W. Bush told US citi-
zens and the world, 'You're either with us or against us', he used an
old fascist call to action, used by both Benito Mussolini and Adolf
Hitler, which had succeeded in the past in quelling dissent. To make
every subject a matter of black or white is the antithesis of justice,
strangling true democracy. Voices of dissent may begin as a minority,
but they quickly grow if the cause is just. The abolition of transatlan-
tic slavery is a good case in point.

There is a real urgency to the project of incorporating civil society
within a meaningful decision-making process. The danger is that if

the manifold injustices the world faces are not addressed, the conse-
quences could be extreme. The propensity to violence by desperate
people is a huge challenge for citizen activism. I believe passionately
that violence as a means of advancing progressive causes, whilst some-
times justifiable in the face of state- or corporate-sponsored aggres-
sion, is not ultimately viable. My experience in South Africa during
the apartheid years showed that state violence led to popular violence
which in turn led to the crime levels that are so damaging to that
beautiful country today. The way to prosecute for justice is through
just means so as not to dehumanise ourselves in the process.

This is connected with the violence of poverty, something we will
talk about in more depth later on. Hunger is effectively a weapon
of mass destruction. There is enough food and enough water in the
world today. Their distribution is unjust, with abundance in some
countries and a devastating lack in others. Part of this is simply the
luck of geography, but still we have the ability and technologies to ad-
dress the problem. We simply need the will and resources to do so.

The dangers to civil society in our current context

It has become something of a truism that the attacks of 11 September
2001 changed the face of the world as we know it. I would argue that
the 24 months that followed those attacks were more consequential.
In a remarkably short period of time, we witnessed a clear shift to-
wards unilateral action and militarisation, and the undermining of
human rights and civil liberties. Taken collectively, these threaten the
ability of citizen voices to be heard in decision-making processes, and
erode global stability and human security.

For me, the war in Iraq highlights three main threats to civil society.
The first is to civil society's agenda. War has diverted both attention
and resources away from the key issues that civil society organisations
(CSOs) worldwide are working to address. Long-term campaigns and
efforts aimed at gender equality, social and economic justice, poverty
reduction, environmental protection and the defence of human rights
have been overshadowed by the Iraq crisis.

The second threat is to democracy and civic participation in a broader
sense. Even in the United States, where attitudes to the war are argu-
ably more ambivalent, citizen voices organising in opposition to the
war far exceeded those urging an invasion of Iraq. But in Iraq, where
citizen participation in decision-making has been severely curtailed
for decades, Iraqi civilians have had little or no opportunity to shape

their own lives and destinies. Now we need to ensure that the will of the Iraqi people can prevail. It is vitally important that a post-war Iraq is built on sound foundations of social, economic and political justice and democracy. This can only be achieved multilaterally and with the full involvement of the UN and civil society.

The notion that democracy can be imposed upon a country is clearly questionable. Surely, democracy in Iraq can only be sustained through the active involvement and support of citizens who are engaged in their communities and helping to determine their own futures? In an age where many societies in transition are struggling to sustain viable democracies, it is disturbing in the extreme to witness such a high-profile global conflict premised on a flawed notion of democracy.

The third threat is to global multilateralism – a framework for addressing and resolving conflicts that is supported by many in civil society. Military action against Iraq without the endorsement of the United Nations set a dangerous precedent that may well undermine this long-standing cornerstone of global security. In the months leading up to war, citizen voices from around the world called for a strengthening of the UN's role in moderating conflicts. Unfortunately, the decision to invade Iraq, despite the opposition of most members on the Security Council, effectively opened the door to an era of greater instability. This is especially troubling given recent precedents of the emergence of unilateralism at major UN conferences (for example, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the World Conference against Racism) and trade talks. Now, more than ever, there is a need for unity and respect among nations, and the democratisation and strengthening of global governance institutions.

There are also strong grounds for hope. Never before has there been such widespread, sustained and truly *global* citizen mobilisation around issues such as poverty, where over 150 million stood up to tell our leaders enough was enough in October 2009, and climate change, where millions and millions of people demanded a fair, ambitious and binding (FAB) global deal at the summit in Copenhagen in December 2009. Yet, notwithstanding all the mobilisation efforts of climate campaigners, we did not secure a FAB deal. Instead we got a FLAB deal – full of loopholes and bullshit – as one campaigner has put it.

In the face of these challenges, global civil society has proved itself to be robust, diverse, responsive and highly creative. The physical and electronic networks of civil society activists – and ordinary citizens who may not consider themselves activists – that have been

built over the past decade have sprung to life in dramatic form. One of the greatest challenges civil society faces is to remain responsive to the events around us while working towards a long-term vision of a world where people and their voices are at the centre of public life.

Citizen action and current democratic practice

Those of us who live in the so-called democracies of both the global North and the global South labour under the assumption that democracy fundamentally exists and that our notion of democracy, more or less, works. Those who live and labour in authoritarian and politically broken states broadly believe the others are lucky to live in democracies where they are entitled to vote, to be heard and to form citizen led organisations. I'd like to challenge both of these assumptions with a view to making us better at democracy, better at opening spaces for civil society to flourish, better at making informed decisions about who should govern and lead and how they should do so.

Firstly, democracy is about much more than the freedoms of speech, association and expression. Of course democracy can't possibly exist without civil and political rights. Certainly the democratic states in our world today are better than those under authoritarian rule. Yet we have so much more ground to gain if we hope to solve the crises of civil wars, food and resource shortages, the growing challenge of poverty and wholesale change in using the earth's resources for industry and consumption.

When local and national politics are so flawed that the public fail to exercise their democratic right to vote, something is very wrong.

In most democratic states, by which I mean countries where local and national governments are voted for by citizens, we have generally seen a consistent decline in sheer voter numbers. In parallel, there are more and more people involved in citizen organisations. This is not democracy at work. When local and national politics are so flawed that the public fail to exercise their democratic right to vote, something is very wrong.

We need only look at the flaws in modern electoral processes to understand the contemporary loss of faith in political processes at the citizen level. In the United States, the electoral colleges system resulted in Al Gore losing an election to George W. Bush in 2000, despite the fact that the former received a larger number of individual votes. As a consequence, one could, at a cynical level, consider the US to have been a 'failed state' for the years between 2000 and 2008, during which time the country's leadership led both an illegal invasion of Iraq, on the premise of unsubstantiated claims, and initiated

a long-term war, with little regard for national boundaries, against an invisible enemy. It called this war 'War on Terror', and we are all aware of its consequences.

Many potential political leaders never even see the light of day. Political campaigning in democratic states today has a high financial cost of entry, a barrier to vast numbers, quelling the prospect of a political career for anyone without the right connections or financial backing. It's no coincidence that Italy's three-term president is also a billionaire who owns the biggest national media organisations. Running for office, even at the local level, costs a lot of money. One of President Obama's most significant campaign achievements was an incredibly well-run, groundbreaking fundraising campaign. He successfully took on the Republican Party and the Clintons, both of whom had enormous financial reserves. To enter the fray in any election-oriented society, even with a fresh and appealing voice, requires financial muscle.

The news media make and break many political leaders as well as many civil society-led arguments. Like it or not, whilst 'celebrocracy' or the use of celebrity to gain public attention is sometimes distasteful to citizen movements, the news media are important conduits of messages to the public and to political leadership. Mary Robinson, the first female president of Ireland, once told me that politicians respond to numbers, since staying in office is effectively a numbers game, and the ability to manipulate the media plays a pivotal role in this process.
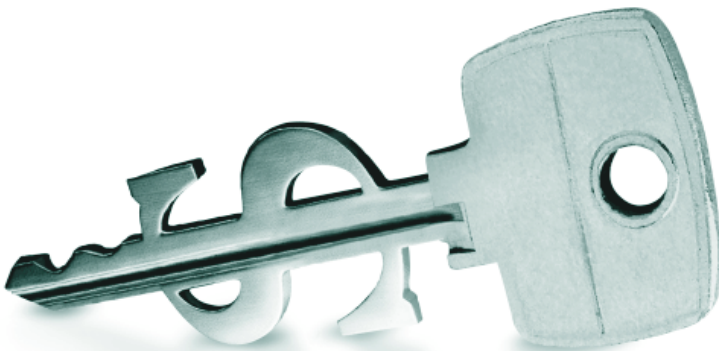
To enter the fray in any election-oriented society, even with a fresh and appealing voice, requires financial muscle.

The first media was a citizen media, intended to share information and act as an early warning system to ensure others were equipped with important details so as to protect themselves or their communities, or develop strategies to deal with day-to-day events. Today's news media is largely controlled by a handful of huge corporations. Since they frame the debate, political and otherwise, information sources on the issues and events are all too often skewed. Important information goes unreported, populist information takes precedence over critical legislative change that then slips under the radar, or information is framed by the views of the editor or corporate owners. A nascent citizen journalism is growing in both scale and richness of content, driven in large part by the growth of the internet, but it has a long way to go to meet the sheer reach and impact of the heavily corporatised news media.

 A cursory glance at the absence of gender equality in national and local political representation raises further questions still about the validity of democracy at work. Women are still a novelty in politics, despite the fantastic example of leaders like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Africa's first female president. Marginalised sectors of society also struggle for recognition. The former British cabinet minister, David Blunkett, did much to advance the potential for those living with physical disabilities. He is profoundly blind, yet has had a long political life despite this. However, democratic society does not embrace diversity at the political level and these individuals remain the exceptions to the rule.

When you put all of these factors together – fewer voters, flawed elections, over-corporatisation of the news media, coupled with the lack of gender equality and diversity in political representation, the prohibitive cost of entry to run for public office and the 'War on Terror' as an excuse for undemocratic methods – it all adds up to an absence of a culture of dissent in those countries that consider themselves to be the strongest democracies. All these factors increase the injustice of the democratic deficit.

I'd go a step further and say that with many of the most pressing issues facing individuals and communities, the real power shifts are moving even further away from ordinary people. Climate change represents one of the clearest examples of an issue which cannot be solved locally or nationally. It's one of the issues that require solutions grounded in supranational governance. However, that doesn't mean local and national leadership are absolved of responsibility. We need to understand how best to use the space we have locally and nationally to

address those factors within our domain of control. For example, it was appropriate that global non-governmental organisations (NGOs) worked for a fair, ambitious and binding deal in Copenhagen in December 2009, and that they then ensure the necessary steps are taken to implement and further the UN's commitments post-Copenhagen. But it's equally important, for example, for the Mayor of London to ensure that the public is actively engaged in carbon reduction in the city, at a household level, in city-wide transport infrastructure, and so on. It is still the role of London's civil society networks to ensure local government is setting the agenda, and that this agenda is contextualised against a backdrop of citizen benefits and desires.

Think locally, act globally

During the 1980s many activists around the world embraced a simple but evocative slogan: 'Think globally, act locally'. The message was that in acting at the local level, one needed to understand how global forces impacted on local reality. In short, trying to tackle local issues without understanding the ever-increasing power of global processes was tactically inappropriate.

By the mid-1990s, activists from the global South began to question this logic. Some asked whether this did not trap civil society in solely local interventions when, in fact, many of the causes being pursued locally had reached the point where they needed to be advanced on a global scale, within the context of global forums and processes. They argued that perhaps we need to turn this slogan on its head and instead learn to 'think locally, act globally'. In reality, citizen action does not have the luxury to think only globally or locally and to act only globally or locally. They need to do both and understand how these different levels of governance interact with each other.

In reality, citizen action does not have the luxury to think only globally or locally and to act only globally or locally. They need to do both and understand how these different levels of governance interact with each other.

Maximo Kalaw, the Philippine environmentalist, noted in 1995 that the realisation of the continuum from local community citizenship to national citizenship and global citizenship is essential to the establishment of a sustainable global governance system (see Liporada 1997:6). This reality has been borne out by the experiences of civil society organisations. It is also the main rationale for their participation in global governance processes.

The experience of NGOs is that years of grassroots level work can be negated by bad national policies. Consequently, they have found it necessary to participate in national policy advocacy work. As they do, they realise that their national concerns are fundamentally con-

nected to wider global processes. Development efforts, whether local, national or global, have become subject to conditionalities of international financial institutions, trade agreements and foreign assistance. Consequently it has become imperative for civil society to participate in global decision-making processes, provided for in the consultations on summit meetings and conventions of the UN, as well as by UN development agencies, the Bretton Woods Institutions, the Global Environment Facility and the World Trade Organization.

This rise towards global activism around a range of issues is happening at a time when many citizens of the world have, for the first time, achieved representative electoral democracy at the national level. Whilst it seems ironic that this is happening when in fact the centres of power have shifted to regional and global levels, I would be anxious not to encourage the tendency to celebrate the demise of the nation-state. True, there has been a reduction in the power and influence of sovereign states in absolute terms, but they are still the most important players in political and economic governance at a country level and cannot be replaced by supranational constructs.

These global multilateral organisations face a challenge of legitimacy. As they increasingly take a lead in policy and strategy, they need to undergo significant reform themselves. We need to ask questions about what kind of multilateral organisations are capable of meeting the needs of global governance. There is also the challenge of creative and rational integration. Far too often we see a lack of coordination strategies, leading to the unhelpful tendency at national levels for different line departments to fragment issues. There are some shocking examples of how sometimes a housing ministry will go ahead with a project without bringing on board the water affairs ministry. This usually has disastrous development consequences. Unfortunately, this is a tendency replicated within the NGO community specifically, and civil society more generally.

Re-framing civil society's space for the future

John Clark, the former head of the World Bank's NGO division, told the CIVICUS World Assembly in the Philippines some years ago that there was an urgent need for new paradigms about how we think about development. He noted that the saying that goes, 'Give a man a fish and he is fed for a day, but teach a man to fish and he can feed himself forever,' is in need of revision. If you teach a man to fish, does he have a line and net to be able to catch any fish? Does he have access to water? Can he get his fish to the market to earn income? If

the man fishes, do any of the fish get to other members of the family? And do the poor even like eating fish at all? Are the poor actually sitting by unpolluted and well-stocked water, just waiting to learn how to catch fish? Or is the issue really one of power and poverty? Is our job to teach the poor, or to help people identify their own needs and ensure the right questions are asked?

The challenge is to think out of the box, rather than allowing ourselves to be constrained by the limitations of current institutional reality. Can we imagine a world that can be genuinely more just and equitable; ultimately one that can be safeguarded for future generations? In the act of seeking to realise this vision, we can actively do our part as civil society to close the gap on the democratic deficit.

Many thinkers and intellectuals anticipated that with the end of the Cold War and the prevailing of free market ideology, the role and power of civil society would become more and more prominent in the running and the decision-making processes of democratic states. The German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, promoted what he called a free public sphere that would allow a 'dialogue, free from domination' about the values of a given society. Such a dialogue should be maintained by a civil society that sets its own agendas and which is only regulated by the state insofar as the state ensures that the dialogue happens in a democratic and domination-free setting. What sounded like utopia in the early 1980s was all of a sudden on the cards as a real opportunity in the mid-1990s. At the same time a growing number of political thinkers, such as Audrey Osler, Anthony Kwame Appiah and Ulrich Beck, promoted a more cosmopolitan world view that started to engage with value and belief systems of societies from all over the world.

Much of the energy and impetus of those years has now been lost. The 21st century has seen a relapse into more state control, powered by fear and a preoccupation with homeland security, and less public engagement. The conviction of the people in the North that a strong civil society can change political systems – as demonstrated by peoples' movements in former authoritarian societies – has waned, replaced by an often complacent, one-step-at-a-time mentality that promotes an individualistic mindset.

More optimistically, Michael Edwards, in his book *Civil Society* (2004), sees civil society as a public sphere between the state and the markets which, if created, maintained and defended as a free and democratic public space, can act as an enabling framework for a society, allowing people to discuss, influence and regulate processes normally control-

led by the state (Edwards, 2004). In other words it could be a space that simultaneously enables, acts out and protects active citizenship.

If created in a free and democratic way, civil society could provide a structure in which a debate on how to react to the current global challenges could take place. With the analysis of the economic crisis in full swing everybody seems to agree on the need for a more regulated global system of checks and balances. Considering the crisis of confidence in state structures and the accepted need for more regulation, it is astonishing how little thought is given to the question of how this regulation could be exercised. Some economists claim to have found a solution in a model close to that of a social market economy, a concept that has proved unworkable for many former Eastern bloc countries. Others still believe in the self-regulatory powers of the free market. Funnily enough, many claim that a concept as elusive as civil society would not be able to regulate complex systems.

So could this not be the ideal time to re-think and re-examine the role a strong and vibrant civil society could play in navigating societies though this perfect storm? Highlighting the huge potential, Edwards maintains that 'civil society is simultaneously a goal to aim for, a means to achieve it, and a framework for engaging with each other about ends and means' (Edwards, 2004: 110). If this is true, there is one key element of society that needs to be in place: actively engaged citizens who have the means, the empowerment and the willingness to participate in state matters, and these are the issues the next chapter will address.

So could this not be the ideal time to re-think and re-examine the role a strong and vibrant civil society could play in navigating societies though this perfect storm?

Chapter 2 » Re-defining what change means and how it occurs

Change in many spheres is becoming increasingly urgent. The issues we face today are not benign; they are not going to be solved through a culture of incrementalism where we too often accept, even celebrate, tiny victories as 'the best we can do'. Good enough is not good enough.

The statistics speak for themselves. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent an attempt to define clear goals to assess progress in the fight against poverty. The MDGs suggest we are capable of halving hunger in the world by 2015. Does that make it acceptable for the other half, the hungry, to continue to starve in a world of such abundance? Nobody reading this volume will believe this is morally viable. We need to aim higher and have the skills, resources and ways of working to enable us to be effective in the spheres of action where the levers of change are engaged.

As civil society we have come to the realisation that, to be more effective in creating a just and equitable world, we need to increase our joint efforts to seek collective responses and act in unison. The strength that comes with unity cannot be underestimated. This has been evident in recent years with the advent of the anti-poverty movement's 'Stand up' events, creating awareness of the demands for poverty eradication and engaging over 100 million citizens around the world in the effort on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This scale of grassroots campaigning creates a power base for multiple anti-poverty organisations at the policy advocacy level. What needs to be reviewed is not the level of unity or the degree of energy in civil society; it is our ability to create positive change faster and with larger effect. It's time to scale up the outcomes of our activities.

I'd like to propose ideas here for others to take even further. These are ideas that can be the genesis of transforming citizen activism so that it moves to a faster, sharper way of acting. There are many questions to answer. How do citizen organisations, formal and informal, interact today? And how could (or should) their practices be re-assessed? What does success look like at each level of civil society action, from delivery level to policy/advocacy level, and even to the level of global governance structures? How can we improve measurements of success commonly employed today? How do we value relational capital today? This chapter begins the task of addressing these questions.

From participatory democracy to participatory governance

Embedded in democratic constitutions are rights and freedoms that accompany citizenship. These rights and freedoms include participation. The notion of citizenship, especially in more stratified societies, accords benefits to some groups and restricts the rights and freedoms of others, seldom completely accommodating people with lower status.

Traditional notions of participation limit citizen engagement to voting in democracies and to an involvement with government-owned initiatives that provide services to groups with lesser socio-political or economic status. In contrast, I define participatory citizenship as the fostering of improvements in relationships between society's political constructs and its citizens – in the process constructing new avenues to redefine relations between the privileged and the less powerful in society. It's time to move beyond participatory democracy to participatory governance.

Participatory governance is essential for the consolidation and deepening of democratic culture. Unfortunately, the practice of democracy is too often reduced to its bare essential, which is the holding of elections. Reducing the idea of democracy to the single act of casting a ballot every four or five years in fact undermines democracy's power and potential. Democracy should entail the participation of all sections of society in the decision-making process and the formulation and implementation of policies. Participatory democracy therefore gives a 'voice to the voiceless' and provides an opportunity to contribute towards decision-making and policy creation. But it can go further. Democracy can and should be practised in those global and large-scale regional constructs that constitute the predominant levers of change for some of our biggest social and environmental problems. This is how I would define 'participatory governance'. When all is said and done, how effective civil society is at a governance level is likely to define how effective it can be at the policy and service delivery levels too.

My model of thinking about civil society activity has three tiers:

Level of intervention	Period for success	Focus of intervention	Level of current civil society investment
Macro	5-20 years	Governance change	5%
Meso	2-10 years	Policy change	15%
Micro	1-3 years	Delivery of projects and programmes	80%

The reality is that most of the resources at civil society's disposal, and the majority of civil society activity, occurs at the grassroots 'micro'

level. We deliver benefits to sufferers on the ground. Morally, we cannot possibly decrease our efforts in this arena. But this largely determines how CSOs are resourced and structured and as a result this is how we've trained the donor community to think of us. State-based donors will often co-opt civil society to do their work because we've become so efficient and knowledgeable in the delivery arena.

In the last decade or so, civil society has become much more focused on advocacy work that affects policies. As a result, civil society runs up against a persistent contradiction in its work that has significant policy-related outcomes, caught between the will of the donor, the will of the legislature and the will of the citizenry whose needs we seek to represent.

So, on the one hand, civil society is delivering services to citizens with great effectiveness and becoming increasingly adept at influencing policy at the national and local levels. On the other, there are far too few breakthrough changes at a macro (governance) level stimulated by the work of CSOs. Perhaps this is because the challenges themselves are complex and large-scale and the solutions are far from clear.

The dearth of success at this level feeds criticism that civil society is too often oppositional and not propositional. CSOs struggle to develop a vision of how breakthrough change can happen because their efforts are unbalanced.

A good example to illustrate my point is the many organisations set up around the world to deal with the horrors of domestic violence. These organisations do an important job of alleviating the suffering and treating the emotional needs of the victims of domestic violence. However, there is no possibility of these organisations reaching every person in need of counselling and treatment as a result of violence perpetrated in the home. Even if the resources available for this work were to explode exponentially, we would fail to reverse the tide of this tragedy. Though most morally conscious democratic states have legislated against violence in the home, the problem hasn't been solved. This is because change needs to function on other levels, in the recognition that root causes of domestic violence lie in the constructs of masculinity, parenting responsibilities, socialisation and so on. How can we engender this change? Only by addressing the issues on a micro, meso and macro level.

Improving what we do at the micro level: Delivering services more effectively

At the micro level, we need a complete re-assessment. This is critical, as the quality of policy interventions is being affected to some extent by the need to please the public donors who fund much of the delivery-level work.

We must innovate in order to reach larger numbers in the short to medium term. NGOs have become a part of the 'marketplace' they serve, which creates tensions at the delivery level. NGOs need to locate the difference between professionalisation and corporatisation. There is simply too much waste. Delivery is critical, because it's morally questionable not to reach and support as many of those in need as possible. Delivery also remains essential because meso and macro level changes have longer lead times, and there is learning to be taken from it to support actions taken on the policy and governance levels.

Many of the failures at the micro level can be traced to donor practice, where short-term deliverables are required for further short-term funding to be released. We must work to create wider social awareness of the scale and nature of the problems and solutions. The emphasis on micro change creates an environment in the wider general public and in donor communities of 'absolution through contribution', rather than awareness of the real requirements needed to foster long-term and sustainable change.

Below are seven strategies for innovation at the micro level:

1. Do more with the same resources

NGOs today are territorial and often competitive. Every organisation which operates within an 'industry' of specialists should consider, at the very least, programme mergers and, where relevant, organisational mergers. This will not be a popular view, but the reality of the economic climate and the diversion of donor funding to many macro level issues means these measures now need to be considered. This does not mean we leave people in the lurch. It should make organisations even more effective at the delivery level when the resources they currently duplicate are gainfully employed in delivering services to a wider need base.

2. Demolish silos

In the corporate world, silos represent the idea that each department in an organization – sales, design, manufacturing, customer service, order fulfilment, technical support, and so on, – is an independent vertical structure that is self-contained and independent from the others. You work in your own silo, communicate with people inside the silo (there are no windows, so you don't even see anyone else), and have as little contact as possible with people in other silos. Management systems based on silos all too often leads to the creation of barriers, preventing organisations from making the most of their capacity to act within their given sphere of influence. Silos have become a serious obstacle to the ability of organisations to function effectively on a micro level as they do not allow for cross-fertilisation of ideas and activities, and everyone is too busy working within their own silo to think about what is going on around them.

A more efficient management system connects departments laterally into a cohesive structure in which people know the function, contribution and importance of all the other departments and the people working in them.

Civil society organisations create their own missed opportunities by blindsiding themselves to opportunities for cooperation and widening delivery. Many organisations address the same audience on different issues. A more integrated approach will significantly enhance the impact of our messages. A sense of 'intersectionality' offers greater relevance to helping those we're trying to support. According to Wikipedia, intersectionality, first promoted by feminists, is: 'a sociological theory suggesting that – and seeking to examine how – various socially and culturally constructed categories of discrimination interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality. Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the 'intersection' of multiple forms of discrimination."

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Zackie Achmat, founder of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), an organisation in South Africa delivering support to HIV-positive men and women, is a good example of someone who puts intersectionality into practice. He is an outspoken and respected voice on issues around women's rights, domestic violence and many others, not just health. As a result, his organisation is tapped into every level of civil society and government, making it more effective at delivering the health services needed at the grassroots level. His organisation is relatively small, but punches well above its weight in recognition terms, which has created delivery and funding stream benefits.

There are many reasons to bring informal and formal civil society organisations together. Breaking down the silos would bring informal organisations, with their finger on the pulse, closer to the more detached formal organisations, breathing life into both and stimulating innovation.

3. Introduce accountability at every level

Accountability in the non-profit sector today is almost exclusively orientated 'upward' to governments and private donors. There is very limited accountability to the actual communities that non-profit organisations serve. Horizontal accountability to each other intra-organisationally is insufficient as well. Yet the concept of 'joined-up delivery' can increase effectiveness exponentially. For example, NGOs today face issues of ministerial departmental 'turfs' because funding streams typically go through particular line ministers. As a result, NGOs replicate one another instead of using their knowledge of one stream of work to inform another. A more innovative approach to accountability could also open up opportunities for funding that have not been previously considered.

4. Redefine success at every level

The pressure on NGOs to constantly demonstrate success has had a massive impact on our value system. Organisations won't embrace or report failure enthusiastically because of concerns about funding turn-off. However, as Albert Einstein observed, 'Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.' All plans tabled for donor approval anticipate a successful outcome. But sometimes they aren't 'successful' in donor terms, and there are unforeseen reasons why. A smart, agile organisation which can see it's heading for difficulties can regroup and re-strategise quickly if it knows its funding remains unaffected. We tend to pursue strategies relentlessly as though determination itself

The obligation to the community served should be as strong as the obligation to the donor.

will make them work. Sometimes you have to know when to shift. More frequent internal checks and balances, a focus on objectives and the flexibility to shift strategies during a programme are essential. At the end of the day the obligation to the community served should be as strong as the obligation to the donor.

5. Reduce the transactional cost of the resourcing relationship

Civil society can learn much from the business sector when it comes to transactional cost management. Staff in the social sector are employed there because of their core competencies in delivery. This should remain the focus of people who are 'experts' in this area. But these same people are often called upon to deal with inefficient, unwieldy reporting and application processes. This ultimately undermines the ability of CSOs to operate in their core competencies. Simple ideas like common, open source application and reporting formats would be a welcome innovation.

6. Aggregation resources for generic purposes throughout the sector

All formal civil society organisations have to meet legal, financial and environmental requirements. Human resources best equipped for specialised delivery of services are too often diverted to attend to these fairly generic requirements. Greater strengthening of generic aggregation could help to meet these human resource challenges. For example, if donors and national governments, in the interests of maximising their investments, worked to fund shared generic resources, this would hugely reduce the proportion of operating budgets funding organisational running costs.

7. Transnationalise intelligence for better local practice

Organisations that can be formally defined as global tend, as a matter of course, to share best practices across borders. Those that are locally based ought to be creating similar opportunities through coalitions and other sources. For example, CIVICUS has created an affinity group of national organisations which seeks to enable intelligence-sharing. This is less about exchanges of technical information and more about valuable, practical learning, such as South–South exchanges of intelligence.

Even global organisations in the social and environmental sector often fail to share best practices between organisations. Practical intelligence can come from outside an organisation's own special interest area. We should be more open to learning, irrespective of where this learning comes from. Forums for sharing and the will

to listen are all that is required to enact this strategy, ultimately leading to less duplication of effort and resources.

Donors, too, should foster intelligence-sharing as it ultimately improves the ability of programmatic and organisational grants to achieve their aims. Donors should, as a matter of course, include fellowships for knowledge-sharing as a means to guarantee the best possible outcomes.

Finally, organisations need to interact in order to create forums for deliberation with regard to the long-term assumptions and principles underlying the work they are collectively doing. Civil society is in a unique position where it can constantly assess and evaluate the wider context of its activity, a process that needs to be engaged in across organisations on a micro level.

8. Break down the barriers within civil society

According to Wikipedia, civil society is 'composed of the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state (regardless of that state's political system) and commercial institutions of the market'. In institutional terms this includes NGOs, social movements, trade unions, faith-based organisations, community groups and more. Yet, quite often in discourse and practice civil society is used interchangeably to refer to NGOs, voluntary organisations or not-for-profit organisations. Unless we find better ways of working together across the full breadth of civil society – as we have seen with such new movements as the Global Call to Action against Poverty (www.whiteband.org) or the Global Campaign on Climate Change (www.tcktcktck.org) – we will not have the ability to push those with power in government and business to implement deep, substantive changes.

How can we innovate at the meso/policy engagement level?

NGOs have the luxury of operating outside the bureaucratic framework. The accumulated knowledge of micro-level programmes is a valuable reservoir of intelligence for improving policy. Democratically elected governments often deprive themselves of intelligence from the non-profits who fill so many social delivery gaps. There is a huge gap between textbook policy knowledge and experience. So before we look at innovation strategies at the meso level, we need to:

Democratically elected governments often deprive themselves of intelligence from the non-profits who fill so many social delivery gaps. There is a huge gap between textbook policy knowledge and experience.

> » examine how NGOs can have a higher level of policy knowledge

> » recognise the irresponsibility of NGOs which sit on valuable intelligence that could help policy

> » encourage donors to enable NGOs to resource better at the meso level

> » enhance NGO culture so that it can become more self–challenging, rather than self-serving.

If we want to create a sustainable change of scale, government intervention is essential. We need governments to take small-scale success models as a start. Furthermore, NGO practice today is not investing enough at the meso level because NGOs are almost exclusively measured on delivery. Consequently, donors have no responsibility for enabling NGOs' participation at the meso level. So much of what NGOs can or cannot do within a given country is determined by its government, and this needs to be understood and addressed.

Here are six areas of innovation at the meso level:

1. Work intersectionally

> » Analyse carefully where the policy leverages are – they're not always obvious.

> » Identify targets for intervention more laterally.

2. Make good the policy/implementation deficit

> » CSOs need to develop a better understanding of how national policies relate to sub-national frameworks.

> » We need to develop our understanding of the policy chain and the disconnect between national and local/provincial levels of government.

> » CSOs need to make judgements on how to deliver a greater outcome more quickly.

3. Aggregate through infrastructure investment

> » Allocate resources with a view to long-term planning and development of working structures and practices.

4. Take account of regionalisation

» Invest in supporting policy change at transnational levels,
where the real power of influencing policy change is
increasingly found.

» National governments can't always impact on currency and
economic realities. We need better understanding of what
policies can be influenced, where the points of influence lie
and how to intervene at multiple levels.

» But we must remain mindful of our responsibilities at national
level too – national 'ratification' of regional and global
agreements is required.

» NGOs have a massive opportunity to innovate through
developing an understanding of how different levels of policy
making interact; and as a result making smart choices of how
to achieve policy success.

5. Recognise the centrality of parliaments

» CSOs don't invest enough time and energy in parliaments as a
source of influence

» Yet CSOs often have better access to global governance than
elected national representatives.

» CSOs must realise the value of their spheres of influence to
negotiate better access at parliamentary level in democratic
countries.

6. Break down the silos

» As we discussed at the micro level, there are opportunities at
the meso level to locate points of intersection, cooperation
and coordination between the broadest spectrum of CSOs
working in the interrelated areas of human rights, human de-
velopment and human security.

» Promote dialogue on the values that are important for society.

» NGOs should aim not only to present alternatives and solu-
tions, but also to ask questions that penetrate the heart of the
matter and provoke society to collectively explore resolutions
to problems that have previously been neglected or ignored.

How can we innovate at the macro/systemic level?

On a macro level it's now clear that the strategies we've employed for the past decade or two are not effective and need a radical overhaul. Even longstanding democracies need constant re-assessment. Policies are made within particular political paradigms, which may be flawed. NGOs in this globalised world must influence policy in global institutions, to ensure that the very institutions themselves keep up with the changing times. Even the UN, a largely benign institution, was driven in its formation by the victors of World War II and its governance is consequently still stuck in the geopolitics of 1945. The challenges on the macro level are imposing, but they need to be faced, and mechanisms for engendering change need to be developed.

Areas where we could seek to innovate at this level are outlined below:

1. Time frame rethinking

   » The biggest deficits to be addressed are at this macro level. Innovation at the macro level cannot be technical by definition; it must be imbued with the values of equity and justice.

   » Good micro-level programmes show results in a year or more. Policy/meso-level changes have cycles which, optimistically, occur over two to five years, but are often longer. However, governance changes take decades.

   » In spite of this, non-profit organisations' revenue flows are based on a quantified return on investment in one-to-five year time frames. This encourages NGOs to focus less on both holistic policy change and breakthrough governance change.

   » Resource providers need to be vigilant about how to structure resourcing relationships, ensuring they're not exclusively focused on incrementalism. A no-brainer would be to make multi-year funding programmes a norm.

2. Divorce conditionality of micro programmes from macro needs

   » Over the past 10-15 years changes have occurred in bilateral agencies so that larger numbers of smaller organisations can apply for programmatic funding, above and beyond the big NGOs.

   » Governments have used NGOs as public service contractors.

   » In developing countries governments are subjected to conditionality, or 'delegated conditionality'.

Revenue flows are based on a quantified return on investment in one-to-five year time frames. This encourages NGOs to focus less on both holistic policy change and breakthrough governance change.

» This often affects NGO perceptions of where their loyalties lie (in their reporting relationship to the developed country governments which provide resources for the poor in developing countries.

3. Mainstream the issues

» The media environment constantly redefines what is deemed newsworthy.

» Governments respond to large constituencies expressing themselves in mainstream public environments.

» NGOs need a bigger investment in media capacity to articulate policy demands in a mainstream, popular way.

» The use of 'celebrocacy' to generate attention creates a certain level of discomfort (Bono and a few others being exceptions). While fully supporting the engagement of celebrities in campaigning for justice, I concede that this must be managed carefully, otherwise the voice of those who should be heard, will be drowned out by the power of celebrity.

» Technology is slowly democratising the media, but the digital divide still poses challenges in developing countries; the reality is that notwithstanding the possibilities online media offer, they are still insufficient to balance the penetrative power of corporate and government dominated media.

The media environment constantly redefines what is deemed newsworthy.

» Make no mistake: penetrative media shapes the public reality and therefore we cannot but invest in this the most important part of what the French sociologist, Louis Althusser called the ideological state apparatus.

4. Reduce the compulsion to be brand-obsessed

» At a fundraising level, branding good actions is critical. But at the macro level, its usefulness has limitations.

» An example is the 2005 Make Poverty History campaign, where the UK had a special moment. Make Poverty History brought a plethora of groups and the public together, but was dismantled largely due to 'territorial demands'. At the end of the day, after a huge amount of effort, insufficient progress was made on advancing trade justice, debt cancellation and on improving the quality and quantity of aid. Importantly, though, the unified brand of Make Poverty History, which included small and large organisations, was killed by the bigger organisations in the UK since they did not want to subordinate their own brand identities to a unifying brand.

5. Re-assess how we view the policy chain

» Democratic space has been shrunk by the War on Terror, which raises the question: What kind of environment is needed to influence policy advocacy?

» Tough policy advocacy work needs investment. We too often underestimate the ideological state apparatus, meaning we fail to realise the limits imposed on the policy changes we're trying to effect.

» The demand for a just world isn't new. The World Social Forum, for example, in asserting that 'Another World is Possible', was in fact saying a more just world is possible. As the struggle continues we have to continue asking ourselves: are our strategies for changing public opinion working?

6. Re-affirm notions of citizenship, its responsibilities and its potential

» Re-affirm the centrality of critical thought and resolute action as the duty of every citizen.

» As global issues have become more complex, there has been a tendency for these to be seen as the domain of experts and beyond the capacity of individuals to influence or change.

» However, it is only by each citizen vigilantly observing and critically reflecting on the direction we are taking on a global level and as societies that we can overcome injustices.

» Every citizen has the duty to advance positive change, because we are all interdependent and our humanity can only be preserved by recognising the dignity of all human beings.

» Therefore, it is essential to overcome technology-induced passivity to realise how in daily life, professional roles and collective actions, citizens can fulfil their duties towards each other towards accomplishing a shared good.

Reclaiming civil disobedience

What does history teach us about systemic policy change? It teaches us that when decent people put their lives or livelihoods on the line through civil disobedience and activism, things get changed. The NGO community has evolved an understandable distaste for violence as a means of achieving governance change, so that NGOs today only act in ways that are both peaceful and legal. I'm not advocating violence as a means to any end, but if NGO policy advocacy is going to work, we have to do something different. Much as we say that given the urgency brought about by climate impacts, it cannot be business as usual, civil society must also now concede that it cannot be activism as usual either. Above all we have to embrace right-ness and justice. Will NGOs take risks? Or will institutional self-interest dominate their behaviour? The stakes have got monumentally higher, and NGOs have to employ some of the mechanisms outlined in this chapter to up the ante. Of course, civil society as a whole must also now challenge the dominant, largely uncontested social and economic paradigm that is deepening inequality in virtually every country in the world and between rich and poor nations.

Legal, peaceful but at the same time much more serious action is called for, action which is prepared to take considerable risks to ensure its effectiveness. History teaches us that when humanity has been faced by an intolerable injustice, whether it was slavery, colonialism, apartheid, the denial of women's right to vote, or of civil rights in the US, the struggles for justice only progressed when decent men and women said enough is enough and no more. In the foreseeable future, humanity and all other species could conceivably be wiped out. Silence and timidity, in the face of this terrifying threat, cannot be the answer. Given this reality, we need to question whether we should always stay within the boundaries of the law, which in some cases is un-

just and anti- democratic. We need to learn from previous struggles, which only moved forward when leaders and activists were prepared to put their lives on the line, and to risk arrests where necessary. Defending civil disobedience, or non-violent direct action as it is called by Greenpeace, probably the leading NGO when it comes to using civil disobedience, should be taken up more frequently and vigorously as part of citizen action if we are to ensure that those with power are moved to change significantly and speedily. However, it is critical that civil disobedience maintains a passive resistance character, since violence is strategically, tactically and ethically flawed, however huge the injustice might be.

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Chapter 3»
Accountability

Civil society and accountability

Although there exists an array of mechanisms presently applied to enforce accountability within government, corporations and civil society, there is a seemingly widening distance between the institutions and their constituents. A general decline in the participation of the public in national and local elections, due to persistent public mistrust in leadership, has resulted in a 'democracy deficit', whereby the formal trappings of democracy are attended with ever-diminishing actual substance (Naidoo, 2003). While, in many respects, corporations have begun to take their social responsibilities more seriously than they did previously, their activity within the economic sphere, particularly within the financial sector, has demonstrated how far these entities' practices fall short of giving due consideration to the wellbeing of society.

Within this context, civil society continues to retain high levels of trust in the eyes of the public. A vibrant civil society has been seen as the way to restore trust in social institutions, by promoting active citizen involvement. However, questions have nevertheless been raised regarding the degree to which CSOs are accountable, not only in the management of funds, but, most particularly, in respect of the community to whom the organisations purport to be of service.

In this chapter, we will attempt to unravel the meaning and implications of accountability for civil society in practice. This will be done by tracing the root concepts for the practice of accountability and then examining some of the difficult questions raised as a result of this investigation. Each of the main mechanisms and frameworks for accountability will be presented, and their strengths and weaknesses explored. Following this, careful consideration will be given to the challenge of civil society accountability in diverse community contexts.

The nature and importance of accountability

Accountability defined

Within any institution that serves a role in society, there are generally mechanisms in place to ensure that the actions of the institution are in accordance with the norms that society has a reasonable expectation will be upheld. These are the limits and rules that an institution

accepts, or are imposed upon it, to promote trust in the functioning of the institution.

On the most literal level, 'accountability' implies being held to account for one's actions. When actions are judged as being right or appropriate, this judgement is made in relation to certain ideas as to what should or should not be done and whether the action was suitable for the context in which it was applied (Bovens, 1998). Therefore, we can say in more precise terms that accountability involves the justification for a set of actions, in terms of relevant norms, as appropriate to a particular context.

The reason it is necessary for institutions to have mechanisms of accountability in place is that society has certain legitimate expectations regarding the role the institution is supposed to fulfil, and expects it to uphold certain standards of practice. For example, we expect that a corporation will not use funds for purposes other than those that are designated, and that the state will not channel public funds to pay for private expenses. These expectations are held because it is understood that society can only reliably function if these principles are respected and that the consequence of not adhering to these principles will be a loss of credibility and gradual breakdown of trust.

Accountability can also be viewed in ethical terms. Society collectively judges that certain ideals should guide institutional actors. A corporation should be guided by ideals, so that, for example, it treats its workers with dignity. Government, it is generally held, should live

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up to the ideal of public service. It is this ideal of public service that leads ministers to resign in the British parliamentary system when there have been errors or misconduct within a government department under their leadership, even if the minister was not personally responsible (Marshall, 1991).

Another dimension of accountability is that an institution has obligations towards constituents or stakeholders. These are the people the institution serves, or from whose actions the institution gains the power or legitimacy to act. Within a democracy, government gains power to act through the vote of the general public, so the government should be answerable to the people. From an environmental vantage point, we can also say that society, and especially industry, only has the power to act due to the resources that the earth bequeaths, which, in turn, entails that we should collectively be responsible in our actions towards the environment.

In reality, these dimensions of accountability intertwine and overlap. For example, through the ethical ideal of democracy, we come to realise that a government should be responsive to the constituents, who are the citizens of the state. This, in turns, leads to rules being put into place for elections, which become the functional basis for accountability in practice.

Accountability is necessarily a matter of degree. No institution can be completely unaccountable as this would lead to chaos, since there would be no internal or external controls. Certain rules and feedback mechanisms are necessary just for the processes, products and services to take place on a reliable basis. If these controls were not in place, the right hand would not know what the left hand was doing and there would be no way to coordinate effective action.

All institutions within society are governed by sets of regulations according to which certain standards of accountability are legally held in place. The formalistic legal level is a narrow interpretation of the functional dimension of accountability. Laws set the standards according to which an institution functions in society. When these rules are violated, the institution is likely to be legally liable for its actions. Enron, for example, subverted the rules that guided accountancy practices, which ultimately led to the indictment of the chief executive. However, there may also be principles or standards of accountability which are not legally enshrined, but should still be upheld by the institution, since these conform to ethical norms that lie beyond present practice. In these cases, citizens might advo-

cate that these standards become established in law. As an example, in the years leading up to the 2008 financial crisis, there had been a widespread use of subprime mortgages in the United States. The companies selling these mortgages were acting unaccountably, since they did not act in good faith to the customers, even though in the locations where they were operating, their practices did not formally break any laws.

The relevance of accountability for civil society

To understand the importance of accountability within civil society, it is necessary to consider the general role of civil society and how it emerges. The most fundamental aspect of civil society is that of citizens coming together to advance a shared idea for the good of society. As citizens, we might be aware of improvements that can be made to our own or neighbouring communities, such as helping children who should be getting a better education, isolated elderly people, or abandoned animals that require taking care of, or reducing the number of unnecessary deaths from curable diseases in impoverished countries.

Where citizens are conscious of a wrong or a situation that should be addressed in society, it is the duty of the citizen to act conscientiously to work towards ensuring change and improvement. This is a superlative ethical duty that is voluntarily taken, beyond the requirements of law. It addresses the ideal role of citizens, to promote reciprocity among people, communities and the environment. Although Bob Marley chanted, 'Stand up for your rights', he could equally have sung 'Stand up for your duties', since this is as much an integral part of the meaning of citizenship (Linklater, 1998). While citizens can act on their own accord to promote conscientious action, it is much more effective for people to work in groups. This is where civil society comes into being as an active sphere.

Therefore, civil society is the space where citizens come together to act conscientiously to effect change and improvement within society and for the community. The range and diversity of civil society organisations reflects the myriad paths and perspectives that can be taken towards improving society. These include organisations devoted to weighty issues, such as global poverty and climate, established institutions that promote representation or learning, such as trade unions and universities, as well as clubs that bring people together for shared activities such as chess and football.

Civil society organisations reflects the myriad paths and perspectives that can be taken towards improving society. Including organisations such as trade unions and universities, as well as clubs that bring people together for shared activities such as chess and football.

The efforts of citizens working together to promote change has, throughout history, brought about real and lasting improvements for society. Movements such as the suffragette movement, the early development of trade unions and abolitionism shaped the institutions and wellbeing of humanity. The right of women to vote, decent labour standards for workers and the ending of the slave trade can all be traced to the bold actions of citizens mobilising through civil society.

The levels and scope of accountability

The practice and advancement of accountability, whether within civil society or in institutions with which civil society interacts, varies. They depend on the purpose of the civil society activity and the level of engagement. Where the purpose of an organisation is to deliver services, the considerations of accountability pertain to the micro level and are orientated towards relevant local factors. Civil society is often directed towards efforts to change and improve national policies at the meso level so as to advance the recognition of a group or the appropriate realisation of a human right. In circumstances where the structure of governance is inadequate for the proper fulfilment of state duties, civil society may aim to refine the rules of governance that will be legitimately acknowledged at a global or regional level (Naidoo, 2004).

In reality, all these levels interact and are interdependent. The micro level of service delivery often requires attention to the meso level of policy formation. Similarly, the macro level of rules of governance effectively frames both. Part of the challenge for civil society organisations is to be mindful of the interrelationships among these levels, so that when providing a service at a local level, they are also aware of the influence of government policy for the effectiveness of the service provision. Similarly, CSOs that work in advocacy at the macro and meso levels should consider the influence that their activities may have on individuals and communities at the local level. The geographical use here of macro (global and regional), meso (national) and micro (local), has a limitation since even at the local level you can have governance and policy struggles that need to be fought.

In South Africa, for example, one of the fights civil society engaged in immediately after Nelson Mandela was elected was to push for a Domestic Violence Act, which has significantly empowered organisations working to combat domestic violence. Investing energy at the policy level can reduce the number of people you need to support the direct delivery of services.

However, policy change is often more difficult than simply running a particular project. It also needs to take account of the wider context of governance at the macro level. The ability to change policies can be restricted if the governance framework is flawed. In apartheid South Africa, when I was trying to work with my colleagues to change the education policy, we were limited in terms of what we could achieve, since the whole governance at the top, which determined what policy was adopted, was undemocratic, unjust and racially biased.

When James Wolfensohn headed up the World Bank, civil society advocates would sometimes get to a point where the management of the World Bank would agree with the policy being pushed by civil society. However, we were sometimes told that the Board of the World Bank, the Bank's governing body which determines the framework for policy making, would not support that view. Closer examination of the governance of the World Bank revealed that it was governed on a one-dollar, one-vote principle. Even though the World Bank mainly made policies that affected poor countries, these countries had very limited power within the governance of the Bank. Consequently, over the last two decades civil society organisations have been addressing not only governance deficits at the national, provincial/state and local levels, but also at the transnational and global levels of governance.

If you are a non-profit organisation mainly delivering services, the challenges of accountability are different from those of an organisation that is trying to influence policy. They are also different from those of an organisation that is primarily trying to change structures of governance. Accountability systems and the way you seek to show your accountability will vary according to your focus. Furthermore, remember that today more and more NGOs are involved in delivery, in policy and in governance. We should bear in mind that there are a lot of policy think tanks that are also NGOs, which do really important work but are not connected to those that are doing actual service delivery on the ground. This does not mean that every organisation trying to influence policy also has to have delivery of projects and programmes. However, if there is no accountability towards the people affected by the policy changes these organisations propose, then they need to work in alliance and partnership with others which are directly accountable to communities. Otherwise the criticism can be justifiably levelled that their policy demands are being made from an experiential vacuum.

Everyone wants to see quick returns, something that is sometimes called the 'magic bullet' of development.

One of the key issues I want to reiterate in relation to this is the length of time it takes for success to be achieved or impact to be measured. If you are trying to deliver a project or programme, within one to three years you are likely to see some results – a measurable increase, for example, in the numbers of children attending school or women accessing safe shelters. However, if you are trying to change the governance of the World Bank, you are probably talking about a 10 to 20 year time frame. Because interventions at the level of policy and governance require more time and more perseverance, they don't fit into bilateral agencies' development funding cycles. Everyone wants to see quick returns, something that is sometimes called the 'magic bullet' of development. Even though changes at the governance and policy levels can deliver the biggest impact, they are the hardest to fund and hardest to resource.

When we ask ourselves what is driving accountability and civil society accountability today, we need to recognise that people in rich countries and countries with stronger democratic traditions can learn from those of us in poor countries or who have weaker democratic traditions. This is because 20 years ago, our governments were challenging the legitimacy of civil society on the basis that we were not elected, even when they themselves in some cases had not been democratically elected. Due to the fact that we had to deal with these pressures for so long, you tend to find that the oldest and actually the best codes of ethical conduct for the NGO community were developed in developing countries. For instance, SANGOCO (South Africa National NGO Coalition), the organisation where I worked before CIVICUS, adopted a code of ethical conduct in 1997. When we adopted ours we discovered that there were equivalents in Uganda and elsewhere that had been adopted 10 years earlier because of the pressures there to be accountable and establish legitimacy.

At the same time, I think it's vital that civil society groups don't become too inward-looking about accountability, or too bogged down in bureaucracy. It's important to keep a perspective, not just on our own accountability, but on our role in holding others to account. It is important, too, that we should not expect the same accountability mechanisms from civil society organisations, acting in the public interest, and businesses, whose primary reason for existing is to deliver profits to shareholders.

Accountability at the global level

On 20 November 1999, the world was confronted with scenes of mayhem as thousands of demonstrators converged on Seattle to campaign for a fair global trading system at the World Trade Organization (WTO) conference being held in the city. Although these demonstrations were the most vociferous public display against the WTO, they were only the outward manifestation of criticism that had long been directed by civil society organisations against multilateral institutions.

In the wake of the Seattle protests, critics questioned civil society's legitimacy to forcefully press their agenda on democratically elected governments. As *The Economist* (1999) noted, the organisations at these demonstrations 'may claim to be acting in the interests of the people – but then so do the objects of their criticism, governments and the despised international institutions'. Although wary of the enthusiasm of the anti-capitalist activities, the magazine did not so much condemn the liveliness of the protests as the claim by organisations to be representing the poor while advocating policy agendas that might even be inimical to their interests. After all, '…governments and their agencies are, in the end, accountable to voters. Who holds the activists accountable?... Who elected Oxfam?' (Slim, 2002).

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This question is particularly striking in light of the role civil society organisations have come to assume in the international domain. The last 25 years has seen the resurgence of a vigorous civil society that positions itself to directly challenge governments, corporations and multilateral institutions on internal policies and practices. Bypassing traditional notions of sovereignty, organisations composed of concerned citizens see themselves as standing in solidarity with the marginalised and oppressed, and as actively guarding the sanctity of the environment. The credibility that the civil society organisations hold is essential for their standpoint to be taken seriously.

Although democratic governments are elected by the people and therefore have their legitimacy grounded in representation, the actions of the state, even in a democracy, can be and often is misguided, irresponsible or wilfully destructive. Whilst elections serve as a fundamental mechanism for accountability by which to ensure that the formation of the government to some degree reflects the will of the people, periodic elections are not sufficient to ensure that in the intervening periods the state does not act in ways that are contrary to the wishes or interests of the citizen body or global community. One does not have to look far to find instances of democratic governments

quashing human rights, cutting essential social services or launching unnecessary wars.

Often it is only the dissent of citizens that can forestall governments from going down a path that is unhealthy or dangerous for the social good. Civil society is a domain where people can gather and organise together to act on interests that are shared, not only among themselves, but with society and the global community as a whole (Nerfin, 1986; Korten, 1990). The civic space is an arena where citizens can take a step back from the work of governing or the business of corporate affairs, and ask with an open mind and a compassionate heart: Are we acting properly as a society or global community? Are we looking after the most weak and vulnerable? Are we properly educating our children and tending the sick?

The direct action of civil society to provide services to the marginalised and oppressed is a channel by which the conscientious acknowledgement of suffering can be followed by a commitment to give. Citizens may voluntarily come together through CSOs and conscientiously offer to support individuals and communities where help is needed, but for which government services are either unavailable or inadequate. Time and again, as wars, tsunamis and epidemics affect distant parts of the globe, civil society organisations have been at the forefront of helping victims and rebuilding communities. Civil society has the potential, then, to serve as the conscience of global society, though only to the degree that it properly assumes its exemplary role.

In practice, there are two models or paths that CSOs adopt in their civic activities. One is to serve as interest groups acting competitively in the public sphere to advance their particular interests or beliefs. In this model, organisations advance their constituencies' interests without considering how this might affect the broader community, or other groups in society.

Alternatively, a civil society organisation can understand its role as acting upon a duty towards society as whole, by advancing the common good or promoting human rights through the particular cause that it serves. For this latter path, the obligation rests upon the CSO to prepare the best case to demonstrate that the objectives it seeks to realise are in the shared interests of society or the community being served. In other words, for CSOs to serve as the conscience of society, the criticism that is directed against current social practices and institutions needs to be directed inwards, to ensure that the position being advanced is, in actuality, reasonable and justified.

Within all human societies there is a propensity for error and delusion that can lead to the perpetration of injustices. For this reason it is always necessary that there should be a conscience that raises critical questions, whispers loudly so that everyone can hear, points out faults and errors and acts as a constant agitator (Arendt, 1972). But for that standpoint to be tenable, organisations need to engage in introspective reflection, to guard against errors in their own judgement.

It must also be remembered that levels of authority are related to issues of power, privilege and influence. For example, the level of authority that CIVICUS has is limited, even though it is broader-based in terms of its membership than Oxfam, because Oxfam has a brand name, it has a media machine, huge amounts of resources, money from governments where it is based, and so on. However, I don't think authority is static; it ebbs and flows. A practical example is the Centre for Youth and Social Development in the state of Orissa in India, whose authority increased significantly during the super-cyclone, because the state was unable to address the crisis effectively. The ability of CSOs, led by the centre – which is managed by a visionary leader, Jagadananda – to engage with immediate problems was so significant that government had to defer to them with regard to decision-making as to how to deal with the effects of the super-cyclone on the local community.

In addition, the authority of civil society organisations grows when there is a sense that the government in power has very little legitimacy. During the apartheid era the authority of civil society in South Africa was significantly higher than that of government. Anything a civil society leader said would carry more weight, even within the mainstream media, than what was said by government, because the government was seen to have such a deep legitimacy deficit.

Civil society dynamics: Relations between donors and civil society organisations

Although they may sometimes earn a limited amount through revenue, organisations within civil society are most commonly dependent on the contributions of donors who share a belief in the cause that the organisation seeks to advance.

Donor support within civil society takes various forms. NGOs commonly receive the support of a few major donors, generally foundation or country donors. Trade unions, some religious institutions and some campaigning organisations, such as Amnesty International and

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Greenpeace, are membership organisations. Many organisations rely on fundraising from the general public, often combined with major donor support. I should note in passing here that in terms of thinking about income there are other models that seek to reduce dependency on major donors. For example, Age Concern England (ACE), seeks to raise income by selling insurance services to over-50's.

Where civil society organisations receive support primarily from a few major donors, as is most commonly the case, the dynamic that necessarily develops between the organisation and the donors can often prove highly influential in shaping activities and projects. In particular, since the donor is able to choose which projects to finance, this allows the donor to monitor the design and application of civil society programmes.

In one respect this relationship with the donor, an inevitable component of civil society dynamics, serves as a crucial channel by which organisations are held accountable. Civil society organisations receive funds provided voluntarily and so must constantly prove themselves to donors if their funding is to continue. Hence, CSOs are forced to operate on a 'perform or perish' principle, which can be effective in ensuring that they reach certain standards in their programmatic activity (Naidoo, 2004). In reality, if organisations do not perform as resource providers think they should, they often perish. However, the drawback of this relationship is a tendency for the priorities and discretion of the donor to become a key factor in determining the structure and content of civil society programmes.

The influence of donors over civil society organisations manifests itself in several ways. Primarily, the method by which the organisation manages, reports upon and evaluates its programme largely takes place within frameworks that are required or recommended by the donor. Within the context of international development, the foremost methodology that has been adopted within organisations is the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). While the LFA has proved useful in ensuring that the programme being implemented is systematic and internally coherent, the framework has nevertheless been widely criticised as being reductionist in its analysis. In particular, it could be said to focus on narrow metrics of impact to be accomplished within the time frame of the project, generally around three years, rather than on whether the project is appropriate for the community (Ebrahim, 2002).

Moreover, the continuation of donor support is often accompanied by conditionalities which the organisation is required to apply in order

to demonstrate that its practices conform to donor demands. The choices and priorities of the donor often follow from geopolitical realities. Country donors have insisted that products or tools that are directed towards development projects are purchased from the country funding the project ('tied aid', as it used to be called). The consequence has often been an unnecessary waste of donor funds, inefficiencies and the use of tools that are inappropriate to the local community where they are being applied (Fowler, 2000).

The power that donors hold in relation to civil society programmes can lead to CSOs practising 'upward accountability' towards the donor to ensure that their requirements, priorities and criteria are met, rather than 'downward accountability' towards the community, principles and ideals that are central to the organisation's mission (Najam, 2003).

Another complicating factor today is the blurring of the lines between civil society, the corporate sector, and government. On the one hand you have several civil society organisations that are developing income-generating businesses and are straddling the corporate arena. For example, the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh has one of the biggest cell phone companies in the world. But on the corporate side you can have corporate giving coming directly through the Ccorporate Ssocial Rresponsibility department which can lead to a lack of clarity. For example, American Express have set up the American Express Foundation within non-profit law. It has the status of a non-profit entity, so while they might be a donor, they are also part of the galaxy of civil society organisations and institutions. There is a good body of knowledge from the European Foundation Centre and the Council on Foundations, the two umbrella bodies for the US and Europe, who have come together and developed a set of accountability principles, but the whole environment is much less straightforward than it needs to be.

Assessing impact

In recent years impact assessment has emerged as the principal means by which civil society organisations that serve, represent or advocate for communities are held accountable. The discourse of 'impact' emerged from the practice of cost-benefit analysis and environmental impact assessment within development projects. Impact assessment has, however, moved beyond solely economic and environmental aspects to include social or cultural dimensions. The fashion for impact assessment has been reinforced by an emphasis on results-based management that emerged from business practices, and has been adopted

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within the public sector to support the drive towards greater efficiency; and within civil society in response to donor expectations of demonstrable results.

There's no doubt that impact assessment has some strengths as an accountability method. It can give some indication of the effectiveness of programmes; close monitoring of the effects of activities also allows organisations to evaluate, learn from mistakes and make improvements; and it can also provide an evidence base for a programme's continued support. Yet there are a number of difficulties with using 'impact' as the main frame of reference for civil society accountability. Impact may not always be obvious, may be hard to trace, and harder to attribute. The pressure sometimes placed on NGOs by donors, including foundations and trusts, which are, in terms of their registration status, non-profit civil society organisations themselves, turns the potential of philanthropy into what I term *foolanthropy*. Too often the quest is for instant success or a quick return on investment, which means that false claims are made about progress. Huge pressure is put on recipient organisations to present progress. In an attempt to please donor organisations, they often do so in ways that do not necessarily tell the full truth. This tendency has often led to programmes and services not being sustainable once the donor interest in the initiative wanes.

Where an organisation faces pressure in an environment where it is competing for a limited amount of funds, it can lead to grandiose presumptions that a change in society is attributable to the organisation's programme, when the reality is far more complex. Since it is so difficult to meaningfully demonstrate medium-term impacts where a myriad of entwining factors come into play, the temptation is to focus on tangible and quantifiable results, usually short-term impacts. This not only affects the quality of the assessment, but also the nature of the activities undertaken, which are often guided by the concern to quickly show impressive results, with organisations becoming focused on meeting short-term needs rather than addressing the underlying problems or local institutional dynamics.

The capacity-building framework and capabilities approach

Whereas the primary concern of participatory mechanisms is the direct interaction with community members as a mode to promote conscientious development, the capacity-building framework is concerned with the ways by which the community can be concretely strengthened through civil society activity.

A dilemma that is faced by civil society or any institution that aims to promote a benefit through service provision is the risk that this will induce a dependency by the recipients on the service. Those services that hold such a risk are certain types of aid or welfare that enable the recipient to survive, but do not help the individual or community to emerge from their present situation. This can lead to a situation where the individual or community becomes progressively more dependent on the provision of the service, meaning that skills for self-sufficiency or community sustainability atrophy, creating a vicious circle.

In contrast, services that build the skills of recipients, or provide the ability or opportunity to gain such skills, enable the recipients to become empowered or increasingly self-subsistent. This can also enable recipients potentially to confront the underlying issues that have created the challenges they face. The capacity building framework is a model which allows us to consider whether the civil society programme serves to strengthen and empower the recipient of the service and thereby avoid inducing dependency. The services likely to build capacity are those such as education, where skills or knowledge are cultivated, or health, which strengthens capacity by enabling the participant to be free from harmful disease.

Another perspective on capacity-building developed by the esteemed economist and philosopher, Amartya Sen, focuses on functioning of freedom as the most fundamental element of development. Sen's theories were developed in response to the prevailing orthodoxy that development consisted primarily of economic growth, according to which a state may industrialise and thereby raise the overall income of citizens (while taking little account of differences of distribution). However, the consequence of the narrow promotion of economic growth was that in the short to medium term there was little provision or improvement of social services, leading to unnecessary suffering. Sen argues that rather than the goal of development or public policy being to maximise economic growth, it should instead aim to increase the capabilities or freedom of the population (Sen, 1999). There has since been further development of this approach to include 'wellbeing' as a key indicator of development, which has an additional benefit of being inclusive of all sections of society, including older people and those with disabilities, whose interests are not traditionally considered in development (Lipman, 2009).

The implications for civil society accountability are that the fundamental measure by which a programme should be assessed is whether it has increased the capability of individuals and communities to

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achieve their potential. This provides a framework by which the maximising of impact can at least be qualified within certain parameters so as to be sure that it strengthens the community rather than causing dependency.

An exemplary model as to how this framework has become established within civil society is the microfinance programme of Grameen Bank. Rather than provide direct poverty relief to indigent women in Bangladesh, Grameen Bank provides a micro loan by which the individual can start a small business, which can then be paid back progressively. The strength of such an approach is that a loan is provided which would otherwise only be available at usurious rates. However, the loan is only for a very small amount, enough to start a business that is suitable for the local context. As such, the participants in this programme gain income and skills by which to establish their livelihood on a self-subsistent basis (Hassan, 2002)

Based on the ideas of Sen, a 'sustainable livelihoods' model has been developed whose emphasis is strengthening the capacity of the community to provide for its own subsistence. The livelihood approach aims to assist a community primarily by learning what the livelihood assets are that already exist in the community, and how these can be strengthened. Such assets may be health, access to education and sources of credit. Attention is also given to the vulnerability factors faced by the community, which determines how the livelihood assets may be used reliably. Also considered are the livelihood strategies generally adopted by community members in the context of the problems they face and how these practices can be improved (IFAD, 2009).

Codes of conduct

In response to the growing calls for civil society accountability, there have been serious collective efforts by CSOs towards self-regulation, which have steadily gathered momentum. The central focus, in this regard, has been the development of codes of conduct that uphold principles and standards to which CSOs are required to adhere. These codes have been prepared at the national, regional and international levels, as well as for certain sectors. A 2006 study reviewed 35 such codes of conduct, including the Code of Conduct for Somali NGO Networks (Lloyd and de las Casas, 2006), Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International and the Pakistan NGO Forum Code of Conduct.

While the proliferation of codes of conduct shows that civil society organisations do not take their obligation to be accountable lightly, there are weaknesses that remain pervasive among these codes of conduct. Foremost among these are that the codes are generally voluntary and do not have legal enforcement mechanisms. Many of the principles and standards that are laid out effectively remain aspirational. Moreover, many CSOs do not have the means or institutional structures to put such standards in place (ibid.).

There are, nevertheless, a number of codes that include enforcement mechanisms, demonstrating greater promise as an effective method of accountability. One such mechanism is the requirement that an organisation assess its compliance with the code and submit a work plan as to how compliance will be achieved where this falls short. Another common feature is a complaints mechanism, to which stakeholders can turn when civil society organisations fall short of acceptable standards (ibid.).

A further critical aspect is the content of the codes and the type of accountability that these emphasise. Since country and regional codes of conduct have often been developed in response to pressure from donors and the state, they tend to emphasise priorities pertaining to organisational management, especially the management of finances. However, within such codes of conduct, there is very little mention made of accountability towards the community, and relevant standards, such as requirements for participation. The codes of conduct for sectors such as humanitarian aid tend to emphasise the technical aspects of service provision and how this should reach certain levels of quality, but do not include the importance of considering community dynamics when designing or implementing programmes (Lloyd, 2005).

From defensive to proactive accountability

So, how in practice can civil society organisations ensure that their programmes and policy demands have a legitimate basis within the social context and strengthen their accountability? After all, civil society as a vehicle for the mobilisation of citizens shares the same liabilities and weaknesses as do individual citizens, or indeed the institutions that civil society criticises. Practical accountability mechanisms can help ensure that the actions of civil society are demonstrably guided towards the wellbeing of the community and society.

I would argue that civil society organisations need to respond to the accountability debate in a more strategic way, and give more consid-

eration to how they can take the lead in strengthening their own accountability. For example, when CIVICUS was trying to build support among international NGOs for an international NGO accountability charter, we approached several of the most prominent brand-name NGOs. Nobody disagreed with the idea; they all said it was an important area to be addressed, and that we should do it. However, all the public opinion surveys, even those produced by fairly conservative organisations, have shown that in the world today most people have high levels of faith in NGOs and other non-state actors, and low levels of faith, trust and confidence in government and business. Therefore, many of the leaders of the big international NGOs took the view that because they were already trusted there was no reason to invest resources in this area.

However, CIVICUS presented two reasons why they should. One was that trust should never be taken for granted; on the contrary, it's something that needs to be nurtured. The second was that if we didn't take action to strengthen accountability, there would be an attack on us and we would have to address these issues on the defensive. Sadly we were right. In 2003 a conference took place in Washington DC called 'Holding the Unelected Few Accountable,' organised by the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative organisation that could be characterised as President George W. Bush's and his Vice President Dick Cheney's personal think-tank. The whole tenor of the conference was that NGOs are undermining the sovereignty of nations; the organisers also criticised companies like Nike, for example, saying that by bowing down to the pressure from some NGOs to change their labour-hiring practices in Asia, Nike was also undermining sovereignty. That conference persuaded a lot of international NGOs to say 'let's get our act together'. These attacks gave impetus to the historic International NGO Accountability Charter which, while still young, is having an impact on the practice and accountability culture of the bigger international NGOs.

If we were to ask ourselves why this has become a big issue now, we would have to be honest with ourselves and say that actually this debate should have taken place 10 or 20 years ago. The reason the debate is happening, and why in the last eight years in particular it has become more urgent, is the discourse of the War on Terror, the curtailment of civil liberties and the shrinking of democratic space generally. According to CIVICUS' Civil Society Watch Programme, at least 60 countries around the world have passed or proposed laws in the last five years that restrict the role of citizens' groups, using the War on Terror as an excuse to justify that.

If we didn't take action to strengthen accountability, there would be an attack on us and we would have to address these issues on the defensive.

Even without these pressures, I would argue that there is still an ethical imperative to respond to this challenge. We should recognise that even if nobody is putting pressure on us, if we receive money in the name of people whom we are seeking to serve, if we expect to be heard at tables of governance, to talk to our governments and put forward our views on policies, ensuring strong accountability in our own activities is the right thing to do, not simply something we ought to do.

Accountability at the local level

Having examined some models for accountability, we shall now consider the dynamics of the local context and the importance of sensitivity and responsiveness to the community. While there is great diversity among the types of civil society organisations and their respective functions or purpose, for the most part all can be understood as serving a local community on various levels.

The term 'community' is one that implies a shared meaning or purpose (Cohen, 1985) or interdependence of needs within a group of people. In this respect, a community can exist on many levels, wherever there are institutions that serve a common purpose or hold a set of needs. Hence, a village can be a local community, as can subgroups within the village, such as women or the poor. Every group that shares interests, such as musicians, farmers or activists can identify itself as a community. A society within a nation-state forms a community to the degree that there is a level of shared institutions and interdependence. Even the society of nations at the international level is sometimes referred to as the global community. Hence, a community is not a single homogeneous entity, but an identifiable unit representing shared commitments among its members, one that overlaps, interacts and may come into tension with other identifiable communities.

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There are many ways in which considering accountability of civil society in terms of the community is important. Firstly, an organisation providing a service should be accountable towards those who are being served. The unique position of civil society is that, unlike a democratically elected government, which receives a mandate from the choice of the people, the willingness of a civil society organisation to serve a community generally arises from the voluntarism of the organisation, rather than at the request of the community itself. A civil society organisation acts from its mission to promote a good

cause within a society. As such, it is crucial that the organisational vision corresponds to the community's needs and aspirations.

Secondly, the community as a unit of consideration represents not just the individuals directly served by a civil society programme, but the broader context of which the individuals are a part. Any activity that an organisation undertakes unfolds within a sphere of interacting socio-economic dynamics and institutions. A CSO entering a context should be aware of the possible effects of the programme beyond its direct application and be prepared to take a measure of responsibility for these.

Thirdly, a community will often have cultural values and institutions that to a certain degree define the way of life for community members. An organisation that introduces a programme into the community will necessarily interact with its local culture and can potentially disrupt that culture. While cultural change is inevitable, it is essential that the organisation be mindful that a legitimate basis for an intervention may disturb local cultural norms, and give consideration to the perspectives of the community members to whom these are of intrinsic value.

The issue of 'downward accountability' stems from the difficulty of demonstrating whether the activities of an organisation are relevant to the community and whether the organisation is answerable to community members on this account (Najam, 2003). While in most cases a community is likely at least to give formal consent to organisational activity, whether the community gives comprehensive consent to the content of a programme can prove far more contentious.The power gap between the often better educated and technically more skilled leaders of organisations, especially those who work in a professional capacity, and the volunteer members of community groups is extremely wide. It is therefore critical that the power differences are acknowledged up front rather than pretending everybody is starting from a level playing field. There is much scope for improvement to enhance greater levels of accountability to communities being served by NGOs and other civil society organisations.

The degree of community involvement, of course, very much depends on the nature of the civil society organisation and programme. A membership organisation, which provides a service primarily to its members, such as a trade union, is accountable to the community being served. An organisation that emerges from and is based within the community that it serves is likely to be close to the community. With an organisation that is based at a regional, national or interna-

tional level, there is potentially, at the outset, a wide gap between the organisation and the community to which there is a purported commitment.

A perplexing matter to consider here is the role of religion within a community. The legitimacy of religious institutions can serve as an interesting counterpoint to questions about civil society legitimacy. In particular, the question can be raised with regard to religious practitioners: who are they answerable to in their actions? The specific issue of religious involvement within civil society will be examined in more depth in a later chapter.

Meeting the challenge of accountability

Just as it is better for citizens to act together than alone when conscientiously fulfilling duties to improve society, so it is better for civil society organisations to collaborate in considering how contextual dynamics should be taken into consideration in pursuing its goals. Since many communities share similar cultural or socio-economic characteristics, it is possible through deliberation to arrive at propositions and principles that reconcile contrasting values and complex social dynamics. To this end, it is important that, on the global level, there is a deliberative space wherein the intricacies pertaining to issues such as the relationship between culture and human rights, economic growth and wellbeing, and so on, are not presupposed but are considered collectively, from various angles, through active thought and dialogue.

In particular we need to actively and vigilantly recognise the following issues:

1. The NGO sector is not homogeneous and its diversity needs to be acknowledged at all times.

2. In attempting to draw lessons from other countries, we need to recognise that we cannot have a 'one size fits all' approach; local circumstances must be taken into account.

3. This process ultimately involves people, and people can bring a lot of their individual socialisation, baggage and ideological bias into play. Therefore the highest levels of integrity, transparency and openness need to be built into any process seeking to develop a self-regulation framework.

4. We need to ensure that it is not only service delivery organisations that are brought into the frame but also those that are orientated towards advocacy work.

5. We need to ensure that any self-regulation framework does not become a gate-keeping instrument and that it is open to reflection, evaluation and change over time.

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While efforts to develop accountability frameworks might appear to be daunting, the process can also be productive and developmental. It is critical, therefore, that whatever methodology a country, region or sector chooses to pursue, the very process of choosing the methodology should be an educational and capacity-building one. People should be empowered as a result of this process and the public at large should be engaged wherever possible. To meet this challenge we need to explore ways in which we can mainstream this process – For example, investigating how we can get public broadcasters and the media involved in promoting public discussion. We should also not rush the process: 'more speed less haste' should inform our approach.

In the long term, having effective accountability systems in place, systems that are respected by NGOs, trusted by the public, and work effectively for the particular social context in which they are applied, will lead to a more effective NGO community, with increased possibilities for new and sustainable indigenous resources.

Accountability is the missing ingredient. Its absence contributes to curtailing excellence in government, business and citizens' organisations. It is therefore critical that citizens' organisations implement working accountability practices, thereby maintaining the highest levels of accountability, transparency and legitimacy, while urging government and business to do likewise.

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Chapter 4 »
Citizen organisations and the business community

Historically, big business in particular has been harmful to the environment, has promoted and engaged in corruption, ignored human rights and generally been exploitative. Citizen campaigning has over the decades restricted the excesses of business practice, and forced business to think not only of its conventional capital but also to see value in its reputational and relational capital. The last two decades in particular, have seen the emergence of a significant number of ethical codes of conduct, reporting frameworks, such as the Global Reporting Initiative, and moves in a positive direction on the part of several business entities to address their negative social and environmental impacts. While this must be acknowledged, it is fair to say that collectively the business community has done too little too late.

Just as it would be wrong to talk about civil society as some homogenous monolith it is equally wrong to talk about business in a similar way. The size of businesses, whether they are micro, small, medium, or big and operating in several countries, all creates important differences in terms of what positive social impact we can expect from the business community. Public trust surveys have shown declining levels of public trust in business leadership and there is a growing sense that business today enjoys far too high levels of influence on public life. The United States Congress, for example, can be described as the best parliament money can buy, given how corporate money has polluted US democracy. While the US perhaps shows the problem in the extreme, this tendency is genuinely world-wide today.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall we have seen two contradictory impulses on the part of the business sector. On the one hand, some felt that socialism had been defeated and now was the time to engage in unhindered profit-making, irrespective of social and environmental impacts. On the other hand, as more business leaders began to understand how serious the threat of runaway catastrophic climate change might be, they began to embrace symbolic, voluntary initiatives such as the Global Compact initiated by the former secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and to support the emergence of organisations such as the World Council for Business for Sustainable Development.

Yet, there are fundamental problems, particularly concerning the framework within which big business operates. These include spiralling levels of senior management remuneration, particularly CEO pay; the manipulation of national policy-making by business to advance its own interests, such as the fossil fuel industry's efforts to promote the notion of 'clean coal', and other attempts to generate false utopias; the siphoning of huge amounts of wealth from the South to the North; and continuing, high levels of exploitation of workers in developing countries and elsewhere. That there are important exceptions to this rule must be acknowledged, but overall the story of business is not a good one.

The manner in which growth has come to be measured is also deeply problematic. For example, we largely have stock market or paper growth which does not generate decent work opportunities and has largely been growth without equity. It is for this reason that those of us from civil society who have chosen to engage with the business sector in forums such as the World Economic Forum at Davos have understandably been on the receiving end of criticism from human rights, development and trade justice groups. Yet, whether civil society activists like it or not, business is a very dominant reality in all that happens around us. Furthermore, organisations that are primarily engaged in delivering services at the micro level have close relationships with the business community, depending on it for financial contributions. So in practice civil society is divided about how to deal with the business community.

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From a climate endangerment perspective, we need to recognise that if we do not generate a 'green race' to replace the 'arms race and the space race' of previous eras we will not have the possibility of ensuring that greenhouse gas emissions peak in 2015 and diminish thereafter. This means getting some leading global companies to show serious, courageous and inspirational leadership. I believe strongly that there is no harm in engaging the business sector in short-term projects and programmes that seek to address the context of the most vulnerable men and women and children on the planet on the one hand, while, on the other, challenging some of the more structural problems with the way business has been allowed by irresponsible governments to operate on a largely unregulated basis. To be fair, though, there is a growing number of business leaders, such as the CEO of PUMA for example, who are impatient at the lack of political will on the part of the political class to make the tough decisions that can protect this planet for future generations. There are other business leaders who want clear environmental legislation, which ideally puts a price on

carbon, and which will give the business sector the confidence to invest in clean technologies and in low carbon growth strategies. The absence of this clarity has in actual fact contributed to the lack of progress on the part of several businesses in the US and elsewhere.

So clearly there has to be fundamental rethinking about what kind of global economy is needed to deliver environmental sustainability, sustainable development, and peace and security. The efforts of civil society in exposing bad business behaviour must be intensified. Searching for a social and economic paradigm that creates decent work, is ecologically grounded and ultimately creates greater equality is a massive task which will see many civil society organisations coming into conflict with business from time to time. Yet, we must also examine how we can get business to change its approach to profit-making and engage in something more humane, where people are put before profit. This chapter focuses on some of the key challenges in the existing engagement between business and civil society organisations, given that it is in the real world that civil society exists and engages.

Corporate social responsibility

During the years I worked in adult education with the Sached Trust in South Africa, we produced a civic education supplement each week. We needed to let people know what we were doing, but more importantly we wanted to share the scarce, high quality educational resources with the maximum number of people who needed them, so we approached what was then the Argus Newspaper Group (now the Independent Newspaper Partnership) to help widen the distribution. As a result, our reach increased exponentially. From their point of view, the Argus Group realised that due to the ascendancy of technology, newspapers were under threat from greater competition for their current reader base. Given that there was a huge population with poor literacy rates, it was in their interest to help educate new readers in order for their business to grow. Both the non-profit and for-profit organisations achieved objectives they might never otherwise have reached by collaborating and partnering with each other.

Historically, civil society has had a non-functioning relationship with the business community, frequently seeing business groups as contributing to the problems they need to overcome. The main relationship, if any, was through the cheque book, and the motivation for the business organisation's donation was either to meet corporate social responsibility (CSR) targets, reduce taxation through tax breaks or to

provide the business with some good public relations – a fundamentally shallow interaction. There is a widely held belief that companies such as British American Tobacco and BP only engage in their high-profile environmental campaigns in order to divert attention from their core businesses, which have proved harmful to the environment or to individuals.

Some commentators, such as Milton Friedman, would argue that the sole reason for the existence of a corporate body is to maximise the return for its shareholders and therefore that social responsibilities should not be taken into consideration by business. The view is that such responsibilities should be assumed by the individual in society, not the corporation. However, I would argue that it is the responsibility of the business community to ensure that shareholder interests do not progress at the expense of the individual or the communities in which it operates. In fact it is possible to go further and take on board the belief held by many religious and indigenous communities that the economy exists to serve the community.

Some years ago CIVICUS developed an International Corporate Engagement Taskforce to help civil society move from its begging bowl mentality to identify a more strategic approach to business. The findings reflected that for the business community, corporate social responsibility could be extremely important at a functional level if implemented in its true sense.

By opening infrastructure and facilities to community groups, businesses can significantly widen the scope of influence and interest in their products and services, while contributing to the local community's wellbeing.

What is involved here is relational capital, which expresses the importance of the business sector examining and investing in the variety of relations it has with workers, the community and beyond, from an environmental and social perspective. For example, many corporations have training facilities that are underutilised at weekends. In this context there have been positive models of big businesses opening up their infrastructure and facilities to communities in the localities where they operate.

The potential advantages to business of this kind of action, in terms of relational capital, are considerable. By opening infrastructure and facilities to community groups, businesses can significantly widen the scope of influence and interest in their products and services, while contributing to the local community's wellbeing. Sharing skills – in, for example, marketing and financial management – through secondments to the non-profit sector is a way of enhancing both business and civil society at the same time.

If a business can supply a valuable resource, such as a marketing person, for an hour a week for a year, this probably represents far more than a cash grant as these are skills that many small non-profits cannot actually find or afford. All of this is indicative of the way in which the business community has much more to offer than just opening their cheque books.

The starting point of engagement

If a business organisation can find a way of delivering a socially responsible output that is linked to the core services and products that they actually produce, there is a greater chance of sustained engagement on the part of the business in question.

The example of the Argus Newspaper Group demonstrates the possibility of achieving a synergy, where their assistance in promoting positive change in the local community was also in their own business interests. If we look at a larger-scale company such as Microsoft, it makes sense that it investigates how to make its software and other technology available free of charge to non-profits, schools, and so on. In a way it is easier for a company like Microsoft to seek to contribute in an area in which they have an evident competency and expertise. As long as their business is viable there is a good chance that their social responsibility programme will have long-term success. Some, though, point out that the way in which Microsoft has gained business dominance ought to see the company being convicted for violat-

ing laws (weak though these are) that seek to restrict monopolisation of a sector of the economy by one or a few business entities. Indeed, Microsoft has spent tens of millions of dollars defending such legal actions in the United States and in Europe. So those that want a fundamental change in the way business is working will justifiably argue that Microsoft software donations to schools and non-profit-making organisations cannot compensate for the unfair business practices that Microsoft engaged in to achieve market dominance.

I should point out that many commentators use the words 'engagement' and 'partnership' quite loosely when talking about the business community working with the not-for-profit, sector. These words actually cover a wide range of diverse interactions between profits and non-profits, anything from the equivalent of a one night stand, to a slightly longer flirtation, to marriage. However, it needs to be recognised that the corporate sector always controls the balance of power, no matter what the structure of the relationship is, because they have more resources, capacity, staffing, and so on. In the same way, as talking about 'partnership' between Northern and Southern NGOs can be misleading, because the power relations are so unequal, the uneven balance of power creates problems in relationships between for-profits and nonprofits.

What place does business have in public life?

This is an increasingly difficult question given the vast range in the scale of business organisations. Small to medium sized companies sometimes do a great job of contributing to local communities. Large corporations are expanding beyond national boundaries, bringing about new challenges in how to identify strategies for putting back into the myriad of communities they affect.

The convergence of multiple crises poses challenges for business of all sizes. Two years ago the fuel price increase brought many businesses close to the brink of collapse. This extended into the food price crises, linked to hoarding and speculation by agricultural businesses. The financial crisis has left none unscathed. And the environmental crisis threatens the viability of the entire planet, with even the major scientific body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, now suggesting the situation is dire.

It's time to question the obvious contradictions. Business has to moderate expectations of the return on investment to its shareholders. Even George Soros, investment guru and philanthropist, calls the

kinds of returns of recent years 'excessive'. Companies listed on the stock exchanges of the world simply cannot continue to grow via the conventional logic of growth without equity – or jobless growth. The countries of the world cannot address poverty and development problems without providing decent jobs. It's essential for the business community to buy into the work agenda by creating decent and sustainable green jobs.

Furthermore, business as a whole must cease to consider the market as though it is a god-given construct. We know that it is a human construct which, in the past two years, as the banking crisis has precipitated an economic downturn, has been shown to be flawed and imperfect. Whilst cost-saving job-cutting often increases share prices in the short term, it also has a negative impact on consumer confidence in the company, which will ultimately result in share price reductions.

The unabashed over-consumption in the developed world is simply not sustainable. What North America spends on pet food in a year could give every African three meals a day. And when we look at the current perfect storm, the response of both government and business has largely been incremental tinkering that has been unsuccessfully presented as substantive change to make big business more accountable. But largely it has been a business-as-usual approach. It is probably helpful to remember the words of Albert Einstein when he stated: 'We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.'

The complexities of the issues relating to the relationship between business and the environment are clearly illustrated in attitudes towards recycling. Recycling is about finding ways to make our goods and services more sustainable. Clearly, recycling paper means we chop down fewer trees, which is good for the planet as trees are the lungs of earth. However, there is a whole business community which exists on the basis of growing trees and selling them to the paper industry. So, if there is an increase in the recycling of paper this ultimately means, for example, that Sappi and Mondi, the duo-monopoly in the paper industry in South Africa, will have to recognise that their profit margins could be under threat, and will need to rethink their whole output and business model. . Failure to adapt now means they could potentially die, but before that happens this means they will have to cut jobs, which could leave people in poverty.

Another example would be in regard to General Electric (GE) and the other global electronics firms, and their sale of electronic goods. These goods are aggressively marketed and it is very much in GE's interest that consumers buy new or upgraded products. However, if we truly want to change behaviour to become more environmentally sensitive, we should be encouraging people to use products for a longer period and to ensure that products can be upgraded when necessary rather than having to be thrown out. However, this is not being addressed by the business community. Despite reductions in the energy consumption of many electric products it is still very much business as usual in terms of moving more and more products out of the door, a problem exacerbated as a growing middle class throughout the developing world wants to spend the money that they earn.

If all the citizens of the world shared the same standard of living as people in the OECD countries we would need almost 8 planets to deliver that. The terrible reality is that the people paying the highest price for the catastrophic results of climate change are those coming from the countries least responsible for carbon emissions and environmental pollution, because those countries have relatively low levels of industrialisation. There has to be a fundamental rethinking of the way business operates, what products they produce, how they produce them and how they remunerate and judge value for remuneration. The scandal of the banking industry is a case in point.

The whole structure of incentives is one that lacks any social incentive at its core.

The levels of remuneration of chief executives and top tier management have to be addressed as a fundamental issue. The whole structure of incentives is one that lacks any social incentive at its core. The excessive remuneration and bonuses are in keeping with a system where few companies are judged on what they contribute to the community, as this does not normally make up their performance assessment. When companies do engage in 'giving back to the community' it is often viewed as something that is 'nice to do' rather than 'critical to do'. Business needs to look afresh at its role in community re-investment, understanding that this is not charity; it is about paying your dues.

Companies are dependent on the environment in which they place their factories and production facilities, dependent on the community for their labour, sales of their goods and services, and without the community and consumers, companies cannot thrive. In 1999 Rajesh Tandon from India, who was then the chair of the CIVICUS board, and I wrote a book with a concluding chapter entitled 'Civil Society and the Millennium'. In this we argued that the very notion of citizenship in its broadest sense is undermined when the business com-

munity largely sees people as consumers of their products and services, and politicians see them merely as voters to get them elected.

All of which has helped to undermine the credibility of the business community. At the risk of sounding alarmist, I would predict that if the global business community in the next five years does not wake up and recognise how serious the situation is in the world, it will probably be too late for them to reverse their lack of legitimacy, respect and trust with their consumer bases that are critical for their survival.

Leadership in the business community

When I was secretary general of CIVICUS we decided to move from Washington to Johannesburg. The US dollar bought you eight Rands, so we negotiated all our contracts in dollars and we recruited internationally, but had to write the contracts in Rands according to South African jurisdiction. Management knew there would not be significant increases in their salaries on an annual basis. However, we pushed our salaries to the limit to attract good staff. Even though there was no actual increase in salaries in Rand terms, people's salaries doubled in dollar terms, because by the time the actual shift of headquarters happened the dollar was at R10. At one point a dollar bought you R12 but by 2003 the trend had reversed, so that R6 bought one dollar. Due to the strengthening of the Rand, salaries paid in dollars doubled. As a result CIVICUS was facing potential bankruptcy in 2004. We had to raise twice the number of dollars to pay the same salaries. I took myself off salary, for example, among other things that had to be done to survive. Now imagine if the currencies had moved the other way. My Board would have said we needed to raise half as many dollars, or we could have employed more staff, and there could have been more generosity on the part of CIVICUS to its staff. Timing is everything. With no skill or competency issues involved, had I planned the budget at one dollar equals 6 Rands, and the currency had weakened and one dollar bought you 12 Rands after we moved to South Africa, CIVICUS would have been able to provide more programmes and had more staff.

These variables are indicative of the way in which business itself constantly lives on the borders of its notion of success or failure. No CEO can possibly control the variables that his or her business is subject to. This highlights the fact that timing, rather than skill or competency, can heavily affect the wellbeing and organisational health of the for-profit and the non-profit sectors.

We have to revisit whether excessive capital accumulation, with people having 10 houses, flying in private jets, having security guards, and so on, can be sustained. When I look at my own country – the city that I grew up in, Durban, and where I live in Johannesburg – I see that higher levels of wealth do not generate higher levels of happiness, security and wellbeing, because the wealth gap grows to such an astronomical level. The excessive 'haves' have to think about how they protect themselves from the desperate 'have-nots', and so the security walls steadily rise in height, giving nothing except a false or merely physical sense of protection.

Furthermore, we need to address our current crises with reference to history, since the solutions will so often be found within the problems. The world was not prepared for the fall of communism. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, complacency of huge proportions has prevailed. Governments and big global corporates saw capitalism as the panacea for everything. With no competing ideologies, there have been no checks and balances, leading to the 'casino capitalism' mentality that has prevailed. In 1997, Bill Clinton and Jim Wolfensohn publicly warned that the world needed a new financial architecture, yet nobody reacted, nothing changed – until September 2008 when it all fell in a heap. It's now clear that it's in the best interests of the business community to push for more certainty and less anarchy in the global financial markets, even if no -one was saying this five years ago. It's important for business to recognise that it cannot control everything. It has an interdependency with political structures and communities.

The changing contract between business and society

The contract between business and society has changed over the years. I would imagine that this is a necessity in order for business to have a consumer-driven licence to operate. Most businesses have seen their obligations at the minimalist end of the spectrum, restricted to the basics of engaging in honest, legal actions with regard to their local communities (even if these principles are not necessarily upheld when multi-national corporates operate in countries at a distance from their consumer base). However, so far the contract has not been widely seen by business in a holistic or moral way, and this is what needs to change.

Business might be behaving better at fulfilling its perceived side of the contract between themselves and society, but it is still not enough. How business views the contract, and how behaviour changes in light of this more morally binding view, is critical in this moment of mul-

tiple crises we find ourselves in. The reality is that many of the largest national institutions are now partly nationalised, including many banks in the UK and United States. The anger of ordinary people is simmering since it is their tax money and increased national debt that have been used to pay for the mistakes of a few. The fact that the CEOs of banks then paid themselves bonuses after being bailed out by taxpayers' money has also generated outrage.

Business often takes its lead from government and policy. If policy-makers are appeasers, then business leaders have not felt the pressure to change. Waiting for pressure from the system is no longer viable. But business people are citizens too. They have a personal interest in a habitable future for our planet. The description of 'habitable' refers not just to climate change and the fact that business has obligations in that arena, but also to the overall harmony and wellbeing of everyone, the ability of all to contribute to society. This wider challenge must be partly met by businesses of all sizes if they are to grow and prosper.

So, for business, there has never been a more critical tipping point, or a greater need to re-think and re-invent corporate citizenship. The fundamental structural changes required will take time, but that does not mean business leaders should sit on the fence. In the short term, business needs to determine strategies for change at the macro, meso and micro levels. To this end, business leaders can begin by coordinating and cooperating with NGOs and local organisations with shared interests. Business must break down the silos of competition and operating categories to work with others for changes that will benefit all. Success should be measured horizontally, upwards and downwards, and has to be recognised as more than the annual profit increase. Most importantly, every business must recognise that it can make a contribution to change for everyone's gain, but only if they integrate corporate social responsibility practice into profitable business activities.

Chapter 5 »
Secular and religious civil society dynamics – How do we break the barriers and bridge the divide?

This chapter engages with the dynamics of secular and religious civil society. It explores the nature of secular and religious civil society, sketching out the oppositional impasse that must be overcome for the realisation of the full potential of civil society. It advocates a communicative approach for effective future citizen action and the advancement of civil society towards genuine civility.

Central to the discussion is the complexity of the interaction between secular and religious civil society, an interaction characterised by difficult and highly nuanced challenges. The chapter suggests different categories for these challenges, namely: definitional, values, accountability and organisational architecture. The path towards resolving the challenges is mapped out against the backdrop of significant historical experiences of secular and religious communities working together to advance justice.

The chapter calls on secular civil society to address the sources of its animosity towards religion and traditional knowledge, as opposed to scientific and modern knowledge. Secular civil society is called upon to explore why religion is sometimes associated with 'incivility', and whether this link is absolute and justified.

Communicative action and a collective motivation towards rational agreement is therefore advocated as the ethical route towards true civility. Given the enormous challenges to humanity, it is imperative for secular and religious civil society to engage effectively, build relationships and find common ground, thus creating the necessary capacity to address the challenges effectively.

I'm not going to be naïvely romantic regarding the extent to which immoral acts have been justified through religion. On the contrary, a large emphasis will be placed on the duties of religious leadership. At the same time, the approach advocated in this chapter is one that has been criticised heavily by various secular activists, in particularly gender equality advocates, as being too soft on religious leadership. However, what is being called for is not the justification of immoral

domination of women, but the engagement of religious leaderships and faith-based organisations (FBOs) in order to foster a change of attitude from within such orders.

The difficulty in writing on such a complex issue reflects not only the philosophical complexity of ethical reflection, but the practical difficulties that I have faced both as a human rights advocate myself and more importantly in my facilitator role at CIVICUS. There will always be some who argue that even the communicative approach I am advocating here is tantamount to cultural domination and ideological imperialism. However, I believe that progress can be made, and that there is a common humanist element in all moral systems, secular and religious. Moreover, I would argue that there is no alternative in a world where our problems are increasingly shared. Collective problems such as climate change require collective action, but in a world where international political institutions are deficient, there needs to be a global unity behind the necessary action, and that can only come from civil society if differences along religious and ethnic lines can be overcome by an ethic of civility. In this sense it is a global call to action against oppositional attitudes and disrespectful relations; a call for a coming together of secular universalists and religious traditionalists in a common cause.

The nature and extent of the divide between secular and religious civil society

I endorse human rights as a universal statement of morality, but the way in which we act upon that is far from straightforward. The moral imperative they imbue is clear, and in many cases religion itself seems like *the* barrier to justice. It will be argued, however, that it is not religion per se that is the barrier. And although there is a huge responsibility on the part of religious leadership to act against certain morally abhorrent practices, there is an equal onus upon secular civil society to engage with religion in an effective, purposeful and respectful manner. This engagement needs to be one that is based on a genuine understanding of difference, and mutual respect. If religion is not given the appropriate space and motivation to engage, then we deny religious organisations the opportunity to act morally. This is what happens when religion is demonised and secular civil society acts with explicit disregard and moral superiority within the social space where both have an equally legitimate concern.

An examination of what changes need to occur so that the energies of secular and religious citizen groups can be brought together for

maximum impact on a broad range of issues may largely be a question of practical reason and ethics. However, it does require a significant level of understanding of the nature and extent of the divide to be breached.

The definitional challenge

How do we define civil society? It means different things to different people, depending on your sphere of activity, your background, and so on. One definition is: the sphere where citizens voluntarily associate to advance common interests. But how do faith-based organisations fit into this description? Often it is not a choice to enter into a religion; you are born into it. You may have a choice to leave a religion, but for most people the initial choice of becoming a part of a religion is not theirs to take. At the same time, FBOs often work on a secular basis. Islamic Relief, for example, doesn't provide services only for Muslims. Where should the line be drawn between CSOs and FBOs, and is the line necessary?

In 2002, CIVICUS needed to develop a working definition of civil society because it was going into the new phase of launching the Civil Society Index, one of its most important programmes. What was agreed was that civil society should be understood as 'that realm of space between the state, the market, the individual and family, where citizens voluntarily associate to advance common interests'. This definition, however, is immediately problematic when it comes to religion, because in practice when people talk about civil society organisations (for example, when the UN talks about accrediting civil society organisations to participate in its processes), they are talking about a space where citizens associate 'voluntarily'.

In one of the meetings, the question was starkly raised that a definition based on voluntary association actually excludes religious organisations because very few people in the world 'choose' their religion. Rather, the choice is passed on through family tradition. Religion is held to be the collective choice, or the collective 'will' of the people. This raises an important point relating to the kind of understanding of freedom we are seeking to operationalise. It's part of a debate which has tended in the Western philosophical tradition to view freedom in terms of the individual, and as a function of their autonomy. It is from within this intellectual tradition that such a question of 'voluntariness' would be raised.

Where should the line be drawn between civil society organisations and faith-based organisations, and is the line necessary?

This debate has implications for our understanding of the way we see civil society: that is, as a product of a particular historical development, formed under certain contingent conditions in Western Europe. Attempting to find a definitive place for religion in the language of civil society is difficult and fraught with contradiction. 'Civil society' is a fundamentally modern phenomenon, as it is defined in relation to the modern nation-state and largely in terms of the individual.

The language of secular civil society is inseparable from Western development. There's no need to apologise for this, so long as we can be confident that we are thoroughly committed to resolving the moral issues such an agenda poses with the utmost ethical deliberation, humility and conscience. This will permit religious leadership to do their duties within the context of the modern world, rather than according to the ideological whims of the West. If we take such a civic-republican view at the global level, we can attempt to justify our agenda and our approach by showing that the moral standards championed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are indeed non-arbitrary demands.

Civil society is an ideal associational type which is designed to facilitate living with difference, with difference defined as a particular way of viewing society. The fundamental demand this places on religion is that it must recognise the validity of plurality in society. This is part of the attitude of 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' that you can find in Adam Smith's social psychology in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* – a sentiment that President Obama asserted as a universal truth when he spoke at Cairo University in June 2009, and one which underpins the communicative ideal emphasised in this chapter.

Attempting to find a definitive place for religion in the language of civil society is difficult and fraught with contradiction. 'Civil society' is a fundamentally modern phenomenon, as it is defined in relation to the modern nation-state and largely in terms of the individual.

Potential rifts between civil and religious notions of freedom

A major contention between secular activists and many religious traditionalists is that when you say 'voluntarily associate to advance common interests', the common interests that certain religions sometimes pursue, based on a particular reading of scriptures and a practical wisdom handed down over the years, can be perceived, both in modern-day Western society and non-Western contexts, as actually tantamount to being 'uncivil', and in many cases morally abhorrent. For example, the intolerance towards gay and lesbian people, the domination of women and the patriarchy and male dominance in religious leadership are in contradiction to the main secular currents of civil society.

Martha Nussbaum tackles the issue of the 'voluntariness' of social and religious orders. Here, as with all liberal focus on freedom of association, the extent of freedom to associate is directly linked with the individual's ability to leave such relationships, namely, the equal freedom to disassociate. Nussbaum calls into question the legitimacy of social orders and moralities (religious-based or other) that enforce high levels of threat, fear, punishment and deprival of knowledge when it comes to certain groups such as women, and general dissenters, who wish to exit the religion. This is an issue that bedevils all religions to a greater or lesser extent. To elaborate on the issue, Nussbaum asks the reader to consider a woman called Vasanti, who, despite unhappiness, is psychologically incapable of leaving.

> [Vasanti] stayed in an abusive marriage because of 'desire-deformation' induced by intimidation, contempt and neglect. Vasanti stayed for years in an abusive marriage… Like many women, she seems to have thought that abuse was painful and bad, but, still, a part of women's lot in life… The idea that it was a violation of rights, of law, of justice, and that she herself had rights that were being violated by his conduct – she did not have these ideas at that time, and many women all over the world still do not have them.

We often see huge contradictions between a formal position and actual practice in religion. A further example is that some of the worst sexual abuse of young men and women has occurred within the Roman Catholic Church, which has given a bad name not just to Catholicism but religion as a whole. This has raised the crucial question of to what extent the Catholic Church and its various appendages are to be considered part of the broader family of civil society. If it is given unquestionable status as a civil authority then it gives a bad name to the broader community of secular civil society, where one of the key changes that activists have been struggling for has been a dramatic reduction in the high levels of sexual violence against women, as well as young girls and boys in society as a whole.

Such problems reflect the issues that often make religion difficult for secular actors to engage with. Religion is sometimes seen as one of the main obstacles to eradicating the social injustices that secular civil and social movements are tackling. However, it must not be forgotten that we are not only dealing with religion in its institutional guise, we are also dealing with people, and their concrete identities. It is often these very people that the citizen-based and civil society initiatives are working to help. This means that religious orthodoxy is not a barrier to overcome as such, but an authoritative voice in people's lives

that needs to be engaged in dialogue, creating a platform upon which we can help to foster a genuinely respectful civil society in which people can develop and have the moral motivation to behave according to a civic duty or virtue.

When secular civil society organisations look at religious communities, they have to take into account one fundamental thing, which is that whether they like it or not, religious institutions have the widest reach in terms of membership, resources, depth of commitment and so on. If you are trying to wage any campaign, such as tackling climate change or poverty eradication, then you have to engage with these institutions and these contradictions.

The basis of respectful dialogue lies in mutual understanding, which makes respectful dialogue possible. This can help enable religious leaders and institutions to reflect upon how their own religious perspective can interact with and benefit civil society as a whole, including their followers.

The values challenge

When I was growing up in South Africa there was an organisation in Durban that was part of the global Catholic youth movement called Young Christian Students (YCS), and another called the Young Christian Workers (YCW). They were highly radical in their analysis, far to the left of most secular civil society youth organisations.

Religion is set to play a definitive role in contemporary society, if it is given the opportunity to adapt to the plurality and the progressive demands of the global challenges we face.

They remain a reminder of why one should not ghettoise religious civil society groups into 'minimal' educational roles. Some of the deepest intellectual critiques of how the world is being governed – its trading systems, inequalities, and so on, have actually come from within faith-based institutions.

The point is that to equate religion normatively with traditionalism in this way, suggesting religious organisations are unable to perform civic humanistic functions, is wrong. Modernisation has actually facilitated the growth of religion in many respects, as religions have taken advantage of the networking possibilities to organise on a global scale. Religion is set to play a definitive role in contemporary society, if it is given the opportunity to adapt to the plurality and the progressive demands of the global challenges we face. If we do not facilitate its role, we risk not only creating a huge barrier to worldwide citizen action on issues such as global disease, climate change and food shortage; we also risk provoking a civilisational clash that is far from inevitable, and would be entirely our own fault.

In a complex modern world, all participants must find a way to work together to fight common problems, both natural, unforeseen, and those that we create ourselves as we self-indulgently emphasise minor differences rather than concentrate on the overwhelming similarities and common interests of humanity. If this is the boiling point, the crisis time, then we need to develop an ethical framework around which such common interests can be facilitated, and common problems effectively addressed.

As citizens, religious people have a right to associate and the right to a freedom of conscience which supports their religious way of life. Although religious institutions, as we said earlier, have legitimacy in terms of a quasi-civil mandate from the people affirming their authority, they are also directly accountable to the people themselves. Only with the support of their followers can any order be maintained. Thus their accountability is directly linked to their protection of the actual liberties of each of their followers, in political terms. Their basic human freedoms and rights need to be guaranteed; that is, all individuals have the right not to be killed, raped, abused or dominated. This duty falls to the religious institutions and leadership themselves, who must accept the responsibility that comes with such normative power. Accountability to God must therefore be achieved via accountability to each and every individual within society. This is the kind of civic humanist thought that religion needs to embrace when interpreting its moral role in a modern pluralistic world.

This thinking is influenced by Habermas, whose insights are key, because his theory of communicative action is developed in such a way that the ethical and moral are inseparable when it comes to practical reason. It is this kind of pragmatic ethical reason that must be employed by human rights activists in the public space we call secular civil society, when it comes to the actual and physical processes of moralised action against certain practices and social norms that may be in discord with the moral sensibilities enshrined in the universal human rights agenda. In this sense, Habermas is crucial for our understanding of the ethical duties and responsibilities of *all* those who wish to operate in the public sphere, and that moralised space we term civil society.

All the same religion claims to be in tune with justice. Although there are major differences between different religions and within religions, most contain major humanist and progressive elements that need to be engaged with. A profound understanding of religion reveals the role it plays in people's understanding of their own existence, and how this is related to the meanings and beliefs according to which people live their lives and make their personal choices. Often, these beliefs are fundamentally different from the prevailing conceptions and requisites of freedom in the West, and this throws up contradictions. However, if we are to pay more than lip service to respect and tolerance, we have a duty to thoroughly understand the comprehensive nature of religion.

If our thinking is trapped in the divide between 'modern' and 'traditional' it is simply insufficient when it comes to dealing with any kind of practical engagement. It means that the kind of responsibility and duty to 'understand' and engage on a communicative basis lacks the necessary introspective ethic. This undermines the development of the public space that we would like to term civil society. Communicative action builds the space for further and stronger communicative action in the future, yet it does not necessarily rely on any particular form of 'modernity' or historical development. In other words, communicative action aims to be as neutral as possible, whilst acknowledging that neutrality is itself an impossible goal. Based on this understanding, we must not only recognise that religion is a legitimate source of authority, it also becomes clear that it articulates an important and legitimate voice on all the shared issues and challenges that we face collectively.

It may seem optimistic to call for this kind of ethic, with the emphasis it places on a humanistic understanding of the potential in all actors for 'rationality'. The biggest challenge *is* to create the environment to unlock such a rationality, so that alternative moral standards and practices can be resolved through a mutually reflective process.

The accountability challenge

Amartya Sen, in his book *The Idea of Justice*, talks about the two different approximations to the meaning of justice in ancient Sanskrit (Sen 2009). The first is Niti; the second is Naya. The former refers to procedural justice, which we can roughly correlate with the institutional structure of society, economy, government, even the norms and moral language of a particular society. The latter is an overriding concept, tracing an overall 'directional' flow of justice or 'realised justice'. The two understandings are obviously related and mutually reinforcing.

Moral motivation is the crucial aspect of all theories that strive to find ways of mechanising this underlying idea of justice in Naya, a justice that requires more than Niti on the part of actors in society, demanding that we go beyond the minimums prescribed by our self-contained moralities.

Plurality is a reality that both secular civil society and religious communities, in their many respective guises, have to come to terms with. There should be no enemies in civil society, only people who genuinely seek to realise their common interests, agreeing to disagree on certain issues in the meantime. The first step in creating this civil environment is to allow all voices to be heard. This is a republican sentiment rather than a politically liberal one, and is especially necessary when dealing with people and communities in countries and parts of the world who do not share a liberal history.

Neither the universalistic language of liberal justice nor the law of God are sufficient to justify every action.

We have talked about how civil society actors have a duty to think carefully about such issues. However, we must also consider what the legitimate demands are that can be placed on religion. We must assess what the limits of the use of religion are as a justification, both for endorsing social practices, and for declining to actively use their reach and moral authority within society to fight against certain injustices. We must now, therefore, turn to the duty that falls to religious institutions and, particularly, the religious leadership. What, then, are the limits of religious justification? And what does religion need to do in order to reciprocate in a communicative and propositional engagement?

Neither the universalistic language of liberal justice nor the law of God are sufficient to justify every action. When religion is directly taken as justification for behaviour that is morally unacceptable by today's standards of human rights, serious questions are raised as to the role religion *ought* to play in guiding morality. There are many contradictions within religious practice that give religious institutions a bad name in secular civil society discourse.

However, we have established that religion does have a legitimate role both in civil society and in peoples' lives, and we need to be aware that within each religion there are progressive voices which are striving to be heard and need our support. I make a point of saying to every religious leader I meet that there is nothing in their scriptures that says abuse of and violence against women and children is acceptable.

The constitution of some religions makes their relationship with civil society and its laws more problematic than others, and the largest difficulties exist within Islam, in which the Quran is taken to be the literal word of Allah, and the effective legal constitution. But the general point remains the same. Within all religions, including Islam, there are humanistic commonalities that have the potential for ethical progress towards shared justice. More broadly, and in terms that relate to the accountability and responsibility of all civil actors, progress will only be made if secular civil society organisations as well as religious institutions and organisations understand that people are not essentially beneficiaries, clients, charity cases and victims, but citizens imbued with rights and responsibilities – citizens worthy of both respect and being consulted in meaningful ways regarding the issues that they face in their daily struggles and in life generally. In this sense, religious bodies must accept the ethical obligations placed on them in a pluralistic world. This means that religion, if engaged with respectfully and given the chance to act voluntarily alongside secular civil society in the service of common humanistic interests, must adapt to the demands of the human rights agenda. This shouldn't be seen as an existential threat to religion, and its comprehensive worldview, but it does put a conditionality on certain fringes of its activity, and imposes a responsibility to act within its moral capacity to advance the general ethical consensus embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This does not mean that secular citizen action cannot address morally questionable practices within religion, and push for change through dialogue. It is paramount, however, that engagement is sought and dialogue is based on grounds of mutual respect and understanding. This is for several reasons. The first is that an individual's freedom is intimately linked to their self-understanding, which is often formed in terms of religious practice and religious identity. At the same time there's a moral imperative for secular civil society and the more moderate and positive forces in religion to engage in creative ways. Although we have a duty to those groups – women and others – who are suffering now, the long-term goal of creating a civil environment for engagement rather than estrangement, and propositional discourse rather than oppositional stand-off must remain at all times in the minds of secular civil society

and citizen action organisations. Only if they keep this in mind will the long-term environment be created in which the issues that they are so virulently opposed to can be dealt with on a level that can penetrate the norms and the civil culture of a society. It is as much of an imperative not to undermine the foundation building for discourse between members of civil society, especially in terms of religious institutions, as it is to resolve morally dissonant practices of the moment. Reasons must always be given to religious institutions as to why issues are so urgent and why it is important that religion itself takes up its moral duty to outlaw and publicly reject such practices.

Examples abound of campaigns and civil actions with positive outcomes as a result of successful engagements between secular civil society and religion.

The question then arises whether there is an onus on secular communities to engage with the more moderately religious organisations. With regard to this, I hold the view that it is in the strategic interests of secular civil society to humble itself and to engage. Examples abound of campaigns and civil actions with positive outcomes as a result of successful engagements between secular civil society and religion. One example from the post-apartheid South African experience is the campaign that led to a National Men's March on Violence against Women and Children held in Pretoria on 22 November 1997. Religious leaders were mobilised by an awareness that their silence regarding the fact that every six seconds one woman in South Africa is raped was 'deafening'. Nothing in the scriptures rendered acceptable abuse and violence against women and children. The campaign highlighted the obligation of religious leaders to stand up in their temples, churches, mosques, synagogues and so on, and speak out against this injustice, because men within their religious bodies were probably engaging in such violence and in some cases even the leadership of some of these institutions were too. While the campaign caused significant discomfort to some in the religious community, who felt they were being pushed too hard, others, such as the woman's movement, felt that the campaign's approach was too soft. Ultimately, the National Men's March on Violence against Women and Children brought together a broad coalition. The disagreements between the secular and the religious proved of less significance than the fact that all got together because of their understanding of the enormity of the issue, and that it will not go away without them embracing it and speaking out. The creation of this common understanding opens a door for religious thinking to pass through and join secular civil society on the other side. The more of these doors that are created and passed through, the more progress can be made. It sets a basis for deeper conversations in the years and decades to come. The strategy, therefore, ought to involve finding ways of highlighting the moral repugnancy of silence or non-engagement on the part of religious leadership and highlighting the fact that silence means complicity.

The challenge of defining civil society is a moving target. As a practi-
tioner, engaging with the intellectual literature on the one hand, and
how it operationalises itself on the other, I feel there is no doubt that
religious organisations are part of civil society. However, for most of
the secular progressive civil society, when they think about which
religious institutions they see as part of civil society, it's a particular
strand of organised religion. It's not necessarily the Catholic Church
or the Vatican per se, but the Catholic Agency for Overseas Devel-
opment (CAFOD), CFFD (France), Caritas (recognised by the Pope)
and CIDSE. These organisations are fairly progressive on a number
of issues, but they struggle with condom use, women's right to choose
an abortion, gay and lesbian rights and so on. Nevertheless, notwith-
standing a certain level of intellectual confusion, in practice organ-
ised religion in the form of its developmental and charitable arms has
largely been accepted as a legitimate part of civil society.

Every religion claims to be working for justice, according to their
particular interpretation of it, and claims to be protecting social or-
der. However, there are many contradictions within religious practice
that seem to directly challenge the idea that it is really the people's in-
terests that they have at heart. Order is an important goal for society,
yet it is difficult for any religious leader to claim that male domina-
tion of women is a necessary part of that, or that suppressing the free-
dom of homosexuals to live without fear and exclusion in some way
contributes to it. On issues such as these, religious leadership needs
to do more to fight against the kind of social norms that uphold such
uncivil sentiments. Secular and human rights activists have a duty to
engage with such religious forces in a propositional manner in order
to work with them and attempt to address these issues. If religious
leadership can be engaged in such a way, then the chances are that
the injustices involved in these practices will be reflected upon by the
more progressive strands of that religion.

Religion provides a rich
source of community that
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often lacking in individualistic
societies.

The comprehensive nature of religion, and its power in the minds of
whole communities, allows it to provide the kind of social bond and
sense of duty that is largely held to be missing in Western societies.
Religion provides a rich source of community that equates to a social
capital of trust and reciprocity which is often lacking in individualistic
societies. When there is talk of 'broken Britain', or Americans 'bowling
alone', or increasing anti-social behaviour and insecurity, it is apparent
that the social cohesiveness religion brings is missed. In this sense, reli-
gion can play a massive role in serving justice, so long as the message it
serves is adaptable to the requisites of the modern world.

Learning to live with the other: How secular and religious worlds can benefit from their differences

How can a way be worked out to build organisations and to bring them together under one umbrella? One of the largest gatherings for religious groups is the World Conference of Religions for Peace, which succeeds in bringing together different organisations to discuss how to find common ground. Another example is the global campaign for debt relief, where religious and secular civil society came together to work towards one goal, but from different backgrounds.

The diversity within civil society is a strength as well as a weakness. Consensus is not a goal in itself; civil society should have different values and goals represented. When we realise we are different from other people, we tend to exaggerate those differences, and emphasise the best in our own ideology and the worst in 'the other's' ideology – instead of doing the opposite and trying to engage with what we are jealous of in the other's faith or ideology.

Religious groups and leaders possess enormous influence over their followers, in ways that secular civil society cannot. Adherents to a faith become members of a community and are prepared to have their world view shaped by the leaders or teachers of that faith. This places an enormous responsibility on the role of religious leaders, whose reaction can be ambivalent; should they adopt a strong role and try to influence the people of their community regarding secular issues such as the environment, or should they remain detached from secular issues?

The huge importance of religion in a majority of people's lives represents a potential power for positive change which civil society needs to harness and put to work. There may be something troublesome in the secular position, a longing for commitment and stability that religious belonging may give. Religion offers a highly developed structural framework for its followers to occupy, a structural framework with inherent strengths and weaknesses. In a structure you always run the risk of being stigmatised if you reach out to 'the other'; how can you cooperate with 'them' when you are one of 'us'? If you were alone, perhaps it would be easier?

An example of being flawed by one's structure occurred in post–apartheid South Africa. When civil society activists met with the World Bank this was seen as a betrayal by other parts of the activist sphere, who said they were speaking with the enemy, and would become contaminated with capitalist values. But if you are secure and have

confidence in your own values, it shouldn't be a problem to hold a dialogue, to engage and even cooperate with people or organisations with a completely different set of values when your strategic goals are advanced. Rather it should be seen as an opportunity for change.

There's no avoiding the significance of religion as a major social force. What do secular movements want from religion? Secular people see a number of very potent aspects within religious society which they perhaps feel jealous of, such as power, stability over time, and commitment. In some senses civil society could be seen to have turned into subcontractors for the welfare state, but the primary reason for FBOs to exist is faith; not changing the world or even working for development. Democracy, gender equality, children's rights, human rights, and so on – are these concepts natural in FBOs? However, civil society needs to be able to accept that whilst an FBO may not be operating from the same starting point as a secular CSO, both can share common objectives. If both an FBO and secular CSOs are working on a campaign for famine relief, to take a straightforward example, the key issue is that the two organisations find a way to work together in spite of their differences, to maximise the benefit they are seeking to provide.

Religion needs to be considered a legitimate part of civil society without any reservations, so long as its leaders do their part to adapt to social norms and practices that fall within their traditional moral jurisdictions.

The primary reason for faith-based organisations to exist is faith; not changing the world or even working for development.

On 4 June 2009, President Obama gave a speech at Cairo University to a world audience. He spoke of a new beginning, in which religion would play an essential role, and discourse would be the means to a common future. He talked of the massive commonalities that we share as fellow human beings, and the responsibility rests on us all to look inward. Below are excerpts from his speech:

> So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, and who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. This cycle of suspicion and discord must end.

> I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles – principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

Of course, recognising our common humanity is only the be-
ginning of our task. Words alone cannot meet the needs of our
people. These needs will be met only if we act boldly in the years
ahead; and if we understand that the challenges we face are shared,
and our failure to meet them will hurt us all…

Obama's speech has a deep and universal message. Its emphasis on re-
spect based on understanding, and the need to focus on the vast commo-
nalities of interest rather than on the few divisive differences, transcends
the issue of Muslim-US relations that it primarily addresses, speaking to
us all. What I hope to achieve in this relatively brief space, is to empha-
sise that this responsibility falls on us all, at all levels of engagement, di-
rect or indirect, with other peoples, other cultures, and other value sys-
tems. If the rhetoric of Obama is to be anything more than just that, the
ethics that he propelled have to be internalised by all civil associations
who advocate for civil society and human rights based agendas.

If we are to be 'brought together', it means we need to converge upon
a minimum core of common values. Moreover, it means that we need
to develop a pragmatic ethics so that such a common core can be fa-
cilitated, developed and acted upon. The latter emphasis means that
there needs to be room for plurality and difference in perspective, and
for multiple moralities and value systems. They must all, however, be
imbued with a motivation for rational agreement on certain areas. If
we can develop such a communicative ethic, such as that called for by
Habermas, then we can begin to substantiate it, and genuinely un-
leash the power of citizen action. Moreover, if we remember that the
majority of citizens in this world hold some kind of religious belief, it
is clear that religion has a major role to play in this endeavour. Once
the ideal communicative environment is established, the focus can be
placed on developing this common core of values, with human rights
as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constituting
this contemporary minimum core.

Finding common ground

The work of Amnesty International presents a prime example of the
inconsistencies and the struggles secular civil society can face with
regard to religion. The Pope, for example, is incredibly consistent
in his views. He opposes abortion, and the woman's right to choose,
but he also opposes the death penalty, as both concern the sancti-
ty of life. Amnesty can find common ground on the death penalty
but is opposed to his stance on abortion. There are therefore major
grounds for commonality, as well as major grounds for disagreement.

For progress to be made, it is the grounds of commonality, in terms of practical agreement, that need to be built upon.

My assessment is that the dialogue between civil society and religion is increasing; and there is potential for the dialogue to develop in a genuinely respectful manner. When I started the job as CIVICUS secretary general, there was a lot of dialogue and engagement happening as a result of interfaith initiatives which emerged in the 1980s. The work of the World Conference for Religions for Peace should be recognised in this regard. It must be noted, however, that the one significant setback over the last 20 years has been the rise of very militant hard-line components in virtually every religion, a phenomenon that has been popularly called 'fundamentalism'. The mainstream media and even some academic discourse have put a disproportionate focus on Islamic fundamentalism, but if we look at virtually every religion we see a return to fundamentalism of varying degrees.

Unfortunately after the 9-11 attacks the words used by President Bush, and his approach and demeanour, actually inflamed rather than reduced fundamentalism. When he used the word 'crusade', religious scholars in the Islamic world genuinely felt a sense of déjà vu. When he used the phrase, 'You're either with us or against us', he also created this black and white 'clash of civilisations' picture of the world. There are many stories which are hidden and which the global media do not pick up as they focus on religious conflict, painting a divided picture of the religious and secular dynamic across the world, one which tends to highlight the exceptions rather than the rule. In India, Israel/Palestine, the former Balkans and so on, there are regular marriages between people of different religions, something which runs completely counter to the idea that religion is a black or white issue. I think that, over time, a tendency of greater acceptance is likely to succeed.

With regard to the women's movement's engagement with religion, we are seeing increasing dialogue across the feminist/faith divide. People who would never have sat together in the same room are now engaging. I had experience of this while working on the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP). In Beirut, April 2006, there was controversy when people who had worked together for a year on the Make Poverty History campaign took issue with the fact the campaign did not use the language of reproductive rights. In the aftermath of the 2005 global campaign at the Gleneagles G8 summit the feminist movement wanted to see the language of reproductive rights strongly reflected. In contrast, the religious organisations did not want any mention of reproductive rights whatsoever. This standoff potentially threatened to com-

promise the whole campaign. What we did was ask representatives of both groups to go into a room and not come out until they had found a compromise. The compromise that they found was to say the GCAP supports reproductive health. Each party got less than they wanted, but gave much more than they had initially been willing to compromise. This solution effectively allowed a coalition between two key constituents to remain in place. Problems occur when both parties consider each and every inch to be absolutely vital. Engagement is regularly seen as a negotiation in all-or-nothing terms, because the potential effects of compromise on such issues can be seen to be too large.

The last thing secular civil society wants is that after all its efforts to alleviate social ills and help certain dominated social groups such as women, it finds these efforts are undermined by the intransigence of religious belief as it reverts to fundamentalism and identity politics.

The bottom line is that there is a great deal of agreement across the different religions themselves, as well as across different religious institutions and secular civil society.

I advocate strongly for secular civil society to engage in a respectful way with religious civil society, because of their reach, constituency, influence and power, and also because I don't believe they are 'stuck' or 'frozen' in a moment. Things are shifting and moving. It is up to the creativity of secular civil society activists to draw and build on some of that intellectual ferment; and to be as innovative and creative as possible in order to actually help those progressive leaders who exist within all religions.

A great example of this comes from my own country, where the dogmatic belief of the Catholic Church that contraception is unacceptable has been challenged by the Church itself. The Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu has gone on Television to participate in adverts calling for condom use. It may take the Catholic Church another 10 years before it actually shifts from its orthodoxy on condom usage, but Archbishop Tutu has led the way in taking the necessary steps for the Church to engage with the real life needs of the people, and take a positive position.

At the end of the day, it doesn't serve the purpose of good critical dialogue and engagement between people of different views to use their points of disagreement as an excuse not to engage. The bottom line is that there is a great deal of agreement across the different religions themselves, as well as across different religious institutions and secular civil society. We need to do everything in our power to explore this commonality, and to find a way to ensure that civil society and religion can combine to confront the issues which are now facing the planet, and require urgent action, today.

Chapter 6 »
Poverty

'Poverty is the absence of all human rights. Every person living in poverty has no rights. You name it, they don't have it.'

Muhammad Yunus,
Founder of Grameen Bank and Nobel Prize Laureate

In 2006 I attended the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland. A CEO of a large US firm, during an informal conversation, remarked to me that whilst the 2005 WEF forum had largely agreed that poverty was the greatest challenge facing the world, the 2006 forum seemed to have reached the consensus that climate change had now become the biggest problem. He went on to comment that perhaps addressing poverty has become inappropriate. If greater numbers of people are delivered out of poverty, he argued, they will want to consume more, acquiring the trappings of a Westernised middle class. Their newly acquired microwave ovens, refrigerators and cars would only mean that carbon emissions and energy consumption will increase even more.

The reality is that to enable the lifestyles of OECD citizens for all 6 billion or so of the world's population, we would need 8 planets to feed our vociferous consumption. Where does this leave the anti-poverty movement? And more to the point, where does it leave human morality? Can anyone seriously suggest that we allow poverty to spiral so that it continues to affect even great numbers of people, as though informal 'culling' is even worth a moment's thought? Despite efforts in Africa, Asia, the West, on the global political stage and at the grassroots, more and more people are hungry, cold, mired by treatable diseases and living lives that people in developed countries generally cannot even conceive of. How can this be so in a world of such abundance?

Much has been said about the anti-poverty movement, its successes, its failures and its complexities. Debt cancellation; aid and trade justice; gender equality, a rights-based approach and the importance of good governance will all be discussed in this chapter. However, given my opening anecdote, I'd like to begin by saying this: first and foremost the somewhat naïve view that poverty and climate change are two competing challenges needs to be debunked. The struggle against global poverty and the challenge of dangerous climate change, are in fact, two sides of the same coin.

The out-of-balance world.

At the heart of our global problems is the fact that we have a world seriously out of balance with itself. As observed above, the amount of money Western European and North American households spend on pet food each year would translate financially into three meals per day, of adequate nutritional value, for every man, woman and child in Africa over the same period. The European Union invests the equivalent of two Euros per day in subsidies for every cow in Europe, yet contributes a fraction of that to the development budgets intended to balance inequities between the global North and global South.

The English word 'crisis' has its origin in the Greek word '*krisis*', which means 'decision'. The Mandarin and Cantonese character for crisis is also the character for opportunity. We are witness to a time of multiple and multifaceted crises. Now is the time to make sensible, bold and courageous decisions to overcome their nefarious and devastating effects. The first step is to forget turf and territory.

The richest countries are already putting the 'Business as usual' signs back, despite the fact that the recent financial crisis has exposed deep-rooted flaws in the economic model that serves the minority of the planet's citizens, neglecting the needs of the majority of its people. World hunger levels are the highest they have been in decades, with 1.02 billion people (one sixth of humanity) now going hungry each day. According to a recent report from the Global Humanitarian Forum, climate change already affects approximately 325 million people across the globe, costing the global economy around US$25 billion. The world economic meltdown has had devastating effects on the most vulnerable women, men and children of the planet. While one child dies every three seconds as a result of extreme poverty, in 2009 alone US$18 trillion was used to bail out banks and other financial institutions, a stark contrast with the US$2 trillion disbursed as aid in the last 49 years. These terrifying figures are both an indictment of current priorities and a reflection of the consistent misapplication of aid over the course of decades.

Think about how the world has evolved, and all the injustices the world has seen: women were denied the vote; slavery was legal practice; colonialists assumed ownership of and profited from the natural resources of developing world countries with no compensation to the citizens of these nations; civilians suffered death and devastation due to land mines left by occupying forces long after conflicts ended; the idea of demanding policy changes to cancel the debts of poor countries was once scoffed at. All of these are examples of situations where

In 2009 alone US$18 trillion was used to bail out banks and other financial institutions, a stark contrast with the US$2 trillion disbursed as aid in the last 49 years.

civil society actors in different guises opened the debate, even if they were initially dismissed as romantics and idealists. When women in the United States first stepped forward to say that they themselves should decide whether to see through or terminate a pregnancy, they were treated as heretics. Even setting fire to living human beings suspected of practising witchcraft was once a norm.

Immoral, inhuman constructs can only work where there is both a perpetrator and a collaborator. Taking millions of Africans from their homes and shipping them far away to live and work as slaves could never have happened if there had only been Northern 'human hunters' and Africans were not collaborating with this system. The fact is there were Africans who captured and enslaved other Africans, then as now. Today in countries like Mauritania, modern-day slavery persists. Civil society has to lead the way in addressing the profound immorality of a world where poverty is allowed to become acceptable. If not, we are all collaborators in the ongoing existence of this tragic injustice.

Specialisation as a fetish

The challenge in thinking through how to improve poverty activism is to get the balance right between specialisation and integration. Right now, excessive specialisation means the effectiveness of the anti-poverty movement has become as fragmented as the movement itself. So the overall impact of years and years of work is too often diminished, leading to nothing more than incremental tinkering around the edges. It's time to scale up the synergies of the wide body of committed people and organisations to collectively make the large strides necessary to get to the heart of the problem. Looking back in history, I couldn't find a single example where a large-scale problem was solved through strategies which amounted to nothing more than incrementalism.

We urgently need to both improve connectivity in campaigning as well as discourse between the various movements seeking to address these issues. At the moment there's a whole package of dichotomies surrounding poverty activism and poverty eradication, with the debt cancellation movement, the trade justice movement and those seeking better aid justice failing to maximise their resources. The activities surrounding these sets of interrelated, yet distinct goals are segmented and siloed into different specialist areas. These specialisations cooperate at some levels, but fail to coordinate at the levels that could exponentially improve performance on each of the issues.

By way of example, let's take just one of the anti-poverty specialisations, trade justice. By trade justice we mean creating a global trade environment that is equitable, fair and benefits all citizens of the world equally. Within trade justice activism some are focused on gaining equitable, preferential market access for developing countries. Others are more focused on lobbying for eradicating the trade-distorting agricultural subsidies of rich nations. The issues are complicated and convoluted. Citizen activism has to have a certain level of policy and content knowledge in order to engage at the right level of debate. But this does not mean that trade justice should become an issue that stands alone rather than being integrated and connected with the struggle to increase aid or debt cancellation.

There needs to be respect for the specialisation that specific issues require, but there is no excuse for failing to connect the different agendas more effectively. The examples of gender inequality, education and the North/South relationship all clearly show how specialisation can lead to a failure to maximise the potency of civil society resources in the campaign to fight poverty.

The work to address gender inequality is probably the most important poverty eradication strategy. The multiple benefits of empowering women in terms of employment opportunities, education, access to health, financial systems and so on, have greater potential gains for societies than any other. Women play an unequally large role in creating social health and harmony. I have learned from a great friend

The global campaign for education, which in itself addresses a basic need, is equally critical to poverty eradication.

and colleague, Ramesh Singh of Action Aid, that women farmers produce 60–80 per cent of the food in poor countries but own only 1 per cent of the land, thus finding themselves largely excluded from farmers' associations, services and technical know-how. In fact, rural women alone produce half of the world's food but receive less than 10 per cent of credit provided to farmers. Yet the proponents of gender equality seldom use the opportunity to speak out and frame aid, trade or debt relief policies in a gender-empowering fashion.

The global campaign for education, which in itself addresses a basic need, is equally critical to poverty eradication. Education gives people an opportunity to permanently break out of the cycle of poverty. It's the absence of educational opportunities that trap people in a lifetime of poverty. Yet you hardly ever hear the all-important people who deal with education as a form of social empowerment engage in the debate on how 'more and better aid' could significantly change the social status quo in some of the poorest parts of the world.

It's not my intention to pick on any one party. We're all guilty of fostering this incrementalism at times. Specialised debates require specialised knowledge. But the specialisation required to deal with content has become a fetish in the anti-poverty movement. And in the name of specialisation, what we have done is create a high level of parochialism that does not serve the larger purpose. It's not helping to alleviate the suffering of those living in poverty. Things are getting harder, not easier. The numbers are rising, not declining. There are more poor people in rich countries and there is also more poverty in poor countries. To take baby steps towards policy change is good and important, but not at the exclusion of taking the big ones. I firmly believe, and history has shown, that bolder, joined-up initiatives are more likely to fast-track success. It is urgent that anti-poverty activism step back from its own constructs to develop new and more relevant ones that engage with the wider crises, forge new and more equal partnerships, and ultimately deliver more towards addressing the scale of the problem.

Anti-poverty activism in itself must become much more joined up. We can only achieve this if all the players come together to effect a new modality for change. The problem is threefold. Firstly, there is too much fragmentation. Secondly, there is far too little coordination around the opportunities to advance any of the policy areas, individually and collectively. Thirdly the funding modalities that exist actually contribute to the fragmentation. There are demarcated pots of money for governance, gender, economic justice and so on, ensuring that both private and state donors are guilty of a 'jam jars' mentality.

Philosophically speaking, those donors that would normally support trade justice are the same that would also support debt cancellation and more and better aid. If there was a perceptible benefit in separation, such as drawing in new constituencies of people or donors, there might be a justification for keeping each of these movements as disengaged from each other as they are. But frankly, as things stand, what we have is an intellectually created set of divisions.

Another challenge is the dynamic between the North and South. Considerable money flows via governments from the North to their own national NGOs who then find 'partners' in the South. It is important to recognise that anti-poverty activists in the South and North have different comparative advantages in regard to what they can bring to the global fight against poverty. If the partnership is to succeed, it has to start with the recognition of each partner's power differentials in practice. It's better to discuss this in an open and transparent way, rather than pretending, as too often happens, that it doesn't exist. Ground rules need to be set, so that both parties know how to manage these natural tensions, or else the word 'partners' will mask much more than it reveals.

If the partner from the North has the cheque, and the other is seeking the financial resources, often to ensure the survival of the particular NGO in the South, the resulting tension means that the partner in the South feels constantly obligated. There are exceptions, of course, but it's only in the case of the stronger Southern NGOs, those with a level of financial security or political leadership and management willing to stand up to the power of their Northern 'partners', that more equitable relationships are formed.

The Global Call to Action against Poverty: The potential for coalition building

The Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) started as an ambitious experiment in 2004 to connect the struggles of the different movements in and around anti-poverty activism, including the gender justice and environmental justice movements.

GCAP has formulated an ambitious set of demands around poverty eradication, as well as clear climate and environmental change demands, and demands to end conflict as a major driver of poverty disproportionately affecting women and children, gender equality demands and so on.

The efforts of GCAP since September 2004 have bridged many divides, bringing people from different specialist campaigns around the table to participate in joint global campaigning. GCAP has made progress, but it's not the panacea, for the simple reason that whilst it is in these forums that bold decisions can be discussed, this is not enough to ensure the deliberated outcomes will happen. It is only after the collective clarity of thought has been brought to bear that the real work can begin. For example, GCAP acted in a smart and strategic way to consciously embrace climate demands in a policy manifesto called 'The Montevideo Declaration'. In addition to some radical, collectively supported demands around poverty eradication, a clear set of environmental policy proposals have been articulated, specifically around climate change. However, just because something exists on paper, it doesn't make it happen. People can sit in the same space and feel motivated about working together, but once they get back to their offices, and are faced with reporting to donors, acceding to pressures from their senior management to 'focus, focus, focus', the challenge that needs to be addressed is in danger of remaining unattended.

To engage or not to engage?

The contestation is that many anti-poverty campaigners, in choosing to focus on major international summits and citizen action, rather than solely on citizen mobilisation, are wasting their time.

I have noted the writings of some critics who contend that the riots related to IMF policy in the global South have had a greater significance than public engagement and policy advocacy efforts of the GCAP coalition. These comments are made in the context of three clear approaches towards engagement: principled non-engagement, selective engagement and comprehensive engagement with national governments and intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank, IMF or United Nations.

The contestation is that GCAP, and many anti-poverty campaigners, in choosing to focus on major international summits and citizen action, rather than solely on citizen mobilisation, are wasting their time. I would agree with critics that despite the hope inspired by promises made at the G8 over the years, and even more so at the more inclusive G20, generally there is very little delivery after the event, both in terms of resultant communiqués and in real implementation where it counts.

However, there is another side to the argument. Engagement at the international, macro level is often the only way for the developing world to gain a voice. Many of the international institutions are governed entirely undemocratically, with the very parties that are designated 'recipients' being granted a very limited voice. It may seem entirely illogical to deny developing countries a role in determining their own development, but this is the reality. In practice, civil society

organisations, particularly coalitions like GCAP who have the collective power of many, are often the only representative voices of those people that these summits are supposedly designed to focus on.

In 2005, the Make Poverty History campaign set out to engage global citizens around the world, and especially in G8 countries, in the reality and urgency of poverty, a campaign which culminated at the time of the Gleneagles G8. My comment at the closing of the G8 summit was that 'the people had roared and the G8 had whispered'. Make Poverty History may have had its flaws at many levels. But it represented a first step, from which GCAP has learnt a great deal.

The third year of the partnership between GCAP and the UN Millennium Campaign – 2009 – saw over 176 million people, most in poor countries, demand justice by participating in the 'Stand Up' campaign to end poverty and inequality. I am still a firm believer that public engagement on this scale helps enormously in policy negotiations at state and intra-state levels. However, we need wholesale change, not just minor policy revision. This is the challenge for GCAP and many others, including the donor community, a challenge that needs to be engaged with using all the means at our disposal.

De-bunking conventional thought for greater success

One of the first things we need to do is stop thinking about the rich and poor comparison as being more or less along the lines of the North-South divide. The fact is that there is a growing poor population in rich countries, in part fuelled by the economic crisis of the past few years, and a growing affluent population in poor countries. Sometimes being a poor person in a rich country can be even more desperate than being a poor person in a poor country. For example in Botswana, a relatively poor country, after years of civil society activism pharmaceutical companies have had to agree to provide generic drugs at greatly reduced prices. So an HIV sufferer without health insurance stands a good chance of accessing the drugs they need because Botswana is classed as a developing country. However, in Los Angeles, one of the wealthiest cities in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, an African American woman who is HIVpositive, has a low level of education, is unemployed, and consequently has no health insurance, would have no access to generics. She would need a charity to help her. In order to find any available support, she would need a level of knowledge, information and networking to access the non-profits that may try to address the needs of those suffering terminal medical conditions and a lack of access to health insurance. One of the gaps in the whole strug-

The reality for the urban poor is not too different from that of millions of women who are tenant farmers in the developing world.

gle to end global poverty is that we have not connected the struggles of poor people in rich countries and poor people in poor countries.

All too often the scourge of poverty is equated with a lack of money, or exploitation of the poor. The noted Harvard historian, Niall Ferguson, who grew up in Glasgow's council estates himself, observes in his book, *The Ascent of Money*, that poverty has more to do with a lack of financial institutions than their presence (Ferguson 2008). When potential borrowers have no access to fair and efficient credit, they end up in the clutches of rapacious loan sharks, leading to an endless spiral of debt that cannot be repaid. The reality for the urban poor is not too different from that of millions of women who are tenant farmers in the developing world. It's a reality which dictates a complete inability for the working poor to create change for themselves, to get ahead, to change the dynamic for future generations.

Many poverty interventions are simply about alleviating rather than eradicating; this is true of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), which reflect goals for reduction. I propose we stop thinking about poverty 'alleviation', as though poverty is a temporary problem. Until we take bolder steps towards the complete eradication of poverty, we will continue to move backwards and forwards in a constant dance with the problem. If we consider hunger to be a terrible act of violence in itself, which stunts growth and educational development and rips families and communities apart, does it make sense that our interventions prioritise merely reducing the numbers of people who are hungry? One of the MDGs states that half of the world's hungry will continue to live in hunger after 2015. Who makes the moral choice about which half stays in poverty and which half moves out? The MDGs, sometimes called the Minimalist Development Goals, are the bare minimum we should achieve, not aspirational objectives.

It is high time that we began to frame the MDGs in a human rights context. Many, including members of the Elders group, such as Mary Robinson, Jimmy Carter and Graca Machel, have spoken of the human context behind MDG achievement. We can make ostensible progress with the MDGs, but these gains will be short-lived until they are underpinned by a charter for humanity that is transparent, clear and measurable. We need to get away from a culture of 'immoral symbolism', which celebrates statements of intent by political leaders and intergovernmental groupings, such as the G8 and more recently the G20, recognising that in reality history has shown a high level of non-compliance by governments who sign accords and commitments, even in the most high-profile ways.

Aid: Improving quality and delivering justice

Aid is not a panacea, and the aid debate all too often creates the wrong impression. In our globalised economy, it doesn't pay the wealthy to allow poverty to grow. Creating fair constructs for more and better aid will ultimately create wealth for everyone, not just the poor. It will create local and global markets for products and services, self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship, demand and competition in the finance sector and fewer pressures in the long run on the wealthy countries that are already struggling with ageing populations and the consequent strains on domestic social welfare systems.

'More and better aid' is not just the mantra of the activist. It is a concept that demands deep thought about policy dynamics, ranging from the distribution of aid, to enhancing the financial literacy of the working poor. It requires the input of grassroots enterprises and policy-makers. It imposes a moral obligation on us all to introduce new and feasible propositions to do more capacity-building with donor funding. We need to stop enabling aid to be seen as 'handouts'. This also relates to the notion of poverty 'alleviation' rather than poverty eradication.

In early 2009 Dambisa Moyo, a Zambian economist at one of the US banks, published a book called *Dead Aid*. Moyo's hypothesis has appealed to conservative donor states, since she argues that aid is fundamentally bad and should be stopped immediately. I would argue that, morally, aid needs to be re-formulated, not as a handout, but as something between an investment in the future of humanity and reparation for what has been taken from developing countries by colonial powers in the past and by many multinationals and corrupt political leaders since the colonial era. Alongside this change of approach, the fundamental weaknesses in the aid system, such as conditionalities, disproportionately high transaction costs, the level of sovereignty that developing countries must give up to secure aid, and the amount of time required for bureaucracy and managing the aid relationships, need to be radically addressed. For example, the US government gives Israel US$1 billion a year without conditions, whereas aid to developing countries is so heavily tied up in conditionalities that in some cases the impact of this aid is significantly diminished.

On the issue of the quantity of aid, we see a terrible lack of political will, rooted in a legacy of racial inequality and discrimination, which continues subliminally to affect policy-makers' choices. The commitment made by Northern countries in 1970, of giving 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to developing countries to address their developing needs, is often portrayed to the electorates of

rich countries as an act of charity and goodwill. But in 1970, most of the countries in the developing world were emerging from decades of colonial bondage and aid was never understood as an act of charity. It was seen in the context of historical redress and compensation for some of the excesses and exploitation of the colonial period. The late Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, the pan-African activist, and one of the finest people to come out of Africa, eloquently said that, 'Africa is not poor, but Africa has been impoverished'. Beneath the soil, Africa is one of the richest continents and precisely because of this, it is one of the poorest above the ground. This is indicative of the way in which the resource richness of various countries around the world has often ended up being more of a curse than a blessing.

The wealth of these resources mainly benefited rich multinational companies and the political domestic elites who struck deals with them over the years. Initiatives such as 'Publish what you pay' and, more recently, 'Publish what you fund' represent an improvement in addressing some of the more obvious attempts at exploitation. These are well-intentioned attempts to make it more difficult for governments to act without transparency in the execution of their aid programmes. 'Publish what you pay' is also putting pressure on corporations to be clear about what they are paying for – and where their purchases really come from. Let's hope this ends the frequently overlooked practice of paying what cannot be described as anything other than a bribe in the course of executing business.

On the one hand, rich nations provide aid to strengthen the capacity of health and education systems in developing nations. On the other, they aggressively engage in head-hunting some of the most critically needed human resources to compensate for shortages of trained people in their own countries.

A further significant problem with the whole aid discourse is that a great deal of aid given to developing countries is for human resource development, education, health, and infrastructure such as water, sanitation and roads. Focusing on education and health reveals some of the contradictions that exist in the system. On the one hand, rich nations provide aid to strengthen the capacity of health and education systems in developing nations. On the other, they aggressively engage in head-hunting some of the most critically needed human resources to compensate for shortages of trained people in their own countries. This happens continually with science and maths teachers, doctors and health professionals, IT professionals and more. There's a massive flow of brains, for example, from India to the west coast of the US, which is central to the success of the information technology sector. Likewise, evidence emerges of the large numbers of Malawian doctors in Manchester (whereas there is one doctor to every 50,000 people in Malawi), Nigerian doctors in Philadelphia, South African doctors all over Canada, and so on. It raises a big question about who is aiding who at the end of the day. In relation to systemic education and health concerns,

what are donors doing to enable these individuals to stay within their communities, and to reverse the continuing spiral of shortages within those countries supposedly benefiting from the aid?

Crisis as opportunity?

We have at the moment what some of the big online campaigners call a 'crisi-tunity'. This means using crisis as an opportunity to force the debate to move from looking inward to looking outward; an opportunity to turn accepted thinking on its head and come up with new, achievable alternatives. If we break down the silos and centre the debate on a joined-up approach where human rights, human development and human security are seen as the interdependent tenets that they are, we might just come up with totally new constructs that work.

What if we turned conventional wisdom on its head and asked the questions differently. For example: What if debt cancellation was seen as remittances? What if aid was viewed as investment? What if trade policies were transparent and fair? What if one-way conditionality was replaced with two-way accountability? What if the working poor had a real, consultative role?

What if debt cancellation was seen as remittances? What if aid was viewed as investment? What if trade policies were transparent and fair? What if one-way conditionality was replaced with two-way accountability?

The perfect storm that we find ourselves in can lead to one of two responses. One is the route of 'business as usual'. This is what happened at the April 2009 G20, which engaged in minor tinkering here and there, hoping to reverse the total meltdown of the global economic system. Lip service was paid to poverty and climate change, with a statement about greening the world's economy, but the summit failed to provide any substantive propositions to back up the statement. The other is a route that truly engages with the radical changes the world needs.

Right now, if we were to bring the climate change and poverty eradication agendas together in a symbiotic relationship it would be a step in the right direction. We know that with the climate we either get it right and survive, and keep the planet safe for future generations, or do it wrong and sink in the process, literally and figuratively. I believe the global climate consciousness is beginning to ignite and 'climate justice' is fast becoming not only an understood term, but also a mantra that provides commonality for civil society organisations from all points on the spectrum.

Some of the challenges that keep poverty campaigners in different specialist areas apart, creating different movements around trade, aid and debt, become even bigger hurdles when we think about how to

connect poverty and climate change. It is true that, in the absolute sense, if everybody in developing countries were to have the same standard of living as those in developed countries, with the same energy-usage logic, climate change would accelerate more quickly than at its current rate. So, hard choices must be made.

The gap between the two agendas, poverty eradication and climate change, needs to be bridged. If we accept justice as a principle, it's not fair that those least responsible for the climate catastrophe should be the ones who pay the biggest price.

Connecting these different agendas is critically important. Resistance will come from the unfortunate territorialism that can afflict the civil society community. There is already talk of red-green tensions in social movements, with green being more environmentally focused, and red representing those wanting better economic equity and better protection for the working class. These tensions exist at a very practical level, which will have to be worked through case by case. For example, let's say there is a mine in South Africa that has high levels of radiation. The environmentalists will rightly say it is unsafe for the workers, the surrounding environment and communities, so it must be shut down. Trade union activists on the other hand, are of course sympathetic to the health of the workers and the immediate community, but their key concern is to defend jobs. Part of our problem in civil society is we fail to create spaces to talk about these contradictions and how we can manage them. The key message of this volume is that, if we are to deliver justice, then civic groups must become a lot better at focusing on the many things that unite us while deciding to respectfully disagree on the finer points of difference between us.

In the past we might have believed that we had more time to make incremental progress on these issues. The logic in the anti-poverty movement has been that the struggle to end global poverty is a marathon not a sprint. However, the difficult question we now face is: do climate change and the recent shocks to the world's economic systems allow us the luxury of running a marathon over the course of the next 10-15 years? Can we delay the implementation of significant policy and essential change? Let's be clear. Time is running out for addressing the issue of poverty. It requires urgent solutions, solutions which must be implemented within the next decade, at most.

Chapter 7 »
Climate change
– A catalyst for civil society unity?

Let's start with the facts. The planet is getting hotter. It is a problem of man's own creation. The people who are least responsible for the problem are already paying the price right now. All of these facts are being more and more understood within civil society.

Let us assume that we have a shared vision of the scale and terrifying consequences of the climate problem. The question then becomes a more challenging one: deciding what I personally can add to the discourse that will help us, as civil society, to move the tackling of this problem forward in a constructive way.

I would advocate beginning with the philosophical realisation that the answers lie within the problems. These solutions will become apparent only if we embark on a journey towards a totally new conceptual framework for problem solving. This will require a new and clear lexicon, enabling us to think about climate change, not as a single problem alongside a multitude of other global problems, but as a way to truly embrace the opportunity that exists in the face of what I have already referred to as the 'perfect storm'.

There is much to learn from the challenges the anti-poverty movement has faced. As I remarked in the previous chapter, activism has been afflicted by a culture of 'incrementalism', by which I mean that we tend to overcelebrate statements of intent by political leaders and intergovernmental groupings such as the G8 and G20, taking these statements at face value as serious and implementable. In reality, so far no actions have been taken which would have the kind of impact that is necessary.

In the current convergence of crises – food, financial, fuel, climate, poverty – we can't afford the time or the opportunity cost of a business-as-usual approach. It's time to question everything. The answers we will find depend entirely on how big we make the questions. Clearly we're not yet asking big enough ones. The impact of global warming is creating the greatest challenges humanity has ever had to deal with. Our usual approach – taking baby steps on a journey towards substantive change, doing routine assessments of 'progress'

over time – simply won't get us anywhere near the results we need in the time we have. It's time for a new paradigm, one that encompasses a new, green economy, sustainable and decent jobs, and promotes sustainable practices by governments, business and citizens from all walks of life. The choice is simple: we all get it right and survive; or we get it horribly wrong, we fail to act and everything else becomes academic after that. If we fail, it won't matter if you're from the global North or global South. Our fates will be sealed together.

Policy advocacy approaches versus adaptation and mitigation

I'm not sure it's entirely productive to view the work done at a policy advocacy level as being at odds with the delivery level work in helping communities to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. But it's a debate that is going on at several levels and must therefore be addressed in the context of this volume.

There is a common, but naïve, view in civil society, firstly that the required quality of policy work can be delivered, and secondly, that all the policy outcomes will be positive. There is a fundamental credibility gap within this thinking. The reason is that too many people doing high quality policy work in civil society find themselves far too encumbered.

Policy work usually lacks direct input from those doing frontline activism and service delivery. I believe the quality of policy and advocacy demands would be enhanced if governments were permitted simply to dismiss policy interventions when they have their origins in an experiential vacuum.

Territorialism is definitely slowing down progress, not aiding the cause.

Furthermore, the whole North–South dynamic comes into the frame. If countries of the global South – those least responsible for the industrialisation that has caused global warming – are already suffering, who provides them with financial assistance? And are those in the global North who are expected to make financial reparations entitled to have a voice in the policy arena? Should this be the exclusive domain of the Southern entities with frontline experience? Territorialism is definitely slowing down progress, not aiding the cause.

The move towards the increased professionalism of the NGO sector in particular should not at face value pose a problem, if this trend means making organisations more efficient, effective and influential. However, if we misinterpret professionalism to mean mere mimicry of the work culture, organisational structure and remuneration logic of the private sector and, to some extent, governments, we run the risk of turning strong organisations into nothing more than strong bureaucracies.

To answer the question of whether policy advocacy is at odds with adaptation and mitigation, I'd say a resounding 'no'. Both are needed. Both have a role. Each work stream would benefit from greater integration and intelligence-sharing with the other.

We've talked about learning from the challenges of anti-poverty activism, but there is also much we can learn from the successes of the anti-poverty and the environmental movements. Both have done a great job in recent times of broadening public consciousness around their issues. For example, the Global Campaign for Climate Action (GCCA) mobilised over 15 million people via their website, www.tcktcktck.org, in the run up to the Copenhagen climate summit.

Now we have an obligation to make sure that the largest possible numbers of people are able to participate in these struggles, and to ensure there are creative, innovative, challenging and even enjoyable pathways to participation around the poverty and climate change challenges. At the same time, we should recognise this as an opportunity to bring together the interdependent agendas of the two, rather than seeing them as competing and quite different struggles.

Global goal-setting: How it works

I grew up in apartheid South Africa, where the primary consciousness was formed in the context of institutionalised racism and the horrors of systemic abuse. At that time, and within that context, people who engaged in environmental activism were seen as somewhat misguided 'tree huggers' or 'bunny lovers' who were distracted by minor issues, missing the real point. As a result even black professors dismissed them, seeing them as eccentrics who loved animals and plants more than people. Fortunately environmental activism is now widely recognised and understood, albeit not necessarily among the poorest of the poor who are the first victims of climate change.

To set the scene for global contextualisation, it is worth taking a moment to look at the system that fundamentally created the industrialised, fossil-fuel dependent world we know today.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall the prevailing orthodoxy has been that capitalism triumphed and socialism failed. Therefore proponents of capitalism feel vindicated in their belief that a market-driven system is best, since it has 'survived'. To an extent that is true, but it does not mean it's the best system possible. It simply means it's the one that has survived for now. Capitalist ideologues with faith in the system must understand that, just as nobody could have predicted the pace and scale at which the Soviet Union would collapse, nobody can accurately predict how and when the casino capitalism trap we find ourselves in may itself collapse, based as it is on a logic of environmentally unsustainable overconsumption.

As citizens we have to pose questions about market-driven economic systems. As I've said before, people talk about the market in godly terms – Lloyd Blankfein of Goldman Sachs was quoted recently as saying investment bankers do 'God's work'. But markets are completely human constructs, with man-made rules. How does the market directly affect poverty and climate change? All too often it rewards practices that are violently counter-productive in the struggle against both. If a company almost anywhere in the world fires a large number of workers it is seen as becoming more efficient, and its share price goes up. If we have a system that applauds unemployment in the name of efficiency, when we know that decent work is a critical factor in successfully lifting families and individuals out of poverty, what chance do we have? We cannot uncritically accept the market as a God-given construct that cannot be manipulated.

When a national consumer confidence index comes out in the US which shows that citizens are more inclined towards saving than consuming, share prices fall. If the market is concerned about the future of this planet, shouldn't the fact that people are consuming less and reducing their energy consumption lead to a boost in share prices?

On the converse side, when a national consumer confidence index comes out in the US which shows that citizens are more inclined towards saving than consuming, share prices fall. If the market is concerned about the future of this planet, shouldn't the fact that people are consuming less and reducing their energy consumption lead to a boost in share prices?

We have to ask these bigger questions. If we in civil society merely continue to deliver little projects here and little campaigns there, we will not deliver the change that is urgently required. Frankly, if we are serious, we need to take a hard look at many of the things our cultures celebrate, and establish what's still feasible and what is not. For example, half a billion people in the world follow Formula 1 racing. When tough choices have to made, though, with a green future in mind, it is questionable whether such a highly polluting sport still has a place in the form that it is practised today.

We need to look further down the line, beyond what we can see in the limited time frame of our own backyards. This involves understanding the complex relationships that link poverty and climate change, an issue which will become more and more acute as the impact of climate change grows. Whilst a developing green industry will create job opportunities, it's important that we're conscious of the impact of changing industrial patterns on local communities. The necessary drive towards increased recycling will affect the logging, timber and paper industries, among others, in many developing countries, and we need to ensure again that decent, sustainable jobs are part and parcel of a sustainable planet.

The point I'm making is that everything is complex and interdependent. There are clear roles for government, for business and for civil society organisations. But the three sectors must work with an unprecedented unity of purpose, and we must collectively make the delivery of environmental justice a tangible reality.

The role of governments

In December 2009, I was present in Copenhagen to witness and participate in the World Climate Summit, known by some as the Conference of the Parties (COP 15). The first COP was in 1992 in Rio and was dubbed the Earth Summit. As we now know, the summit failed to achieve the agreement that campaigners had hoped for. Little more than lip service was paid to the overwhelming need for governments to take strong, decisive action to avert catastrophic climate change.

Ironically, their collective failure only served to highlight their importance. Climate change is an issue that requires action on a global, macro scale. Civil society can and does lead the way, but this is a challenge that needs positive action from organisations across the board, and that includes governments.

Whether elected or self-appointed, all governments have a moral obligation to deliver leadership on climate change. In order to do so, they have to get over their outmoded historical concepts of where power lies. As Obama discovered at Copenhagen, the US is a powerful force economically and a voice of authority in the West, but in the developing world it does not have the same influence. As a nation, it is financially beholden to China, India and other so-called less developed nations. So, global political constructs led by the usual suspects will have to be re-assessed in line with these new realities.

The disappointments of Copenhagen serve to underscore the truth that nothing will be done of any significance unless there are clear and binding agreements, with tangible deliverables, at a global level. Mechanisms have to be implemented immediately to ensure delivery of goals for carbon reduction, and other measurables at the national level. National governments, in turn, have a responsibility to make goals achievable at local levels.

Unless governments show leadership and do so quickly, the sheer scale of the problem will start to seem too large for individuals to believe in the potential for success. The very existence of democratic state institutions is at risk if people can't trust the state to look after

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their fundamental security. I believe that if state and intra-state or-ganisations lead, a groundswell of citizen support for sensible initia-tives will follow.

There needs to be a redress of the imbalance between developed and developing nations that is clear, easy to understand and transparently implemented, with a minimum of bureaucracy and an unravelling of conditionalities. It's impossible to think that the citizens of devel-oping countries, who are becoming increasingly industrialised, will not aspire to the Western-style consumption obsession that has long been held up as the model of success. The West has to own up to its short-sightedness and actively enable new and better ways to lift the citizenry of developing countries into greater comfort, without going down the road of the unrealistic fossil-fuelled model of consumption that has got us to where we are now – the brink of human disaster.

Similarly, the developed world has an obligation to lead in the de-velopment of new and better financial, job-creation and production models within the developing world. This should be the new garden of the earth, producing food for all. Copenhagen showed the way in which previously marginalised nations are starting to truly engage with the widest possible constituencies at home and abroad, demon-strating leadership in a way they've not done previously on the global and regional stages. Their leaders will have to stand up against re-gional bullies, take responsibility for compliance with global agree-ments at a regional level and get local implementation under control. A sustainable model for the world needs to work for everyone, not just the rich nations. The leaders of the developing nations need to make this clear, in spite of the tendency of the wealthy nations to try and stitch up a deal to suit themselves.

What business can do

Businesses, large and small, have first and foremost to believe that they can make a difference and that changes they make will not result in medium- to long-term losses. In fact, most of the business leaders who have invested in reviewing their business models, so as to reduce their impacts, have found the measures they have taken as a result have resulted in improved productivity and profitability.

The global economic crisis and recessionary times provide the per-fect moment for business to set itself goals for change. But these goals must not be minimalist. They must be bold and ambitious, setting an example and creating new standards. For example, deciding to reduce

emissions by percentage points is likely to result in nothing more than incremental improvement and, ultimately, prove to be too little too late. What about businesses looking for innovations that make them impact-neutral, or even impact-positive? The steps that need to be taken would not only lead to better practices for the company in question, but also probably create new entrepreneurial business opportunities for others, who would produce the goods and services needed to service these new models. This in turn would create new employment opportunities for a new breed of entrepreneurs in a post-carbon economy.

There is no question that business has an opportunity to provide the lead in offering consumers better choices and the stimulus to lead their lives in a more environmentally responsible fashion. Business may be tempted to await legislation that enforces change, but it would do much better to build up its reputation with employees and customers by being proactive. It's not a matter of 'if' business will have to change, it's a matter of 'when', so why not just get on with it?

A great example of a business demonstrating leadership is the fairly upmarket supermarket retailer in France, LeClerc. Some years ago, the company's leadership decided that carrier bags were ridiculously expensive and wasteful. They realised that the same shoppers came back week after week for the same products and every time, these products went into new bags, most of which ended up in landfill as the bags themselves held no intrinsic value for the consumer. So they decided to make robust re-usable and recyclable carrier bags and boxes and to charge shoppers for them. As a result, shoppers valued these carrier items because they were costly, and they have been re-using them ever since. Woe betide the tourist who is not aware of the rules. This example has proliferated through much of northern and western Europe. It wasn't that hard – it took a simple decision and quick implementation. All their shoppers quickly realised the rules and began to see the sense in them. The reality is that people will use the supermarket that's convenient to them, unless their circumstances change. They don't shop for carrier bags, they shop for household and food products. However, in most UK supermarkets, for example, re-usable and throw away bags are both in use – and many people still leave the supermarket with several throwaway bags full of shopping. A challenging question here is whether, given the need for rapid structural, policy and behavioural change, we can depend on voluntary changes or whether people should be denied environmentally unfriendly options through laws passed to enforce changes in behaviour.

Ethics are not off-putting, they're attractive. Consumers have always loved brands that stand for something that resonates with them.

Many other retailers in Europe have seen the sense in this kind of thinking. They've promoted it to their customer bases, explaining the rationale. People have remained loyal to those brands. Ethics are not off-putting, they're attractive. Consumers have always loved brands that stand for something that resonates with them. Businesses would do well to measure not only the cost-saving of impact reduction strategies, but also the added value that gains in reputation give their brands over time. The brands that lead in practice will also lead in terms of reputation. The brands and companies who wait to act until they are forced to do so will find themselves less highly valued by the consumers who fuel market share and profit.

The role of civil society organisations

In most spheres of civil society, efforts tend to put the emphasis on delivery. Recently, work around policy change has received greater emphasis. However, far too little effort is focused on systemic change. The work of civil society within the environmental movement stands out as being quite different.

Specifically in the climate change movement, but probably more broadly in environmental activism generally, the question needs to be asked as to whether there is enough meaningful delivery at the grassroots level. Is the effort consistent with the scale and stature of the need for reductions in carbon emissions? Certainly there is a huge effort being made at national and global levels in policy advocacy, but is this to the exclusion of efforts to bring about systemic change?

The corporate sector tells us through advertising that they're working on new and better technologies for delivering energy, yet they're still protecting old fossil-based energy sources because they've invested so heavily in them. National governments are still building coal-fired power stations to meet the growing energy needs of their populations. When small groups of local activists protest, they rarely achieve the kind of success they're hoping for. Although citizen protests around climate change are gaining more visibility and have more traction than in the past there is still a long way to go before it becomes an electoral liability for politicians to fail to react with enough urgency and ambition.

If we examine the evolution of development NGOs, they initially focused on delivery of services and didn't engage in much advocacy around policy change. Over the last 10-15 years they have embraced the policy side more and more, in the process pulling back

from delivery to concentrate on advocacy. This, I believe, has better possibilities of eventually delivering breakthrough change.

If we look at the international environmental movement, there is still relatively limited investment in exploring alternative models of delivery around energy provision. There have been, though, more attempts over the last decade – which shows that seeking practical solutions is growing in importance. For example, Greenpeace played a key role in developing natural refrigerants to encourage companies that are mass users of refrigerators to stop using technology that puts fluorinated gases, which are even more harmful than carbon emissions, into the atmosphere. Although Greenpeace's priorities are bearing witness to environmental degradation, raising awareness lobbying governments and business intensively to change to more sustainable approaches and engaging the public in fight for equitable sustainability, it does also contribute to seeking practical and implementable solutions. Perhaps those who are best placed to take part in environmental campaigning don't have a social delivery mindset, and as a consequence have difficulties imagining what form a delivery programme might take. But does this mean there is no scope for civil society at this level? It's a question that's going to need examining as civil society seeks strategies for making its contribution to the campaign against catastrophic climate change as effective as it needs to become.

Looking ahead, acting now

The issues regarding climate change are so severe and so urgent that they can seem overwhelming. Within this context, it's sometimes hard for civil society to work out what it should be doing first. In order to confront the problem we have to understand the situation in all its complexity, taking on board how it demands a paradigm shift in our way of looking at the world. Only when we embrace this will we be in a position to begin to see how to achieve and implement the solutions we are searching for.

Given this, perhaps the real question to address in civil society is whether dealing with climate change is a problem of transition. The conventional usage of 'transition', put simply, is when a society, institution or person goes through significant, radical change. Historically, we have seen the transition from a feudal way of life to the urban-industrial complex. In this moment it is evident we are living through another massive human transition at a global level, in which climate change will be the catalyst for massive, radical change.

Civil society must first recognise the scale of the human problem of transition and then develop strategies to engage with it. This is not to say this work should be done at the expense of policy advocacy activities. It should be done in addition. Throughout history it has been citizen organisations, with the longer-term pan-generational horizons that only citizens possess, that have looked ahead and foreseen the needs of individuals and communities. If civil society does not continue to think this way, we will fail the constituencies we have been created to serve, we will fail to see the potential injustices waiting to be experienced, and we will ultimately fail humanity, especially those most in need of the benefit of our intervention.

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Chapter 8 »
The prospects and limitations of civil society in challenging environments

Civil society has been a contested concept over the last 20 years and has suffered, both in discourse and practice, from the tendency towards homogenisation and generalisation. Writing about Eastern Europe in the 1980s, Michael Ignatieff defined civil society as 'the kind of place where you do not change the street signs every time you change the regime' (Ignatieff, 1995:128). In this phrase, Ignatieff captured an anti-governmental definition of civil society. Such an understanding was popular after the fall of the Berlin Wall: civil society was understood as being the place where people and their groups are free from governmental interferences to pursue their own concept of the societal good. Within this context it is worth drawing on two specific ways of seeing civil society. Mary Kaldor views civil society as 'the medium through which social contracts or bargains between the individuals and the centres of political and economic power are negotiated, discussed and mediated' (Kaldor 2003). Ernest Gellner has suggested that civil society is a set of non governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state (Gellner, 1983). These definitions function at a rather general and abstract level. Yet, in a world of ongoing and emerging conflicts, and with the threat of new conflicts caused by climate change, increased food insecurity and water scarcity, there is a need for a varied approach towards understanding both the possibilities and limitations of the role of civil society.

The diverse geographical, cultural and political contexts within which civil society operates determine the possibilities and limitations of civil society. The realities of civil society in China or India, given their geographical size, large populations and internal diversity are going to be markedly different from the realities of small Pacific or Caribbean island nation-states. What are the implications for civil society in countries where there is greater adherence to the rule of law versus countries where there is a weaker embrace of the rule of law? What are the implications for civil society in countries that experience ongoing conflict, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Iraq or Palestine/Israel, or those in post-conflict situations such as in Liberia, Northern Ireland or Haiti?

What I would like to do here is to look at the prospects and limitations of civil society activities in particularly challenging and vulner-

able environments. Here, as elsewhere, civil society can be a crucial element for stability and social cohesion. In fact, civil society has often had a role of minimising violence in social relations, even if there are some instances, such as in Rwanda, where parts of civil society have fuelled conflict. Yet overall, civil society's traditional role has been to defend the public use of reason against submission, fear and dogmatic ideological approaches. It is also crucial in advocating for people's cultural and economic rights, often shedding light on structural social injustices that are the root causes of so much conflict today.

Civil society can reflect all the contradictions of society, its good and its bad. We should be careful to distinguish between a progressive civil society, which basically supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and those parts of civil society that are hostile to inclusivity, tolerance and diversity. This is not always obvious. For instance, in France, many members of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), a trade union supposed to be left wing and progressive on issues such as race, voted for the extreme right leader Jean Marie Le Pen in the 2002 and 2007 elections. In Indonesia, a few institutions which are registered formally as NGOs have at times behaved violently towards Hindu and Christian minorities. Those examples show that there are many contradictions in civil society, and that it is wrong to assume that civil society is only the 'good guys'.

Civil society's traditional role has been to defend the public use of reason against submission, fear and dogmatic ideological approaches.

This caution is important when it comes to assessing the role of civil society in challenging environments: some parts of civil society support human rights, gender equality, religious diversity, and so on, and are usually trying to prevent conflict and war, but this cannot be said for all. Some actors within civil society are actually trying to prevent the resolution of conflict, or to further weaken the governments that are seeking peaceful resolution of conflicts. A current example would be the situation in Zimbabwe where some churches still steadfastly support the dictatorial presidency of Robert Mugabe while others vociferously oppose him.

One of the difficulties is that most of the literature on civil society is Western-oriented, and therefore often partial. But when talking of civil society's scope and action, one cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach. The need to differentiate can be seen if one compares, for example, civil society in China with civil society in Lesotho or in a small island state.

Three traditional aspects of civil society are especially relevant within particularly vulnerable situations. As non-governmental by defini-

tion, or as a non-state body, civil society should offer protection against an oppressive state (for example, in extremely authoritarian countries). Secondly, as a third sector between the market place and state coercion, civil society permits private association to emerge as a source of social trust and civic capacities – both qualities essential in vulnerable situations. Finally, civil society as public sphere can create public opinion, which is an important condition for democratisation and stabilisation.

The different situations of civil society in challenging environments are seldom subjected to detailed analysis and consideration. These situations can be defined as follows:

» Civil society in pre-conflict situations

» Civil society during conflict

» Civil society post-conflict and in transitional justice

» Civil society in small island states and societies under stress

» Civil society in weak, fragile or so-called 'failed' states

Civil society in pre-conflict situations

The role of civil society in pre-conflict situations is, I believe, crucial. Civil society organisations can act either positively or negatively in this delicate time where violent and exclusionary identities are being built. Political leaders often make use of people's distress and social insecurities to construct rigid, exclusionary identities that reinforce their power, supporting the creation of enemy images of the 'other' in order to mobilise members of one particular group to fight against another. In a context of mistrust, fear and low social capital, it is therefore highly necessary for civil society to deconstruct those negative images that impede peace, and to promote dialogue and inter-communal cooperation. Often, the hidden agenda is economics. Conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms should work to break down these negative images and create a culture based on tolerance, cooperation, and empathy. To do so, civil society can, for instance, organise interactive workshops with members of each community, facilitating unrestricted dialogue that enables each party to change their perception, and perhaps to engage in a process of creative, communal, problem-solving. Cross-cultural communication can also serve to deconstruct, for example, ethnic identities and build a new, common identity, promoting a culture of 'relational empathy', that is, at the same time, a culture of diversity and pluralism.

At this first level of conflict prevention, it is essential for citizen action to have a better understanding of the root causes that can lead to conflict. Recently, the debate has been divided between two main arguments. On the one hand, people affirmed that today's wars were being fought by barbarians, primitive men to whom the fruits of the Enlightenment had not yet arrived. They were stuck in the past, haunted by the memories of ethnic hatred that had been temporarily kept on hold under the tight control of authoritarian regimes. The 'ethnic cauldron' argument was particularly successful in the aftermath of the Balkan wars. By reducing wars to this culturalist myth and making them appear inevitable, this argument seems to reject the idea that wars may actually have a reason, a causal explanation. On the other hand, people have argued that today's wars can be very rational: people can actually do well out of war, and thus have a reason to fight. Globalised trade, the so-called 'resource curse' and natural human envy explain why, for some, the continuation of war can be more profitable than its resolution. This argument, based on a neo-classical economic theory of human interest, has been particularly developed by World Bank and IMF researchers.

By acting to deconstruct these rigid identities, civil society should show that what we often see as 'ethnic wars', or 'ethnic hatred', are not a fait accompli. Instead of explaining conflicts with reference to ancient, fundamental, ethnic hatred, it needs to affirm that those hatreds were just a construction designed to hide more basic, down-to-earth, interests. This tendency is aggravated by the failure of states, globalisation and the liberalisation of economic forces, encouraging the privatisation of violence and giving rise to increased competition for natural resources. War no longer appears as a simple breakdown, but rather as a self-sustaining, rational economic system. The erosion of the traditional tax-based system that financed the war economy has created the need for an alternative source of funding, a 'grey economy' relying on international flows, humanitarian assistance and black markets. Looting is therefore an important factor that also needs to be addressed. This change of perspective makes war more tractable than in the first interpretation: money and resources are physical goods that can indeed be traced and stopped. Contemporary wars are therefore a complex mix of poverty, grievances, as well as envy, greed and the new opportunities generated by globalisation.

Adopting this alternative strategy of diversity and pluralism would change the actual focus of conflict prevention and peace operations, in favour of citizen action. Instead of concentrating on top social actors, including military, political and religious leaders usually in-

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volved in what is called 'track-one' diplomacy, peace-builders should act at the middle-range level, trying to influence local political leaders, NGOs, workers, small business owners, but also academics, journalists, artists, or trade unions leaders. These actors are often the most capable of engaging people at the grassroots and the top social level to interact with members of other communities and promote social justice. This cross-cultural dialogue, combined with political action to challenge the structural factors that fuel the building of exclusive identities, should assist in conflict prevention.

One example from my home city can illustrate this role of civil society. In 1949 in Durban, a state-manipulated conflict arose between South Africans of Indian descent and the predominantly Zulu population of the city. As youth activists in the 1980s, we knew that, particularly under apartheid divide-and-rule conditions, the possibility of this conflict erupting again was a permanent possibility. To prevent such resurgence, a youth organisation called the Youth Forum organised what we called 'Breaking Down Racial Barriers and Building Trust Workshops', bringing together youth from both communities for an extended weekend, giving both groups an opportunity to communicate and challenge their perceptions of one another. Even though we were all non-racist in our orientation, we still discovered that we held deep-rooted misconceptions about each other, and the workshops were a vital step towards overcoming these misconceptions.

Such workshops can be of great value, especially when there is a possibility that political agents may manipulate identities as in Bosnia, Rwanda, or even the US, with the more recent immigrant communities. The xenophobic violence in South Africa in 2008 was a striking example of the power of those racial stereotypes and how, if we are not careful, they can explode into full-blown violence in a context of social insecurity. While the South African state's response was woefully inadequate, prior to the violence erupting, as well as during and after the conflict, civil society cannot claim to have done substantially better. In June 1988, 10 years earlier, at the annual meeting of the South African NGO Coalition, a resolution on anti-xenophobia had been adopted, and there was no reason to believe that stereotyping, particularly of Africans from other parts of the continent, was common among South African people. And yet, 10 years on, violence erupted. Warning signs are often there for some time before a conflict erupts, as was the case after the Kenyan national elections in December 2007. But too often civil society, like governments, crosses its fingers and hopes for the best. What is needed is to develop better early warning systems and for civil society groups to be empowered

with the tools of analysis and engagement to nip conflict in the bud, since the volume of work needed to reverse such conflict-inducing attitudes after full-blown conflict erupts is significantly more costly in human, material and developmental terms.

Civil society during conflict and the transition to peace

If prevention does not work, however, there is still room for civil society action during the conflict itself. At a micro level, civil society has to deal with the worst manifestations of the conflict, which continues in the early post-conflict stage. Micro-level interventions here will tend generally to be local interventions aimed at providing immediate relief through a range of projects and programmes, especially targeting the most vulnerable groups such as women or children.

But there are also more far-reaching roles for civil society during conflict that have important consequences, up to and including the post-conflict reconstruction period. NGOs are often instrumental in documenting human rights abuses during civil conflict, becoming a prime advocate of accountability for the past. They can also play an important role as critics of government action, sometimes conducting their own investigations into past human rights abuses. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, for instance, were crucial in demanding that the Argentine military junta reveal the fate of their sons who had 'disappeared'. Civil society groups have also often worked to document human rights violations under oppressive regimes. The Chilean Catholic Church's *Vicaria de la Solidaridad*, or Uruguay's office of the Regional Service for Peace and Justice (SERPAJ), put pressure on their governments before, after and during the transition, publicising their findings and helping to achieve accountability in trials or truth commissions.

The roles of civil society in conflict situations is clearly manifold: civil society can provide humanitarian relief, but sometimes CSOs can be caught on either side of the conflict, trying to do advocacy and supporting the peace process. The role of civil society is therefore important during the conflict, in its resolution, and then in post-conflict reconstruction. This is especially true when the post-conflict state is weak, or lacking in legitimacy, and where a traumatised citizenry has come to distrust any intervention by the state either because of previous state violence, or because of state inaction when violence was being meted out to affected communities. Civil society therefore often acts as a substitute for state action in conflict situations, acting to rebuild social trust. However, if this role implies that a transition to peace can take place without, or against, that society's national gov-

ernment, it can be problematic. An anti-governmental approach by civil society can lead to dangerous misconceptions, compromising the myriad ways in which the government and non-governmental groups can work together and supplement each other's effort in the resolution of conflict. Government and civil society should not be at odds, because ideally each can contribute to ending the conflict and starting the process of democratisation and transition.

There is a tendency today of engineering peace and democratic transitions from above, following an institutional 'checklist'.

Another important role of civil society in conflict is in establishing what we could call 'zones of civility', small areas where democratic space survives even in conflicted or authoritarian systems. It is always possible to identify local islands of civility that refuse to accept the politics of war and exclusion. Examples such as the town of Tuzla in Bosnia, Northwest Somaliland, or Echevan in Armenia are cases in point. Groups, too, can represent these zones of peace: for instance, women's groups in Sierra Leone were strong advocates of peace. Peace operations and conflict resolution should rely on these local groups and places, which means also more collaboration with local NGOs and more grassroots initiatives for peace. There is a tendency today of engineering peace and democratic transitions from above, following an institutional 'checklist'. Peacemaking, peacebuilding and transitional justice still rest on a 'high politics' vision of the state, focusing more on the consolidation of strong and secure democratic institutions than on the nurturing of a culture of democracy and civility on the ground.

This top-down strategy, though necessary, is insufficient. Peace needs to start from the deep politics of a society, reverberating from there to the high politics of the state. Conflict resolution should be characterised by a more inclusive, bottom-up effort, controlling violence so that space can then be created for the emergence of a strong civil society. The difficulty is that the status of civil society groups within a context of war is precarious: ironically, civil society needs a state to survive and fulfil its potential. The rebuilding of civil society should therefore not be done at the expense of a state's institutions and national security, as the two are complementary. Post-conflict resolution and reconstruction should draw upon zones of civility as a model, in order to create self-sustaining and wider zones of peace. An interesting approach, specific to post-conflict situations, is the development of local, traditional forms of justice. Such approaches were implemented with the *gacaca* courts in Rwanda, local dispute resolution methods in East Timor, or through the use of the water ritual in Mozambique and Sierra Leone. Those local approaches can be beneficial for civil society, and counter the critique that civil society is a Western idea that has no universal validity, because it is only part of the liberal market democracy ideal.

Crafting peaceful social relations is an essential antidote to the ruins left behind by what we could call 'uncivil' wars. Reconciliation does not only mean national reconciliation, but also reconciliation at the personal level, such as the rebuilding of social relations. John Paul Lederach, for instance, defines civil society as: 'A web of human relationships made up of individual people, their networks, organizations, and institutions around which social and community life is built… The only thing civil society is not is the formal structure of official public governance, particularly at national level.'

Such a definition makes the whole focus of civil society shift. It becomes all about local relations. Adopting this view means changing our understanding of peace and security as well: we must not understand it as a political settlement, but as a deeper process, as a dynamic social ecosystem. Peace-building's emphasis on global and macro level factors should also be changed, as it persistently ignores the interconnectedness of community experiences. A more local focus would entail, among other things, a 'fine-grained' analysis of both the dynamics of war and the prospects for peace at community level. Social sciences should therefore be employed in the analysis of conflict and peace-building strategies. For instance, peace-builders could draw upon the idea of strengthening 'social capital': the idea that civic engagement gives rise to networks, norms and systems of trust that aid coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

Can external intervention rebuild social capital in war-torn societies? Peace-builders may need to be more humble. Ultimately, the resolution of conflict lies in the society in which the conflict occurs: external agents can only build capacities that increase the likelihood of peace. Rebuilding social capital and livelihood systems is harder than restoring infrastructures and institutions. It involves redefining relationships, creating a healthy civil society, facilitating the healing process as well as making institutions both trustworthy and trusted. The international community is not always well suited to do this, and any attempt to do so can appear paternalistic. Local involvement is therefore essential. Resolution and reconciliation are ultimately processes that must be designed, implemented, and sustained by and through those previously at war. A 'society building' strategy of conflict resolution, aiming at the recreation of social trust and capital, would suggest that social change should not be directed solely by the state or the international community, but through the interaction of civil society organisations themselves. Multi-track diplomacy for instance, or facilitation strategies of intervention, could stress the importance of bottom-up initiatives for social transformation.
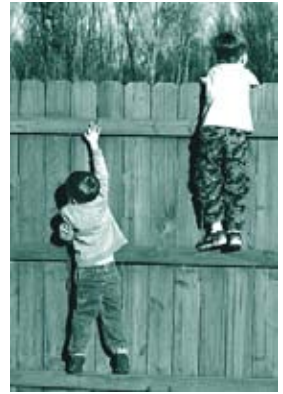
Crafting peaceful social relations is an essential antidote to the ruins left behind by what we could call 'uncivil' wars.

Civil society in post-conflict situations

The state-building approach to peace, the idea that state institutions are the main entity responsible for development, peace and security, should thus be revised. There is a strong tendency to see peace through a sequencing approach, starting with security reforms, institutionalisation, and then filtering down to civil society. Relying excessively on a Weberian approach, this misses the importance of societal perceptions of legitimacy, which can only take root on the ground. The reconstruction of war-torn societies' social fabric remains therefore largely ignored. But CSOs' role does not stop when the cease-fire is signed. On the contrary, it becomes all the more important when it comes to consolidating peace on the ground and building social trust.

Domestic CSOs, where they exist, can also help shape the form of transitional justice mechanisms. In Guatemala for instance, the Alliance against Impunity, a coalition of local NGOs, had an impact in ensuring that there would be no amnesty for gross human rights violations. The Assembly of Civil Society also played a significant role in getting the government and the rebels to agree on the creation of a truth commission as part of the UN peace agreement. Its consultation with local communities and political parties enhanced the validity and legitimacy of the peace process within Guatemalan society at large. Civil society can also replace official, state-supported, justice initiatives. In Guatemala, dissatisfaction with the government-sponsored Truth Commission, the Historical Clarification Commission (CEH), led the human rights office of Guatemala City's archdiocese to launch an unofficial truth project called the Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI). REMHI undertook a comprehensive investigation of past atrocities. Local citizens were trained as 'ambassadors of reconciliation' and charged with recording testimonies in the most remote villages. In 1998, REMHI released its report, '*Guatemala: Nunca Mas*!', which clarified many facts about the conflict. The challenges and importance of such investigations, and the potential threat they represent for the perpetrators, were dramatically underscored by the murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera, coordinator of the report, only two days after its release. In South Africa. too, NGOs helped draft the legislation that established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and participated in the selection process for commissioners. They were also crucial in designing the reparation programme after extensive consultation with victims' groups, and community and religious organisations.

Despite those various locally rooted experiences, transitional justice is often accused of failing to really affect local dynamics of conflict and the realities for people living on the ground. This is problematic in post-conflict situations, where the central state is weak and national-level transitional justice mechanisms alone cannot create a comprehensive community-based approach that includes the opinions and ideas of those whose lives have been most directly affected. The strong and persistent influence of legalism can make the process appear more and more distant from the communities actually affected by the conflict. Institutionalised, technical and remote, transitional justice initiatives too often fail to properly analyse the questions of *what* it is for and *whom* it serves.

Even after transitional justice mechanisms have been implemented, civil society can continue playing an important role, pressuring governments to continue their investigations, to fund reparations, to cooperate with the investigation and to implement recommendations. CSOs often have greater legitimacy in local communities, and may therefore be better able to win the cooperation of those who don't trust the government, as we have seen in the Guatemalan case. They can thus obtain more information, and provide counselling and care of victims.

There are lessons to be learnt from the transitions from repressive regimes which may not have been in open conflict but where human rights abuses occurred. For example, as democratic transitions in Eastern Europe and the concerns about personal autonomy, self-organisation and private space in post-communist countries have shown, civil society is crucial in the transition from authoritarian rule. For instance, we have witnessed the important role of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland with its impact on the Solidarity movement, and the role of the Protestant Church in East Germany. On the other hand, the absence of a vibrant, independent civil society might partly explain the difficulties of democratic transition in Russia. While Poland had managed to maintain some space for civil society under communist rule, this was largely absent in Soviet Russia. The major difference between the transition in post-communist Europe and transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America is what we could call the 'simultaneity problem': in addition to making a political transition to democracy, these countries made a transition to a market economy. They were all totalitarian or post-totalitarian states, but the difficulties they faced were different because of this double, simultaneous, transition in the context of a social 'vacuum'. But even there CSOs have managed to survive and to advocate lo-
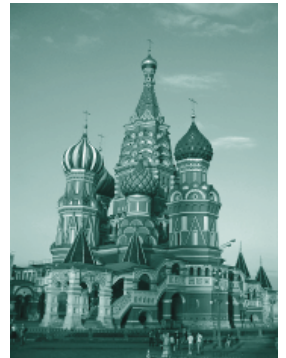
The absence of a vibrant, independent civil society might partly explain the difficulties of democratic transition in Russia.

cally for democratisation and reconciliation. In the USSR, a human rights organisation called Memorial started acting in favour of victims in the early 1980s context of *glasnost* and liberalisation. The rejection of Stalin's repression actually served, thanks to their activities, as a catalyst for mass organisation at civil society level. For instance, Memorial started huge petitions demanding the creation of a monument commemorating the victims of Stalinist repression. They also had a huge role in documenting human rights violations, creating an archive which contained over 50,000 files on the victims, including camp memoirs, victims' letters, rehabilitation documents, and names of gulag victims. Memorial's impact was huge, in defending the rehabilitation of victims, giving them legal advice, and obtaining compensation and restitution for their families. However, Memorial, like most CSOs in oppressive regimes, faced many administrative difficulties, even for their basic needs, such as official registration, or the opening of a bank account.

As we have seen, civil society plays multiple roles in post-conflict situations. It can delimit governmental prerogatives, allow the formation of political groupings, develop future political leaders, or even counter and de-legitimise exclusive political identities and social narratives. It can also engage in data collection, representation and advocacy, collaboration and facilitation, service delivery, research and education, or act as a parallel or substitute authority. All in all, civil society can help create a participatory democracy and a real open social system where people can affect society through ways other than voting. At a policy level, civil society is usually at the forefront in calling for instruments of transitional justice to be applied. As noted, in South Africa, civil society was an essential advocate for the creation of the TRC. Once the TRC was set up, civil society tried to make sure it would function properly, that it would help to generate the full truth, in a way that would lay the foundation of future reconciliation. It is still acting today, for instance fighting for victims to obtain reparations and helping them sue their perpetrators or the people who collaborated with the regime, as witnessed by the action of the Khulumani group which supports the efforts of victims of apartheid repression to speak out and seek reparations. Secondly, civil society has a role to play in raising awareness, encouraging deliberation, and gathering evidence. In Zimbabwe, for instance, many people speculated that Robert Mugabe would go to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Jestina Mukoka, the head of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, whose main role was to document human rights violations, was arrested by the Mugabe regime in early 2008 for that very reason. It is interesting to ask why the government went after her and her organisation. Did it feel threatened by their actions?

I believe this example shows the key role that civil society can play in post-conflict situations. The Zimbabwean government knew how important this documenting and listening action was, especially with ICC charges being a real possibility. The ICC relies on high quality and credible evidence. The role of the prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, is to gather essential knowledge about what happened. He can't do that from his office in The Hague, and thus needs the help of local CSOs such as the Zimbabwe Peace Project.

Another essential aspect for CSOs in transitional justice is advocacy for social justice and development as a form of transitional justice. Structural social reforms would be the most forward-looking measure of transitional justice, as they look for a way of transforming the current conditions of the victims themselves and of their descendants. Through them, transitional justice would become connected to a broader project of social justice and development that could take the form of redistributive policies or affirmative action programmes. This connection, and the broadening of the definition of victim, are important for peace-building too, as economic structural inequalities are the main impediment to the reconstruction of a healthy and dynamic civil society.

However, such social measures have not typically been considered as being part of transitional justice. The connection between transitional justice and development was made only recently, and further research is needed. This lack is, again, a sign of the strength of the neoliberal paradigm's influence upon the field. Liberalism typically insists more on political rights than on economic or cultural ones. This shift towards social justice, promoted by civil society, would thus entail finally abandoning the dominant model of economic transition based on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's 'Washington Consensus', which focuses only on liberalising growth and markets without taking into account wider demands for social justice in post-conflict or post-totalitarian societies. A more radical turn towards distributive programmes may therefore be perceived as a threat to liberal ideas, or at least a reformulation of their principles, since liberalism does not generally support the notion of group rights, cultural rights and affirmative action.

We must bear in mind that this role of civil society in transitional justice, while promising, is not always fully cooperative. Different groups can have different ideas about what 'justice' entails in a post-conflict situation. They can disagree on reparations, for instance, seeing them either as a fair compensation, or as blood money. In South Africa, NGOs disagreed on the fairness of amnesties and of the TRC

as substitutes for trials. They also disagreed on the extent and de-sign of social reparations. Groups in civil society may be very weak and disunited in vulnerable times, which limits their impact. National governments may be either indifferent or overtly hostile to their activities, as in Russia. The government remains essential when it comes to prosecutions, commemoration and reparations: at some point, therefore, the state must be brought back in.

Civil society in small island states and societies under stress
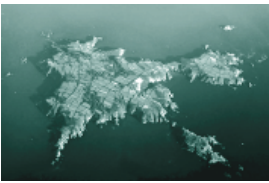
Small island states are an interesting, underanalysed, case study for civil society in vulnerable environments.

Small island states are an interesting, underanalysed, case study for civil society in vulnerable environments. Small island states have small-scale economies with limited resources, and are therefore high-ly dependent on external aid and trade. They also suffer from deep structural disadvantages. For instance, they face disproportionately high transportation costs due to their geographical remoteness. This external dependence makes them more vulnerable to external eco-nomic threats. This also lessens their capacity for recovery from a natural disaster, for instance. The issue was well illustrated by the dif-ficulty of the Maldives after the tsunami. Climate change will only make those issues bigger. Institutional capacity-building is of critical importance to those small island states, or they won't be able to face the challenges ahead.

Climate change in small island states has already started taking its toll, with 'climate refugees' appearing. The consequences of global warm-ing are going to be enormous. There is certainly a space for crucial civil society action here, as those who consume the most are the most protected from global warming. Nobody has yet talked about this question in the context of transitional justice, but it is a question that needs asking. It could mean, for instance, that the ICC, or another international penal institution could judge not only individuals, but also companies responsible for global warming. Who is going to be held accountable if the planet becomes impossible to live in? CSOs in small island states could be in the vanguard as advocates demanding accountability, as these states are, together with several African states and low-lying areas such as Bangladesh, the first victims of global warming. The mandate of the ICC was initially designed to address human rights violations, to put an end to the culture of impunity. But right now the biggest transition the world is facing is climate change: is it not normal that those responsible are judged? Of course, such a change will raise many difficulties, including in terms of the defini-tion of crime as omission or commission, the assignment of cross-generation responsibility, and corporate accountability.

Civil society in fragile and weak states

Considering the specific role of civil society in fragile and weak states is unusual. Indeed, as we have seen, the main concern of the international community in such cases continues to be the building of strong state capacities from the top. However, active citizens are necessary for this policy to be sustainable.

Fragile states are usually defined as those states lacking the capacity or the political will to provide their citizens with their basic entitlements to, for example, food, justice and security. The World Bank uses the term 'low income countries under stress' (LICUS) to define states characterised by a combination of weak governance, weak policies and institutions that are undermining its capacity to deliver services, control corruption and promote accountability. Those states are considered as being at high risk of conflict and instability. USAID further distinguishes two categories of fragile states: vulnerable ones, which are unable or unwilling to adequately ensure the provision of security and basic services, where the legitimacy of the government is weak; and crisis states, where the government does not exert effective control over its own territory, legitimacy is weak or non-existent and there is high risk of violent conflict.

The main challenge for civil society in such complex environments concerns its ability to work both for short-term relief, providing basic needs and services, filling the gap left by the state, and in the longer term, namely contributing to the development of institutional capacities. The problem is that, too often, the latter goal is abandoned because of the urgency of the former. In vulnerable situations, civil society is thus reduced to service and humanitarian aid delivery. In a way, this is understandable: when people are lacking basic goods and services, when they are deprived of clean water, food, healthcare or education, good governance and democratic accountability do not seem like top priorities. However, the two are actually related. Poor governance and the lack of basic services often go hand in hand.

A major challenge for civil society in fragile states would be to point out this linkage between political and structural factors, and thus raise support for better governance. But this activity itself is not without difficulty. In weak states, it is likely that the government will see this type of civil society advocacy as threatening to its own, failing authority. Civil society is often under tight government control in fragile states, as witnessed currently in Zimbabwe. The cost of operating in such an environment is therefore very high: the lack of infrastructure and communication, the costs of housing, salaries and security, have to be taken
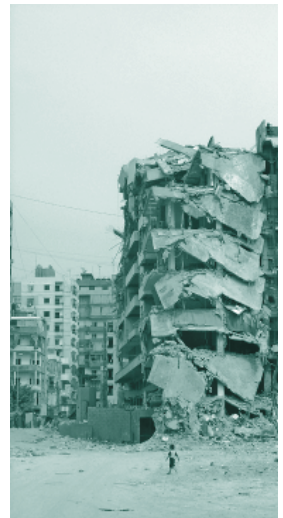
Armed conflicts, socio-political crisis and environmental stress rip apart democratic institutions and poison the very structures of civil society, reducing citizens to the basic imperatives of survival.

into account. The volatility of the political environment might en-
courage certain CSOs to be more cautious. In Zimbabwe, for instance,
NGOs receiving funds from British or US organisations are considered
anti–government, and are therefore put under greater risk.

More generally, civil society in fragile, weak or failed states operates in
an environment of social mistrust. Willingness to cooperate across dif-
ferent societal groups and to trust others might therefore be limited. In
this respect, once again, civil society is a reflection of society as a whole.
In weak states, it is even more likely to reflect society's deep social di-
vides. Many CSOs might therefore represent only one part of the com-
munity, reinforcing its exclusiveness. For civil society to work in weak
states requires a certain degree of social cohesion, social capital and in-
terpersonal and institutional trust. The absence of basic services threat-
ens the very foundation of the social contract between government and
society. Again, we see how everything is related. As long as social trust
is not restored, civil society will not be able to act effectively. Ways of
building social cohesion include the promotion and facilitation of dia-
logue, the struggle against impunity, and the fostering of social stabil-
ity. The current situation in states such as Sudan or the Democratic Re-
public of Congo shows the urgency of such challenges.

The limits of civil society action in vulnerable environments

Wars and societal tensions tend to entirely destroy social ties; societies
that have lived through such phenomena often continue to stay divid-
ed for a long time, in spite of the political progress they might make.
Without the action of a strong human rights orientated process, peace
and stability cannot effectively take root. Armed conflicts, socio–po-
litical crisis and environmental stress rip apart democratic institutions
and poison the very structures of civil society, reducing citizens to the
basic imperatives of survival. In challenging situations such as those
surrounding conflict or failed states, civil society can be divided, and
might therefore need the intervention of a third party to help advance
the goals of peace and democracy. This third party does not neces-
sarily have to be an international organisation: it could be a regional
one, like the Southern African Development Community (SADC),
though many of these regional entities have generally been weak in
protecting the human rights of citizens within their regional remits.
All of this, of course, depends on specific circumstances to which
the international community must remain sensitive. We must always
keep in mind that society is reflected in the values and politics of civil
society as a whole. In vulnerable situations, this is even clearer, and
that makes its action and the implementation of its policy all the more
complex. This shows the importance of enabling dialogue and delib-
eration between communities before, during and after conflict.

Civil society and the state: A complicated but necessary relation

The relation between civil society and the state has been, is, and will continue to be a challenging and vexing one. When the state is weak, the temptation to bypass it totally is high, for example by delivering aid directly to the population. While this might be justifiable and even necessary in the short term in some contexts, it raises issues for the long-term sustainability of service delivery and the necessity of building effective, transparent and accountable public institutions. This is what we could call the 'two-track' dilemma. Dominant developed countries, sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'the international community', generally see relief and humanitarian aid as a temporary band-aid on the road to development, for which the state should eventually take responsibility. But if the 'international community' focuses too much on civil society actors at the expense of building state capacities, we might end up with two parallel tracks, one governmental and the other non-governmental, with no bridge between the two. Ideally, both strategies should go together, with civil society still enjoying an appropriate measure of independence and autonomy. It is important, therefore, to recognise the legitimate role of the state as a potential partner to civil society action. Relying exclusively on CSOs is not sustainable, in part because they are limited in time and resources, lacking the necessary infrastructure to become permanent actors. Also, CSOs are often locally constrained, and cannot ensure that services will be delivered to everyone. Such policy would be better coordinated at state level, even where CSOs have an important role to play. Finally, the participation of government in the delivery of service and justice can help legitimise it. The building of state capacity in fragile and post-conflict states must, at some point, be addressed. Otherwise, NGOs, and CSOs more broadly, will proliferate without offering any real and sustainable impact.

Dominant developed countries, sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'the international community', generally see relief and humanitarian aid as a temporary band-aid on the road to development, for which the state should eventually take responsibility.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge the fact that civil initiatives against incivility frequently emerge in the face of the worst violence. For instance, the Red Cross Committee was created during the battle of Solferino, Save the Children after World War I, Médecins sans Frontières after the Biafra crisis and Oxfam during the Nazi occupation of Greece – to name just a few. Civil society clearly does have a peacemaking and stabilising power, even if it lacks the instruments of coercion and the legitimate use of force.

Bad civil society

We should, however, acknowledge the existence of a 'bad civil society', or what I have called elsewhere 'uncivil civil society' (Naidoo, 1999), particularly within challenging environments, and be aware of the dangers it poses. There is a strong tendency today to see a vibrant,

strong civil society as naturally strengthening and enhancing liberal democracies. The traditional 'civil society argument' supposes that a vibrant and strong civil society and associational participation naturally strengthen and enhance liberal democracies. The alternative is said to be apathy, atomistic individualism or isolationism. Particularly in post-conflict situations, we should always ask ourselves *what kind* of civil society actually promotes democracy and peace. Some civil society organisations advocate exclusionary practices, hate and bigotry. In pre-conflict situations, these are generally the ones building up the identities that foster violence and exclusionary practices. And when the trust and the solidarity that civil society organisations create remains contained within a certain group, democracy is not strengthened. 'Particularistic civility contains all the goods that are associated with participation (trust, public spiritedness, self-sacrifice), but only between members of a particular group, and it often encourages the opposite sort of attitude to members outside of the group.'

In fragile and complex times of transition, this kind of civility is all the more dangerous. Putnam (2001: 22) acknowledged this difficulty when distinguishing between what he called a 'bonding' and a 'bridging' social capital. Bonding social capital is inward-looking and tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups, while bridging involves making connections across social, cultural and political partitions. To avoid those risks, we have a responsibility to try to direct civil society away from those dangerous 'bonding' paths, but we should not stop there. We should also look at larger socio-economic factors that can contribute to the rise of this 'bad civil society'. The latter is a problem of social justice. To that extent, it is all the more urgent that civil society in challenging environments takes a stronger stance in favour of poverty reduction and distributional reform.

Global civil society and the limitations of external donors

Civil society at the global level has an important and sometimes ambiguous role in vulnerable environments. It can be positive, for example, as witnessed with the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Indeed, the idea of the ICC emerged from global civil society more than from national governments: the NGO called the Coalition for the ICC, for instance, played a major role, and so did many non-state actors in Africa. However, the role of global civil society does not stop here. Now that the ICC exists, CSOs continue to lobby for the Court to be respected, for people to cooperate with it, for countries to sign and ratify its treaty. Its role is therefore to enrich and consolidate the institution, as well as to offer criticisms of its performance where appropriate. Finally,

it also has a role in drawing attention to issues that the ICC should take up, to bring it to certain places in the world where there is serious conflict, such as Sudan, where the conflict in Darfur has captured global attention. Global CSOs are also crucial in the struggle against war crimes, for instance by promoting international treaties forbidding certain weapons. The 2008 anti-cluster bombs convention was a striking example of what NGOs can accomplish. Even when no treaty is actually signed, CSOs can still act through a 'naming and shaming' policy, lobbying against the use or the production of such lethal weapons.

But the problem, and the main weakness of global civil society activism, is that the influence of Northern civil society and the developed world over the South is disproportionate. The ICC case demonstrates this, as there appears to be unevenness in the way the ICC acts at the global level. The input of civic voices, heard far away from the corridors of power and ignored by the media, is often overlooked. There are virtually no voices within the ICC establishment who are asking, for instance, why former UK prime minister Tony Blair and former US president George W. Bush, who violated international law, and have essentially taken their countries into a war based on a lie (or several lies), thus creating profound instability and a humanitarian crisis in Iraq itself, as well as giving rise to wider global instability, are not being called to account. The international humanitarian law violations during the Israel's Gaza War in 2009, as detailed in the Goldstone report, are another case in point. The failure of the ICC to speak out in a consistent way about such issues raises questions about whether the advocacy of civil society is helping international law in general. So long as these institutions appear to act only against developing countries, and fail to act in a balanced and equitable manner with regard to richer and nuclear-wielding military powerhouses, so long as there exists a double standard, the very idea of the Court will be undermined. What threatens the ICC now is that it is generally seen as a Northern institution only. This is problematic for the very functioning of the Court, which relies on cooperation from governments, especially Southern ones. If those governments feel that the Court is unfair, they can hinder its work and essentially block it, as the African Union has done by uniting behind President Bashir of Sudan. On the other hand, former Liberian president Charles Taylor would not have been arrested had it not been for the action of other African leaders who cooperated with the ICC. Will they cooperate to get Al Bashir arrested? I doubt it. The African Union and the Arab League are still being quiet on this, and in Sudan, some CSOs are supporting the Sudanese president.

Global civil society also has a role in helping local CSOs on the ground. However, reshaping policies that try to create a healthy civil society from the outside can sometimes have the opposite effect. 'Civil soci-

ety for export', with programmes funded by organisations such as the Open Society Institute, may alter the organisational landscape of local civil society in unexpected ways. External donors in transitional societies may, for instance, undercut the social and local basis of support. Externally funded civil society organisations may become too dependent on their donors, and lose contact with their own local constituencies. Often, it is the West which helps and encourages such movements. George Soros and the Open Society Institute, for instance, put a lot of money into Eastern Europe to build the 'infrastructures' of civil society: a forum for institutions, umbrella networks, capacity-building, and so on. They also counselled the future leaders of the TRC in South Africa on how to build the Commission. In the case of the 'velvet revolutions' of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, this external influence was even more obvious: foreign, state-sponsored institutions were basically giving out cash to local NGOs. Because organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International receive their funding from the developed world, it may raise the question of whether non-indigenous civil society organisations are legitimate on the ground. There is much room for improvement. Without a strong civil society on the ground, or the help of local NGOs, we are very vulnerable to claims of Western imperialism. The problem is that civil society is extremely vulnerable when it develops a dependency on external sources. When the majority of the resources comes from outside, then civil society might become or be seen to be agents of external countries, as is the case today with Memorial in today's Russia. It is therefore necessary, in vulnerable situations, to go further than just service delivery and funding. In those weak societies, it is essential to help develop the capacities of civil society groups. Too often, we underestimate the importance of indigenous norms and indigenous culture. There is no one-size-fits-all model of peace-building and transition. What worked in post-war Germany and Japan in terms of rebuilding the country will not necessarily work elsewhere.

The only way to find out the best method for a given situation is to open up as many spaces as we can for informal and formal civil society networks to evolve. By doing so, we will be able to ensure that we understand the views of people in post-conflict situations. And in many cases, all that people want is to get on with their lives. In South Africa, despite wide outreach and communication efforts, many people criticised the TRC because it was too expensive: it was argued, for instance, that for reconciliation to be possible the government should simply have given all the TRC money to the black community to help them rebuild their lives in dignity. For civil society mechanisms to be successful, one of the key roles for civil society is to ensure that the most marginalised groups have a voice. The 'lazy way' in vulnerable

situations is to homogenise the population, to treat it as 'the' people, all in the same manner. But the role of civil society in challenging environments is more complex: it has to look towards the distinctive constituencies within the community, constituencies that require special attention and support. People are not affected by a crisis in an identical manner. For instance, child soldiers have very distinctive needs. Women, too, as well as children, require specific support and solidarity as they generally pay the biggest price during war. They can emerge from conflict as the most wounded, most violated. There is a critical role for civil society here, and not only for CSOs focused on women, to ensure that in post-conflict and vulnerable situations, significant care and sensitivity is given to address the distinctive needs of women and children. Without a more conscious approach towards conflict, crises, and their differentiated impact on people, we cannot create lasting peace.

Building sustainable peace and consolidating societies means focusing on the things we hold in common, on the things that unite people, and permitting people to agree to respectfully disagree on other things. This peaceful disagreement will not work if we do not respect differences first. For me, there is no contradiction here. The best commonality is the one that recognises all those differences that people possess, whether in terms of language, ethnicity or class. The crucial role of civil society is therefore to encourage pluralism. The greatest mistake of this new wave of thinking about reconciliation and healing is that it tends to believe there is only one truth about the conflict among the affected populations, and therefore only one way to achieve justice. Rather, experience shows that truth is not just the reproduction of facts for the victims: it also lies in people's moral perception of these facts. The general tendency to approach post-conflict and vulnerable societies in a technocratic manner is problematic, as it is often at the expense of resolving underlying injustices. Western interventions in post-conflict situations are often said to be aimed at the 'building of local capacities'. It is true that the capacity for free association requires people to renounce ideological groups and parties, to control their vengeful impulses and to be capable of sociability. In a healthy civil society, people must be able to trust and be loyal to each other. The difficulty is that those qualities cannot be planned or legislated from above.

Moving beyond the capacity-building model

I remember, growing up in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the way campaign leaders used to evaluate us, assessing each one's capacities in campaigning and organising. They used to say things like: 'That one is good on fundraising, but his gender sensitivity must be built.' This capacity-building approach supposes that all we need is to

'fill up' people, as when we go to the gas station. It also denotes a form of arrogance towards the people concerned. I remember, too, when I was president of the African Society at Oxford, how a young, innocent, 22-year-old woman told me once that she wanted to go to Africa to help women 'build their capacities', teach them to fight for their rights, and so on. The reaction in the audience, mostly composed of African women, was swift, harsh and biting, and ultimately dismissive.

Furthermore, the capacity-building approach suggests that there is nothing to start from in the beginning. But I believe that there is no such thing as a society which contains no element of civil society at all. Civil society, as I understand it, also includes informal social networks of people. Think of the former Soviet Union, for instance. Many people present it as a 'vacuum society', a place where there was no civil society at all, because of 70 years of totalitarian rule. But still, there existed some formal organised civil society such as trade unions and women's organisations, albeit regulated and tightly controlled by the state. In such cases, what we are seeing are manifestations of civic institutions which lack the capacity to build civic trust. Even in extremely repressive societies, people still form informal networks. There is no such thing, therefore, as an absolute clampdown on civil society by the state. The state can never completely close down civil society and consequently there is never nothing to start from. Even North Korea, I believe, experiences some form of civil society that could serve as a basis for reconstruction if the regime were to be overthrown. People in the harshest, most repressive societies always build networks that could lead, eventually, to resistance. Before nation-states and political parties existed, people still engaged with each other, sometimes with a high level of organisation. The basic building-block of civil society, in that sense, is already there. This has a lot to do with the question of trust. I believe that the relationships that are built when people gather in extremely repressive situations possess a level of trust that is higher than those formed under more normal conditions. My closest friends today, those I trust the most, are often those I met during the years of repression in South Africa.

The capacity-building approach suggests that there is nothing to start from in the beginning.

Ultimately, peace and stability are sustained on the shoulders of people and communities alone, not by state political actors. To that extent, reconciliation and the rebuilding of civil society after conflict should be seen as a local, long-term process, not an immediate goal. Creating political institutions might take six months. It might take six years to create a viable economy. But it will probably take 60 years to create a truly durable and sustainable civil society after authoritarianism and conflict. It is the most difficult, but also the most important, task ahead. Recent events in Iraq have proved this: civil society is the hardest thing to bring about.

Chapter 9 »
The challenge of youth citizenship –
From the margins to the centre

'Your children are not your children, they are the sons and daughters of life longing for itself.'

Kalil Gilbran

As you read these words, several young people around the world will lose their lives – to AIDS, gun violence, the impact of environmental neglect, and to landmines. Many more will suffer as social support systems and the criminal justice system fail them. Others will suffer as a result of the failure of the so-called war on drugs, or will perish in various internal conflicts in countries around the world. Are young people, then, simply a problem that adults have to find solutions for?

The truth is that, on the contrary, despite all the challenges that young people face, it is they who offert he greatest scope for innovation, have the greatest courage, and are capable of donating an amazing amount of voluntary energy and effort. Young people are increasingly aware that they do not need to inhabit the fringes of public life. They are already beginning to occupy the centre in creative ways, expressing their frustration or anger with their circumstances. We should remember that question, 'How old will you be in 2050?', emblazoned on the T-shirts of young members of the Global Campaign for Climate Action delegation at the 2009 G8 summit. The youth delegates' message was: the future belongs to us and we are going to do everything we can to ensure environmental, social and economic justice for future generations.

Young people are not simply tomorrow's leaders, as is often said. They are, in very real ways, today's leaders. The experiences of individual youth leaders, and the examples of the efforts of youth organisations, strongly suggest that youth is on the move – with greater skill, greater strategy and sense of purpose than ever before. Young people around the world are no longer willing to be mere spectators on the sidelines: they are central players at different levels in the public sphere.

The participation of young people in civil society is nothing short of a demographic imperative. Especially in developing countries, they are in the numeric majority. This is a growing tendency in many African

countries, as the decimation caused by AIDS reshapes the contours of the demographic map. The challenge faced by young people, as well as adult leaders of civil society organisations and their counterparts in business and government, is to create ways in which youth will be treated as fully fledged citizens. Young citizens have the right to be heard not only on policy issues that confront various countries, but also policy choices facing global institutions such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations and its agencies. In short, I believe that advancing the agenda of youth participation is no longer merely a nice thing to do, but a critical thing to achieve.

In order to further explain this statement, I would like to disaggregate youth participation into three levels, investigating how it functions within the three tiered macro, meso and micro structure outlined in this text.

Levels of youth participation: macro, meso and micro

Macro

Increasingly, young people seek to address the fundamentals of governance, at both national and global levels. Over the past few years, young people have begun to question the very essence of the public institutions that govern them. We are familiar with the phenomenon of students and youth activists taking to the streets in protest at unfair international trade agreements or corrupt, authoritarian governments. At a national level, even in longstanding democracies, young people are voicing their dissatisfaction as public institutions appear increasingly impotent, unpopular and unaccountable. At a global level, young people have joined forces with experienced activists to raise fundamental questions about the governance of powerful institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In the process of proposing alternatives, they are challenging inequitable political and economic structures: for example, the dangers of wealthier countries having disproportionate influence over international financial institutions. Unconstrained by a 'That's just the way the world is' mentality, young people have the ability to pose questions in fresh ways that open the door to possibilities of fundamental institutional reform at both national and global levels. Another example of this is their questioning of the one-dollar-one-vote system of the World Bank and the IMF, at a time when world leaders have acknowledged that we need a new financial architecture that delivers greater equity and social justice.

Unconstrained by a 'That's just the way the world is' mentality, young people have the ability to pose questions in fresh ways that open the door to possibilities.

Young people have inspired adults to think with greater courage and vision in order to make substantive changes which address issues of governance and power, not just small administrative reforms. Consequently, one important aspect of youth participation is the opening up of debates and exploration of alternatives to the institutional arrangements that the adult world takes as 'given' and permanent.

Meso

In spite of the youth-unfriendly governance of public institutions, which leads to youth voices not being taken seriously, as well as the gaps in accountability or 'democratic deficits' within institutions, many young people are committed to working for positive social change. At the national and provincial/state-wide level young people, like many other socially excluded groups, find that with the rules of participation working against them, it becomes all the more critical to participate in order to try to influence outcomes. Sometimes this is done to limit the damage of policy positions, sometimes it is to advance a particular policy, and sometimes young people participate simply to gain a better understanding of the rules of the institutions and processes with a view to developing a long-term strategy to change and challenge these rules. Using a working definition of young people as people aged 30 and under, we find that they are often present in a range of national policy processes where there is scope for input and engagement by civil society organisations. On the down side, in order to be accepted in these processes they often have to hold back from advancing a youth agenda too forcefully, and feel compelled to subordinate this issue to other broader and more generic goals.

At a global level, young people are engaged to varying degrees and in a variety of ways with the diverse array of intergovernmental organisations and international processes. A growing number of international conferences have specific opportunities for young people to meet and develop their positions on a range of issues. The work of a range of visionary thinkers in institutions such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat has consciously opened spaces for youth involvement. While some might say this is too little too late, it is still an important foundation that can be built upon and consolidated in coming years. Seeing young people as active and positive social agents, and not as victims, is not only the right thing to do, it's also clearly the smart thing to do.

There is a growing despondency in the ranks of many civil society leaders around the world as to whether engagement through dialogue with international institutions such as the UN, IMF, World Bank, WTO

and so on actually yields substantive benefits. It's a despondency shared by some youth organisations. Nevertheless, in the face of this anxiety, many young leaders still conclude that despite the limitations of consultative processes, it is critical that they stay engaged with the current institutional framework to make the best of what is available.

Micro

Young people want to do real things for real people through a range of innovative programmatic interventions. The number of young people participating directly in civil and political life via a diverse set of indigenous local and national youth organisations, is awe-inspiring.

The programmatic output of national and local youth organisations adds immense value to the overall social fabric in communities around the world. For example, the Chinese National Youth Foundation is engaged in youth leadership training as well as helping build schools in rural China. In Africa, various youth organisations are doing inspiring work around the pandemic of HIV and AIDS.

The Helping Hands youth organisation in Durban, South Africa, is a telling example of the way many youth-driven initiatives do not necessarily manifest themselves as formal organisations. Helping Hands has been operating as a non-registered informal voluntary organisation since 1980, engaged in such diverse activities as civic and political education classes, tuition in subjects such as mathematics and physics, coaching in swimming and athletics, as well as supporting various institutions offering care to abandoned children and those living with disabilities. Gender awareness programmes and racial justice programmes have also helped to share information, develop skills and build leadership. The range of their activities is remarkable, and I was privileged to have been part of the leadership of Helping Hands. When I reflect on the work that I have done with CIVICUS and its affiliates, in promoting citizen participation and strengthening civil society, I have little doubt that most of what I know was learnt in my years as a young activist, when the work of this small organisation helped to open my mind to the wider possibilities inherent in civil society.

Other global youth movements and organisations such as the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), the International Youth Foundation (IYF), the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM), the International Alliance of the YMCAs and YWCAs offer great opportunities to youth to realise their potential. Right now, many of these institutions are grappling with how to engage young people in the governance of their institutions, believing

The number of young people participating directly in civil and political life via a diverse set of indigenous local and national youth organisations, is awe-inspiring.

that including young people more effectively in decision-making can only enhance performance. The efforts of inter-governmental organisations such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UN also demonstrate positive, albeit insufficient, trends of youth participation in a range of initiatives around the world.

Mapping out the challenges and opportunities for youth participation

Having examined the various levels of actual and potential youth participation in civil and political society, we must now consider the particular challenges and opportunities for youth participation. Here again, we must disaggregate our understanding of familiar concepts, including the most basic category of 'youth', to better understand the challenges and opportunities for youth participation

Recognising the diversity of young people

It is vital that in pursuing the objective of strengthening youth participation we do not treat young people as a monolithic entity. Failure to understand its diversity could have disastrous consequences. There are several key distinctions that need to be kept in mind. First, and most importantly, is gender. Second, there are the distinctions that different age cohorts raise. Third, we need to be mindful of occupational locations and groups: primary schools, high or secondary schools, unemployed young people, professional young people, students in tertiary education, and young workers. Fourth, cultural background and religion play identity-defining roles. Fifth, issues of race and ethnicity also need to be dealt with sensitively.

These diversities are not being brought up to suggest that young people cannot rise above such differences. In fact, less constrained by the baggage of tradition or history, young people are often better then their elders at establishing connections and uniting across these boundaries. They have the ability to lead the way in fostering greater racial and ethnic justice, for example, and greater religious acceptance and tolerance.

Young people and globalisation

It is untrue that globalisation is fundamentally a new trend. The quest to connect across geographical divides pre-dates the nation-state system as we know it today. However, the scale of interaction is far greater today due to advancements in the field of communications. Today, we find that young people are connected across national boundaries

more than ever before. The flow of information has, in fact, fostered a virtual youth community that manifests itself in different ways across the world. For example, the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) has a Children and Youth Task Force which is advancing the interests, participation and perhaps most importantly, the voice of young people in anti-poverty campaigning.

At the same time, we are confronted with the challenge of what Demos, a policy think tank in New York, has labelled 'economic apartheid'. Economic apartheid often has a distinct youth dimension. In spite of the fact that a small percentage of young people have benefited as a result of the information technology revolution, the sad reality is that while some speed off on the information super-highway, millions more are left behind, stuck in their potholes, further debilitated by a lack of technical knowledge or infrastructure. The dominance of English on the internet also means that many other language groups are excluded. On the positive side, information technology has played a pivotal role in broadening access to participation, while the sharing of experience has promoted cross-cultural learning and dialogue and had an impact on how young people interact with each other and society as a whole. Notwithstanding the inequity in access to information and communications technology, known commonly as the 'digital divide', young people are participating, learning and leading in creative, and often invisible, ways. Just because you cannot see them does not mean they are not taking part. The coming decades should see an increasing intensification of participation for those people who have technological access. Unfortunately, this means that those without access will be left further behind, providing us with a challenge to ensure more equitable access, and more equitable and effective participation for all young people.

Young people and the social exclusion debate

In the coming decades, it would be remarkable if humanity could judge itself not simply on the success of a few but, on the overall progress of the majority. In particular, humanity needs to rise to the challenge of addressing, in creative, dynamic and courageous ways, those who have been and continue to be excluded from the mainstream of public life. In societies around the world, young people have been 'marginalised', seen as the 'lost generation', a 'Generation X' in search of self-identity, victims in need of salvation. Young people's alienation from public life is, in itself, a form of social exclusion that needs to be addressed.

It would be remarkable if humanity could judge itself not simply on the success of a few but, on the overall progress of the majority.

We also need to pose the question: how can young people, notwithstanding their own feelings of social exclusion, contribute to supporting the struggles for justice of other socially excluded groups? Being sensitive to questions of social exclusion also opens a powerful window into the work of other constituencies striving to create a more just world, meaning the power of youth participation can be aligned with a community battling against issues such as environmental injustice or poverty; or help that community to find ways of connecting with other socially excluded groups.

The one caution here is that young people must ensure that when they interact with other constituencies, they work as partners, listen well, guard against framing people as victims, beneficiaries, recipients, clients or charity cases. It is critical that youth respect the integrity of the people they seek to serve. The African concept of *ubuntu* (community), given expression in the proverb 'I am because you are', is a powerful reminder that we acquire our identity, our sense of community, our meaning and purpose through our interaction with the other people in our lives. Therefore, when working with socially excluded groups, we need to be mindful that those of us who consider ourselves to be 'serving' others are in fact serving ourselves, since we often get so much more in return.

Young people and the challenge of leadership

Young people are increasingly assuming important leadership roles all over the world. This is something which needs to be consolidated, celebrated and expanded. The challenge is to recognise the multifaceted nature of youth leadership and ensure that there is always a conscious commitment to ensuring that leadership development is part of our work. Leadership development is a term that is frequently used in broad, sweeping terms. In reality, it is very much context-determined. From my position as a civil society practitioner, I see at least three distinct patterns of leadership development that are required in NGOs and other civil society organisations, applicable to differing situations.

First, there are youth organisations constituted and led entirely by young people. Here, incumbent leaders need to ensure that they do not allow their own leadership, however inspiring and excellent, to prevent the rise of the next generation of leadership.

Second, there is the situation of young people working in organisations governed entirely, or mostly, by adults. In such organisations,

there have been positive movements in the right direction over the last 10 years or so. Increasingly, young people are being brought into the governance structures of these institutions. For example, there has been a moderate rise in the number of young people being nominated to the governing boards of directors. The election of Rajiv Joshi, who played a key role in initiating the CIVICUS World Assembly and was a successful president of the Scottish Youth Parliament, onto the CIVICUS board at the age of 22, is one of several examples we can point to. There is also a greater push to employ young people in the ranks of the administrative and programming staff of these organisations. These trends need to be strengthened.

Thirdly, there is youth involvement in civil society organisations which do not focus exclusively on youth issues. Here, again, the challenges are somewhat different. In fact, it is harder to develop youth leadership in these settings, since it is often suggested that the vision and mission of an economic or social justice movement are so pressing that there is neither the time nor the resources to worry about youth leadership or other 'distracting' factors. Yet these organisations often rely on young people as their 'shock troops', 'foot soldiers' or 'work force'. Consequently, these organisations must think deeply about how they relate to their youth constituency, ensuring that their leadership role is not stunted, but encouraged. Ultimately, the future vibrancy of many organisations depends on achieving this.

Youth organisations, and indeed all citizens' organisations, need to think about nurturing youth leadership and come up with innovative ideas about how to do so.

Youth organisations, and indeed all citizens' organisations, need to think about nurturing youth leadership and come up with innovative ideas about how to do so. They need to make investments in leadership development that are smart, courageous, innovative and cost-effective. This entails an investment in time and locally available resources as well as the creation of conscious learning opportunities for young people, that take into account a full range of leadership skills. Fortunately, many innovative leadership programmes already exist. Such programmes need to be built upon, and incorporated as a natural part of these organisations' day-to-day life.

Young people and the challenge of gender equality

While serving a five-year term as a board member of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) I was able to witness first hand the inspiring work being done in its programme, Young Women in Leadership, and wasoverwhelmed to see how many young women stepped forward to participate in this programme's activities. The contributions of the women's movement around the world, which have

opened up more spaces for active young women's leadership and led to remarkable improvements in our approach to social issues over the past few decades, need to be acknowledged. More recently, the UN Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995, provided impetus to these developments, and many young women were inspired by the pre- and post-Beijing processes. Nevertheless, the disproportionately low representation of young women in public life is truly scandalous. Unfortunately, many youth organisations remain firmly dominated by young men and a range of societal norms hinder the participation of young women. The fact that young women usually carry a greater burden of responsibility with regard to domestic work, for example, reduces the amount of time available for participation in public life, and in many societies young women are actively discouraged from seeking avenues for public contribution.

Gender equality needs to be tackled by young people who believe that full democracy will never be achieved unless men and women share equitably in the democratic and economic process of their societies. Both the struggle for gender equality within (in youth organisations) and without (in the society as a whole) need to be tackled simultaneously. Thankfully, more and more people, including a growing number of men, agree that gender equality is going to be central to creating a world that is environmentally sustainable, and in which social and economic justice reigns supreme. Given that even in long-standing democracies women still occupy a largely symbolic or token presence in positions of influence, humanity needs to ask itself why is it willing to deprive itself of the vast experience, wisdom, sensitivity and creativity of more than half the world's population.

Young people, democracy and governance

Increasingly today, citizens around the world are arguing that they want to be involved in public life beyond simply voting once every four or five years. The stale and old idea of 'governance being what government does' is being vigorously contested. Governance is being redefined as how policy decisions get made and what government and its citizens do, together and apart, to meet the needs of their societies. Thankfully, many enlightened governments and international bodies increasingly seek out the voices of citizens' organisations to try to draw more people into the policy-making process. At a time when democracy is in crisis, with fewer and fewer people voting, this is vitally important. Electoral systems are becoming less and less accessible to ordinary people. There is diminishing internal democracy, transparency and openness within powerful political parties, even in countries with longstanding histories of party politics and a growing sense that national governments in poor

countries are powerless in the face of influential global institutions. Formal electoral democracy is unable to deliver economic justice in many parts of the world. All of these realities have combined to create a huge distance between elected officials and their citizens.

What, then, are the specific challenges for young people? The most important challenge is ensuring that youth does not slide into cynicism, but continues to remain critically engaged with democratic institutions, however flawed. Young people of voting age should vote, even if it is only to 'spoil' or invalidate the ballots as a sign of protest at the choices available to them. Apathy should be challenged.

I believe that the time has also come for a serious reconsideration of the voting age. Today, young people can have as much access to information as their parents, or even more. Young people take on important social responsibilities and have earned the right to participate in the democratic process. For some time now, many of us have been calling for the voting age limit to be reduced to 16. It is worth bearing in mind that President Nelson Mandela, in acknowledgement of the role young school students played in the struggle against apartheid, once called for the voting age to be lowered to 14.

Young people have a big role to play in addressing the democratic deficit at various formal and informal institutional levels. Historically young people have played a key role in struggles for democracy around the world. This involvement continues today. Many youth heroes have given their lives in the campaign to see democracy prevail, a recent example being the young Iranian activist, Neda Agha Soltan, who was shot and killed during protests in Tehran in June 2009.

At the macro level, we need to be looking at what substantive changes need to be made to the rules, procedures and laws that guide our lives at a local, national and global level. We're going to need the imagination and the creativity of young people, so as to think more courageously and innovatively about the changes that need to be made to ensure our public institutions are the best they can be to meet all of humanity's needs.

At the meso level, while recognising that institutional change is a marathon and not a sprint, we still need to ensure that the current processes function as effectively as possible. How can we get more young people running for public office, voting, campaigning and shaping the elections agenda? At a global level, how can we ensure, for example, that the regular UN conferences, such as the recent Copenhagen Climate Change summit, have a strong youth voice and

Young people and those not yet born are undoubtedly the most important stakeholders when we talk about the environment.

presence? Young people and those not yet born are undoubtedly the most important stakeholders when we talk about the environment. The impressive contribution of young people to the campaigning at Copenhagen, which I witnessed first-hand, is clear testament to their awareness of this, and the passion with which they are seeking to ensure their contribution to the debate gets heard.

At the micro level, young people need to be engaged in specific projects around voter education, civic education, promoting adult literacy and so on.

All three levels of participation are important and it is incumbent upon young people to establish links between these levels.

Youth participation in developing a new world vision

Young people have the advantage that they are not over-burdened by the habitual cynicism of the adult world. They are probably better able to imagine a world where there is no homelessness or war, and one in which justice prevails. Clearly, one of the roles that young people should engage in is visionary scenario-planning. Getting young people to think about the future and about what new paradigms might work is essential. This need not be a solely long-term, romantic enterprise. Young people can and should be also looking at creative and new ways for organisations to operate and rethink their strategies.

I can provide two examples of novel ways in which young people have 'broken the mould'. Rather than view the relationship between corporations and civil society organisations as primarily adversarial, or merely a flirtation sealed by a donation or grant, young people have participated in encouraging civil society organisations and businesses to creatively seek common ground, working out ways of channelling the considerable resources of the latter towards social development. For many civil society organisations, this approach of exploring common ground with business required them to 'think out of the box'. CIVICUS has published a pioneering study called 'Promoting Corporate Citizenship: Opportunities for Business and Civil Society Engagement', which outlines the challenges, possibilities and opportunities for developing the relationship between NGOs and the business community beyond donations and funding grants, towards harnessing the full resources of the latter.

Another example of breaking the mould has to do with how we think about issues of gender equality generally, and an issue like violence

against women and children in particular. In the past, violence against women was treated as a woman's issue, to be taken up by women's or-ganisations. In reality, as some men have repeatedly pointed out, this is fundamentally a men's issue. It is men who are the perpetrators and the problem is rooted in how masculinity is constructed and understood. Education and outreach efforts should target men as well as women. Rethinking some of our fundamental conceptual frameworks, and linking this new thinking to more substantive issues, can create a more just and equitable world. Young people, less influenced by the burdens of tradition and societal habit, are in a better position to recognise and act on these changing models. In meeting this challenge, young people have an indispensable role, putting them at the vanguard of instituting fundamental positive change within our societies.

From MAZES to GRACES – integrating youth work in broader social and economic change

Sometimes, the youth participation agenda is unable to move forward. It finds itself trapped in a maze because it cannot actively interact with the range of other social interventions that are under way. We can move out of this maze of isolation if we embrace the intersectionality of youth participation and youth citizenship with key areas of volun-tary action for positive social and economic change. Inspired by those women activists who have refused to be parochial in their vision and have made common cause with other citizen movements that work for social and economic change, I propose the concept of 'GRACES' as a simpler way to talk about the challenge of intersectionality.

GRACES

G   stands for full gender equality and raises the question of what actions are needed to ensure the full participation of young women in public life.

R   raises the question of how we can work for racial justice and religious tolerance.

A   deals with age and ability.

C   deals with class, community and caste

E   deals with ethnicity

S   covers those that are otherwise socially excluded, such as people living with HIV and AIDs or other illnesses and disabilities, indigenous peoples and those who face discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Building intergenerational synergy

Advancing the agenda of active youth citizenship will not be served by romanticising youth participation. While we look at the abundant benefits, opportunities and energies that can be harnessed by youth to breathe new energy into what has become a stale and moribund public life, we also need to note the limitations that hold back youth participation.

In examining such limitations, adult public figures should recognise that each generation brings with it certain objective limitations. These limitations should not be read as something that should limit our capacity to make youth citizenship real and active, but should be understood as another challenge that needs to be met with creativity and realism.

Any agenda to harness the full participation of youth in public life should take as its starting point the need to develop and build appropriate generational linkages. This is a matter of priority, considering that the growing sense of alienation experienced by young people is linked to serious generational divides which mean we fail to utilise intergenerational synergy. The need for this sort of prioritisation is illustrated by the work done by the now defunct Global Meeting of Generations, a civil society effort which sought to bring together the wisdom of multiple generations in framing a new approach to sustainable development, and it is important that civil society comes together to create a successor to this forum.

Young people need to feel enabled to take initiatives to deal with the challenges that they face, and know that they possess the mechanisms that will permit them to contribute. Just as importantly, youth leaders and adults should encourage young people to be major societal stakeholders – stakeholders who have the ability to offer creative contributions to the challenges facing humanity as a whole. Any failure to do so will squander the enormous potential that active youth participation has to offer to the world, a potential the world cannot afford to ignore.

Chapter 10 »
The majority are socially excluded!! Marginalised groups and the challenge for civil society

'*The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity.*'

George Bernard Shaw, *The Devil's Disciple* (1901)

In the previous chapter we concentrated on youth as the hope for the future. However, the diverse groups who make up our society, and their capacity for contributing towards social progress, notwithstanding the discrimination they experience, must not be forgotten. Today we measure the progress of human society largely on the economic achievements of those who are already relatively privileged. In the coming decades, humanity has to learn how to judge itself on the progress of those who are most socially excluded. For democracy to have any value, policy-makers and civil society organisations must address the issue of justice for socially excluded marginalised groups.

Firstly, let us define 'socially excluded marginalised groups' for our purposes here. There are majority groups that have also been marginalised historically and still are today. These include young people, already discussed in the last chapter, and women, addressed throughout the volume. Therefore, the socially marginalised groups we will be looking at in this chapter include indigenous communities, people living with HIV and AIDS, people living with disabilities, people living with illness, religious/cultural/linguistic minorities and people with an alternative sexual orientations. In particular we shall look at the complex issue of older people. Collectively, the numbers of these disparate groups are enormous and constantly on the increase.

The world is suffering from various large-scale unsolved health catastrophes, such as the silent genocide of AIDS in Africa and elsewhere in the world. This has vast repercussions, since the numbers of sufferers are growing, and have been every year since statistics began in 1990. Similarly, the numerous hot spots of societal and political violence around the world mean that increasing numbers of people are living with the after-effects of violence – disabilities of all kinds abound as the result of war, conflict and the after-effects of war such

as land mines. The World Health Organization estimates that 750 million people in the world are living with disabilities, 80 per cent of whom are in developing countries. In these poorer countries, only 2-3 per cent of children with disabilities go to school. This means the cycle of poverty can never change for the vast majority of the one-in-ten children born with disabilities.

Social exclusion is also driven by invisible prevailing prejudices against the indigenous peoples of the world. If citizen organisations are to stand for justice, they need to recognise that some of the greatest crimes of genocide in human history have been perpetrated against indigenous communities. While it might be impossible to reverse these injustices and for example, return *all* the land that was taken from indigenous communities historically, it is imperative that we do more to protect and celebrate the culture of indigenous peoples, which history will judge as being much more attuned to how human beings need to live in order to co-exist harmoniously with the environment. Their way of life is in stark contrast to those who set out to 'civilise' such communities and in so doing initiated a process of greed, accumulation and conquest which has brought this planet to its current precarious point.

So how do these different areas of social struggle intersect? This is the critical question. It is a fact that people in richer countries with a proper healthcare infrastructure can live with HIV for a much longer time than those in poor countries, a clear example of the way in which poverty exacerbates the challenge of illness. The only way forward for all concerned is to find moments and points of intersection between the various struggles that are, on the whole, being conducted independently of one another. Below, we take a look at the various groups identified as forming part of a marginalised consensus, and examine ways in which they might be able to identify and act on these moments of intersection.

Older people

'In Africa, it is said that when an old man dies, a library disappears. Without the knowledge and wisdom of the old, the young would never know where they come from or where they belong. But in order for the old to have a shared language with the young, they must have the opportunity to continue learning throughout life.'

*Kofi Annan, former United Nations secretary general
and member of the Elders*

Who are older people?

The definition of 'older people' varies in different cultures. The differences tend to be around what 'older' means within the chronology of age. Some classify people as 'older' when they cease being able to do things for themselves. The UN definition of 'older' is 60 years of age or above. Some countries define 'older' according to a legislated pension age. However, whilst definitions are necessary, they can also get in the way of defining justice for older people. For example 'younger' older people in Africa still have enormous responsibility in the raising of grandchildren whose parents are working, whereas in the global North, grandparenting is often a leisure activity, undertaken part time or sporadically. However we define 'older', the reality is that the societal status of this 'group' is changing. Whereas, traditionally, older people were respected and revered for their wisdom, they are now becoming marginalised as their numbers grow across the world.

An ageing population

As more countries develop better education and better healthcare infrastructure, people live longer.

The global population of older people is projected to double by 2050 to 21 per cent of the total population. The increase will be greatest and most rapid in developing countries where the older population is expected to quadruple during the next 50 years, while the proportion of children is projected to drop by a third, from 30 to 21 per cent. The reality is that life expectancy is increasing all over the world, and in virtually every country (except those in Southern Africa, due to HIV and AIDS). According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2005 population statistics, 80 per cent of the global population of over 60s will be living in the developing world by 2050. In 2005, over 60s accounted for 10.4 per cent of the global population (673 million). In other words, older people are becoming an increasingly large group in both sheer numbers and in terms of proportion of the population.

Clearly, it's not just in the global North that populations are ageing. In fact, 11 per cent of China's population today is over 60. As more countries develop better education and better healthcare infrastructure, people live longer. Significant differences also exist between developed and developing countries in terms of the kinds of households in which older persons live. In developing countries a large proportion of older persons live in multigenerational households. Older women outnumber older men increasingly as age increases, though this is currently more the case in developed countries than developing countries. Recognising the differential impact of ageing on women and men, and that more older women than men will be left living

on their own with very little visible means of income, is integral to ensuring the development of effective and efficient measures for all older people.

Despite the huge demographic changes that are taking place, there is little discussion about the consequences of the success of keeping people alive for longer, nor about the role of older people and how they should be regarded within the new global society. Consequently, older people frequently experience the discrimination, invisibility and neglect familiar to other minority or marginalised groups.

Older people are citizens, contributors and consumers in the world, like everyone else. They are people with hopes and fears who continue to have a place in society. And like everyone else in society they need and want to be heard, valued and respected. They are not just people who are dependent, frail, and grateful for whatever bit of help or charity they can get, whether that help comes from the state, their community or their family.

The promotion of the full participation of older people is an essential element for a healthy and dynamic society in which the combination of the experience of the old and the freshness of youth are recognised as being of value. Strengthening solidarity among generations and intergenerational partnerships can provide a strong momentum for change driven by civil society. Maggie Kuhn's US-based Gray Panther movement of the mid-late 20th century, whose motto was 'Age and youth in action' offered a shining example of the generations campaigning alongside one another on common political issues.

Older people and civil society

Society on the whole is failing to adequately reflect either the significance or the value of older people. This position is not helped by organisations focused on the specific needs of older people, who often isolate themselves from the mainstream of civil society, 'specialising' both their remit and their voices. The contributions of older people are not taken nearly seriously enough in mainstream or issue-based civil society organisations. Just as young people are viewed as 'half full', older people are too often viewed as past their expiry date.

We are failing on a global scale to see the potential of older people – a big mistake given their numbers and the contribution they could be making. Older people have technical skills and knowledge. They also have experience and first-hand knowledge of history (which can be either a negative or a positive attribute, depending on how this

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knowledge is used). Older people need help in order to overcome the digital divide, something which is widening to a far greater degree in the global North than the South, creating a growing chasm between young and old.

In developing countries where the welfare state is likely to be non-existent or minimal, the burden falls on working populations who are often unable to meet their own immediate needs, much less the needs of an extended family. This is not a marginal issue; it is a mainstream issue that must be addressed by a cross-section of societal entities simultaneously.

Today policy-makers look at older people in terms of the cost/benefit equation. Those not contributing to GDP are viewed as a cost to the system. In fact, this model is simplistic. Ways of attributing economic value to viable roles performed by older people, for example child-care, need to be found.

Furthermore, with the growing numbers of older people it is essential to integrate the evolving process of global ageing within the larger process of development. In 2002 the Second World Summit on Ageing was held in Madrid, Spain. The International Plan of Action on Ageing which emerged from this summit calls for changes in attitudes, policies and practices at all levels in all sectors so that the enormous potential of older people in the 21st century may be fulfilled .

The aim of the Plan of Action is to ensure that older people everywhere are able to age with security and dignity and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights. It proposes 'ageing-mainstreaming' and 'ageing-specific' as the main policy directions for achieving this. Ageing-mainstreaming aims, in the same way that gender mainstreaming does, to integrate or mainstream ageing issues into all major national policy domains, such as development planning, finance, housing, education, income generation and health. The second type of action includes policies and programmes that specifically address the needs of older people, such as old age pensions, long-term care and healthcare services. An important component of both types of policy action is capacity-building for both organisations working with older people and for organisations of older people. This is a central role in which civil society organisations could play a part, by recognising and supporting the role and place of older people in their communities.

However, it is not only policy-makers who fail to value older people's contributions. Many civil society and non-governmental organisations, who should know better than others that people have rights, still choose to ignore both the plight of older people and the contribution they can make, even within their own realms of influence. For example, women's organisations the world over are increasingly strong and vibrant, yet much more needs to be done by these organisations to address the rights and potential of older women specifically. It could also be argued that older people themselves aren't doing enough to advance their own cause. The focus of many organisations in the older people's movement is on supporting the specific needs of the older generation and delivery of services to meet those needs, and insufficient attention is paid to the policy changes that are needed. Considerably less energy is given to wider activities that may increase the role, the voice and the value of older people across the spectrum of contemporary issues that affect us all. In the end, older people themselves are losing out −as individuals, who are not realising their full spectrum of rights, and at the same time receiving inadequate pensions and healthcare; and as a collective force, who are not realising their potential to effect change within their wider communities.

The focus of many organisations in the older people's movement is on supporting the specific needs of the older generation and delivery of services to meet those needs, and insufficient attention is paid to the policy changes that are needed.

What do older people want?

We all live in a world of multiple identities. These include class, religion, geography, socio-economic grouping and also age. Whilst younger people and young adults tend to align themselves more closely with these diverse aspects of identity, there is a perception that older people are more inclined to view themselves in terms of their age band, rather than any other group. But the lives of older people are a combination of all their life experiences, which in turn are influenced by religion, location, income and so on. It is this life course that affects how they are and what they do today. Older people are not a homogeneous group with the same views on things or the same needs. Many studies bear out that two of the things older people want most for themselves are to have meaningful relationships and to make a useful contribution to society. This shouldn't be that hard to fulfil, given certain practical allowances. Older people often have more control over their time and are therefore an incredibly valuable resource who could be engaged in strengthening grassroots activities at the local level. In many instances this kind of mobilisation may require resourcing and support in practical ways, such as transport and so on, but it is a massive social asset that is not being tapped.

Society's failure to value older people within its cost/benefit criteria has moral implications. Older people have usually contributed to so-

ciety and their local economy for decades and deserve some kind of acknowledgement. If they're lucky, they might get a state pension or state-sponsored healthcare. But what other rewards are we affording this growing band of people on a moral level? Do they not, at the very least, deserve some measure of status and respect for the contributions they have already made? Indigenous cultures look upon their older people with deference for their wisdom and experience. The rest of us could take note.

Creating an older people's movement

The older people's movement can take some positive learning from the youth movement. Youth mobilises as a form of recreation. They add enjoyment to the act of gathering, they advocate hard for inclusion in decision-making processes and work hard to be included as a sub-set that is increasingly institutionalised in mainstream civil society movements. Youth are moving stealthily beyond their silo, commenting on and influencing issues well beyond delivery to the specific needs of young people. In a similar fashion, older people have the tools, the numbers and the vested interest to broaden their approach, while simultaneously advancing their cause.

It is not as though older people are fundamentally underrepresented in societal institutions. In fact, one could argue that they are overrepresented in politics, in business leadership and other spheres of influence. What remains is for active older people in influential positions to recognise their obligation to those with less opportunity to have a voice. Those who possess influence can help to advance the cause of older people significantly, by aligning themselves with the call for increased social capital to be afforded to older people as a whole. Importantly, though, we must underscore the potential for older people to advance other causes too, not just the needs of their own group, since they have so much to contribute to broader efforts to create a more just world.

People living with illness and disabilities

People living with illness

We often think that it is predominantly the elderly who suffer from illness within our society. However, there are millions of people of all ages living with curable and incurable illnesses around the world. The tendency is for society to view these people, living with lupus or sickle cell disease or multiple sclerosis or cancer, among other diseases, as a problem, as people who need to be managed until death, rather than as people with a great deal to offer society.

People living with illnesses require the status of citizens with full
rights of participatory citizenship. Of course they need specialised
help from a health perspective, but the strategies to advance their
cause lie in exploring the opportunities for coordination of the vari-
ous groups that support these different illnesses. I believe there is
scope for greater unity, coordination and interaction between some
of these specialised groups.

Even in a country like Germany, with a strong movement of patient
rights, there is a tendency for the different specialised fields to oper-
ate in relative isolation from one another. If there was a greater effort
to build unity, find common ground, while recognising difference
and divergence, it could potentially give a stronger voice and policy
impact for all the different constituencies. This should not preclude
investment in looking at how these groups can support each other,
whether this means accessing state funding for cancer research or for
other terminal illnesses, or securing an enabling policy framework.
Imagine how much more powerful it might be if someone suffering
from a condition that was not that being lobbied for was speaking
alongside somebody with lupus, who was speaking alongside advo-
cates for resources for cancer research, for example. By working to-
gether and moving away from specialised fields of operation, greater
opportunities can start to arise.

People living with disabilities

Society needs to take collective responsibility for its failure to value
the potential contribution that people living with disabilities have to
make. Of course people living with disabilities need support, and this
will vary with the nature of the disability. But even in those parts of
the world where support is available for those with disabilities, we fail
to provide adequate opportunities for disabled individuals to contrib-
ute to society and public life. The British MP and former government
minister, David Blunkett, has done much to help the cause of blind
people by simply getting himself to the position he did – and then be-
ing judged by voters and colleagues against the same standards applied
to sighted people. We must advocate for more people living with dis-
abilities to be included in public life, particularly in countries where
conflict has resulted in disabilities for so many, such as Afghanistan,
Iraq or the US where so many returning soldiers have come back
with serious disabilities.

More than this, though, we must look closely at the policy deficits at
the national and global level. By this I mean we must take a long, hard
look at how government policies and practices are enabling people

living with disabilities to contribute to all facets of life in the work-place, schools, public office and so on. A complete paradigm shift is needed in order to take minority discourse to a wider, broader so-cial level. Public perceptions must be changed to facilitate this para-digm shift. If we focus only on what groups with disabilities do not have, rather than their capabilities, this in itself is disempowering. Often the well-intentioned fundraising activities supporting deliv-ery programmes for disabled people fall into the trap of using shock or sympathy to generate support. In the long run, these advertising programmes can do more harm than good. The institutionalisation of disabilities often prevents people from enjoying normal activities in which they are capable of participating. Here again silos are a big problem. We must ask ourselves the questions: How are the voices of these groups heard in everyday life? How do people living with dis-abilities integrate into other social and citizen constructs?

People living with HIV and AIDS

When we talk about people living with HIV and AIDS we need to recognise that this is now a global pandemic with tens of millions af-fected, and one that disproportionately affects people in poorer coun-tries around the world. In Africa alone we lose 6,000 people every single day as a result of HIV and AIDS. Many who are not dying of full-blown AIDS are dying from what is euphemistically called op-portunistic infections, linked to being HIV-positive, when people's immune systems can be so eroded that a severe flu can be fatal.

In Africa alone we lose 6,000 people every single day as a result of HIV and AIDS.

The issue of HIV and AIDS raises the troubling question of the strug-gle against racism. If, for example, in Western Europe and North America 6,000 died each day as a result of HIV and AIDS, the global community and particularly the dominant nations within the global community would not just be talking about the need to intervene with a significant scale of resources, there would be real action. I am saying this as an African. Richard Curtis, key in the formation of Make Poverty History, has said that you can bet your last dollar that if that number of people were perishing from preventable illnesses and death in the Western world the resources would long ago have been found. This raises the question that if we live in a world where some people are seen as expendable, why isn't there a bridge between those movements fighting racism, those seeking to tackle HIV and AIDS, and organisations such as the Pan-African Treatment Action Campaign which advocates for the necessary resources and support for people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA).

Acknowledging the vast scale of the epidemic, we also need to think about how it is addressed. A point worth noting is that if someone other than those closest to the pandemic speaks out about HIV and AIDS this can result in the severity of the crisis being taken more seriously. This is not to be insensitive to the fact that people want to speak for themselves. People living with HIV or AIDS legitimately want to have the biggest say in the advocacy for their interests, but this does not mean their voice is undermined by having people struggling with other illness stand shoulder to shoulder with them in advocacy campaigns for better HIV and AIDS policies.

One of the key reasons that it is important to look at how different areas of social endeavour intersect, is that we know that middle-class or relatively well-off people who are HIV-positive, especially those from wealthy countries where there is a better health system in place, succeed in managing and living with the HIV virus for a much longer period of time. We need to look at how poverty, and a whole range of issues, exacerbate the challenge of addressing the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Consequently, it's critically important that we focus on where the different struggles intersect. This is demonstrated by the Global Call to Action against Poverty, where addressing HIV and AIDS is seen as a fundamental part of addressing the overall global struggle against poverty. If there is inadequate health care, poor sanitation, limited access to water or nourishing food, the struggle of people living with HIV and AIDS is intensified to an almost immeasurable degree.

Other marginalised groups

People with an alternative sexual orientation

The gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (GLBTI) communities have been perceived to represent a challenge to mainstream sexual and societal norms. As a result this community has been marginalised throughout modern history, and it is only recently that it has mobilised itself to participate as a growing force within civil society.

Nevertheless, many GLBT people in many parts of the world are still living in secrecy. In many countries homoerotic activities are criminalised and GLBTI people face violent persecution by the state and by others. Even in the so-called liberal democracies where formal equality exists before the law, GLBTI young people are far more likely to commit suicide, and far more likely to be victims of unprovoked violent attacks, while many face bullying or outright discrimination in the workplace. The interaction with dynamics of race, class and gender also tends to compound existing inequalities. These are

fundamental human rights concerns, and it is important that those in the GLBTI communities are given the opportunity to make their voice and contribution heard in the ongoing discussion of the role and nature of human rights within civil society.

In addition, the struggle of campaigners on HIV and AIDS issues is connected with the question of social attitudes towards the gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-gender community. While it is clear that many people affected by the pandemic are heterosexual, it's undeniable that the GLBTI community has paid a huge price as a result of the pandemic, as well as placing itself at the forefront of the campaigning around HIV and AIDS. However, the question remains as to how we get the different struggles to intersect as effectively as possible, so that the different connected agendas can all move in a positive direction. The gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities need to continue to participate in the struggle alongside the movements fighting racism in Europe. Together they could seek a way to build a bridge with the Pan-African Treatment Action Campaign.

My argument is essentially that investing more time, energy and resources in alliance-building and joint advocacy across these different silos is an investment well worth making, because this will ultimately enhance all the different agendas. People often speak about unity and coordination, but it takes hard work to build alliances across different areas of interest and across different institutional, organisational and territorial boundaries.

Indigenous peoples

Social exclusion is also driven by the invisibility that the media bestows on marginalised groups. One of the areas where invisibility manifests itself most powerfully is with regard to the surviving indigenous peoples of the world. If civil society is to stand for justice, for reversing historical crimes against humanity, and so on, we have to recognise that when human history is recorded, some of its most atrocious injustices, including genocide, have been meted out against the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, parts of Europe and also Africa and Asia. For civic action not to take on board that historical fact weakens our morality and our legitimacy in fundamental ways.

One of the areas where media invisibility manifests itself most powerfully is with regard to the surviving indigenous peoples of the world.

If we had listened to the wisdom of various indigenous communities, we would not be confronted by the climate catastrophe we are now facing. If you look at the indigenous peoples of North and South America, for example, their relationship to their environment and the centrality of valuing the environment in all its shapes and forms

was something we have sadly and foolishly ignored. It is only now, in the early 21st century, that the world is having to return to the wisdom and knowledge of indigenous peoples, and recognise that in fact they hold the solutions in terms of sustainability, recycling and actually stewarding and caring for our planet. It is the indigenous peoples, who have been decimated through genocide in countries that today claim to be democracies, who possess the knowledge and wisdom that can save this planet from the over-industrialisation, damage and destruction we have inflicted on it. There is a Cree proverb which I quoted at the CIVICUS Vancouver World Assembly in 2001, an assembly technically held on sacred land of the first nations in Canada: 'Only when the last tree has died, the last river has been poisoned and the last fish has been caught, will we realize that we cannot eat money.' Time has not totally run out but is fast running out for us to reverse this dangerous trajectory that humanity has embarked on. Learning from the historical knowledge of indigenous peoples might very well be one of the solutions to the climate crisis.

We need to recognise the cultural dislocation caused by genocide. We also need to acknowledge the fact that these nations were conquered, and learn to value what is in danger of being lost, doing whatever is possible to recompense societies whose alienation from our modern world has driven their children into alcoholism and drug addiction. The elders in those communities are correctly trying to ensure that they hang on to the knowledge of their ancestors. Imagine how different the world would look today if the indigenous peoples of Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada had developed a visa system and were 'civilised' enough to defend their territory, as a result of having access to the guns and weapons of the 'civilised' world. Of course, I say this a bit tongue in cheek, since one could very well argue that true 'civilisation' is not one that generates weaponry that kills fellow human beings and other forms of life on the planet. And needless to say, the word 'civilised' is probably one of the most abused and problematic words, given how it has been used over time.

While we cannot reverse the legacy of injustice and genocide, current generations must look at how to ensure respect for voice, presence, rights and resources of the remaining descendants of indigenous peoples, so that their culture is safeguarded in its own right, along with their decimated body of knowledge, so vitally important for our impoverished global society. There are challenges of resource provision. In the US they are dealing with resource realities by throwing casinos at native reservations, which breeds another whole set of social problems.

The indigenous peoples of the world possessed and still possess a spiritual dimension which, we might well come to realise, is more sophisticated than that of their conquerors.

In New Zealand/Aetorea, and in North America, people still take part in spirit-dreams, just as the First Nations used to do. It's an experiential process and testament to the way in which the indigenous peoples of the world possessed and still possess a spiritual dimension which, we might well come to realise, is more sophisticated than that of their conquerors. They see God in nature and God's presence in the natural world on earth. This is in contrast to many of the world's organised religions, which promise people a better life after death in another space, rather than redeeming that better life in this space.

When I was 15 I was expelled from school for leading a protest march against the apartheid system during a national student uprising against apartheid education. It was 1981. Paddy Kearney, a white South African, who led an organisation called Diakonia, an ecumenical inter-denominational group which helped victims of apartheid and lobbied for justice, mobilised the faith community to support those of us who had been expelled. There was a mass meeting to mobilise public support to get us reinstated. At that stage, as a 15 year old, I was very much seeing the struggle in South Africa as black people against white people, so it was a revelation that this man, Paddy, would come and stand with us. The government in 1981 had just passed a law with high prison terms for anyone trying to burn the South African flag because 1981 was the 20th anniversary of South Africa becoming a republic. Paddy gave a speech where he asked what right the government had to pass this law, to punish people for burning the symbol of the state, when the symbol of God on earth is human beings. If these human beings were 'God's flags', he said, and since they were being violated so overwhelmingly by the apartheid government, the government had no right to be passing any laws about burning a piece of cloth with some colours on it. It was a powerful thing to say but got to the heart of the issue about what really matters when you measure symbols against the truth of humanity.

I think that when we see indigenous peoples solely as an example of a quaint historical throwback, we're failing to understand the current moment of history that we inhabit. This can be seen in the fact that in 2007, after decades of struggle, the indigenous peoples finally got the UN to create a declaration of the rights of indigenous peoples. Yet many of the dominant nations, including Canada and the US, have still not signed the UN convention because they are scared about the reparations they might have to pay. The failure to understand our common humanity is evident in the way it has taken so long even for formal apologies to the Aboriginal people to be made by the Australian government, which until recently persisted in a state of denial

with regard to its nation's history. Importantly, it was civil society expressions from the dominant white community in Australia that pushed for a government apology, in a campaign which went onfor decades. It was a moving moment when the white Australian band, Midnight Oil, performed 'Beds are burning', a song that speaks of the atrocities committed against the Aboriginal people, at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, wearing black tracksuits with the word 'Sorry' emblazoned on them.

Dalit and Romany peoples

The Dalit caste in India and the Romany peoples scattered around the world represent two more examples of the many other marginalised communities that are struggling for recognition of their human rights, and who suffer from an absence of media and campaigning focus on their plight.

The caste system has been officially abolished in India, but still persists, and the Dalit community could continue to suffer for decades to come the injustices it has suffered for so long. The 1989 Protection of Atrocities Act was supposed to protect the Dalits; in practice, though, they are still frequently subjected to prejudice and discrimination, which sometimes takes violent forms.

The persecution of the Romany people has been an ongoing blight on Western culture for centuries, and continues to this day. For hundreds of years they have suffered from pogroms, forced assimilation and a denial of their cultural and human rights. Perhaps because of the geographical disparity of the Romany people, they lack formal political structures or representation, which means that it has always been hard to get their cause heard in decision-making institutions or the mainstream press, where they are frequently demonised.

The experiences of both the Dalit and the Romany peoples are examples of the way in which marginalised communities suffer as a result of the fractured approach towards addressing their issues. Campaigners from diverse marginalised communities need to find ways to connect with one another, recognising their commonalities. By working together, they will strengthen both their individual and their collective campaigns, and this can lead towards addressing centuries of injustice, and the eventual institution of effective and functioning human rights for marginalised peoples across the world.

Marginalised communities and alliance-building

A greater effort must be made by the various groups involved in representing different interests to build unity and create common ground. How can the various struggles intersect to enhance their collective ability to get all these progressive agendas moving forward? We need to look beyond our borders, look beyond our specific needs and invest time, energy and resources in breaking down the silos. Building alliances and crossing boundaries is hard work and requires new skills. But the investment is worth the returns.

Let's take HIV and AIDS as an example of one of the big issues. At the micro level there is a lot of work to be done to fight stigmatisation of people living with HIV and AIDS. The contribution of organisations not primarily focused on this issue is vital in advancing advocacy and highlighting this global crisis. We also need to ensure that those who are most vulnerable – the victims of multiple levels of exclusion because of poverty, poor health, lack of education, and so on – are provided with the resources they need, so that lives are saved and what I call the passive genocide, or daily silent tsunami, that is under way is reversed. In addition, we need to look at the appropriate enabling policies at the meso level, driven by political leadership.

In South Africa, the country with the largest number of PLWHA, policy has been marked by ambiguity and worse. Indeed, the record has been scandalous, with the government engaging in self-indulgent and esoteric policy debates around whether being HIV-positive leads to full-blown AIDS, and a questioning of the link between HIV and AIDS. We do not have the time or energy or luxury to go round in intellectual circles in this way. This issue needs to be addressed at the policy level by individuals who have the necessary influence to be listened to. It is also crucial that HIV and AIDS are tackled in the context of other crucial social justice issues.

Earlier, I referred to Zackie Achmat, founder of the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa. Even though he has challenges with his own health, he does not simply focus on HIV. He is first and foremost an African citizen operating within the South African nation-state, speaking out on a wide range of social justice issues. His contribution has led to the TAC becoming one of the most powerful social movements in South Africa, one which has delivered enormous benefits to the struggle against HIV and AIDS. His example creates a model for the way in which marginalised communities can strengthen campaigns across the board if they can succeed in crossing issue-based boundaries to promote positive change.
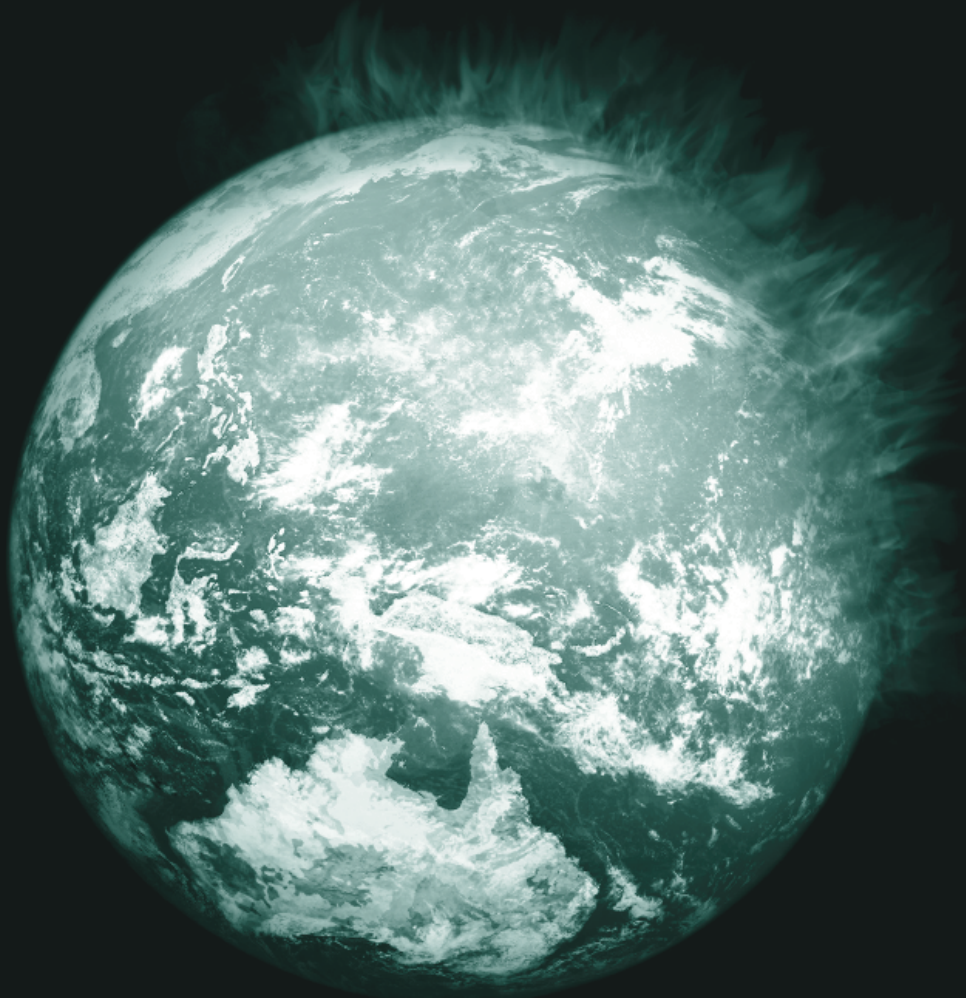
Conclusion

Leadership in challenging times

In this volume, I have tried to argue that we have reached both a figurative and a literal boiling point. When large parts of any community, country, region or continent reach such high levels of exclusion, especially in a context of excessive wealth, wastage and inequality, leaders in all sectors of society, not just politicians, must take serious note. Leadership is probably one of the most important and critical missing ingredients to ensure that we do not sleepwalk into a global crisis that will make earlier crises look like a Sunday morning picnic.

I have sought to examine in this volume the achievements, current possibilities and future potential of progressive citizen action, as well as exploring the obstacles that civil society faces as it seeks to continue to make a positive impact on global society. I would be negligent if I overlooked the fact that as the world struggles to find a way out of the perfect storm we have created; the key issue is leadership or lack thereof. Without appropriate leadership, we are a ship adrift in that storm. So, before I bring this volume to a close, I'd like to offer a few reflections on the nature and importance of leadership as I perceive it.

In lieu of a formal working definition of leadership, let me share three basic elements of leadership that make sense to me:

» Leadership involves uniting people around a set of shared beliefs or values.

» The purpose of leadership is to act in accordance with these stated values in the service of society.

» Leadership is not a one-way street, but a dynamic, reciprocal, interactive process between those termed 'leaders' and those termed 'followers'.

It is often said that the rise of globalisation over the past several decades has ushered in a new era of interdependence. And in many respects this is true. From the foods we eat to the economic and political systems we are part of, our societies, lives and livelihoods have become intertwined to a much greater degree than was previously the case. An economic collapse in one part of the world sets off a chain reaction on the other side of the globe. The outbreak of a mysterious new virus prompts countries worldwide to introduce stringent health precautions. A computer virus spread by email can literally overtake

the world's computer systems in a matter of hours. The release of a much awaited book or film is met by a simultaneous frenzy of anticipation in dozens of cities worldwide.

Once again, we need to remember the truth of the proverb about *ubuntu* – or community – which says, 'I am because you are'. The proverb dates back to an era when interactions between people almost always occurred face to face. It remains valid in our globalised world, but it now takes on a very different form. Our identities are still shaped through interactions with others, but these interactions can now take place across long distances, via e-mail and the Internet, with people from backgrounds very different from our own. Our identities are shaped by more and more diverse influences; and for the growing number of people who cross physical borders and live outside their countries of origin – by plan or because of need – the multiplicity of identities can become truly enormous. This rapidly changing world creates significant challenges for those who, at a community and a political level, place themselves or find themselves placed in positions of responsibility, taking on the mantle of leadership within their communities.

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What are the implications of these changes for notions of leadership? To put it simply, leadership now is much more complicated than it used to be. During the industrial age, things operated in a much more traditional, hierarchical way than they do now. Organisations and societies were structured more 'vertically.' The leader 'at the top' – whether elected, appointed, or there by birth (as in monarchies) – charted the course for the 'followers' at the bottom and was respected because of his (or sometimes, but not usually, her) 'positional authority'. There was a sense that leaders were somehow 'special people' with special abilities. The distance between leaders and followers was often significant and the relationship generally flowed one way: from the top down. In many cases, leaders and their followers derived from quite similar cultural backgrounds.

This kind of arrangement is increasingly untenable, however, against the backdrop of the global society I have described. There are a number of reasons why. First, leaders no longer operate in isolation – it is virtually impossible to separate global problems from local or regional ones. A mayor of a small town is forced to confront the consequences of problems whose roots lie in the international economic system, for example. The head of a small business no longer operates in a regionally defined market – he or she must take into account global trends. An environmental activist works to address issues that are linked to decisions made in cities and countries thousands of miles away. The

old slogan 'Think globally, act locally' suggested that in attempting to address local issues one needed to understand how global processes, institutions and decisions impact on local choices. However, one of the ironies about the moment of world history we find ourselves in, is that, as countries like South Africa, and those in central and eastern Europe and elsewhere, were gaining electoral democracy at the national level for the first time, or after a long hiatus, real power was increasingly shifting to the supra-national level. Responding to this shift now challenges us also to 'think locally and act globally', something we must learn to do if we want to make an impact within the forums where real power over significant aspects of our lives resides.

Second, the challenges facing today's leaders have become so complex and multifaceted that it is unlikely that they can be successfully handled by the more traditional 'top down' model. Collaborative leadership, teamwork and participatory decision-making are increasingly common – at all levels of society, in single organisations and in complex institutions – as leaders come to recognise the benefits of drawing upon diverse expertise and perspectives. This is linked to the fact that people in societies around the world want to play a more active role in shaping the communities in which they live and are increasingly hesitant to accept 'leadership from above' that does not involve a role for ordinary citizen voices. Popular expectations of improvements in quality of life are on the rise, but the ability of traditional institutions such as national governments to deliver seems to be waning. This 'mismatch' between present-day challenges and the ability of existing institutions to address them is prompting calls for new and innovative forms of governance and leadership that are more appropriate to current needs.

Third, because of the fragmenting of identities I have talked about above and the increasingly diverse character of many societies, leaders are now in a position where they cannot assume that their 'followers' will share the same values, belief systems, language, culture, expectations and outlooks on the world that they do. This greatly complicates the leadership project and demands a deep and ongoing commitment to leadership styles that emphasise dialogue, reaching consensus, building bridges, and valuing difference. Leaders increasingly have to interact with people unlike themselves and to learn to value and use meaningfully the talents and perspectives of people who hail from dissimilar backgrounds.

Let me try to sum up some of the key 'leadership lessons' that I think emerge from this discussion of the challenges of a global society:

» Effective leadership in our global society means bridging bound-
  aries. The boundaries are many and varied. They include not
  only those differences which are commonly referenced – race,
  ethnicity, socio-economic standing, gender, sexual orientation
  and religion – but also things such as age, experience, national
  origin, language, temperament and world view.

» Today's problems are exceedingly complex. They demand the
  efforts of a lot of people from varied backgrounds, who are
  willing to work together in a deliberate and collaborative way
  to find innovative solutions.

» Democratic and participatory forms of leadership need to be
  embraced. Authoritarian and hierarchical approaches are unsuited
  to today's challenges and are unlikely to succeed. Leadership can
  emerge from many places within an organisation or a society,
  and those forms of leadership that see leaders and followers as
  dynamically linked in a joint endeavour hold particular promise.

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Leadership is also called into question depending on whether the focus
is on changing delivery and implementation, policy or governance.

The first type of change can be said to take place at a micro level,
where actions are undertaken with an eye to improving day-to-day
realities on the ground. I consider this as change at the level of opera-
tions or implementation. Programmes such as those concerned with
improving the quality of community in a neighbourhood, workplace
or institution of learning, are an example of such change.

The second type of change occurs at the level of policy. It goes be-
yond simply addressing existing problems and seeks to reform the
underlying policies or practices that are responsible for producing the
problems in the first place. The efforts of the International Campaign
to Ban Landmines typify attempts to influence the policy framework
shaping a given issue. By applying pressure to national governments,
the campaign succeeded in the adoption of a new, enforceable inter-
national convention governing the use of landmines.

The final level of change – the most difficult to bring about – is struc-
tural. It concerns institutions of governance and the mechanisms by
which macro-level decisions are made. The slow and difficult steps
towards reform at the World Bank for example – being driven by
leaders both inside and outside the institution – are aimed at this most
challenging, yet most influential type of change.

Civil society and the challenge of leadership in the coming decade

I have been struck often, over the years, that even though civil society organisations are primarily working for change, and often substantive and deep change, most civil society organisations are as resistant to change as business and governments in terms of their own internal practice and particularly in how we address and manage power within civil society groups, whether at a local level or globally. Over the last decade, there have been many inspirational and courageous actions taken by civil society organisations, whether they be trade unions, NGOs, faith-based organisations, social movements and others. We have seen this at a local, provincial/state level, nationally, regionally, as well as globally. But when it comes to tough internal changes that are needed, particularly for older and larger organisations, civil society leadership sometimes displays the inability to change as well. I have argued that critical for civil society organisations is that they must break down the barriers, silos and divisions that prevent a more united response to injustice and exclusion.

The unification of the two global trade union federations (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) and some independent unions that belonged to neither, in December of 2006, stands out as one of the few exceptions. The leadership in these different parts of the global trade union movement, were being faced with several challenges: a changing labour market, growth of informal jobs, increasing union-bashing and union-weakening strategies by employers, and much more. They realised that the best chance they would have in the face of new and distinctly different conditions was to make some difficult and challenging decisions about working for greater coherence, coordination and impact, including facing the possibility that some leadership positions might well be made redundant. For me, this trade union unity process was inspirational. Sadly, such examples of working for unity are few and far between. In the NGO community, even though important steps have been taken towards greater unity, much more can and still needs to be done. The future will not be more just, sustainable and inclusive, unless and until NGOs – and particularly international NGOs (INGOs) – seriously and rigorously embrace the challenge issued by Mahatma Gandhi to 'be the change you wish to see in the world'.

In the decade to come international NGOs must become far better at changing themselves in response to the world around them. This means that we must become far more change-capable: capable of change on the same kind of scale and implemented with the same urgency as the change that we are all advocating should occur in the world and the

change that we are demanding from the world's powers, including not only governments but also the key entities of the international community including the World Bank, the IMF and the UN at large.

The rationale and the demand for this substantial change to the way we organise, and work, and to the way we think, have been with us for years in civil society. The facts are and have been clear, and yet we have not embraced the challenge of change as comprehensively as is needed. It means that our contradictions are still huge. Indeed, all the features, contradictions and opportunities of society at large are found inside so-called civil society.

To be fair, many aspects of the operations of INGOs are the product of forces well beyond our control. For example, economic realities, including the structural disparities embedded even in currency exchange rates, or the political realties of the dominance of the West: these things are far beyond our direct control. But it remains the case that, even as we are calling for the redress of political and economic disparities in the wider world, among INGOs our own organisational arrangements have the same dynamics that we target embedded in our own operations. We are reproducing the very North-South disparities in our governance and financing systems that we campaign against publicly.

The disproportionate internal influence – which is the product of their relative wealth – of INGOs' numerous European and North American branches (and, in some instances, Australian and New Zealand branches) is evident in the priority setting, resources distribution and decision-making processes we follow, and we have to admit that, in the main, this is just as it is in the wider world. In this sense some NGOs, unwittingly, are replicating the same biases built into the very fabric of the world's systems of power.

I am concerned that if, by 2020, INGOs have not challenged this within ourselves and done so decisively through making fundamental change in the way we work, *and particularly in the way we are governed*, then we surely will have also failed fundamentally in our work for change in the world. And this change that we seek is urgent in the context of a 'perfect storm'.

These contradictions between what we work for and how we work are not just the product of thoughtlessness on our part but they do reflect a failure on our part to critically engage with the implications of the contexts in which we operate. I see this in a number of dimensions:

Consider for example, the impacts of the post-9/11 reality. Not commented on frequently, but surely ranked among the most troubling consequences of the way that the world's powers reacted to the events of 9/11, is what we can call the 'curtailment of civic mobility'. Since that time, anyone who 'looks' different from a very narrowly drawn Western stereotype has found their movement across borders drastically curtailed. Delegates to meetings are denied visas. Visa applications have become book-length processes. For many of us, the exercise of our right to transit across borders has become marred by what amounts to racial profiling. This is more than an irritating inconvenience. It comes at serious cost to our participation in international forums, adding to and further entrenching the problem of exclusion already present in our organisational architecture, our decision-making and the forums in which we operate.

Visa applications have become book-length processes. For many of us, the exercise of our right to transit across borders has become marred by what amounts to racial profiling.

Witness too the speed with which the world's governments worked together to tackle the global financial crisis, which sits atop the flawed global economic system. This exposed just how wealth-centric are the policies that governments promote and protect, at great cost to ordinary people. Think of the cost and the remarkable immediacy of the last 18 months of bank bail-outs. The urgency and scale with which these initiatives were introduced as compared to the appalling inertia of governments' delivery of their promises in respect of poverty reduction and debt relief efforts underscores my point.

Governments are responding to global problems that bring severe local consequences, with attempts at global solutions. But measured in terms of who is advantaged and who is forgotten, these solutions are not robust or sustainable. To be so, they must be contested effectively by global civil society, of which INGOs are leading actors. Yet, while these global dynamics may be change-resistant, they nonetheless tell the story of our own failings as INGOs to achieve change of the needed scale. By 2020, if our claims to global relevance and sustainable impact are to be made more fully genuine and – critically – more palpably effective, we, as INGOs, must have brought our organisational systems and delivery into a truer alignment with our stated goals, including those of inclusion and engagement, and we must have done so on a global scale.

Why? Imagine the not unfeasible prospect of a more genuinely democratically governed World Bank. It is possible that the World Bank will end up with more representative decision-making, reflecting contemporary global-power arrangements, and will do so by incorporating more thoroughly the voices of governments of the South

such as the BRIC countries. In such circumstances, therefore, it is also possible that the INGO community will be found to be well behind these developments. This would be more than unacceptable. So until we have addressed such weaknesses in our own claims to representativeness, the relevance and thus effectiveness of international civil society is open to serious question. This is a matter related to vulnerability in our credibility and it demands our urgent attention.

This means we have to question not only our own approaches to governance but also our staffing arrangements and our operational leadership: until representativeness and inclusion are found among our key drivers, the capacity we exercise to deliver our goals will be seriously hampered.

I understand that these can be painful issues for us to address organisationally, just as the changes we demand of governments and the business sector are painful to make. And, given the aging of larger INGOs, I also understand that our operating cultures are now longstanding, if not even perhaps fossilised or calcified. Arguably, they are now contaminated by their years of experience and their organisational longevity, which are now at some distance from the original inspiration, super-relevance and political dynamism that were key features of their early founding.

If I look at which NGOs are now the most effective, I have to observe that they are those that are travelling light. Most often these effective NGOs are more newly formed – that is, they are younger. They are more responsive, fleet of foot and adaptable. They move quickly because they are not weighed down by the dense, Northern-bound governance systems of the longer-standing NGOs, which simply do not allow real-time decision-making. These newer NGOs are more directly connected to the impacts they have on the ground and can move swiftly in response to opportunity and to feedback, which means they can also recognise and respond to matters of urgency.

For me, this means that the challenge of 2020, and of the preceding years, is not captured by concern with INGOs' continuation or even their sustainability but with their capacity for self-renewal. And with their capacity for re-establishing, even at the cost of things they otherwise hold dear, their relevance – as measured against current external realities rather than by the terms of their past.

One measure of this will be the extent to which INGOs are ready to strengthen and deepen their understanding and embrace of the or-

ganisational and operational implications of the interconnectedness between our various missions. This work has begun of course, being evident in campaigns such as the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), which brought together, in coalition, a range of otherwise diverse NGOs and other parts of civil society. Likewise, with the Global Campaign for Climate Action, which organised a large part of civil society in the run up to the Copenhagen climate summit. But as we discovered, this was an alliance not of 'oranges with oranges' but of a whole bowl of different fruit. And, we find that we are not all well organised for delivery of effective collaboration across, for example, humanitarian aid, development, human rights, environment and so on. While this work of coalition building is tough and challenging it is something that we cannot but avoid; and importantly, the 'boiling point' we have reached demands this from the leadership of such movements.

To date, international NGOs have sometimes mistaken access for influence. Just as we have sometimes mistaken speaking for being heard.

At the heart of our struggle in the coming decade will be the working assumptions we hold about the nature of social change. It seems extraordinary to me that only one INGO – Greenpeace – engages consistently in civil disobedience. By 2020, we will have changed our understanding of the dynamics of change and reformed our approach to securing change or we will have deteriorated in standing and in the respect we earn. To date, INGOs have sometimes mistaken access for influence. Just as we have sometimes mistaken speaking for being heard.

History teaches us that when facing global challenges – challenges of the magnitude of slavery, apartheid or patriarchy – change comes only when good people stand up, stand out and stand against. Therefore in our campaigns for enduring global change, however strong one organisation – one NGO – is on its own, we can be sure that change will only be won through alliance-building and coalition formation. Organisationally, we have to develop cultures and the personnel that enable these alliances to form and operate effectively despite the things that make us different one from the other. Alliances are not 'home': they can and should exist despite the disagreements we have. It means that by 2020 the competencies of compromise and cooperation will be key determinants of our success.

In my view we need to be more honest about the nature of change and to tackle the distortions of organisational form that I believe prevent the NGO community from being truly effective. If we look at our relative expenditure at different levels in the context of the dimensions of changes needed, we can see that most NGOs are spending far more on the micro level of direct or individual services where

the evidence of impact is often immediate than on the meso or macro level. This dimension is very appealing in a donor-led organisation. Most NGOs invest less, and find it hard to measure the outcomes of investing, in the meso level of public advocacy where the impact we seek may be some two to five years away, if achieved at all. The promise of real change – sustainable and enduring impact – is a long-term macro-level project taking perhaps 10 to 25 years. This is the dimension of global mobilisation – which would see fundamental change in public consciousness and public institutions. Here, however, we as NGOs are spending far less – less in terms of effort, money and human resources. It means we are not investing in long-term change but are caught in the change equivalent of a hand-to-mouth existence: 'effort today, change tomorrow' is a false formula and we would be politically dishonest not to deal with this.

Our methods of funding, the various income streams we rely on and that we promote – work against investment in the longer term. The consumerism that is afflicting the world at large is also infecting us. The hunger for instant satisfaction that drives consumerism and underpins global capital manifests in our own impatience to demonstrate immediate outcomes and our desire to feed these to donors. By 2020, we need to have built and promoted the case for long-term investment in longstanding change.

This begs the question that we should be asking ourselves: if we as INGOs were setting up today, what would we choose to look like? I am certain that if we could, we would avoid the bureaucracy, privilege and comfort that characterise the organisations we have created. I know, once again, that these are enormously painful things to admit and to change in ourselves. To tackle the inequities in the remuneration systems we operate with as INGOs – which see our staff in the North inevitably far better off than those working in communities living with grave disparity – is painful. But, in the next decade we will have to push past internal discomforts such as this to a more a just solution.

In essence, our job now and in 2020 is to move people. This is the long-term answer to global challenges and the solution to global problems. But it means that while as INGOs we have become global organisations we must emerge in 2020 as genuinely global movements.

For all of this to happen the leadership of all of civil society will be challenged as never before. We will be challenged to innovate new and more dynamic, as well as more participatory and inclusive leadership.

A final word

If we are to deliver justice, then civic groups must become a lot better at focusing on the many things that unite us, while deciding to respectfully disagree on the finer points of difference between us.

As stated earlier, the key message of this book is this: if we are to deliver justice, then civic groups must become a lot better at focusing on the many things that unite us, while deciding to respectfully disagree on the finer points of difference between us.

This is a project that will create a variety of challenges for civil society. Challenges that it has faced and overcome before, but given the combined severity of the issues that need to be addressed, these challenges are liable to prove as hard as ever, if not more so. Within civil society we shall have to continue to exercise vigilance, tolerance and an energetic passion for positive change within the societies we inhabit. Civil society, as has been noted, can act as a conscience for the world, and it's up to all of us who constitute civil society to ensure it continues to do so. We need to be aware of our responsibilities as citizens, heeding the lesson to think locally and act globally, as well as to think globally and act locally, so that our contribution can be made to count at a macro, micro and meso level.

I would hope that this volume will support individual and collective efforts around the world, helping the agents and activists of civil society to be aware that they belong to a community which straddles the globe. Often the hardest part of being a campaigner is the sensation of being completely alone in your struggle. Realising that there will be others out there who are facing their own struggles, and whose help might in some way be brought to bear, is more than a mere consolation, it can also prove to be of vital practical importance.

In the end I would hope that, whilst this volume has looked at the crises facing the world, it will also be seen as an optimistic text. There are solutions for the problems we face, we just need to find a way towards realising them. The right kind of leadership can help to achieve this. However, leaders are only as strong as their followers, and in the final count there's an obligation on all of us to do what we can to take up the baton of civil society and change the world for the better. My experiences and the people I have known have convinced me it is possible to bring about the necessary changes, if our energy is harnessed and used towards the right ends, recognising the urgent issues that need to be addressed and acting in collaboration with our brothers and sisters within the space we know as civil society.

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This volume offers the insights and reflections – both critical and self-critical – of a prominent civil society activist who has been engaged in local and global struggles for emancipation for over 30 years. On the basis of his own experiences in many different contexts Kumi Naidoo pleads for the involvement of ordinary people in the work for greater justice in this world. His point of departure is that civil society cannot be strengthened in a vacuum. Its achievements must be the result of actions by real people dealing with real problems.

The volume deals with several of today's most burning issues and also touches on sensitive matters within the global movements engaged in struggles for justice and equality. It does not avoid unpopular views on several issues, and advocates engagement with representatives of various agencies, including controversial ones such as faith-based organisations and the business community.

While being guided by a notion of non-violent forms of resistance, the author nonetheless promotes radical alternatives to the existing reproduction of societies as a necessity to meet the challenges in securing the survival of the human species and a decent life for all. His reflections add to the search for sustainable alternatives and the potential contributions that concerned citizen action can offer. This volume thereby also contributes to a better understanding of the potential that a so-called 'third United Nations' can offer to global governance issues currently at stake.

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