

**DEMOCRATIZING  
THE  
GLOBAL ECONOMY**

**THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

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# DEMOCRATIZING THE GLOBAL ECONOMY THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

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# Summary

How can economic globalization be democratized? Global communications, global finance, global investment, global migration and global trade are becoming ever more important in contemporary society. Yet the rules and regulations that govern these transworld activities currently have precarious democratic credentials at best. How can civil society improve this situation?

This report addresses this question in six steps. Part 1 defines the key concepts involved: ‘economic globalization’, ‘governance’, ‘democracy’, and ‘civil society’. Part 2 explores the nature of democratic deficits in today’s global economy. Part 3 indicates the principal ways that civil society associations can counter these democratic deficits. Part 4 identifies conditions in wider society that help or hinder civil society efforts to promote a more democratic course of economic globalization. Part 5 considers the main problems of internal organization and practice of civil society associations that can advance or limit their capacities to democratize the global economy. Part 6 highlights critical issues for future civil society strategies to democratize the global economy. The rest of this summary reviews the main argument made through these six parts of the report.

Economic globalization is a process, especially pronounced in recent decades, whereby much production, exchange and consumption of resources comes to transpire in a transworld context. This is not to say that local, national and regional economies have become irrelevant; however, an additional, global arena of communications, finance, investment, migration and trade has also become significant. Hence the policy choices that we make about economic globalization have major repercussions for the shape of future society.

The expanding global economy is governed, albeit in quite complex ways. Rules and procedures to regulate global trade, migration, investment, finance and communications come from many places: state organs at the national level; suprastate institutions at regional and global levels; substate bodies at local and provincial levels; various mechanisms in the private sector; and dense networks that interlink these levels and sectors. So efforts to democratize the global economy have to address a multi-layered and widely scattered apparatus of governance.

It is important that the global economy is governed democratically. People affected by the various policy choices should take decisions collectively, openly, equally, freely and responsibly. It may not be clear how, precisely,

democracy should be practiced in the global economy, but the principle is a cornerstone of human dignity and social justice.

Democracy is plainly lacking in present governance of the global economy. The problems relate to ignorance, institutional arrangements and deeper social structures. Regarding ignorance, most people today are at best only vaguely aware of economic globalization and the ways that it is governed. Regarding institutions, none of the various types of agencies that currently regulate economic globalization – states, suprastate bodies, substate organizations, and private mechanisms – has had anything approaching a good democratic record. Regarding social structures, deeply entrenched hierarchies in world politics between states, classes, cultures, sexes, races and more have meant that governance of the global economy has usually involved ‘rule by *some* people’ rather than by the public as a whole. So, whereas democracy is supposed to entail majority rule with minority rights, in today’s global economy the situation is usually one of minority rule without majority rights.

Is civil society an answer to these troubles of democracy? ‘Civil society’ is taken here to be a political space, or arena, where voluntary associations seek to shape the rules that govern

one or the other aspect of social life (in this case the global economy). Civil society bodies bring together people who share concerns about a particular policy area or problem. These groups vary enormously in size, organizational form, geographical scope, cultural context, resource levels, constituencies, ideologies, strategies and tactics. Yet all civil society activities are voluntary (that is, they do not pursue financial profit or public office), and they are actively political (that is, they aim to affect the way that social power is acquired, distributed and exercised).

To be sure, civil society activity (through social movements, philanthropic foundations, faith-based organizations, NGOs, labour unions, business forums, etc.) is not the only way to bring greater democracy to the global economy. There is also a lot that governments, parliaments, political parties, the mass media and educational establishments could do in this regard. Institutional reform of multilateral agencies and a reversal of the privatization of governance could also improve matters.

Nor are all civil society associations equally committed to democratizing the global economy. Indeed, some like racist groups are actually unabashedly anti-democratic. Even supporters of a democratization of globalization have different ideas about the desirable scope, depth, and pace of the process. In general, civil society groups that promote powerful vested interests have

given less priority to this objective than organizations that focus on marginalized people.

Nevertheless, civil society actors can in principle make six main (and at various points overlapping) types of contributions to democratic governance of the global economy. For one thing, civil society associations can undertake public education. Effective democracy rests on informed citizens, and civil society organizations can help to make people more knowledgeable about economic globalization and how it is regulated. Second, civil society activities can promote public debate. Effective democracy depends on open deliberation of diverse views and options. Civil society groups can help to prevent any single policy framework from gaining an authoritarian monopoly over governance of the global economy. Third, civil society initiatives can enable public participation. Effective democracy requires an engaged citizenry, and civil society bodies can help to give people channels of political involvement. Fourth, civil society organizations can increase the public transparency of governing authorities. Effective democracy entails visible governance, and civil society efforts can help to bring governance of the global economy into public view. Fifth, civil society work can enhance public accountability. Effective democracy needs citizen monitoring and control of authorities, and civil society associations can help to hold governors of the global economy answerable to the governed. Sixth, civil society programmes and projects can redistribute resources towards

subordinated social spheres like underclasses, women and rural areas. Effective democracy requires that all people involved have adequate means to exercise their right of participation. As Part 3 of this report extensively illustrates, civil society activities have already provided many democratic benefits of all six kinds in respect of contemporary economic globalization.

That said, the overall scale of these contributions has remained fairly modest to date. Civil society groups could – and should – do far more to advance public awareness, public involvement and public control in the global economy. To promote a fuller realization of these democratizing potentials it is necessary to identify the conditions that can either enhance or obstruct the possibilities.

Some of the reasons why civil society associations have not yet done more to democratize governance of the global economy relate to circumstances in the wider society in which these groups operate. Even the most committed organization can make only limited democratic contributions if the surrounding environment is not conducive to its activities. For example, if widespread poverty means that large portions of a population are fully absorbed in struggles for subsistence, then people can have little resources to support civil society campaigns and little time to join civil society actions. The presence or absence of supportive civil society networks often makes a difference, too. In addition, the effectiveness of civil society

associations as agents of democracy depends considerably on attitudes in official circles. It matters whether the authorities are ignorant or knowledgeable about civil society, and whether they are receptive or hostile towards its activities. The approach of the mass media is also crucial. Civil society efforts to democratize the global economy are substantially helped or hindered depending on whether audio-visual and print media have sufficient understanding of and give adequate attention to civil society actions. Political culture is also relevant. Prevailing ways of doing politics in a particular country or social sector can either encourage or discourage active citizen engagement of global economic issues. For example, consumerist and patrimonial cultures can each (in different ways) hamper civil society activism. Finally, a number of structural inequalities in the contemporary world exert powerful counterforces to civil society efforts to build more inclusive participation in governance of the global economy. Capitalism, West-centrism, sexism, racism, urban-centrism and other entrenched hierarchies all constitute substantial obstacles to the democratization of globalization through civil society.

Along with environmental conditions, the organization and practices of civil society associations themselves also affect the democratizing impacts of civil society on the global economy. For each of the five main potential democratic contributions of civil society activism, there are corresponding major internal challenges to democracy. Thus, while

civil society bodies can provide public education about the global economy, they must also ensure that they are competent to deal with these issues. While civil society groups can encourage open and vigorous public debate, they must also tolerate differences of opinion within their own circles and guard against cooptation by other centres of power. While civil society activism can promote public participation, it faces challenges to offer equal opportunities of involvement to all people, regardless of age, class, faith, nationality, race, sex and other social categories. While civil society bodies can foster the public transparency and public accountability of governance actors, they must also maximize their own visibility and their own answerability to stakeholders and the wider society. In sum, if civil society associations do not maintain high democratic standards themselves, they are not likely to attract the public trust and support they need to fulfil their promise of democratization in the global economy at large.

All of this makes clear that civil society is not inherently either a democratic or a counter-democratic force in the global economy. The critical issue for the future is this: how can civil society associations handle the external and internal challenges (identified in the fourth and fifth parts of this report) in ways that maximize the contributions to a democratization of the global economy (identified in the third part)?

This question cannot be answered in terms of universally applicable ‘best practices’. The

highly diverse cultural, economic, political and social circumstances of civil society groups cannot be reduced to compact blueprint formulas. Associations can certainly learn from each other’s innovations and struggles, including as they are documented in this report. However, any transfer of experience from one context to another requires very cautious and careful translation.

That said, a number of broad urgings can be made regarding future civil society initiatives on the democratization of economic globalization. These suggestions are made throughout the report and summarized in the conclusion (pp. 97-99).

In a word, then, this report offers: (a) a compact analysis of democratic deficits in today’s global economy; (b) a review of what civil society associations have done and could do to help counter these deficits; (c) an exploration of the challenges – internal and external – that civil society groups face to maximize their democratizing potentials; and (d) suggestions on how these challenges can be met. As such, it is hoped that the report will make some contribution of its own to a more democratic future global economy.

## Methodology

This report is a product of the Civil Society and Democracy in the Global Economy Project. This initiative was launched in October 2001 with funding from the Governance and Civil Society Unit of the Ford Foundation in New York City.

Execution of the project has mainly lain with a general coordinator, based at the University of Warwick in Britain, who has compiled the evidence and written the report. Ten country coordinators have arranged meetings with several hundred civil society associations across the world and have commented on drafts of the report. These eleven persons are named on the inside front cover of the report.

In total, 355 civil society practitioners from 251 associations in seven countries have provided ideas and information for this report. All of these contributors (listed in Appendix 3) have taken part in conversations with project coordinators that discussed: (a) the state of democracy in today's global economy; (b) what a more democratic global economy would look like; (c) civil society activities to bring greater democracy to economic globalization; and (d) the obstacles that civil society groups face in their attempts to democratize the global economy. In addition,

many participants have supplied the coordinators with written materials related to their views and campaigns.

It has clearly been impossible for this project to involve every civil society group, from every social sector, in every country, addressing every global economic issue, with every possible opinion. A selection had to be made. However, conscious attempts have been made to cover the widest range that available time and resources allowed.

For example, the country sample of Brazil, Canada, Egypt, France, Russia, Thailand and Uganda spans different regions, cultures, degrees of influence in the global economy, and extents of civil society development. With regard to beliefs and perspectives, the project has involved Buddhists, Christians, environmentalists, feminists, liberals, Muslims, nationalists, social democrats and socialists.

In terms of civil society sectors, contributors to the project have included anti-poverty groups, banking associations, chambers of commerce, activists on communications and media issues, consumer organizations, democracy promotion

groups, development cooperation initiatives, environmental movements, faith-based associations, farmers groups, projects focused on global governance issues, human rights campaigns, humanitarian relief organizations, industrial federations, labour associations, philanthropic foundations, professional bodies, racial solidarity organizations, research institutes, student unions, women's associations, and youth groups.

As for social profile, participants in the project discussions have ranged in age from early 20s to early 80s, with the greatest concentration in the range of 35-55 years. On class lines, participation has been substantially weighted towards middle-class professionals, although other circles such as peasants and workers have also been involved. Regarding gender, male participants have outnumbered females by a ratio of two-to-one. The race profile of contributors has broadly matched that of the general population in each country, although several visible minorities like indigenous peoples have not participated. Contributors have been drawn overwhelmingly from major urban centres, although conscious attempts have been made to contact civil society advocates in smaller towns and rural areas as

well. Clearly, then, participation in the project has been socially biased on several counts. On the other hand, these inequalities broadly reflect the current general profile of leading civil society actors on global economic issues.

Likewise, the members of the project team come from positions of social privilege that invariably skew their own views on democracy in the global economy. Although the project coordination team has included female and Southern majorities, all eleven individuals are university-educated professionals aged 25-55 with fluency in English. Meanwhile the general coordinator and author of this report is a Northern, middle-class, western, male, white, middle-aged, able-bodied, urban-based academic. Much as one can try to be self-critically sensitive about the resultant biases, it is not possible entirely to evade them either.

This report is also a report *back* to the project participants. Each contributor is receiving a copy. In addition, the report is being circulated to other civil society associations throughout the world that have campaigned on global economic issues and to officials involved in governance of the global economy. The report is being made available in the six main languages of the project (Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Thai) plus Spanish.

The spirit of researcher-practitioner dialogue is also reflected in the way that the report is presented. The text brings together a more

academic analysis on one side of the page and quotations (in italics) and examples of action from civil society on the other. (Please note that practitioners have made their remarks in a personal capacity rather than on behalf of their association.) The report thus shows how theory and practice are connected and can inform each other.

Unfortunately, limited space means that only a small sample of civil society insights and innovations can be cited. Moreover, each example can be mentioned only briefly, without delving into the specifics of the context involved. Likewise, it is not possible in this relatively short report fully to explore similarities and differences between countries, classes, cultures, etc. Such details require a book-length analysis.

It is hoped that this report will speak to a broad civil society audience, addressing complex problems in an accessible but not oversimplified fashion. Of course, different readers with different backgrounds, interests, and needs will take different things from the text. Less experienced activists may gain a readable introduction to the issues. Veteran campaigners may gain a clarification of issues and a synthesis of arguments that helps them in the design and execution of future actions.

So this report is meant to be useful, and not simply to occupy shelf and disk space. The hope is to help civil society practitioners: (a) to reflect on their understanding of democracy in the

global economy; (b) to see how their opinions and activities relate to the larger scheme of world politics; (c) to discover and gain inspiration from the work that other associations have done in this area; and (d) to forge new links and cooperation with these other groups. In short, this project aims to sharpen both analysis and activism.

More broadly, it is hoped that the report will encourage widespread discussion and help to generate further initiatives concerning civil society's democratizing potential in the global economy. In modest measure, then, this writing may contribute to building the greater democracy in the global economy that today's world sorely needs.

# Part 1

## Definitions

Key concepts are always problematic. Ideas like ‘globalization’, ‘governance’, ‘democracy’ and ‘civil society’ are heavily contested. It is impossible to give them precise and fixed meanings that everyone can accept. Yet we do

need clear definitions of core terms in order to build a coherent analysis.

The following paragraphs therefore give *working* definitions. The purpose is not to

impose a particular view, but to help readers make better sense of this report. Obviously, it is also possible to define the concepts in other ways, and these different approaches could lead to different conclusions.

## **Economic Globalization**

Economic activity operates on different scales: for example, the household, the firm, the locality, the country, the region, and the world. The global economy covers those parts of production, exchange and consumption of resources that transpire in transworld arenas. For instance, some manufacturing processes involve several countries on different continents. In addition, many goods and services are distributed and sold in global markets. Certain types of money and financial instruments flow across the planet, as do various forms of information and knowledge. Some people migrate just about anywhere on earth to make their livelihood.

Recent decades have witnessed unprecedented levels of economic globalization. Transplanetary flows of resources have grown at speeds and to sizes never seen before in world history. A few statistics illustrate the magnitude of the trend (\$ = US dollars):

- cross-border trade up from \$629 billion in 1960 to \$9,100 billion in 2003
- transborder companies up from 7,000 in the late 1960s to 65,000 in 2001

*Globalization has many meanings, but we can agree that it involves a reduction of barriers separating nations from each other. This trend involves both opportunities and risks.*

Said El-Naggar  
New Civic Forum, Cairo

*We are in a new scenario. Call it transnationalization, or globalization, or worldization. We are in a slow but clear transition from an age of nationalism to an epoch of globalism.*

Octávio Ianni  
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of São Paulo

*Globalization is often presented as a mega-project with Star Wars undertones. But homemakers are also doing globalization in their kitchens.*

Elena Makhmutova  
Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Bashkortostan, Ufa

- stock of foreign direct investment up from \$66 billion in 1960 to \$7,100 billion in 2002
- daily foreign exchange trading up from \$15 billion in 1973 to \$1,490 billion in 1998
- transborder bank loans up from \$9 billion in 1972 to \$1,465 billion in 2000
- telephone lines (fixed and mobile) up from 150 million in 1965 to over 1.5 billion in 2000
- Internet users up from 0 in 1985 to 606 million in 2002
- radio sets up from 57 million in 1937 to 2,400 million in 1997
- international air passengers up from 25 million in 1950 to 400 million in 1996
- international tourists to 670 million per annum in 1999

So significant parts of today's economy have become substantially globalized. This is by no means to suggest that local, national and regional economies have become irrelevant. These other contexts clearly remain very important. However, the global economic domain has grown markedly in recent history, and most signs are that the twenty-first century will bring still further globalization. Therefore, if we want to understand our present and shape our future, we need to give far more attention than previous generations have done to the global economy.

This extra attention is crucial because there are important choices to be made about globalization. Different kinds of global economy are possible. Many people have made the mistake of confusing 'globalization' with free-market economics. Yet so-called 'neoliberal' policies of privatization, liberalization, deregulation and fiscal restraint offer just one policy approach to the global economy. Globalization and neoliberalism are not the same thing: the first is a process; the second is one way – but far from the only way – to govern that process. True, neoliberalism has been the dominant policy doctrine concerning globalization in contemporary history. However, different governments have followed neoliberal prescriptions to varying (and in certain cases quite limited) degrees. Moreover, many people (including multiple civil society groups) have actively promoted alternative, non-neoliberal approaches to governing globalization.

*We see globalization in the shops of Thailand. Thousands of small stores are closing as global retailers like Carrefour, Tops and Wal-Mart move in and push them out of business.*

Pitthaya Wongkul  
Thai Development Support Committee, Bangkok

*You cannot be a successful business organization today if you are not proficient on regional and global economics.*

Maury Temporal  
Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro

*We can't be myopic – unless you tackle global links, you cannot have proper policies.*

Jane Nalunga  
Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations, Kampala

*Globalization can have a good heart or a bad heart. It can bring aid for the poor or look ruthlessly for profit.*

Ezzat Naeim Guindy  
Association for the Protection of the Environment, Cairo

*Being for or against globalization is not the question. It is there. The question is what you do with it.*

Gerry Barr  
Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Ottawa

*The so-called 'anti-globalization' movement opposes liberal globalization, not globalization as such.*

Christophe Aguiton  
ATTAC-France, Paris

*'Anti-globalization' is anti-liberalization and anti-militarization. It is for a humanization of globalization.*

Mohammed Faiq  
Arab Organization for Human Rights, Cairo

## Governance

Every economy is governed. That is, production, exchange and consumption are more or less ordered in relation to certain rules and procedures. Often formal institutions like councils and bureaucracies are established to formulate, implement, monitor and enforce those regulations. Other times the rules are more informal, as in the case of dress codes and the implicit understanding that powerful states have more say than weak ones. Indeed, some of the most influential rules emanate from deep-seated structures of society like capitalism and gender relations.

Even the formal institutional aspects of governance of the global economy are quite complex. Rules and procedures to order global trade, finance, investment, migration, and communications come from many places: state organs at the national level; suprastate institutions at regional and global levels; substate bodies at local and provincial levels; private organizations; and dense networks that interlink these levels and sectors.

In national governments, regulation of global economic matters involves multiple ministries. The main departments involved are those of trade, finance and industry. Central banks also figure significantly. In addition, global economic issues can involve ministries of agriculture, environment, health, labour and social affairs.

Inter-state networks are also important in regulation of the global economy. Well-known examples include the Group of Seven (G7) of major Northern governments and the Group of Seventy-Seven (G77) of Southern governments. Other cases of transgovernmental collaboration on global economic issues receive less publicity. For example, national financial regulators have met in the Basle Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) since 1974.

Some inter-state cooperation in governance of the global economy has been institutionalized in permanent suprastate agencies. For instance, many regional economic arrangements have developed their own secretariats and councils. A

*Governance is becoming so segmented and piecemeal. It is hard to follow what is going on and engage it effectively.*

Gil Yaron  
Shareholder Association for Research and Education, Vancouver

*In traditional state-centric politics, it was easy to determine who made the policy. In contrast, under conditions of globalization it is often hard to show the connections between a decision taken in one place and its consequences in very different places.*

Françoise Saulnier  
Doctors without Borders (MSF), Paris

*You have to look at international aspects of regulation to get the whole picture. On food there is the Codex Alimentarius Commission, on telecommunications the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Without an international approach you can miss everything.*

Marilena Lazzarini  
Institute for the Defence of the Consumer (IDEC), São Paulo

For Canadians, governance of the global economy has largely been a question of regional arrangements: first the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the late 1980s; then the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the mid-1990s; and now the prospective Free Trade of the Americas Agreement (FTAA).

*We live in a global economy of regional blocs, so we must strengthen Arab and Islamic regional institutions to become, bloc-wise, like the EU.*

Abd-El Hamid El-Ghazali  
Department of Economics, Cairo University

*The international financial institutions play an increasingly powerful role in economic policy. They can mobilize people in practically any country of the world to support their position.*

Marina Malysheva  
Moscow Centre for Gender Studies

few also have their own courts and parliaments. Prominent examples of regionalization within globalization include Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the European Union (EU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR).

Several dozen other suprastate bodies concerned with governing the global economy have a transworld scope. Examples include the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Still more regulation of global economic questions occurs 'below' the state through provincial and local governments. For instance, bureaux from Hong Kong, Labuan, New South Wales, and Ontario participate in the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS). To give another example, some substate authorities have created special regulatory arrangements for transborder companies that operate in their territories. In addition, many substate institutions have in recent decades increased their international collaboration through bodies like the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). On these and other occasions, global governance is also local governance.

In addition to state, suprastate and substate arrangements, other governance of the global economy occurs through private mechanisms. For example, regulation of Internet domains largely takes place through a nonofficial organization, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). In addition, various rules of global finance are administered with industry self-regulation through bodies like the International Securities Market Association (ISMA). Many transborder companies subscribe to unofficially formulated and monitored codes of corporate social and environmental responsibility like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Thus governance of the global economy does not always occur through public-sector institutions. It can transpire through private-sector apparatuses, too.

In today's global economy suprastate and substate institutions sometimes deal directly with each other, bypassing the state. To give one example, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has an office in Ufa to work with the authorities of the Russian province of Bashkortostan.

In response to economic globalization the Provincial Governments in British Columbia and Ontario in Canada have followed their own 'structural adjustment policies' that broadly resemble the recommendations of the international financial institutions.

*We need to be open to different ways of understanding governance. The situation is so changed from even ten years ago.*

Boonthan Verawongse  
Peace and Human Rights Resource Centre, Bangkok

*Economics is never only technical. Policy implementation may be technical, but policy choices are political and policy results are political. All too often, officials hide behind claims about the technical complexity of economic policy as a way to avoid political confrontation.*

Benedicte Hermelin  
Solagrail, Paris

*Government tells us that trade policy is a technical area not for civil society organizations. We say no. To make trade policy sensitive to poverty alleviation you have to open it up.*

Godber Tumushabe  
Advocates Coalition for Development & Environment, Kampala

Clearly, then, if we want to discover how the global economy is regulated, we have to look in many places. Governments, suprastate bodies, substate arrangements, and various private agencies – and complex networks between them – all play a part. In turn, as is elaborated in Part 2, these multiple institutions relate to deeper social structures like class, gender and race that also play an important part in governing global economic activity.

Yet, wherever it happens, governance of the global economy is not politically neutral. Making, implementing and enforcing rules is not just a technical question. It is also always a matter of power. So we must ask: where does power lie in the regulation of the global economy? And is that power exercised democratically?

## Democracy

Before we can assess democracy in the specific context of today's global economy (as is done in later parts of this report), we need to consider the general concept. What is 'democracy'? This is a highly contested issue, of course, and this report will not settle the arguments. Indeed, the end of debates about the nature of democracy would be a sure sign that democracy was dead!

In broadest terms, governance is democratic when power lies with the people whom the regulations in question affect. But what does 'rule by the people' involve more precisely? Both theories and practices of democracy have varied considerably across history and between cultures. Liberal democracy – with its emphasis on national self-determination and periodic competitive elections to representative bodies – is only one of many possible models.

Although there is no single, universal, fixed formula for democracy, most approaches to 'rule by the people' would agree on the following general principles. First, people take democratic decisions collectively, as a group,

*Definitions of democracy should not be controlled by academics and legal experts. The poor must also say what they mean and want by democracy.*

Somsak Kosaisook  
State Railway Workers Union of Thailand, Bangkok

*Democracy does not only start in Ancient Greece. Thai villagers have for centuries chosen their leaders, and Buddhist monks select the new abbot in a non-western way.*

Pracha Hutuanuwatr  
Wongsanit Ashram, Thailand

*It is simply a question of taking back, together, the future of our world.*

Platform of ATTAC-France

*Democracy is about giving space for the excluded to have influence in decision-making.*

Iris Almeida  
Rights & Democracy, Montreal

together. Second, all people qualified to participate in democracy do so on an equal footing, with equivalent opportunities of involvement. Third, in democratic processes people operate freely, as autonomous agents: they are not coerced to participate or to express certain opinions. Fourth, democracy is conducted in the open, where all participants can see what decisions are taken and how. Fifth, democracy is both a right and a responsibility – it combines opportunities and duties, liberty and accountability.

So democratic governance of global economic affairs would be achieved if people took policy decisions concerning global trade, global finance, global investment, global communications and global migration collectively, equally, freely, openly and responsibly. But this is highly abstract. How, more concretely, should democracy operate in the global economy?

In fact, there is at present no clear answer to this question. Some commentators argue that traditional liberal models offer a sound basis for democratic regulation of today's globalizing economy. Others argue that globalization is transforming society so radically that we need to build new kinds of democracy.

Whatever the solution, there clearly is a problem. For reasons that are elaborated in the second part of this report, almost no one argues that present governance of the global economy is sufficiently democratic. The public do not currently have adequate opportunities to take policy decisions about global economic matters collectively, equally, freely, openly and responsibly.

These democratic deficits are a cause for worry. Democracy is crucial to a good society. For one thing, democracy has intrinsic value as a cornerstone of human dignity and growth. It is morally good that the public has the opportunity to take the decisions that shape its common destiny. In addition, democracy often (though not always) has positive consequences for ecological care, economic efficiency, conflict management, and social justice. Thus democratic governance is arguably more likely to bring lasting improvements, especially to the lives of marginalized and vulnerable people. Democracy is not the answer to all problems, but many vital problems are not solved without it.

*Democracy is about being able to see everything that happens and to control everything that happens.*

Nancy Burrows  
World March of Women, Montreal

*Democracy means responsibilities as well as rights: responsibility to respect diversity, to fight inequality, and to show solidarity.*

Cândido Grzybowski  
Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis, Rio de Janeiro

*Globalization is defeating all traditional categories of politics. As globalization changes the world, we need new democratic models, new modes of democratic control, new forms of democratic legitimacy.*

Anne-Christine Hubbard  
International Federation of Human Rights, Paris

*Democracy in global governance cannot be addressed with conventional categories. We should leave room for lots of possibilities and stay open to various ideas.*

Surichai Wun' Gaeo  
Campaign for Popular Democracy, Bangkok

*Let us not fool ourselves to solve global economic problems first and then tackle democracy later. These priorities can and must be accommodated together.*

Mostafa Waly  
Federation of Egyptian Industries, Cairo

*If we do not move on a democratization of globalization, we will have a very horrible world.*

Mohammed Faiq  
Arab Organization for Human Rights, Cairo

*Democracy is the least bad regime in society. Global democracy won't be ideal, but it will be a system that people can accept.*

Suriyan Thongnoead  
Federation of Northern Peasants (FNP), Chiang Mai

Yes, theories and practices of democracy are invariably full of ambiguities and contradictions. For example, which should take the higher priority in democracy: liberty or equality; majority rule or minority rights? Indeed, it may well be that democracy is always pursued and never fully realized. Yet a society that is not striving for democracy is an unworthy and usually also dangerous place.

## Civil Society

Later parts of this report examine the role of civil society in making the global economy a more democratic place. However, we first need to have a working definition of ‘civil society’. After all, ideas of civil society are as varied, culturally bound, and controversial as those of democracy.

The term civil society originated in sixteenth-century England, but it means very different things in the contemporary globalizing world. In today’s context we might define civil society as a political space, or arena, where voluntary associations of people seek, from outside political parties, to shape the rules (formal and informal) that govern one or the other aspect of social life. The particular aspect of social life that concerns this report is the global economy.

Civil society associations bring together people who share concerns about a particular policy issue. Examples of civil society groups include anti-poverty movements, business forums, clan and kinship circles, consumer advocates, pro-democracy groups, development cooperation initiatives, environmental campaigns, ethnic lobbies, faith-based associations, human rights promoters, labour unions, local community groups, peace advocates, peasant movements, philanthropic foundations, professional bodies, relief organizations, think tanks, women’s networks, youth associations and more.

On the definition employed here, civil society encompasses far more than so-called ‘nongovernmental organizations’ (NGOs). It includes informal and

*The phrase ‘civil society’ can cover anything: thousands of actors with thousands of contradictions. In fact, the term is so loose that it becomes useless.*

Jean-Claude Fages  
France Foundation, Paris

*‘Civil society’ is quite a new terminology in Egypt. There is still a debate on definition.*

Hamsa Abdul Hamid  
Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization, Cairo

*Illegal labour migrants in Russia from other former Soviet republics cannot legally establish their own civic unions. Nevertheless, they actively keep in contact with each other, often gathering informally to take collective decisions concerning their life in Russia.*

Anatoly Snissarenko  
Adult Education Association of North-West Russia, St Petersburg

An enormous variety of civil society groups have addressed questions about governing the global economy. This diversity includes the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil, the informal Mobilization for Global Justice in Canada, the Arab Organization for Human Rights in Egypt, the Centre of Young Managers in France, the Social Ecological Union in Russia, the Thailand Development Research Institute, and the Uganda National Farmers Association.

*Civil society is the best way forward for politics in the post-Cold War world. Without civil society it is hard to be a citizen.*

Debbie Field  
FoodShare, Toronto

unregistered associations as well as formal bodies. It includes special interest lobbies like many business forums and trade unions as well as public interest campaigns. Some currently popular conceptions have equated civil society with ('progressive') NGOs, but such notions miss many important political activities by citizen associations. The present project has adopted a more inclusive definition.

All civil society associations are voluntary. They do not exist in the first place to make financial profit (like firms) or to pursue public office (like political parties). The lines between civil society, the market and the public sector can blur in practice, of course. For example, business associations often promote the commercial interests of their members. Some labour unions are closely allied with political parties. Some NGOs are creations of governments. Perhaps fringe political parties with no hope of winning elections could be regarded as civil society actors. As ever, no definition is clearcut. Nevertheless, in principle civil society is a distinct sphere where people seek to shape governance without the promise of commercial profit or official power.

An active political orientation is key to civil society. Under the definition proposed here, civil society does not cover voluntary associations like households, recreational clubs and service NGOs when such groups do not strive in some way to affect the acquisition, distribution and exercise of social power. So civil society covers only some non-official, non-commercial and non-familial activities, not all of them.

Apart from their general character as voluntary politically oriented citizen groups, civil society associations are highly diverse. They vary widely in terms of constituencies, functions, sizes, resource levels, organizational forms, geographical scopes, historical experiences, cultural contexts, agendas, ideologies, and tactics.

With regard to strategy in particular, civil society associations pursue a wide variety of goals in their work. Concerning economic globalization, for example, some groups take a *rejectionist* position and want to eliminate the global economy altogether. Other parts of civil society adopt what could be called a

*Civil society plays a crucial role in the creation of a new mode of politics that humanity desperately needs in the wake of globalization. Much more than the state and the market, civil society has the capacity to transform world politics from a struggle for power into a project of inter-civilizational cooperation and dialogue.*

Patrick Viveret  
Pierre Mendès France International Centre (CIPMF), Paris

*Democratic society should have a positive view of globalization. Once globalization is fully functioning there will be no unemployment and no economic crisis.*

Lydia Blokhina  
Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs of Russia, Moscow

*Globalization is a chaos and creates a disaster. We used to be self-sufficient and now we cannot be.*

Tem Tarat and Suwan Mingkwan  
Assembly of the Poor  
Mae Mun Man Yuan Village, Thailand

*Globalization is a fact, but we must intervene to make it a globalization of prosperity rather than a globalization of misery.*

Adeilson Ribeiro Telles  
Central Workers Union (CUT), Rio de Janeiro

*We should not be looking to reconstruct the old structures that have failed. The global economy needs completely new arrangements.*

Kamal Abbas  
Centre for Trade Union and Workers Services, Helwan, Cairo

*NGOs are in no way homogeneous. We have many conflicts about what strategy to adopt.*

Suriyasai Katasila  
Campaign for Popular Democracy, Bangkok

*conformist* position: that is, they are more or less favourably disposed to existing policies. A third stream of civil society activity follows a *reformist* line: these bodies accept globalization in principle, but want to adjust the rules and institutions that govern the process. Finally, a fourth tendency could be termed *transformist* and covers those civil society groups that see globalization as the occasion to bring about a full-scale social revolution.

It is also important to note that the definition adopted here is neutral regarding the desirability or otherwise of civil society. Many civil society groups make positive contributions, but some elements can be quite uncivil, for example, with arrogance, fraud, greed, hatred and violence. Civil society can contain criminal, militarist and racist elements. Moreover, as elaborated in Part 5 of this report, civil society groups can have weak democratic credentials. Thus civil society activities have possibilities to do harm as well as good.

So civil society houses hugely diverse viewpoints. It is a contested terrain that reflects the many divisions, contradictions and inequalities of society at large. We should not expect to find a single civil society position on democracy in the global economy. And that is a democratically healthy thing, too.

*Civil society groups can be united by common dislikes but divided by different visions, offering thousands of alternatives for thousands of tastes.*

Ibrahim El-Essawy  
Third World Forum, Cairo

In bilingual Canada a distinction is made regarding civil society actors between moderate '*réfos*' or 'fixers' and radical '*révos*' or 'nixers'.

*Civil society is an amalgamation of many institutions pulling in all kinds of directions. It is difficult to forge unity and a clear path of development and change.*

Jassy Kwesiga  
Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations, Kampala

## Part 2

# Democratic Deficits in the Contemporary Global Economy

Few people regard governance of today's global economy as anything close to a democratic process. Indeed, less than a dozen of the more than 350 civil society actors who have contributed to this project gave a positive assessment of the state of democracy in current regulation of global trade, global investment, global finance, global communications and global migration. On the contrary, most judgements were harshly negative. This is clearly not a happy situation and probably helps to explain the widespread growth of 'anti-globalization' feelings in recent times.

Yet what, more specifically, does it mean to say that the contemporary global economy is undemocratic? Most people have an intuition that 'rule by the people' is lacking in this area, but they also find it hard to describe the problem very precisely. Meanwhile, those who do have a clear diagnosis often do not share the same

diagnosis. There are different ways to interpret the shortfalls of democracy in today's global economy.

Broadly speaking, democratic deficits in current economic globalization have three interrelated dimensions: ignorance, institutional failings, and structural inequalities. Different analyses may put different relative weights on these main aspects of the problem, but each is crucial.

Regarding ignorance, people cannot effectively deliberate, participate and control in respect of governance of the global economy if they do not sufficiently understand the issues at hand and the regulatory arrangements available to address them. Democracy depends on educated citizens.

Regarding institutional failings, the global economy suffers from democratic deficits inasmuch as governance agencies (at local,

provincial, national, regional and/or global levels) do not provide for adequate public awareness, public involvement and public control.

Regarding structural inequalities, democracy is lacking to the extent that deeply entrenched arbitrary social hierarchies prevent people from having equal opportunities to participate in governance of the global economy. These relations of dominance and subordination fall on lines of state, class, culture, gender, race, age and more.

The three general dimensions of democratic deficits in contemporary economic globalization are reflected in and mutually reinforce each other. Effective strategies of democratization therefore need to take a three-pronged approach of awareness raising, institutional change, and structural transformation.

*The rules of the global economy are not the rules of democracy. There is lots of 'cracy' and not much 'demos'.*

Delius Asiiimwe  
Makerere Institute of Social Research, Kampala

*Democracy has no connection at all to global economic governance today.*

Ivan Blokov  
Greenpeace-Russia, Moscow

*Globalization today is a process of manipulation rather than participation. We don't have a choice in its direction.*

Marcia Florencio  
Afro Reggae, Rio de Janeiro

*Democracy is in freefall with globalization.*

Francine Néméh  
Quebec Association of International Cooperation Organizations (AQOCI), Montreal

## Public Ignorance

An effective democracy rests on knowledgeable citizens. An ignorant population cannot pursue meaningful collective self-determination. To be democratically empowered about an issue – like economic globalization and its governance – people must understand relevant concepts, principles, policies, procedures, ethics and evidence.

Unfortunately, widespread popular ignorance about the global economy prevails today. Almost everyone recognizes the term ‘globalization’, but few are clear about what, more precisely, the process entails. Levels of awareness among the general public concerning the definition, extent, history, dynamics, and consequences of economic globalization are abysmally low.

Likewise, most people are very poorly acquainted with the arrangements that currently govern the global economy. Many citizens have not even heard of the supranational agencies that regulate global production, exchange and consumption. Many are also unaware of the involvement of their national and local governments in the governance of globalization. Few people have more than an intuitive sense of how structural hierarchies (for example, among states or between classes) operate in governance of the contemporary global economy.

Many failings have contributed to this overall ignorance. For one thing, few school curricula have been updated to address problems of globalization. Today’s secondary diploma offers no guarantee that the school leaver is able to distinguish the IMF from the World Bank. Matters are often little better at tertiary level, where only a small minority of universities provide well-developed courses on governance of the global economy. Meanwhile few organs of the mass media – the principal source of everyday information for most people – offer more than occasional and superficial coverage of economic globalization. And few of the relevant governance agencies themselves have incorporated serious public education about globalization into their activities. In other words, public ignorance about the global economy and its governance prevails largely because of limited efforts to counter it.

*Knowing is a primary condition of democracy.*

Jean St-Denis  
Unions Central of Quebec (CSQ), Montreal

*Once people have more clarity about globalization there can be more action and alternatives.*

Nouri Hussain  
Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization, Cairo

*Marginalized people in Brazil hear the term globalization, but it is an empty concept, a blank, not meaningful.*

Mariana and Rafael  
Homeless Workers Movement, Rio de Janeiro

*The only way to democracy is to have people who are aware of their rights and question their rulers. If rulers know that people are educated they will respect their rights. We will never be able to do anything about an undemocratic global economy so long as people are illiterate and unaware.*

Muhammad Abdul Halim Umar  
Centre for Islamic Economics, Al-Azhar University, Cairo

*‘Globalisation’ has been the fashion of late in Russia. Hundreds of conferences and symposiums have been held on the subject. However, there is no agreed definition, and no one has gone deeply into the problem.*

Nodari Simonia  
Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Moscow

*In Russia serious global analysis restricted to a handful of books and a few specialised journals with small readerships.*

Elena Vartanova  
Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University

## Institutional Failings

In addition to a largely ignorant public, many democratic deficits in current governance of the global economy lie in the institutions that make and implement the rules. None of the governance agencies in the global economy mentioned earlier – states, transgovernmental networks, suprastate bodies, substate organizations and private mechanisms – has had anything approaching a good democratic record. Quite the opposite.

### *States*

Central national governments have been the main institutional sites of governance in the modern era. Understandably, then, the main modern campaigns for democracy have focused on democratizing the state: for example, the French Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, decolonization struggles, etc.

Of course, as already indicated, it would be wrong to regard national governments as the *only* place where democracy is needed in today's global economy. However, states remain crucial to the governance of globalization, and it is hard to see how we could achieve democracy in the contemporary global economy without democratic states.

Unfortunately, many – some critics might even say most – states today lack secure democratic credentials. The people – in this case, the national citizens of each state – have limited involvement in or control over their central government. In many countries the national public has few occasions to voice its views, apart from periodic elections of certain government offices. Some states lack even this minimal democratic practice.

Even then, global economic issues have tended to play little part in national elections. Political parties generally mention global trade, finance, etc. only in passing, if at all, in their manifestos and platforms. During campaigns few voters press candidates on policies regarding economic globalization. Likewise,

*Globalization can be directed, but by whom? Who are the chiefs in the global village?*

Jane Nalunga  
Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute  
Kampala

*Decisions about the global economy are taken without public discussion by small and very influential groups. Often people are not even informed about these decisions.*

Luis Bassegio  
Pastoral for Migrants, Roman Catholic Church, São Paulo

*The only site of democratically legitimate rule is the state. Everything else is illegitimate. To democratize the global economy we need to build national structures that allow people to speak.*

Bernard Cassen  
ATTAC-France, Paris

*We have to strengthen democracy inside countries. A strong democratic state will be better able to fight for democratic change in the international arena.*

Sadi Baron  
Movement of Dam-Affected People (MAB), San Carlos, Brazil

*States are pieces in a global jigsaw puzzle. If you lack democracy in one or more states, the global picture will not be democratic.*

Alaa Ezz  
Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation, Cairo

*Global economic issues feature barely if at all in Uganda elections. They're not in the presentations or the manifestos. It's a very big gap that needs to be filled.*

Perry Arituwa  
Uganda Joint Christian Council, Kampala

election coverage in the mass media usually gives scant attention to questions of governing the global economy.

Governments have also almost never called national plebiscites specifically to decide policies toward the global economy. Referendums in some countries on major questions related to the EU are one rare example. Popular votes in Switzerland regarding membership in multilateral institutions are another.

Once in office, most national legislators – as democratic representatives of the people – do little about policies regarding the global economy. Few parliamentarians have personal expertise on global economic issues, and in most cases they do not have adequate professional staff to support them with these matters. Many national representative assemblies barely, if ever, discuss questions of economic globalization. Those legislatures that occasionally do debate these problems often have little influence on what the government actually goes on to do. Although some national constitutions require that the legislature ratifies treaties, most regulation of the global economy today does not come in treaty form, so it escapes the need for parliamentary approval. Countless important government decisions on global economic questions are taken without consulting the democratic representatives. Indeed, legislators are sometimes not even informed of their government's actions on global economic issues. In some cases it is also difficult for parliamentarians to obtain key official documents in these subjects. Of course there are occasional instances of legislative activism concerning economic globalization, like periodic high-profile conflicts in the USA Congress about funding for the IMF and the World Bank. On the whole, however, national assemblies have had a poor record of overseeing policies concerning the global economy.

Instead, state regulation of global economic affairs has tended to rest with bureaucracies that are largely insulated from public inputs and public controls. Most trade negotiators, finance ministry officials, central bankers, communications regulators, investment boards and the like operate out of public sight and with limited, if any, direct citizen input. Even ministers generally intervene only rarely in the work of these officials.

*Villagers do not benefit from democracy in Thailand. Sixty-five years of elections have not helped the villager. Each election is only a struggle between elite groups.*

Veerapon Sopa  
People's Network against Globalization, Thailand

*We should not give up on parliaments. They are absolutely critical to global economic democracy. We need to reinvigorate national parliaments and build new inter-parliamentary networks on global economic issues.*

Robin Round  
Halifax Initiative, Whitehorse

*Many MPs in Uganda do not know and do not care what is going on at the global level.*

Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi  
Uganda Women's Network, Kampala

*Parliament in Egypt can discuss measures concerning the global economy, but whatever the government wants will pass with a large majority.*

Ibrahim Sa'd Eldin  
Third World Forum, Cairo

*Very few politicians in Russia are really competent to assess the consequences of IMF and World Bank programmes. Less than 100 officials in Russia could have a meaningful discussion of this.*

Yuri Dzhibladze  
Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Moscow

*Are our national institutions effective vis-à-vis globalization? Maybe only 10 of our 500 parliamentarians understand issues of global economic governance, and parliament devotes little time to discuss them.*

Suthipand Chirathivat  
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

In December 2001 NGOs in France submitted a petition to the President of the National Assembly urging the creation of a parliamentary commission on global governance with a permanent research staff.

Poor states often suffer the opposite problem that their economic bureaucracy is too small and weak to serve the country. They have too few officials, who moreover have too little professional training. As a result, many states are not adequately represented in international forums that determine rules for the global economy.

As for the transgovernmental links of official regulators described earlier, most citizens are not even aware that these networks exist. So the public is in no position to follow this part of governing the global economy, let alone to be consulted about it or to control it.

Indeed, if citizens have grievances about the way the global economy has affected them, where in the state can they take their complaints? Parliaments have been largely sidelined from the politics of economic globalization, and ministerial bureaucracies tend to be closed. National courts do not handle many cases related to global economic issues like trade disputes or transborder debt problems. Anyhow, many states lack an effective independent judiciary in the first place. Nothing like a national ombudsperson for global economic affairs exists in any country either.

Besides these specific institutional failings, there are also more general problems with the state as a provider of democracy in the global economy. For one thing, what ‘people’ does the state democratically serve? The state is geared to the national community and is democratically appropriate when national interests are concerned. Yet ‘the demos’ in global affairs is not always, or only, national in character. There are also transnational communities of, for example, people of African descent, people of shared religion, sexual minorities, workers, etc. ‘The public’ has many sides in the global economy, and state-based democracy is sometimes not a very satisfactory framework for self-determination by non-national communities.

Then there is the question of practical effectiveness. Even if state bodies were to achieve the highest democratic standards in respect of policymaking on the global economy, would this be enough? After all, no national government can fully control its country’s involvement with the global economy. Weak states in

*With regard to the WTO everything in Thailand is left to civil servants like the Business Economics Department of the Ministry of Trade. These officials are more powerful than the parliamentarians and even the cabinet.*

Chanida Chanyapate Bamford  
Focus on the Global South, Bangkok

*Many officials in the Uganda Ministry of Trade do not have much to say. With underpaid and overworked officials of limited competence, the government is not well placed in trade negotiations. The Minister did not know what he was signing in the Marrakesh Agreement to establish the WTO.*

comments from several NGO staff, Kampala

*Egyptian representatives at global meetings are often not up to standard. Many of them are out shopping rather than negotiating.*

Amal Sabri  
Association for Health and Environmental Development, Cairo

*Democracy in the state does not automatically translate into democracy in global decision-making.*

Françoise Vanni  
Act Here for a World of Solidarity, Paris

*Workers should organize on the basis of class, not country.*

Somsak Kosaisook  
State Railway Workers Union of Thailand, Bangkok

*Globalization provides us with an opportunity to recognize that people of African descent throughout the world form a community of destiny and face similar problems. My identity as a person of African descent can be greater than my national identity.*

Sueli Carneiro  
Géledes – Black Woman’s Institute, São Paulo

*Globalization limits what democratic governments can do and undermines the democratic nation-state.*

Steve Staples  
Council of Canadians, Ottawa

poor countries have especially limited capacities. Yet even the most powerful governments cannot by themselves effectively regulate global financial markets, global communications flows, global migration movements, global companies, etc. Each state rules over a limited territory, while global economic processes operate across the world, often defying national borders. In this sense the global economy can undermine even the best national democracy.

Of course, arguments about the loss of state power in the face of globalization can be taken too far. National governments can still shape the way the global economy affects their citizens. Stronger states in particular may exercise quite a lot of influence in this regard. Many national politicians have found it politically convenient to blame regional and global institutions for unpopular economic policies, when in fact the national government has shared in the decisions. On other occasions states have been guilty of inaction – that is, they could take more initiative to build democratic participation and control in the global economy, but they have neglected to exploit the opportunities.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, to be effective, regulation of the global economy cannot lie only with national states. Thus the past few decades have seen a major growth of regional and global governance institutions, as well as some devolution to provincial and local governments. Hence, while work to democratize the global economy must give much attention to state institutions, a lot of effort must also be directed at other sites of governance.

### *Suprastate Institutions*

Many complaints about the lack of democracy in today's global economy point the finger at regional and transworld governance arrangements. These critics blame the decline of national democracy largely on the interventions of suprastate bodies like the EU, the IMF, the OECD, the World Bank and the WTO. In recent decades these regional and global institutions have indeed gained more power, particularly over weaker states. Yet multilateral economic organizations have developed few democratic credentials of their own. In many cases suprastate authorities have barely even recognized that they have a

Brazil in 1988 and Thailand in 1997 obtained substantially more democratic national constitutions. Yet many feel that the global economy has largely thwarted this new democratic promise.

*The Thai public has expected that the Thai state could do more to manage globalization. State capacity is still important, but Thailand has seen a privatization of state power that leaves democratic forces behind.*

Surichai Wun' Gaeo  
Campaign for Popular Democracy, Bangkok

*I am an internationalist, but I do not underestimate the importance of the national. That is where most of the laws and the money are.*

Gustave Massiah  
International Association of Technicians, Experts and Researchers (AITEC)  
Paris

*It is not that we reject the national, but politics has to be constructed elsewhere, too.*

Bernard Pinaud  
Centre of Research and Information on Development, Paris

*Power has gone to the global level, but we do not yet have a countervailing power that secures democracy.*

François-Xavier Verschave  
Survival, Paris

*Mechanisms like the WTO, IMF and OECD decide on our lives without consultation. You cannot have confidence in these secret committees without democratic legitimacy.*

Geraldo Feix  
ATTAC-Brazil, Porto Alegre

democracy problem.

Much of the difficulty with democracy in supranational bodies arises because it is not clear what shape this democracy ought to take. Should we merely ask democratic states to exercise tighter control of regional and global governance institutions? Or should we seek to build supranational institutions on the model of liberal democratic states, with representative assemblies elected by universal suffrage? Or are alternative sorts of mechanisms required to obtain ‘rule of the people’ in respect of international governance organizations?

The first of these approaches is hardly adequate: more control of regional and global institutions by member states in practice tends to mean more control by the stronger governments. Even if powerful states like China, Germany or the USA had impeccable democratic credentials towards their own citizens – and it is far from clear that they do – these governments have no democratic grounds to speak for billions of people in the rest of the world.

The second approach – that of creating representative chambers for supranational agencies – has been little tried. An exception is the EU, which has had a popularly elected European Parliament since 1979; however, the powers of this body are limited, most citizens are ignorant about its activities, and voter turnouts are generally low. More recently, the East African Community (EAC) has set up a parliament whose members are selected by the national congresses of the three member states. For the rest, other regional bodies do not have a permanent representative organ, and no global institution has seriously contemplated forming one. So we are very far from having a UN People’s Assembly or a WTO Parliament, although some reformers have proposed the establishment of such bodies.

In terms of trying alternative mechanisms, some supranational economic institutions have in recent years undertaken public consultations, especially through so-called ‘stakeholder dialogues’. The idea here is to discuss the preparation and operation of policies and projects with representatives of all affected groups: consumers, investors, residents, workers, etc. Certain multilateral development banks (MDBs) like the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank

*Multilateral organizations do not offer mechanisms for the will of the large majority to be realized.*

Jorge Durão  
Association of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE)  
Rio de Janeiro

*Many IMF conditionalities fall outside its mandate and intrude upon national sovereignty. Such intrusion is unacceptable, even with good intentions.*

Fernando Cardim  
Institute of Economics, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

*Democracy is where every citizen has a constitutionally guaranteed right to intervene in politics. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights needs to be amended to cover not only the national level, but the world level as well.*

François Lille  
Global Public Good (BPEM), Paris

*It will take a hundred years to get a regional parliament in Asia.*

Jarun Dithapichai  
Union for Civil Liberty, Bangkok

*It is necessary to create a world parliament of some kind. I don’t know how to design it, but we need it.*

Cândido Grzybowski  
Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE), Rio de Janeiro

*We need a parliamentary assembly for the WTO. In national contexts, parliaments are the main mechanisms for representation, debate and resolving conflicting policy priorities. A consultative parliamentary body would oversee, debate and report on the work of the WTO. Global parliaments raise lots of questions, of course. How many seats should the assembly have, and how should they be distributed? How would decisions be taken? Who pays the bills? However, these problems are not insurmountable. They have been overcome in the creation of parliamentary assemblies for other international organizations.*

Fergus Watt  
World Federalists Movement – Canada, Ottawa

(IDB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have pursued this process of stakeholder consultation furthest. The IMF and the WTO have taken fewer steps in this direction, and with greater reluctance. Meanwhile, other suprastate bodies like the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) and the OECD have thus far done almost nothing to develop procedures of stakeholder consultation. Moreover, as noted in Part 4 of this report, even the extensive ‘participation’ and ‘partnership’ initiatives of the MDBs have received severe criticisms.

With no representative assemblies and limited if any direct public consultation, then, suprastate institutions have generally taken their major policy decisions behind closed doors, in committees like the Executive Board of the IMF and the Ministerial Conference of the WTO. Although the members of these bodies represent states, they usually lack close links with national parliaments and rarely maintain more than incidental direct contact with citizens.

Moreover, votes in international financial institutions (IFIs) are generally weighted in relation to the amount of money that a state has contributed to the agency’s capital. On this principle of one dollar one vote, the 5 largest shareholder states in the IMF and the World Bank between them currently hold 40 per cent of the vote. In contrast, 23 states of francophone Africa together have just over 1 per cent. A very odd democracy indeed!

Policymaking organs of other suprastate institutions like the EU, the UN and the WTO generally work on the basis of one state one vote. Yet this arrangement gives equal status, in principle, to China and Vanuatu, regardless of their respective shares of world population. Moreover, in practice states do not have equal capacities to exercise their equal votes. In the case of the WTO, for example, nearly a third of the member states have no permanent representation at the organization’s headquarters in Geneva. Similarly, some state delegations at the UN are far larger and more professionally qualified than others.

Further democratic problems arise in respect of the suprastate bureaucracies that do the day-to-day policy work. Like economic ministries at the national level, officials in regional and global economic institutions generally operate with little public scrutiny. It is usually very difficult for ordinary citizens even to contact, let alone influence, staff of the BIS, the European Commission, IMF missions, or

*The World Bank and its current President are making some positive efforts to allow people to participate in decisions, but we have not reached a level that could be called democracy.*

Leonard Msemakweli  
Uganda Co-operative Alliance, Kampala

*‘Consultations’ by international economic institutions are indicative of false democracy, as they ignore underlying power dynamics.*

Pam Foster  
Halifax Initiative, Ottawa

*The WTO really is most undemocratic. It is inaccessible and opaque. It now has a good website, but civil society still does not have access to meetings, nor can it submit briefs to the official proceedings.*

David Runnalls  
International Institute for Sustainable Development, Winnipeg

*It is undemocratic when a richer country has more votes and more power in the IMF and World Bank. The fact that rich people pay more tax does not mean that they get a greater vote in national elections.*

Sarawut Pratoomraj  
Coordinating Committee of Human Rights Organizations of Thailand,  
Bangkok

*The WTO may have the principle of one-state-one-vote, but some states are very strong and some are very weak, so that rights are not equal in practice.*

Abd El-Sattar Eshrah  
General Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce, Cairo

*The UN tries to make a good structure, but the representatives come from governments and go for the benefit of the leaders rather than the people. So the UN ends up far from ordinary people.*

Chalida Tajaroensuk  
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Bangkok

let alone influence, staff of the BIS, the European Commission, IMF missions, or the UN Secretariat.

Finally, most suprastate institutions lack effective democratic accountability mechanisms that hold them publicly answerable for their mistakes. Several regional economic bodies have courts, but few are well developed and even fewer citizens know how to use them. Only the IMF and the World Bank have (recently) set up public policy evaluation procedures. The BIS, the OECD, UN agencies, and the WTO all lack mechanisms for independent published assessments of their performance.

All in all, then, suprastate institutions have had a very weak democratic record in governing the global economy. Of course the power of these agencies must not be exaggerated. Yes, regional and transworld bodies are important players in governance of today's global economy, and their policy prescriptions can have far-reaching effects. However, organizations like MERCOSUR, UNDP and the WTO have far fewer resources than many people imagine, in terms of budgets, numbers of staff, databases, etc. In contrast to national governments, suprastate institutions also lack their own armed forces. So while actors such as the EU and the IMF are certainly influential, they are by no means solo dictators. It would therefore be mistaken to focus strategies to democratize the global economy exclusively on suprastate governance.

### *Substate Institutions*

If state and suprastate agencies have had such a poor democratic record in governing the global economy, is devolution a better solution? Many commentators have suggested that substate arrangements at provincial, district and municipal levels can bring regulation of the global economy closer to the people affected. These arguments propose that the best democratization of globalization happens through localization. That is, transfer responsibility for governance of the global economy away from national and international arrangements and instead concentrate it more in local spheres.

*The ILO is bureaucratic, not democratic. The officials listen to the boss and are careful to protect their position.*

Sakool Zuesongdham  
Arom Pongpangan Foundation, Bangkok

*Staff of the international financial institutions are like the Bolsheviks. They claim to know what is in the people's interest.*

Alexei Simonov  
Glasnost Defence Foundation, Moscow

*WTO panels are absolutely not democratic. They are held in camera where other parties cannot intervene, and their decisions are not subject to judicial review.*

Warren Allmand  
Rights & Democracy, Montreal

*The difficulty for the IMF and the World Bank is that their resources are inadequate in relation to the problems that they are asked to address.*

Said El-Naggar  
New Civic Forum, Cairo

*We should focus on empowering grassroots people rather than reforming world organizations or creating new ones.*

Nantaporn Techprasertsakul  
Campaign for Popular Media Reform, Bangkok

*The Governor of Cairo has concluded contracts for waste disposal with three multinational corporations. He completed neglected local poor communities of garbage collectors, taking their livelihood without bringing alternatives.*

Ezzat Naeim Guindy  
Association for the Protection of the Environment, Cairo

There are certainly occasions when substate governments have taken steps to increase public involvement and public control over global investment, trade, finance, communications and migration as these activities affect local communities. For example, some town councils have held public consultations about allowing a global retail chain to open a local branch. However, initiatives of this kind have been relatively rare. On the whole, substate bodies have given even less attention to the global economy than national governments. Although the slogan ‘think globally, act locally’ has been popular since the 1960s, few provincial and municipal officials have focused on global economic matters.

Yet even if substate governance bodies were to maximize their efforts to achieve greater democratic rule of the global economy, the results would still be inadequate. Local governments cover quite small territorial jurisdictions; hence they are even less able than states to exercise unilateral control over global relations that cross the planet.

Of course substate institutions could increase their power to confront global economic issues by working together. Bodies like the long-standing International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the newer World Association of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination (WACLAC) have developed a multilateralism of local governments. However, these transborder organizations have so far made no policy impact of note on regulation of the global economy.

More radical critics of existing arrangements to govern the global economy suggest that democracy can only be achieved if local communities reject all official agencies: substate, state and suprastate. According to this view, ‘rule by the people’ must rest in direct popular participation at the grassroots. Across the world, a number of social movements have adopted this approach, including actions by indigenous people, landless peasants, homeless urban people, and women’s collectives. Several initiatives like Shack/Slum Dwellers International, Via Campesina, the StreetNet alliance of street vendors, and shop-floor internationalism of certain labour unions have also developed transborder networks between local grassroots groups.

No doubt much more grassroots participatory democracy could be pursued in

In France, the consumer campaign ‘De l’éthique sur l’étiquette’ (‘Ethical Labels’) has aimed many efforts at municipal governments. For example, activists lobbied candidates in the 2001 local elections to back this cause, and over 100 town councils declared their official support.

In 2001 the government of Quebec Province in Canada established a Globalization Observatory involving several dozen individual citizens and civil society associations with diverse political positions, with the purpose of enlarging public debate about global issues.

The campaign ‘The Gulf of Finland’ has seen municipalities and local NGOs in Estonia, Finland and North-West Russia hold festivals, meetings and seminars in transborder citizen efforts to combat marine pollution in the Baltic Sea by global oil companies.

*Local elections have become irrelevant. Global rules like those of the WTO compromise the ability of local governments to enact the policies that local people want.*

Kevin Millsip  
Check Your Head, Vancouver

*When people hear ‘democracy’ they think of liberal democracy. But electoral democracy is pseudo-democracy and illusory democracy. We need direct democracy.*

Prasittipom Kanonsri  
Friends of People, Bangkok

*The local is the place for greater democracy in the global economy. This is where people feel the impacts of global policies – on their education, their health, their sanitation, etc.*

Patty Barrera  
Common Frontiers, Toronto

Around a thousand communities in Thailand are involved in a Community Network for Independent Wisdom, which promotes local self-sufficiency, grassroots solidarity and ecological integrity as an alternative to a global economy.

regard to global economic issues. However, one should perhaps not overestimate the degree that small-scale local activism can control the global economy. Voluntary grassroots associations have opened pockets of democratic expression, but they have scored relatively few lasting victories for local people. Moreover, those victories have usually come when official policies have changed. In other words, the grassroots groups have generally secured their gains against global forces not by themselves, but by using formal substate, state and suprastate institutions.

Finally, it is important not to romanticize local politics, of both official and grassroots kinds. True, the local is often more immediate and more intimate to people than national or global spheres, but closeness does not automatically translate into greater democracy. Local elections can have very low participation rates. Substate government can be just as authoritarian as state and suprastate institutions. Grassroots networks can suffer from class hierarchies, ethnic prejudices, religious sectarianism, and gender inequalities as much as official governance mechanisms. The local is clearly not inherently democratic.

#### *Private Mechanisms*

So far this account of democratic deficits in the global economy has focused on official institutions. Yet, as was noted in Part 1, some governance of economic globalization occurs through agencies of the private sector, like ICANN and the ISMA. These arrangements have some of the weakest democratic credentials of all.

The problems start with invisibility. The great majority of citizens – including many activists concerned with globalization – are unaware that private regulatory schemes are important for various aspects of global communications, global finance, global investment and global trade. Most people have never heard of bodies such as the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), Social Accountability International (SAI), the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce, and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI). Clearly, democracy cannot operate in respect of

Via Campesina is a global movement of grassroots rural people formed in 1993. Its members now extend across seven regions in the Americas, Asia and Europe. The network regularly addresses agriculture and food policies emanating from the FAO, the OECD and the WTO.

*Regional authorities in Siberia define their positions quite independently from the national government. Indeed, we Siberian NGOs often join forces with our regional authorities to advocate our interests at the federal level in Moscow.*

staff of the Siberian Civic Initiatives Support Centre, Novosibirsk

*ICANN is a disaster for democracy. It is a private global organization set up with the blessing of the US Government. An IT businessperson chairs its council, and the US Department of Commerce appoints most of the other members. The five regional directors of ICANN were elected by a horrible method. ICANN rules are often arbitrary and unfair, but there is not much that the public can do about it.*

Carlos Afonso  
Third Sector Information Network (RITS), Rio de Janeiro

*Multinational corporations often settle their disputes using a small club of highly paid private international arbitrators. So they use a lex mercatoria formulated by legal experts with any public involvement or control.*

Hisham Sadek  
Egyptian Association for the Protection of Consumers, Alexandria

*Financial accountability is a matter of public concern. How can we leave the setting of the rules in the hands of private organizations like the IASB?*

Philippe Herzog  
Confrontations, Paris

governance frameworks that are almost completely out of public view.

Moreover, private regulatory arrangements in the global economy have incorporated few if any mechanisms for public input and public control. Bodies like the Derivatives Policy Group (made up of academics and bankers) have no basis – even indirect – in popular election. The World Federation of Exchanges (for stock and bond markets) and the Business Council of the World Tourism Organization do not have procedures for public consultation. ICANN and bonding agencies like Moody's Investors Service have no systems of public accountability that come into play if and when their regulatory activities cause harm.

In short, it is hard to make any democratic justification for private governance in the global economy. Supporters argue that 'self-regulation' by the market is more efficient and effective than 'intervention' by the public sector. Even if this were true – and it is not clear that it always or even usually is – hardly any of the private schemes has anything approaching a democratic foundation.

## Structural Subordinations

The preceding review of institutions that govern the global economy has revealed widespread and severe democratic shortcomings. In fact, very few governance agencies in the global economy have come even close to passing a democracy test. However, the problems go further than institutional arrangements. Democratic deficits in the contemporary global economy also have a deeper structural character.

Structural failings of democracy are a result of the basic principles on which the contemporary global economy is organized. For example, if certain groups of people are consistently and systematically marginalized, then governance of the global economy tends to become 'rule by *some* people' rather than by the public as a whole. Structural inequalities produce dominance rather than democracy.

*ISO standards result from private mechanisms and don't cover social standards. Why should we accept them?*

Chanida Chanyapate Bamford  
Focus on the Global South, Bangkok

*We hear lots of rhetoric about new 'public-private partnerships' in the UN system, but democracy is never part of the story.*

John Foster  
North-South Institute, Ottawa

The Forest Stewardship Council is a rare example of a private governance arrangement in the global economy that attempts to have democratic credentials. Founded in 1993, the FSC has brought together companies, indigenous peoples associations, environmental groups, research institutes, consumer bodies, development NGOs and others to implement a worldwide programme to certify forest products that come from ecologically, economically and socially viable operations.

*Global trends have usurped democracy at all levels.*

Jessie Smith  
Real Alternatives Information Network, Vancouver

*We need more than a democratization of processes. We must also adjust for the historical legacy of inequity in the world economy.*

Heba Handoussa  
Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey, Cairo

*Globalization puts everyone on earth in the same boat, but some are in the hold, while others are travelling first class.*

Jean-François Trogrlic  
French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT), Paris

It is pretty clear that today's global economy has more hierarchy than equality of opportunity. The structures of subordination take a number of forms, including inequality of states, inequality of classes, inequality of cultures, inequality of sexes, inequality of races, and the systemic marginalization of rural areas relative to urban centres. Together, such entrenched structures of dominance have deprived most of the world's people of adequate opportunities to know about, participate in, and exercise control over governance of the global economy.

These structural subordinations in today's economic globalization have both material and ideational underpinnings. In material terms, people in certain countries, classes, cultures, etc. have far greater access than others to capital, income, education, health care, technology and armed force. In ideational terms, notions of American exceptionalism, class hierarchy, colonialism, sexism, racism and the like have 'explained' arbitrary inequalities and made them appear normal. Together skewed distributions of resources and ideologies of privilege have deeply entrenched unequal life chances in the global economy, thereby preventing most of the world's population from fully realizing their democratic rights.

The relative importance of the various kinds of structural inequality in contemporary globalization is a matter of debate. For example, some would say that dominance by major states is the number one structural hindrance to a democratic global economy. Others would say that class hierarchy within capitalism is the principal reason for current failures of democracy in globalization. A third perspective says that the hegemony of western culture is the primary structural problem for global democracy. Meanwhile, feminists say that gender subordination is the main root of democratic shortcomings in the global economy, and black liberation movements say that racial discrimination is the core issue.

This report makes no attempt to resolve such disputes about relative significance. All of these structural inequalities – and more – are clearly major obstacles to democracy in present-day economic globalization. We can still usefully discuss the different inequalities, even if we do not rank them. The order of discussion

*The interests of marginalized groups – like women, youth, the poor and the disabled – are not being brought out in the global economy.*

Patricia Munabi  
Forum for Women in Democracy, Kampala

*We are the grass that suffers when the elephants fight. No one comes to ask what our problems are and what alternatives we have. Things are imposed.*

Zainab Wambedde  
Mental Health Uganda, Mbale

*Equality is less important for a democratic global economy than the respect of diversity, community rights, and local autonomy.*

Saneh Chamarik  
Local Development Institute, Bangkok

*I refuse to place a hierarchy on the different inequalities: between countries, classes, sexes, etc. Solving one will not solve the others. All are important, and all have the same economic motor.*

Dominique Plihon  
ATTAC-France, Paris

*The democratic deficit in globalization is much more complex than the dominance of a few countries. We must discourage this oversimplified picture, which can instigate a nationalist reaction.*

Srisuwan Kuankachorn  
Project for Ecological Recovery, Bangkok

that follows does not imply an order of importance. Rather, it reflects the relative frequency that contributors to this project have mentioned the problem.

### *State Inequality*

Many people think of structural dominance in world politics in terms of a hierarchy of states. From this perspective, democracy has been failing in governance of the global economy because the richest and most powerful governments impose their will on poorer and weaker states.

Thus citizens of subordinated states tend to have far less opportunity to influence regulation of the global economy than citizens of dominant states. The extent that people can participate is substantially determined by the historical accident of their country of origin. Born in Britain – good fortune. Born in Bhutan – bad luck.

This problem of state inequality is made even worse when powerful governments collaborate in governing the global economy. For example, the G7 is a major force of global economic governance, but it has offered a seat to only a handful of states, whose collective population amounts to a small minority of humanity. Likewise, the BIS and the OECD have excluded most of the world's states from membership. The democratic problem of weighted votes in the IFIs has already been mentioned. Moreover, major states have had an informal understanding that a West European is always Managing Director of the IMF, while a citizen of the USA is always President of the World Bank.

Many people therefore speak of a structure of dominance in the global economy by 'the North' over 'the South', by 'developed countries' over 'underdeveloped countries', by 'the core' over 'the periphery'. It is true that states of the South have formed several coalitions of their own, including the G77, the Intergovernmental Group of 24 on International Monetary Affairs (G24), and the Group of 15 (G15). However, these Southern bodies have had no notable influence next to the G7. In 1999 the G7 finance ministers created a Group of 20 (G20) in order to include governments of so-called 'emerging markets' in

*Big countries take advantage in the global economy at the cost of small countries. This is not democratic. But what can a small country do? There is no way we can beat the big country. So we have to play by the undemocratic rules.*

Dusit Nontanakorn  
Thai Chamber of Commerce, Bangkok

*'Democracy' is a concept used by and large by the West and America to advance their national interests. It features far less in reality when it comes to trade than it ought to do.*

Paul Asiimwe  
Uganda Joint Christian Council, Kampala

*Developed countries may have democracy within, but in world politics they impose on weak and poor countries, keeping them from determining their own policies.*

Fu'ad Thabit  
Union for Economical Development Association, Port Said

*The World Bank President has to be a US guy and the IMF head has to be a European guy – that's not democracy.*

Prida Teasuwan  
Social Venture Network, Bangkok

*If we had democracy in the global economy, we would not see the wealth gaps between countries that exist today.*

Arthur Bainomugisha  
Church of Uganda, Kampala

*The difference between the G7 and the G77 is like the sky and the ground. This is clear evidence that the world is undemocratic.*

Somsak Kosaisook  
State Railway Workers Union of Thailand, Bangkok

discussions about governing global finance. Yet the G20 still excludes most states of the world, and so far it has remained a sideshow. Likewise, the recent expansion of the G7 to become a Group of 8 (G8) that includes Russia has made little difference to the structural inequality of states in the global economy.

Among the dominant states, too, one state has been more equal than others in contemporary economic globalization. The USA has had more resources at its disposal than any other government in the world. It has often used this advantage to heavily shape the rules of the global economy, in the process paying little attention to what the majority of humanity might feel and want. Although the USA does not formally monopolize supranational agencies like the IMF and the WTO, in practice it often seems to have had a veto. Some observers have therefore concluded that a single superpower has governed recent economic globalization. The talk is of unipolarity, US hegemony and American empire.

Yet whether we emphasize Northern dominance more generally or domination by the USA more specifically, it is clear that the inequality of states has profoundly violated democratic principles in governance of the global economy. People rightly protest when some regions inside a country are marginalized in the governance of a national economy. Likewise, it cannot be acceptable that most of humanity is subordinated in governance of the global economy simply because people happen to live on one plot of the earth's surface rather than another.

### *Class hierarchy*

Next to the inequality of states, democracy in the global economy faces another structural barrier in terms of the inequality of classes. That is, certain economic groups have an entrenched advantage over others in the governance of global communications, migration, trade, money and finance. Investors, managers and professionals almost invariably have far more say than peasants, workers and the unemployed.

Certainly there are major class inequalities in today's world. The wealthiest

*Globalization is currently US-led. Manifest Destiny [a nineteenth-century statement of the USA's purported mission for the world] is alive and well.*

Shauna Sylvester  
Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society, Vancouver

*In today's unipolar world, they who have the gold set the rules. If your priority is not the priority of the unipolar power, you do not stand a chance.*

Alaa Ezz  
Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation, Cairo

*The US and Europe control the WTO. We're just passengers on the bus.*

Wafula Oguttu  
Transparency Uganda, Kampala

*The dominant states will keep pressing until we explode. That won't be in their interest. Maybe if they see that prospect they will change their approach.*

Abdel Hady A. Elsayed  
10<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan Investors Association

*Globalization has become a return of colonialism.*

Ibrahim Allam  
Arab Organization of Human Rights, Cairo

*Globalization is marked by exclusion. The workers are not taken into account and don't have a space to participate.*

Adelson Ribeiro Telles  
Central Workers Union (CUT), Rio de Janeiro

*Democracy means the power of the people. Capitalism means the power of the market and corporations.*

Alexandr Buzgalin  
All-Russian Social Movement 'Alternatives', Moscow

people have many times more income and assets than the poorest people. These inequalities have in fact widened substantially during recent decades. Moreover, some (though not all) studies suggest that these growing class gaps are in good part a consequence of neoliberal policies toward globalization.

For classes no less than states, economic inequalities readily produce political inequalities. Classes with more resources have more opportunities to exercise power. It undermines democracy when financiers, industrialists, professionals and people with inherited wealth have more chances to shape governance than the majority of their fellow citizens.

In this light many critics have denounced current regulation of the global economy as ‘corporate rule’. Large transnational companies in particular hold enormous resources that can be used to undermine democracy. Relatively small numbers of big enterprises dominate most sectors of the economy today. In this situation, ‘rule by the people’ easily becomes rule by *business*people.

Under conditions of class dominance in the global economy, local and national governments have often been more concerned about business interests and investor confidence than other sides of public opinion. Moreover, many states have acted to reduce the capacities of organized labour to defend workers under conditions of economic globalization. Likewise, the WTO process has included companies more than consumers. The IFIs have generally handled debt problems in ways that protect banks more than poor people. ICANN rules have given higher priority to securing Internet revenues for investors than to expanding Internet access for ordinary people.

It is important to note that class hierarchies in the global economy are transnational in character. In other words, members of capitalist elites are found across all countries from Belgium to Zambia. More of these privileged circles live in the North, but superrich people are also found in the South. Likewise, global underclasses include the dispossessed of the North as well as the poor of the South. In short, class divisions do not coincide with territorial borders.

So a class-based analysis of democratic deficits in the global economy is

*Globalization only belongs to big business. ‘Democracy’ is just a mechanism for global capital to get into the Third World.*

Pitthaya Wongkul  
Thai Development Support Committee, Bangkok

*In theory the government is democratic, but in practice it is clearly on the side of corporate globalization.*

Darrin Qualman  
National Farmers Union, Saskatoon

*The UN has been coopted by the corporations. It is no longer part of the solution.*

Srisuwan Kuankachorn  
Project for Ecological Recovery, Bangkok

*The WTO symbolizes global corporate rule, pure and simple.*

Tony Clarke  
Polaris Institute, Ottawa

*The Russian vote in the G8, the IMF and the World Bank does not necessarily mean the voice of society. Rather, it can mean the powerful Russian part of the world elite. Our elite became rich in a global age and indeed adopts an anti-national position. For them the country is only a place to make their huge income.*

Victor Kuvaldin  
Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow

*Capitalist businessmen are building world government. They look down upon states. They are everywhere and don’t care what state they are in. World governance according to their views will not be democratic.*

Jarun Dithapichai  
Union for Civil Liberty, Bangkok

different from a state-based diagnosis of the problem. Which form of structural inequality is more important? Some analysts say that everything in global politics comes down to classes, while others argue that everything comes down to states. A third approach maintains that both state and class hierarchies undermine democracy in the global economy, where neither is reducible to the other.

### *Cultural domination*

Structural inequalities in the global economy go beyond state and class to cover culture as well. On this analysis, governance of the global economy is undemocratic when it imposes a particular way of being, believing and belonging on people.

Arguments about cultural domination in the global economy (within as well as between countries) often focus on the power of western or modern civilization over other modes of life. For example, the rules of economic globalization may work against indigenous peoples' cultures. Or the regulations might, against the will of the people affected, undermine traditional African, Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu or Islamic principles.

Current governance of the global economy is run overwhelmingly on western cultural lines. Thus, for example, indigenous peoples have normally had very little role in making regulations for the global companies that may come to their homelands. Likewise, authorities tend to dismiss spiritual and emotional concerns as irrelevant for regulation of the global economy. Everyone is expected to behave in a modern, western, secular, rationalist, capitalist, consumerist way. The dominant civilization sets the rules of the game.

Other problems of cultural subordination in the global economy are more specific. For instance, the dominance of English in the global economy tends to disadvantage anyone who is not fluent in that language, for example, many trade negotiators from Francophone Africa. Moreover, it is often hard for ideas and principles that cannot be easily translated into English to get a hearing in global

*Globalization should not impose one knowledge, one way of development based on scientific knowledge from Europe. We need a democracy of knowledge.*

Krisada Boonchai  
Project for Ecological Recovery, Bangkok

*Globalization is cultural imperialism of the West. We do not want to have one value standard as the measure of others. Each culture has its own intrinsic values that need not be measured against others. We learn not from one standard, but from difference.*

Pracha Hutanuwat  
Wongsanit Ashram, Thailand

*It is a mistake to make one model and to say there is one way of globalization for all.*

Abdel Moty Lotfy Abdel Moty  
Union for Economical Development Association, Cairo

*Our rural people may speak a little English, but for them really to understand the WTO agreements they need to get information in their local language.*

Abubakar Moki  
Uganda National Farmers Association, Kampala

*One Singaporean can steal the show in global economic negotiations from ten Thais owing to language.*

Somkiat Tangkitvanich  
Thailand Development Research Institute, Bangkok

*Feminists in India and Uganda can make global interventions in English, but Latin American critiques are not heard in the wider world.*

Maria Betânia Ávila  
SOS Body – Gender and Citizenship, Fortaleza

forums.

In addition, contemporary governance of the global economy is generally dominated by a culture of economistic technicism. Most citizens, including many politicians, have great difficulty comprehending the specialist language of those who administer policies for the global economy. Moreover, the ‘experts’ tend to move in fairly closed social networks. They go to the same exclusive universities, professional associations, recreational clubs, etc. As a result, it can be very hard for other people to become involved in policymaking for the global economy.

In short, then, current governance of the global economy involves widespread cultural subordination. Many people who face attacks on values that are precious to them look for ways to express their discontent and protect their way of life. Yet existing governance arrangements for the global economy have given severely limited possibilities for cultural pluralism and intercultural negotiation.

#### *Other subordinations*

Most arguments about structural inequality in the current global economy highlight domination by states, classes or cultures. However, other hierarchies also undermine democracy in economic globalization. The fact that they are mentioned less often does not necessarily make them less important.

Gender inequality is one example. Women make up roughly half of humanity, but only a small minority of decision-takers in governance of the global economy are female. In addition, women often find it more difficult than men to get a hearing from those who make global economic policies. Many girls around the world suffer unequal access to essential services like education and health care, thereby compromising their ability to become full citizens in adult life.

Racial inequality has also stood in the way of a democratic global economy. Like women, people of colour have been severely underrepresented in official circles concerning global economic issues. Black Africans and persons of African

*The World Bank is now required to publish environmental impact studies on its activities, but how can the public understand this obscure language and make an effective counter-analysis?*

Hélène Ballande  
Friends of the Earth, Paris

*We must conceive of a mode of democracy that is compatible with the legal and cultural diversity of the world. Everyone has to feel at ease in their tradition.*

François-Xavier Verschave  
Survival, Paris

*Global democracy is going to come from discussions of difference.*

Lyndsay Poaps  
Check Your Head, Vancouver

*We need to develop the concept of gender so that women will understand patriarchy in the global economy.*

Supensri Pungkoksung  
Friends of Women, Bangkok

*Shortcomings of democracy are a problem of gender. The more that women participate in decision-making – from the household budget to the World Bank – the more that democracy is improved.*

Claude Piganiol-Jacquet  
ATTAC-France, Women and Globalization Group, Paris

*The ruling paradigm is one of white superiority, when two-thirds of the world's population is not white. Without change in this absurd situation you cannot talk of a democratization of globalization.*

Sueli Carneiro  
Géledes – Black Woman's Institute, São Paulo

descent have faced exclusion to the point that it is becoming common to speak of ‘global apartheid’. Yet, aside from rare events like the 2001 UN-sponsored World Conference against Racism, race is almost never explicitly addressed in governance of the global economy.

Urban/rural divides have also formed a structural barrier to democracy in the global economy. The main governance institutions are all located in big cities that many rural people cannot reach. In addition, the officials who regulate global economic affairs have predominantly urban backgrounds and are to that extent not well equipped to understand rural issues.

Further inequalities – of age, disability and sexual preference – can also intervene to undermine democracy in governance of the global economy. For example, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is one of very few (and poorly resourced) places in suprastate governance that has focused on young people. No agency at all has looked at the specific problems of the elderly in a global economy, or disabled people, or sexual minorities.

## Conclusion

As the preceding pages have shown, even a superficial review of democratic problems in the contemporary global economy is a pretty long story. Widespread ignorance has combined with pervasive institutional failings and deep-seated structural subordinations to create a highly undemocratic situation. Normally we think of democracy as majority rule with minority rights; however, the situation in today’s global economy tends sooner to be one of minority rule without majority rights.

As the many quotations from civil society actors cited above indicate, people across the world and across social sectors recognize that democracy in the global economy is a pressing concern. At the same time, most people lack a systematic, clear and detailed diagnosis of democratic deficits in economic globalization.

*Before globalization, racism was limited to place. Now it is also spread through the new communications tools like the Internet and satellite television.*

Yousri Moustafa  
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

*Child labourers are completely powerless in the global economy. They cannot speak out about their rights and are sacrificed to economic growth via cheap exports.*

Khemporn Wiroonrapun  
Foundation for Child Development, Bangkok

*Global forces largely determine the shape of democracy, but how democratic are those forces themselves?*

Betty Kwagala  
Makerere Institute of Social Research, Kampala

*The faster things move in globalization, the more the democratization process in Thailand is slowed.*

Reawadee Praserejareonsuk  
NGO Coordinating Committee on Development, Bangkok

Even highly experienced activists with a well-developed understanding of the problem still struggle to devise an effective strategy to address this challenge.

Yet, when viewed in long-term historical perspective, this underdevelopment of global democracy movements need not be surprising or discouraging. After all, the challenge of building collective self-determination in a world of unprecedented globality is relatively new. Indeed, the position of contemporary would-be global democrats can perhaps be likened to those who contemplated national democracy in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Early calls for state-centred democracy seemed vague and remote in their time, too. However, concerted struggles over successive generations eventually put considerable flesh on the utopian bones. Likewise, prospects may appear bleak at the start of journeys towards global democracy, but today's embryonic efforts could well prove pivotal to major advances in the long run.

Against this larger historical backdrop, the remaining sections of this report consider what civil society associations can do about democratic deficits in the global economy. Part 3 examines the contributions that civil society activities can make to counter ignorance, institutional failings and structural subordinations and build a more democratic governance of global communications, finance, investment, migration and trade. Parts 4 and 5 identify the conditions that either help or hinder civil society groups in their efforts to promote the democratization of globalization.

*The current trend in globalization is that big fish eat small fish. It is a new social darwinism of rich over poor.*

Hoda Badran  
Alliance for Arab Women, Cairo

*The current situation of huge global disparities is like the weather: if you mix very hot with very cold, you get a storm.*

Aspásia Camargo  
International Centre for Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro

*A globalization that leaves many outside and abandoned will reproduce September 11<sup>th</sup> many times in many places.*

Vladimir Borissenkov  
Russian Academy of Education, Moscow

*A more democratic global economy is also in the self-interest of the strong. Without reform the attacks will intensify.*

Ibrahim El-Essawy  
Third World Forum, Cairo

*The road to global democracy is long and complicated. No single form will be sufficient by itself.*

Eric Loiselet  
Forum for Responsible Investment, Paris

## Part 3

# Civil Society Contributions to a More Democratic Global Economy

Is civil society an answer for democratic deficits in governance of the global economy? Like everything else about democracy, the answer is not straightforward.

For one thing, civil society activity is not the only, the complete, or necessarily the best answer to the problems of ignorance, institutional failings and structural inequalities discussed in Part 2. There is also a lot that governments, parliaments, political parties, mass media, schools and universities could do to increase democracy in the global economy. Democratic regionalization, institutional reform of multilateral agencies, and a reversal of the privatization of governance could also improve matters. In a word, civil society efforts alone are not enough.

Nor does civil society activity have automatic democratizing effects on the global economy. Indeed, as noted earlier, some civil society associations like racist groups are anti-democratic at their core. Other civil society bodies that support democracy in principle give its promotion only low priority in practice. This relative neglect is especially characteristic of civil society organizations that support powerful established interests.

That said, on many other occasions civil society interventions can certainly help citizens to gain more awareness of, involvement in, and control over the regulation of economic globalization. These benefits are apparent in relation to vital ingredients of democracy such as public education, public debate, public participation,

public transparency, public accountability, and an equitable distribution of resources. As the following discussion indicates, civil society associations have already made many contributions to a more democratic global economy in each of these six ways.

On the other hand, civil society groups could also accomplish lots more in each area. The potential fruits of civil society activities for democratic governance of the global economy are far greater than the actual gains to date. Much work remains to be done. Parts 4 and 5 discuss various circumstances that have limited civil society's contributions so far. Part 6 suggests what could be done to increase the benefits in the future.

*All civil society groups should be in the process of globalization. Do we want dictatorship or the voice of the population?*

Shafik Gabr  
Egypt's International Economic Forum, Cairo

*For democracy in global economic governance you need to have a real integration of civil society.*

Maria Betânia Ávila  
SOS Body – Gender and Citizenship, Fortaleza

## Public Education

As stressed in Part 2, public awareness is a sine qua non for democracy. Civil society associations can play a vital democratic function by contributing to public education about the global economy and how it is governed. This means providing people with information relevant to governance of the global economy and enhancing citizen capacities to analyze and interpret that information. The public education role is especially important when, as today, other institutions like government, political parties, schools, universities and the mass media are largely failing to provide citizens with adequate evidence and analysis concerning economic globalization and its governance.

Civil society groups can promote public education in various ways. These include holding learning events, providing learning centres, producing learning materials, and generating publicity through the mass media. For full democratic effect, civil society initiatives should make such education available – and preferably equally available – across all countries, cultures, and social sectors.

To be sure, public education on governance of the global economy should not be limited to technical details concerning relevant laws and institutions. Civil society organizations need also to make people more aware of the deeper structures (and inequalities) that have governed contemporary economic globalization. In particular, public education efforts can seek to dispel ideologies such as class privilege and racism that have severely undermined democracy in world politics.

Learning events about the global economy and its governance can take many forms. Civil society associations have sponsored countless teach-ins, lectures, symposia, colloquia, workshops, discussion groups, round tables, artistic performances, and road shows. Certain civil society organizations have also developed full courses regarding economic globalization. These various opportunities to learn about the global economy regularly draw dozens of people, sometimes hundreds, and occasionally even thousands. In addition, civil society lobbying of parliamentarians can help to educate elected representatives of the public about the global economy.

*Civil society needs to raise people's awareness, to help them make the connections between globalization and the struggles of their daily lives.*

Delphine Mugisha

Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations, Kampala

*School curricula have not caught up with economic globalization. Secondary school students know nothing about these matters.*

Suthipand Chirathivat

Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

*Civil society's most important role in economic governance is public education.*

Andrei Kortunov

Moscow Science Foundation

ATTAC-France regularly convenes lectures and discussions in its 200 local groups on issues of global finance, global business, and global trade. The movement also holds a summer school on basic economics that attracts 800 participants per year.

In three years after its launch in 1999, Check Your Head: The Youth Global Education Network held 700 workshops about globalization in schools across the Canadian province of British Columbia, involving 10,000 people in all. The Real Alternatives Information Network (RAIN) in Vancouver has since 1998 offered the public an 8-week course on global economic issues.

The Institute of Population in Moscow has devised a two-week course on the subject of globalization and gender. In Canada, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women has put together a toolkit on women and globalization.

The Brazilian Institute for the Defence of the Consumer (IDEC) has devised several courses on consumer rights and also prepared consumer education materials for teachers to use in schools.

Civil society activism can also be a learning process in its own right. Participation in collective actions and casual conversations can make people more aware of the global economic forces that shape their lives. Such ‘learning-by-doing’ may be especially important for people with little formal education and low literacy. Indeed, involvement in civil society activities can help citizens – particularly those from subordinated groups – become politically conscious of their identity, their interests, and their right to voice.

Learning centres offer more permanent sites for public education about the global economy and its governance. For example, some civil society associations have built up publicly accessible libraries and documentation centres concerning global economic issues. Many more civil society groups have also constructed websites with large stores of information on economic globalization.

In terms of learning materials, civil society groups have collectively produced enormous amounts of leaflets, brochures, bulletins, newsletters, magazines, books, policy briefs, dossiers, training manuals, audio-visual productions, wall posters, comics, paintings, sculptures and more about governance of the global economy. Increasingly, a lot of these publications take electronic as well as printed forms. Many materials have been specifically designed for laypeople, so that knowledge about economic globalization becomes available to ordinary citizens as well as professional experts. Some learning tools have moreover been prepared in multiple languages in order to reach wider audiences.

As for mass media publicity, civil society groups have often helped to raise public awareness of economic globalization through press releases, press conferences, articles in mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, television programmes and radio broadcasts (including audience phone-ins). Sometimes civil society activists generate publicity with attention-seeking stunts like shock advertisements or burning effigies. Other times civil society organizations use the mass media to spread detailed analyses of governance of the global economy to the general public.

In multiple ways, then, civil society can make a major contribution to a more

*We do not ‘teach’ the homeless about globalization. We first convince them that they must fight, and then we start a process of discussion that leads them to realize why they are poor.*

Rafael  
Homeless Workers Movement (MTST), Rio de Janeiro

*Globalization – its pros and cons – is one of the main themes that we explain to our millions of followers across Egypt in educational meetings, newspapers and websites.*

anonymous leading figure in the Muslim Brothers, Cairo

In March 1999 Focus on the Global South in Bangkok organized a conference on ‘Economic Sovereignty in a Globalizing World’ that drew nearly 400 people from all corners of the world. The annual congress of Egypt’s International Economic Forum gives substantial attention to global matters. In January 2002 the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) held a major conference on globalization.

In 2002 the Instituto Ethos in São Paulo organized a trade fair on corporate social responsibility where 200 companies could exhibit their work in this area, learn from each other, and raise awareness among governments, the mass media and NGOs.

Founded in 1985, the RITIMO network of documentation centres for development and international solidarity has 45 information and meeting points across France open to the public.

The Moscow-based Centre for the History of Globalization provides monthly public lectures free of charge at the Museum of National History. The CHG also records lectures on globalization on CD-ROM for use in schools and universities.

The Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies sends its publications free to a thousand people from diverse sectors of society. Likewise, the Cairo-based Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey disseminates academic findings to several thousand people, using accessible language in both Arabic and English versions.

democratic global economy with citizen education. Civil society activities of the past few decades have clearly made many citizens more aware of – and more confident to speak out on – global economic matters.

That said, much more still needs to be done in this area, in quality as well as quantity. Indeed, as is indicated at greater length in Part 5, civil society efforts can sometimes actually detract from public education concerning the global economy. For example, the ‘education’ may be inaccurate, misrepresent views, or reinforce discrimination against subordinated groups.

## Public Debate

Democratic citizens are not only educated, but also active. They do not passively accept whatever governing authorities say and do. On the contrary, in a democracy people take deliberate stands on issues and adopt their positions after carefully considering different possible courses of action. Democratic governance therefore depends on an open and vigorous public debate of diverse views and options.

Hence, along with public education activities, civil society associations can enhance democracy in governance of the global economy by providing opportunities for public discussion of a wide array of policy conditions and choices. Civil society is a place where citizens – preferably any and all citizens – can together debate where they think the global economy should go.

This democratic contribution of civil society is especially important today, when most ruling circles across the world have tended to take a broadly similar approach to governing the global economy. Many commentators have spoken in this regard of a ‘Washington Consensus’ on ‘neoliberal’ principles. The prevailing view has argued that the global economy should be a ‘free’ market, achieved with policies of privatization, liberalization, deregulation and fiscal discipline.

Through its Scientific Council, ATTAC-France has published a dozen educational booklets on a wide range of global economic questions. All are inexpensively priced and written for a general audience.

Local partner associations of the Uganda Debt Network have developed radio talk shows and phone-ins to engage communities in discussions of economic and social policy issues connected with debt and debt relief programmes.

*What kind of education on globalization are we talking about: for liberation or for imprisonment? Disabling lectures or enabling discussions that empower people to come up with positions that they own and are proud of?*

Jassy Kwesiga  
Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations, Kampala

*Civil society can bring a greater variety of choice. If world leaders are all business people, they will bring only one view.*

Olga Makarenko  
Charity Organization ‘Queen Olga’, Moscow

*The role of NGOs is to counter unipolarity and promote multipolarity.*

Mohamed Idris  
Central Association of Cooperative Unions, Cairo

*The Uganda Muslim Supreme Council brings proposals on economic issues that move in a different direction from the world in general.*

Ismail Ecum  
Uganda Muslim Supreme Council, Kampala

*Before people enter into any decision they need to know about the issue from different viewpoints. Civil society provides a forum where all perspectives can be exchanged.*

Sarawut Pratoomraj  
Coordinating Committee of Human Rights Organizations of Thailand, Bangkok

However, in terms of democracy it is not so much the particular character of the dominant view that matters. It is dangerous for democracy whenever *any* approach – neoliberal or otherwise – threatens to gain a monopoly over governance of the global economy. If one perspective takes overall control, rulers are readily tempted to become authoritarian and arbitrarily suppress dissent.

Civil society associations have therefore played a key democratic role in the global economy by promoting pluralism. While some civil society groups have supported neoliberal approaches, others have opposed existing policy measures and governance agencies. Moreover, many activists have moved beyond a simple rejection of the status quo to offer specific suggestions for different rules and institutions to guide economic globalization. In this regard various civil society bodies have advocated nationalist, socialist, feminist, environmentalist, spiritualist and other alternative models for regulating global economic activities.

In short, civil society offers a forum where the public can energetically – and one hopes nonviolently – debate all manner of ideas about governing the global economy. The democratic key is to keep alternatives open and to nurture a political atmosphere where citizens dare to ask questions and to challenge those in power.

## Public Participation

Along with public education and public debate, democracy is marked by public participation. Governance is therefore more democratic to the extent that all affected people take part – directly and indirectly – in policy discussions and decisions. In a democracy citizens are heard.

Civil society associations can help citizens to obtain such influence in policymaking regarding the global economy. This function is especially important in current times when, as indicated earlier, representative legislative institutions across the world are generally failing to channel public inputs into the regulation

*Often governments do not see the negative sides of trade agreements. Civil society brings in the other views, raising challenges that would not otherwise arise.*

Will Horter  
Dogwood Initiative (formerly Forest Futures), Victoria, BC

Civil society groups have held 'People's Forums' and 'countersummits' alongside many official regional and global conferences, like those of APEC, the EU, the G7, the IMF/World Bank, the UN, the WTO and more. These gatherings provide a space to discuss alternative policies and politics for the global economy. Often the parallel meetings issue civil society declarations that challenge the official communiqués.

A global civil society working group on Communications Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) has prepared alternative proposals and strategies for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) convened by the International Telecommunication Union in 2003.

Since 2001 the World Social Forum, with participation from hundreds of reformist and transformist civil society groups, has convened a global meeting each January-February, concurrently with the World Economic Forum, a business-centred association that has promoted globalization on broadly neoliberal lines. The WEF-WSF debate has greatly enlivened the politics of globalization.

*Every global meeting should be preceded by a meeting of civil society where governments and the multilateral institutions can be informed by civil society about public disquiet regarding what is intended.*

Ibrahim Allam  
Arab Organization for Human Rights, Cairo

Since the so-called 'Battle of Seattle' in late 1999, national trade ministries have substantially increased their consultations with civil society groups. In Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has a substantial programme of civil society liaison. In France, the Minister of

of economic globalization. In addition, civil society activities can provide opportunities of participation for social circles like the poor and women that tend to get a limited hearing elsewhere in politics (including in elected assemblies).

More and more, civil society organizations have obtained direct access to official bodies that regulate the global economy, opening channels through which citizen views can be articulated and transmitted to authorities. Over the past twenty years, many (though far from all) state, suprastate and substate governance agencies concerned with the global economy have developed links with some (though far from all) civil society groups. For instance, civil society associations may participate in official policy consultations. They may sit on official committees and delegations. They may give testimony at parliamentary hearings and multilateral conferences. They may submit position papers and lobby authorities. Sometimes officials also attend civil society events and engage with activists on their own ground.

In these ways and more, civil society associations can open opportunities for all sorts of stakeholders to be represented in policy processes. True, often only a handful of civil society spokespersons actually take part in the official proceedings themselves. However, so long as these advocates maintain close contacts with their constituents, they can convey the experiences and concerns of quite large publics, including various marginalized groups. In such situations civil society activity forms a bridge between ordinary citizens and regulatory authorities.

Other public participation through civil society groups in governance of the global economy reaches authorities indirectly. For example, civil society associations have arranged countless public meetings where citizens can express concerns and make proposals regarding economic globalization. Many such gatherings have convened in the quiet of offices, conference halls, and exchanges over the Internet. Other meetings have taken the form of noisy rallies, marches and occupations, as in the highly publicized so-called 'anti-globalization' protests of recent years. Rulers often take account of such events, even if they themselves are not present.

External Commerce holds a lengthy meeting with civil society actors every two months. In Russia, the question of joining the WTO is discussed in a Tripartite Commission involving government, business and trade unions. In Uganda, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has set up an Inter-Institutional Committee on WTO matters with representatives of civil society on all of its sub-committees.

In Thailand in 2001, farmers associations and NGOs made up one-third of the committee that drafted the official national statute to implement the WTO agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS).

At a regional level, the EU and MERCOSUR have developed multiple mechanisms to receive civil society inputs to their policy processes. French civil society groups with interests in global economic issues regularly lobby in Brussels.

Since 1999 the IMF and the World Bank have required governments who receive debt relief to prepare, in consultation with civil society groups, a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) that sets out how savings on debt repayments will be used to combat poverty. In early 2000 several dozen civil society groups in Uganda gave inputs to the formulation of that country's PRSP. In addition, a civil society task force organized PRSP consultations with hundreds of ordinary citizens in local communities across Uganda.

The Uganda Consumers' Protection Association hosts a Globalization Stakeholders Forum with activists and officials that meets periodically to discuss the social, economic and environmental implications of globalization.

Thanks to mass media publicity, street demonstrations have become a well-known form of civil society participation in the politics of economic globalization. Some protests like those in Genoa, Quebec and Washington have drawn high-profile worldwide attention. In addition, the Movement of Dam-Affected People (MAB) has regularly organized mass marches in Brazil. Peasant and worker associations in Thailand have likewise held various rallies about global trade and investment issues. Trade unions in Russia have held many mass protests about neoliberal structural adjustment policies. An Anti-Globalization Egyptian Group has brought several hundred people on the streets of Cairo during a visit of the World Bank President.

Civil society groups have also promoted indirect public participation in governance of the global economy with surveys, petitions, letter campaigns and boycotts on various issues. To be sure, these collective statements of views do not carry the weight and legitimacy of an official plebiscite. However, they do give citizens a chance to voice their positions and may influence both official policy and public opinion at large.

Along with more conventional public actions like demonstrations and petitions, certain civil society associations have promoted more artistic means of participating in governance of the global economy. After all, some citizens engage in politics more comfortably – and make more impact – through dance, drawing, poetry, song, theatre, and T-shirts than through talking and marching. Civil society programmes can provide opportunities for these kinds of public involvement, too.

In a host of ways, then, civil society actions enhance democracy in the global economy when business forums, community groups, labour unions, NGOs, religious associations, research institutions and other voluntary bodies give a full spectrum of people chances to participate in the policy processes that shape their lives. In a word, involvement in civil society can offer citizens greater voice in economic globalization.

Of course, democratic problems can arise when participation in civil society is skewed by some of the same structural inequalities that mark general governance of the global economy. For example, North-based civil society groups can have more access to regulatory institutions than South-based organizations. Wealthy classes can enjoy more participation through civil society associations than the poor. Women and people of colour can face structural disadvantages in civil society activities relative to men and white people. These and other challenges to democratic participation in civil society are discussed at greater length in Part 5.

The Jubilee 2000 church-based campaign for the cancellation of poor-country debts gathered support with public petitions. These initiatives collected 600,000 signatures in Canada, 520,000 in France, 100,000 in Uganda, and over a thousand in Thailand. In Brazil, meanwhile, NGOs and the Catholic Church held an unofficial 'debt plebiscite' in September 2000 in which 6 million people cast a vote. In contrast, neither the Coptic Church in Egypt nor the Russian Orthodox Church took action in the Jubilee 2000 campaign. In 2003 twenty-two civil society networks in Thailand set up a People's Parliament with quarterly meetings where persons directly affected have a chance to speak, for example, on AIDS, globally funded infrastructure projects, and alternative agriculture.

In 1999 civil society associations in Canada led large-scale public mobilization in favour of the Tobin Tax proposal. After several months of civil society petitions, letters and media publicity, the Canadian Parliament passed a motion in favour of taxing global currency transactions.

In France the development solidarity association Agir Ici ('Act Here') mobilizes citizens in several public opinion campaigns every year on a variety of global economic issues. In these actions Agir Ici collaborates with partner civil society organizations to urge citizens to send postcards of concern to relevant authorities. Each campaign generates 15-30,000 such postcards.

In 1998-9 the sex worker advocacy group Empower in Thailand distributed thousands of handkerchiefs embroidered with the phrase 'IMF can't make me cry' as a way for women struggling under the impact of the Asia financial crisis of the late 1990s to voice their difficulties.

## Public Transparency

Public education, public debate and public participation – as well as public accountability still to be discussed – are all compromised if governance is not publicly visible. Citizens cannot have relevant education, or conduct competent debate, or exercise effective participation if official circles operate in secrecy behind closed doors. Democracy requires access to information and transparency for all. Regulatory operations must be open to public view, so that citizens have precise and reliable information on which to judge the performance of the rules and rulers that govern them.

Civil society associations can therefore provide a further democratic service if they make governance of the global economy more transparent for everyone concerned. This function is especially significant today, when much regulation of global communications, finance, investment, migration and trade occurs outside public view. Citizens often do not know – and find it difficult to discover – what policy decisions are taken on global economic issues, at what time, where, by whom, from what options, on what grounds, with what expected results, and with what resources to support implementation.

To correct this situation, a number of civil society groups have pushed governing authorities in the global economy to be more open about their work. For example, civil society activists have on various occasions pressed governance agencies to increase their public visibility with information brochures, annual reports, websites, exhibitions, speeches, mass media appearances, etc. In addition, certain civil society associations have campaigned for governing bodies in the global economy to release key policy and project documents, so that citizens can better analyze circumstances and choices for themselves and engage in more informed participation.

Sometimes civil society groups have also stressed the need for *effective* transparency. It is one thing to disclose information; it is another to make that information comprehensible, and have it flow, to all people concerned. So civil society advocates can urge governance agencies in the global economy to make

*To democratize the global economy people must know what is going on. Then they can know how to act and feel that they own the process.*

Boonthan Verawongse  
Peace and Human Rights Resource Centre, Bangkok

In 1997 pressure from the Brazil Network on Multilateral Financial Institutions (Rede Brasil) ensured that the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy for Brazil was published and also translated into Portuguese.

In 1998 civil society organizations in Canada and France published the previously secret text of a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) that was being negotiated through the OECD. This disclosure generated increased public debate about the proposal, which was later abandoned.

In Uganda, environmental NGOs have pushed the government to publish its agreement with AES Corporation, the world's largest electricity power company, concerning the proposed \$500 million Bujagali Dam Project on the Nile.

Thanks largely to pressure from civil society groups, the Paris Club (an intergovernmental forum to regulate problems related to bilateral debts) opened a public website in 2001.

Some forty civil society groups in France conducted a campaign in 1999 on 'Transparency, Democracy: The IFIs Also!' Since then the French government has submitted a public annual report on its activities in the Bretton Woods institutions to the National Assembly.

The Toronto-based Maquila Solidarity Network seeks to improve the disclosure and comprehensibility of corporate information, so that consumers who want to shop ethically are better able to judge the behaviour of transborder companies that operate in the export-processing zones of Mexico.

Before the Quebec Summit of 2001 civil society groups, led by the Hemispheric Social Alliance, pursued a yearlong 'liberate the text' campaign,

themselves truly visible to ordinary citizens. For example, budgets need to be presented in ways that are easily understood. Published statements about policies need to be free of technical terms, obscure acronyms, professional jargon and other specialized vocabulary that can both confuse and alienate an audience of laypersons. The documents should be translated into the relevant languages, and hard copies need to be made available for people who lack Internet access. In other words, civil society pressure can ensure that ‘transparency’ goes beyond rhetoric and lip service to be democratically meaningful.

Of course democratization does not end with greater transparency. After all, making injustice publicly visible does not render it any less unjust. Revealing domination does not remove it. Nevertheless, civil society actions to increase public disclosure about regulation of the global economy can greatly empower citizen efforts to engage with this area of governance.

## **Public Accountability**

In turn, public transparency can be a tool for a further core feature of democracy, namely public accountability. In a democratic regime, the governors are answerable to the governed. When democratic authorities perform well, they retain the public’s support. However, when they err, rulers owe all affected citizens apologies, explanations, compensations and possible resignations. When the damage of misguided governance is particularly severe, public pressure in a democracy removes the responsible persons from office or even shuts down the agency in question. In this way democracy is a constant correction of mistakes.

Civil society can be a channel through which the public – preferably all parts of the public – obtains accountability in the regulation of economic globalization. Such a function is particularly relevant at present, when other democratic accountability mechanisms for this area are weak. As seen in Part 2, many authorities that govern the global economy are not popularly elected, so they escape the need to secure a periodic direct democratic renewal of their mandate.

which insisted that authorities should publish the negotiating document for the FTAA so that the terms would be open for public discussion. Governments finally relented just prior to the meeting.

*Maybe the IMF did publish its Letters of Intent with Thailand during the financial crisis of the late 1990s, but these documents were not put in language that the grassroots could understand.*

Lae Dirok Wittayarat  
Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University

*Most institutions have responded to civil society pressures with more transparency, but that does not change the rules.*

Ibrahim El-Essawy  
Third World Forum, Cairo

*We highlight practices that the authorities prefer to hide, often because they serve special interests. We ask the critical questions and force ruling circles to justify their policy decisions.*

Bruno Rebelle  
Greenpeace France, Paris

In the Structural Adjustment Policy Review Initiative (SAPRI), civil society associations in ten countries (including Uganda) have worked with the World Bank in studies to assess the effects of IMF/World Bank recommendations.

A number of civil society associations have monitored how far governments implement the promises they make at UN summit conferences. The Uganda National Farmers Association has played this role in respect of the FAO World Food Summit. Groups in Brazil and Canada are part of a global Social Watch network that has followed progress towards goals of the World Summit for Social Development. The Association for Health and Environmental Development in Egypt has worked through the People’s Health Assembly to track steps regarding the Alma Ata Declaration of the World Health Organization.

Most parliaments do little to monitor policies on global trade, migration, investment, finance and communications. Likewise, courts and ombudspersons are largely absent for global economic issues. Hence few people are alerting the authorities and the public to failings of governance in the global economy.

Civil society associations can improve this situation by pressing for formal mechanisms to monitor and control regulation of the global economy. In this vein a number of civil society groups have urged local, national and regional elected assemblies to undertake more scrutiny of policies concerning economic globalization. Certain civil society activists have also campaigned for the establishment – and subsequent active use – of official mechanisms to evaluate the effects of rules and institutions in the regulation of the global economy.

On many other occasions civil society groups have themselves performed a watchdog role over governance of the global economy. Numerous civil society bodies have checked to see that authorities comply with their public declarations, national laws, and international commitments regarding the global economy. In addition, countless studies undertaken by civil society organizations have documented the consequences of various policies regarding economic globalization. A number of these investigations have exposed error, incompetence, corruption, and harm. So civil society work can be a valuable source of policy critique.

Civil society associations also provide channels through which citizens – in principle from any country, culture or social sector – can seek correction of mistakes in governance of the global economy. Civil society groups have pressed to have rules changed, officials replaced, institutions reconstructed, and reparations paid. To this end, civil society organizations have taken grievances about policies related to economic globalization to auditors, ombudspersons, parliaments, courts and the mass media. In addition, certain activists have staged symbolic ‘trials’ with informal ‘tribunals’ as a way to call authorities to task.

In short, various civil society efforts have sought to secure democratic accountability in governance of the global economy, at a time when few other actors in politics have concertedly pursued this goal. Civil society associations

Human rights groups in a number of countries – including Brazil, Canada, Egypt and Russia – have tracked their government’s compliance with the United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Several associations have submitted a parallel NGO report to the UN Commission on Human Rights that challenges their government’s official account of the situation in the country.

Pressure from civil society groups was instrumental in prompting the creation of an Inspection Panel for the World Bank in 1994 and an Independent Evaluation Unit for the IMF in 2001. Civil society associations are now also actively monitoring and using those mechanisms.

The Uganda Debt Network operates a Transparency and Accountability Programme to watch that officials do not misuse debt relief monies. Poverty Action Fund Monitoring Committees with grassroots participation have been active in over 20 districts across Uganda.

Civil society associations in many countries have promoted ideas and practices of corporate social responsibility (CSR). In these schemes, companies (including many with transborder operations) follow nonofficial mechanisms of accountability to various stakeholders. Groups pursuing CSR include, for example, the Instituto Ethos in Brazil, the Conference Board of Canada, Businessmen for Social Responsibility in Egypt, the Forum for Responsible Investment in France, and the Thai Chamber of Commerce and the Social Venture Network in Thailand.

Global Forest Watch, a network across 9 countries including Brazil, Canada and Russia, tracks illegal logging and its impacts on local populations. It thereby undertakes monitoring work that a number of governments have neglected.

Black people’s groups in Brazil have joined a wider global movement of calls for reparations for historical crimes of colonialism against people of colour. Géledes, a black women’s association in São Paulo, is preparing a case on this matter to present before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Over the years a number of civil society associations have convened unofficial

have righted some wrongs as a result, but much more could and should still be done.

## **Redistribution**

Together, the five preceding contributions of civil society work can do much to bring greater democracy in the global economy. However, increased public education, debate, participation, transparency and accountability are not enough by themselves. In particular, these measures are not sufficient to address the arbitrary structural hierarchies that have marginalized and silenced large majorities of the world's people.

To be sure, public education about the global economy can be crafted so that it is especially accessible to and relevant for underclasses, women, people of colour and youth. Channels of public participation can be opened particularly for people from rural areas and peripheral countries. Public accountability in governance of the global economy can be formulated in ways that are meaningful to non-western cultures.

However, structural subordinations in economic globalization cannot be fully countered without also effecting a substantial redistribution of resources and accompanying opportunities. This is not to advocate equal shares for all in the global economy, without regard to individual efforts and talents. But it is to prescribe fair shares for all, without regard to historical accidents of a person's geographical and social location. Resources should be distributed in ways that give people equal opportunities to develop their initiatives and abilities.

Civil society associations have promoted a more equitable distribution of the fruits of a global economy in at least three main ways. First, they can put the spotlight on subordination. Many labour unions, NGOs, think tanks and others have documented arbitrary hierarchies in economic globalization with countless analyses, anecdotes, images and statistics. Such work has made structural

'courts' to conduct informal trials of global economic actors for their alleged wrongs. A Permanent People's Tribunal, created in 1979, has publicly examined various cases against global corporations, the IMF and the World Bank. An International People's Tribunal on Debt was held at the 2002 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre.

*The major hindrance to democracy in the global economy is unequal distribution of power. To democratize means to oppose dominant power with counter power and redistribute the resources.*

Ibrahim El-Essawy  
Third World Forum, Cairo

inequalities among classes, countries, cultures, genders, generations, races, and so on more visible to politicians, officials and the general public. Greater awareness of patent injustices can increase pressure to take corrective measures.

Second, civil society groups can help to devise and promote policies for a fairer distribution of resources in the global economy. After all, the rules of globalization can be reset in ways that produce more equitable outcomes. In regard to global trade, for example, many civil society associations have pressed for fairer market access, schemes to stabilize commodity prices, and less restrictive intellectual property laws. Other civil society strivings have advanced projects for redistributive global taxes on transworld finance and investment. These taxes would discourage unproductive speculation and at the same time generate resources to improve the lot of disadvantaged circles in the global economy. In respect of global communications, a number of civil society organizations have promoted a guiding principle of ‘digital inclusion’ to counter the existing digital divides. Regimes for more equitable opportunities of global migration could also be contemplated, although few civil society initiatives to date have looked in this direction.

Third, innumerable civil society associations have promoted redistribution in the global economy through concrete projects that help subordinated people to improve their resource position. Thus, for example, many civil society groups have countered gender inequalities with targeted schooling for girls and micro-credit schemes for women entrepreneurs. Other organizations have pursued poverty alleviation (and eventual eradication) in urban slums and marginalized rural areas. Job creation schemes for unemployed youth can make a dent in generational inequalities. In these and other ways civil society actors can empower marginalized people and improve prospects for democracy in the global economy. Such effects can be achieved even when the associations do not explicitly link their work to globalization.

## **Conclusion**

The Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines.

Debt relief

The preceding discussion has indicated that civil society associations can and do contribute to more democratic governance of the global economy in six major interrelated ways:

- public education – fostering knowledgeable citizens
- public debate – preventing authoritarian monopoly of a single policy view
- public participation – providing citizens with channels of policy influence
- public transparency – making governance visible to citizens
- public accountability – holding governors answerable to the governed
- redistribution – countering arbitrary structures of domination

Together, these six broad benefits of civil society activities can inject more democratic legitimacy into the global economy. A democratically legitimate regime is one where the public acknowledges that authorities have a right to rule and citizens have a duty to obey. To date, governance of the global economy has not enjoyed much democratic legitimacy. As the above discussion and examples indicate, a large and active civil society sector could improve this situation.

Yet we must not exaggerate the scale and impact of these benefits either. Civil society activities concerning democracy in the global economy have so far been limited and weak in many parts of the world. Indeed, overall civil society contributions to the democratization of globalization have been modest to date. Moreover, as noted at the outset, not all civil society groups concerned with economic globalization have accorded a high priority to advancing democracy. Relatively few civil society associations that work on global economic issues have had a large and lasting membership.

Civil society organizations could and should do much more to advance public education, public debate, public participation, public transparency, public accountability and redistribution in the global economy. The question is how. The second half of this report considers the conditions that can help or hinder civil society efforts to build a more democratic globalization.

*We need a global public space, a space of dialogue and confrontation where global networks of nonstate actors defend the global public good.*

Bernard Pinault  
Centre of Research and Information on Development, Paris

*Civil society can help to make 'one world' of the people rather than merely 'one world' of market capitalism.*

Suriyasai Katasila  
Campaign for Popular Democracy, Bangkok

*There remains a large gap between civil society aims and achievements on globalization. Even though a lot has been accomplished and our power has increased a hundred times, we are still weak and have much more to do.*

Mohamed Hassan Khalil  
Association for Health and Environmental Development, Cairo

*In some cases civil society groups do not advocate a democratic system and on the contrary are anything but democratic.*

Razmik Panossian  
Rights & Democracy, Montreal

Although ATTAC-France is one of the world's largest civil society associations to focus on globalization, its 27,000 members account for only 0.0004 per cent of the country's population.

## Part 4

# Realizing the Potentials: Environmental Influences

So far this report has explored democratic deficits in governance of the global economy (Part 2) and actions that civil society associations can take to counter these problems (Part 3). The next two parts examine the challenges that civil society groups face in realizing their potentials to democratize the global economy. A diagnosis of the circumstances that promote or hinder these efforts can generate prescriptions for the sorts of strategies that civil society players could pursue to maximize their democratization of globalization. Broad suggestions to this end are offered in Part 6.

Conditions affecting the degree that civil society brings democracy to the global economy are both external and internal to the associations concerned. Thus some of these influences relate to the environment where

civil society associations work, while others relate to the practices of civil society organizations themselves. Needless to say, the outside and inside factors often overlap and interconnect, and civil society actors must address both environmental circumstances (discussed below) and internal process issues (considered in Part 5) in order to realize their democratizing potentials.

The following pages examine influences in the cultural, economic, historical, political and social contexts in which civil society groups find themselves. Auspicious environmental circumstances can be enormously enabling for civil society efforts to bring greater public education, public debate, public participation, public transparency and public accountability to governance of the global economy. On the other hand, inhospitable contexts can thwart

even civil society associations with the best intentions, the highest commitments, and the greatest energies.

Conversations for this project – with several hundred civil society practitioners in widely differing situations across the world – suggest that half a dozen main environmental conditions have affected the ways and extents that citizen groups can inject democracy into the global economy. These influences relate to: levels of resources; the presence or absence of supportive civil society networks; attitudes towards civil society in official circles; mass media treatment of economic globalization and related civil society activities; the prevailing political culture; and the nature and intensity of social hierarchies.

## Resources

Civil society activity requires resources: funds, staff, information, language fluency, premises, equipment, supplies, reputation, basic security, etc. Associations need means to mount actions with respect to public education, public debate, public participation, public transparency and public accountability in governance of the global economy. These contributions cannot be made from nothing.

Transworld civil society advocacy in particular demands significant resources. True, global Internet communications have become relatively inexpensive for many associations, though some still lack computers. Moreover, other aspects of operating globally such as air travel, conference calls and translation services remain costly. Thus intensive transworld activism – which is often necessary to address issues of global governance effectively – is generally only available to well-endowed organizations.

Some civil society groups that deal with issues of economic globalization have enjoyed relatively ample resources. These bodies include a number of economic research institutes and associations of big business. Likewise, certain NGOs and faith-based organizations that address global economic problems have attracted large memberships and substantial revenues. Oxfam and the Roman Catholic Church are examples in this regard.

However, the exceptions highlight the rule that most civil society engagement of global economic issues has occurred under heavy resource constraints. Most community associations, NGOs, religious groups and trade unions have operated with small budgets and limited long-term financial security. They have had only a handful of staff specifically dedicated to global economic issues and have often relied heavily on volunteer and low-paid labour. Even some business forums (especially among small entrepreneurs) and think tanks (especially in the South) have led a precarious existence.

Exacerbating these resource difficulties, most civil society organizations that deal

*It is such an unequal game. Civil society has so little force. We are so pathetically weak, fragile, faltering.*

Gerry Barr  
Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Ottawa

*It is very expensive to operate internationally. We could eat up a lot of our resources in airfares alone. In the past our members could meet together in a church basement and devise a solution. Today you need major resources for international meetings that we do not have. It is so disempowering.*

Darrin Qualman  
National Farmers Union, Saskatoon

*Civil society in Russia is a social science intelligentsia of several hundred people that you can fit into one room.*

Judith Shapiro  
New Economic School, Moscow

*Civil society groups in Egypt dealing with social and governance issues have no stable sources of funding except from foreign donors. There is no local business philanthropy that supports this work, and it will take long to develop.*

Bassma Kodmani  
Ford Foundation, Cairo

*A few of us have email addresses, but no computers, and cybercafes are expensive. It's hard for a rural woman to go to the global village.*

Zainab Wambedde  
Mental Health Uganda, Mbale

*To build democracy you need time, space and resources. We often have none of these.*

Josephine Grey  
Low Income Families Together, Toronto

*We would like to engage in public education on global economic issues, but we lack the funds and staff expertise to do so.*

Anne-Christine Habbard  
International Federation of Human Rights, Paris

with global economic issues are relatively young. Having been newly established in the past two decades, if not the last few years, they have as yet had little time to build up assets or institutional memory. And lots do not survive. Indeed, in many countries a substantial proportion of registered civil society organizations are moribund.

Unfortunately, the better endowed civil society associations like business forums and economics think tanks have, on the whole, tended to assign relatively low priority to the explicit promotion of democracy in the global economy. In contrast, civil society groups that actively promote greater democracy in global production, exchange and consumption have usually struggled with highly constrained means. At the same time, the underresourced civil society associations have all too often been those that seek to give greater voice to subordinated sectors of the global economy. As a result, the people who potentially have most to gain from civil society provision of public education, public debate, public participation, public transparency and public accountability in the global economy are, owing to resource constraints, usually less likely to get these benefits.

Needless to say, the general economic context in which civil society associations operate can greatly affect whether or not they obtain sufficient resources to pursue their programmes. If a civil society group works in a relatively prosperous environment, it has more possibilities to attract the means required to mount substantial actions to democratize the global economy. After all, wealthier and healthier people are more able to pay membership subscriptions, to contribute to civil society campaigns, and to maintain philanthropic foundations that might fund civil society work. In contrast, it is far harder to assemble the required resources if a civil society association works in a poverty-stricken setting. Moreover, poor people – who normally suffer the greatest democratic deficits in the global economy – generally lack both the time to undertake sustained civil society activism themselves and the resources to support others who might campaign in their name.

Of course, civil society associations can pursue any number of innovative schemes to bolster their resource position. Some enterprising organizations (such as big humanitarian relief agencies) have assembled very substantial levels of

*The Canadian government spends hundreds of millions of dollars to promote exports and a few million on programmes to support human rights. We are piddling. We are so small. It is incredible that we have any influence at all.*

Diana Bronson  
Rights & Democracy, Montreal

*NGOs in Russia deal with topics on which they will be paid, and no one is interested in funding work on issues like economic democracy and labour rights.*

Nodari Simonia  
Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Moscow

*Even those of us who appreciate the significance of globalization are just too bogged down in struggles to survive to be able to deal with strategic issues. That's the greatest pity: if we ever do get the time to reflect, it will be too late to fight.*

William Kalema  
Uganda Manufacturers Association, Kampala

*Most of the Egyptian people are fighting for their living. It is a luxury for them to be interested in civil society activities.*

Abd El-Hamid Hasan El-Ghazali  
Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University

Everyday struggles for basic human security in post-communist Russia have left most people with little time or energy for civil society activity. The new rich in Russia have shown few inclinations toward philanthropy. Meanwhile, professional circles who provide much of the social base for civil society advocacy in other countries often belong to the new poor in Russia.

*Thailand lacks a tradition of donating to civil society organizations, so these groups must often look abroad for their funds.*

Prasong Lertratanawisute  
Thailand Association of Journalists, Bangkok

Some civil society groups in Indonesia have sought to mobilize *zakat* and other charitable giving under Islam to improve their resource position.

resources, even when dealing with extremely marginalized groups in the global economy. Nevertheless, exceptions again highlight the rule that problems of inadequate resources have bedeviled all too many civil society efforts to democratize the global economy. Indeed, as discussed further in Part 5, eagerness to obtain funds can sometimes cause civil society associations to compromise their autonomy.

## Networks

Resource shortages for civil society activity related to the global economy can often be partly alleviated when associations collaborate in networks. A civil society organization that is weak in isolation can become stronger through cooperation with other groups. The presence or absence of network affiliations can make a substantial difference to the survival prospects of a civil society association and the impacts that it has.

Networks involve a pooling of civil society capacities. Through their links with each other, associations in a network share information and expertise. Cooperation can also circumvent duplications of effort and thereby generate savings on scarce resources. In some cases civil society organizations may combine their means to mount activities that they could not accomplish – or could not execute as well – alone.

Most civil society networking involves similar types of groups: thus trade unions collaborate with other trade unions; human rights organizations join forces with other human rights organizations; etc. However, networks encompassing different sectors of civil society can also be effective in respect of global economic issues. For example, NGOs, religious groups, trade unions and business forums have on occasion teamed up to advocate debt relief for poor countries. Cross-sectoral networks in civil society can be particularly helpful in strengthening the position of subordinated groups in the global economy. For instance, black movements can combine efforts with women's movements, youth movements can link up with

Certain civil society circles (including in Russia and Thailand) have shifted some of their corporate fund-raising efforts from big business to small and medium enterprises.

Since its launch in 1993, networking through Transparency International has lent considerable added strength to dozens of national campaigns (including in all seven focal countries of this report) to increase openness and reduce corruption in economic governance.

The Economic Freedom Network connects (mostly small) research institutes in 56 countries (including Brazil, Canada, France and Russia) to promote ultra-liberal policies towards globalization.

Inaugurated in 2001, the World Social Forum process has operated largely through networking among civil society groups in a cycle of global, regional and national meetings: at Porto Alegre, Bamako, Bangkok, Florence, Hyderabad.

In Uganda a wide range of NGOs have collaborated in both a Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) and a National NGO Forum. However, cooperation across sectors between NGOs, labour unions and business associations has been thin.

The Youth Training for Development Program in Thailand has worked across classes to link students and young peasants.

Contemporary Brazil has seen some powerful combinations of civil society forces between church, community associations, NGOs and trade unions, sometimes also involving socially concerned academics and business forums.

Transborder civil society networks have greatly bolstered campaigns for debt relief in poor countries. Groupings like the African Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD) and the European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD) have regional memberships. The Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt cancellation at the dawn of the new millennium involved affiliates in over sixty countries across the world.

peasant movements, and so on.

Another especially fruitful form of civil society networking with respect to global economic matters is transborder cooperation. In this case associations in different countries (either from the same or from multiple sectors) work together. In particular, North-South and South-South coalitions can often strengthen the position of weak civil society groups in poor countries.

Civil society networks show varying organizational features. Some of these collaborations between associations are formalized in memoranda of understanding and the like, while other links remain informal. The contacts can be regular or ad hoc. Some connections between civil society groups evolve into long-term cooperation and address a wide range of issues, while other networks are ephemeral coalitions that respond to a specific event or problem.

Whatever the organizational shape, civil society networks can pursue collaboration on global economic issues in a number of contexts. For example, associations may meet together around official conferences at national, regional or global levels. Alternatively, cooperating civil society groups may organize congresses of their own or exchange visits to one another's offices. Networks can also be forged with electronic communications through listservs, links between websites, and telephone contacts.

Networks can yield multiple benefits for civil society efforts to democratize the global economy. For instance, pooled information and coordinated actions can raise the efficiency and effectiveness of efforts to hold governing authorities accountable. In addition, shared experience can provide much inspiration for ways to conduct public education, promote public debate, open space for public participation, and extract public transparency and accountability in respect of governance of the global economy. Moreover, the mere fact of working together with others who hold similar values and interests can inject much confidence and energy into civil society groups that could otherwise feel isolated and powerless.

This is not to say that civil society networks are unproblematic. For one thing, effective networking requires resources that many associations do not have. In

Prostitutes in Thailand have gained a measure of greater voice in the global economy through occasional meetings of the Asia-Pacific Network of Sex Workers.

The creation of MERCOSUR prompted black associations in over a dozen countries (including Brazil) to form a Strategic Alliance of Afro-Descendants of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Examples of widely circulating civil society listservs concerning global economic issues include 'Focus on Trade', coordinated through Focus on the Global South in Bangkok, and 'Sand in the Wheels', coordinated through ATTAC-France.

Civil society groups in nine countries (including Brazil, Canada and Russia) have collaborated in the Global Forest Watch programme to increase transparency and accountability in forest management by monitoring the actions of corporations, governments and individuals.

Campaigners against the construction of large dams, like the Movement of Dam-Affected People (MAB) in Brazil, have taken considerable inspiration from global meetings and international solidarity visits with each other.

*Working with international friends is a good thing. They come and give solidarity: US people, Indians, Japanese, Vietnamese, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Australians. We have a global village right here.*

Suan Sangsom  
Assembly of the Poor, Mae Mun Man Yuan Village, Thailand

Networks of women's associations – for example, through the Open Society Institute in Russia – can promote greater attention to the gender aspects of economic globalization.

The Hemispheric Social Alliance, formally constituted in 1999 as a civil society network for alternative kinds of regional integration in the Americas, has in practice operated largely through irregular contacts among a handful of individuals.

addition, networks often lack clearly established procedures to formulate and execute joint positions, so that collective decision-taking among the participating groups can be cumbersome and confused. Moreover, members of a civil society network invariably have to negotiate differences – sometimes quite considerable differences – regarding priorities, analyses, strategies and tactics. Such negotiations become all the more difficult in transborder and cross-sectoral advocacy networks, where cultural diversity can generate major communications difficulties. Indeed, in some contexts like contemporary Russia, collaborating with foreigners can provoke considerable distrust from governing circles and the general public. Furthermore, like any other political entity, civil society networks to one degree or another involve power hierarchies and power struggles that can undermine efforts at cooperation.

However, civil society associations that successfully address these challenges can greatly enhance their impacts, *inter alia* on democracy in the global economy. Examples cited in the right column here illustrate the possibilities. The ability to network effectively – including across sectors and across countries – is therefore a key organizational capability for civil society groups that address economic globalization.

## Relations with Official Circles

In addition to how they connect with each other, the ability of civil society associations to promote democracy in the global economy also depends considerably on their relationships with governing authorities. If official circles are knowledgeable about civil society groups and eager to involve them in policy processes, then the prospects for civil society activities to contribute greater democracy are much enhanced. Yet if, on the contrary, ruling institutions are ignorant about civil society organizations, averse to engage with them and reluctant to allow them political space generally, then the prospects for democratization of the global economy via voluntary collective citizen action are substantially weakened.

*Any contact we have with foreigners can be used against us.*

Ludmilla Alexeeva  
Moscow Helsinki Group

Differences of perspective and internal power struggles have sometimes weakened the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN), which brought together several thousand civil society groups across the world in the late 1990s to evaluate the results of structural adjustment programmes in around a dozen countries (including Canada and Uganda).

*Our gang are in relations with the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the French Enterprises Movement (MEDEF), and so on. These are our guys. We know each other on a first-name basis.*

Amaury Temporal  
Federation of Industries of the State of Rio de Janeiro

In Russia the federal state has given little encouragement to civil society advocacy work. Independent civil society associations were not legalized until 1991, and even then the reference model was the authoritarian New Order regime in Indonesia. To this day the tax code treats civil society organizations on a par with private enterprises, in spite of several years of concerted efforts by NGOs to change the legislation.

*In the Third World, cooperation between civil society and governments is often poor, especially on issues like human rights and the environment where governments feel they are being pressured. The Arab Organization of Human Rights worked for many years without official recognition, eventually reaching formal agreement with the government in May 2000.*

Mohammed Faiq  
Arab Organization for Human Rights, Cairo

One significant aspect of official approaches is the legal position that states and other governance institutions accord to civil society organizations. Depending on their nature, regulations can have either enabling or disabling effects for civil society activities. For example, rules regarding the official recognition of civil society groups (by state, suprastate and substate bodies) can range from very liberal arrangements to highly draconian frameworks. Laws may permit or restrict transnational civil society networking. In addition, fiscal regulations (for instance, regarding the imposition of or exemption from various taxes and duties) can either enhance or undermine the resource position of civil society associations. In short, laws matter.

The ways that authorities use or abuse their legal powers makes a difference, too. Unsympathetic governing authorities can take multiple measures to restrict civil society activities: prohibiting meetings, censoring publications, halting projects, confiscating assets, intercepting communications, instituting travel bans, imposing extra bureaucratic obligations, applying police intimidation, pursuing smear campaigns to discredit groups and their leaders, or even disbanding associations altogether. In some cases official circles have also operated outside the law to suppress civil society work, for example, by damaging the property of associations or even threatening bodily violence to activists. Of course, civil society groups can take various steps to counter such negative pressures, for example, by exploiting loopholes in national laws, invoking international conventions, garnering public support through the mass media, redirecting funds to safer locations, and so on. Even with creative countermeasures, however, civil society potentials to democratize the global economy can be substantially frustrated in a context of official hostility. (This paragraph draws heavily on Peter van Tuijl, 'Responding to Rights at Risk: NGOs in a Disabled Environment', unpublished paper, July 1997.)

Conversely, sympathetic governing authorities can greatly facilitate civil society programmes to increase public education, debate, participation, transparency and accountability *vis-à-vis* the global economy. In these happier scenarios, official institutions may take actions such as helping to distribute civil society publications, giving air time to civil society groups on government radio and television stations, creating joint councils with civil society associations,

Article 40 of the latest Thai constitution guarantees the public access to radio. A number of civil society associations have used this provision to obtain airtime.

*The main problem for us is implementation. The authorities in Siberia have passed 120 laws on NGOs since 1995 – including very good measures developed by legal specialists – but it is another thing to put them into practice.*

Igor Baradachev  
Siberian Civic Initiatives Support Center, Novosibirsk

*The Thai Government may present us as the Third Hand, and some people can misunderstand the role of NGOs as a result.*

Reawadee Praserjareonsuk  
NGO Coordinating Committee on Development, Bangkok

Rather than promoting a conducive environment for civil society development, the proposed NGO (Amendment) Bill 2001 in Uganda aimed at increased government control of the sector.

*The NGO Law in Egypt is very constraining. NGOs expend too much energy on keeping the ministry off their back.*

Alaa Ezz  
Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation, Cairo

*The threat is not the law per se, but the attitude of the authorities. When will they decide to intervene? Before each protest I am anxious about how the state will react.*

Wael Khalil  
Anti-Globalization Egyptian Group, Cairo

*We do not register our association, because the government would control our work. Already the police have raided our premises, and officials have investigated our organizational and personal bank accounts.*

anonymous activist, Bangkok

defending civil society organizations from attacks by third parties, and even directly funding civil society initiatives. That said, as is discussed further in Part 5, overly cozy relationships with governing authorities can raise questions of civil society cooptation.

Other ways that official circles may open or close space for civil society associations relate to the procedures that authorities follow to include or exclude civil society inputs to policy processes. For example, governance agencies might provide explicit and specific policy guidance (perhaps backed up with training courses) that gives staff clear directions about when, why and how to engage with civil society groups. In addition, state, suprastate, substate and private institutions might allocate specially designated staff and funds for contacts with civil society bodies, as well as providing citizen associations with ample direct access to senior authorities. Indeed, positively inclined governance institutions might include good performance in civil society liaison as a criterion for staff evaluation and promotion. Officials might also pursue a regular cycle of in-depth consultations with civil society associations and invite feedback at any time via postal and electronic communications. Moreover, governance bodies might reserve seats on committees and working parties for civil society delegates. Alternatively, however, ruling circles could neglect or outright refuse to make provisions of these kinds.

Official practices in this regard have varied greatly, of course. Among suprastate governance agencies, for example, certain agencies like the EU and the World Bank have made fairly elaborate arrangements to engage with civil society groups. In contrast, other organizations like the BIS and the OECD have instituted almost no measures of this kind. The United Nations has sought to widen relations with civil society associations, while the Non-Aligned Movement has sooner aimed to restrict them.

The attitudes that officials bring to consultations with civil society organizations also matter. For example, governance agencies can regard such discussions as serious dialogues with substantive effects, but they can also treat exchanges with civil society groups as token public relations exercises. When planning consultations, authorities can determine the participants, the agenda and the rules

The Canadian government has launched and largely financed several major civil society initiatives with relevance to the global economy, including the International Institute for Sustainable Development and Rights & Democracy. The authorities in Ottawa have also supported specific civil society activities, for example, by providing funds to hold a People's Summit alongside the intergovernmental meeting at Quebec in April 2001.

*It is useful to have relations with international organizations that are open-minded. It is not useful with those that have a problem for every solution.*

Mohamed Idris

Central Association of Cooperative Unions, Cairo

*Consultations surrounding the Poverty Strategy Reduction Papers [involving civil society groups in the formulation of economic development strategies] give people the 'right' to 'choose' structural adjustment. The consultations are not democratizing if they do not bring substantive change.*

Pam Foster

Halifax Initiative, Ottawa

*In its last Country Assistance Strategy for Brazil, the World Bank made a pretence of consultation with some civil society groups, but it only produced an annex to the report. The consultation did not change anything. Why bother?*

Flávia Barros

Brazil Network on Multilateral Financial Institutions, Brasília

*NGOs have lost lots of time that they cannot afford to lose by going into all this 'participation' with the IFIs.*

John Dillon

KAIROS: Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, Toronto

*Citizen participation with Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is window dressing. We need to have serious citizen inputs.*

Tony Clarke

Polaris Institute, Ottawa

of engagement jointly with civil society associations, but they can also make such arrangements unilaterally. Executives and staff from regulatory bodies may make the effort to attend civil society venues, or they may expect civil society groups always to come to their offices. Officials can – or alternatively may not – provide interlocutors from civil society with adequate information and sufficient time to offer meaningful policy inputs. Consultations with civil society associations may be held throughout a policymaking process, or they may be delayed until the later stages, when all of the crucial decisions have already been taken. Authorities might make special efforts to hear marginalized groups, or they might only contact the most easily accessible parts of civil society. Governance bodies can be open to receive criticisms, or they may only seek views from sympathetic civil society actors. Officials may report back to civil society groups citizens on the ways that civil society participation has affected policies, or they may neglect to offer such feedback. Governing circles can show appreciation for the time and effort that civil society associations give to offering policy inputs, or the authorities can take the activists for granted, not replying to correspondence and canceling meetings at short notice.

One question of official attitudes that has particular importance with respect to governance of the global economy is the view that states adopt towards civil society contacts with supranational bodies. Some governments take a relaxed position towards direct links (that is, bypassing the state) that civil society associations in their country might develop with regional and global institutions. The national authorities may even be happy to see civil society groups express opposition to, say, the IMF or the World Bank when the government itself feels unable openly to do so. However, other governments oppose civil society connections with supranational organizations as an attack on state sovereignty and work to discourage or obstruct these links. As a result, citizens can experience added difficulties to access IFIs, multilateral trade bodies, UN agencies, and so on.

In sum, the way that official circles approach their dealings with civil society groups can greatly affect the extent that these associations are able to contribute greater democracy to governance of the global economy. This is not to say that responsibility for enabling civil society organizations to bring public awareness, public involvement and public control to policies on global production, exchange

*Authorities in St Petersburg do not regard NGOs as an equal partner for problem solving. Mechanisms for interaction between NGOs and executive authorities either exist mainly on paper or work very inefficiently. In general, officials hold disrespectful attitudes towards the civil society sector, owing partly to the weakness of civil society and partly to the arrogant ignorance of the majority of officials.*

Rosa Khatskelevitch  
Centre for the Development of Non-Governmental Organizations, Saint Petersburg

*The IMF let people know. They don't consult. They know what the answer is.*

Mostafa Waly  
Federation of Egyptian Industries, Cairo

*Our President loves civil society to the extent that it loves him and merges its programmes with his own.*

anonymous activist, Kampala

*World Bank projects in Russia do not include serious public discussion of issues or mechanisms. Usually the public becomes involved only after the major decisions have been made.*

Andrei Kortunov  
Moscow Science Foundation

*We have to change the attitudes of bureaucrats so that they also consult other groups besides business circles and technical experts.*

Somkiat Tangkitvanich  
Thailand Development Research Institute, Bangkok

*Sometimes it is convenient for the Egyptian government to have us say things that they are not diplomatically able to say.*

Nouri Hussain  
Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, Cairo

*The multilaterals think that simply calling us is enough to have consultation. We say no. We need time, we need information, we need to discuss with others.*

Vincent Edoku  
Uganda Debt Network, Kampala

and consumption lies wholly with the authorities. On the contrary, Part 5 of this report elaborates at length on the concurrent duties of civil society groups themselves. Nevertheless, official attitudes make a big difference to what civil society associations can and cannot achieve in respect of the democratization of economic globalization.

## Conditions in the Mass Media

Along with the approach of official circles, circumstances in the mass media can also significantly broaden or restrict the democratizing potentials of civil society associations in the global economy. As noted earlier, print, audio and visual journalism are now the principal sources of everyday information regarding public affairs for most citizens. As such, the mass media significantly affect whether, and how, the general populace is aware of the global economy and civil society efforts to shape it, including in more democratic directions.

Clearly, civil society activities concerning economic globalization and its governance are facilitated to the extent that citizens are aware of the issues in question. When newspapers, magazines, radio, television, CD-ROMs, etc. give high profile to matters of global production, exchange and consumption, civil society associations that deal with these problems more readily gain a larger and more informed audience. However, if mass media communications mainly ignore the global economy, the public is correspondingly less receptive to civil society initiatives on this subject. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, the principal mass media outlets in contemporary society have more often ignored than highlighted issues of economic globalization. This neglect has complicated civil society efforts to mobilize the general public on these matters.

In addition to the quantity of attention, the quality of mass media coverage of global economic problems also makes a difference to civil society work. In positive situations, print and audio-visual reports concerning global trade, migration, investment, finance and communications are clear, detailed, probing

*We invited Thai representatives at the PrepCom of the World Summit for Sustainable Development to come talk with us, but only one official came. We had to chase the others down the corridors.*

Chanida Chanyapate Bamford  
Focus on the Global South, Bangkok

*It is important for us to work on the media. The normal news comes from big business and the state. It dominates people's perspectives and controls people's minds.*

Kaninka Kuankachorn  
Thai Volunteer Service, Bangkok

*Most people only think about globalization as it is presented on television. That is their only information. There is nothing from schools or popular organizations. TV dominates them, with the main channels all presenting the same thing.*

Rafael  
Homeless Workers Movement (MTST), Rio de Janeiro

*With a state-controlled media, anyone who talks about undemocratic global economic governance may find that their views are manipulated before being broadcast. I therefore prefer live interviews, where I know that my words will not be edited and manipulated.*

Gouda Abdel-Khalek  
Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University

*Most of the media in Russia needs politicians, big business or bandits to keep afloat. The media are not oriented to public opinion, but to the big bosses who pay them. The papers know whom they can and cannot criticize.*

Alexei Simonov  
Glasnost Defence Foundation, Moscow

*The Russian mass media focuses on official life rather than civil society. It was actually our great luck that the mass media ignored us in the early years. It gave us a chance to grow and develop before they could crush us. Now we are stronger and can stand on our own.*

Ludmilla Alexeeva  
Moscow Helsinki Group

and nuanced. With such help from the mass media, civil society associations can build on sound public understanding of the global economy and more easily promote a high quality of citizen involvement in its governance. In other contexts, however, mass media accounts of economic globalization are muddled, careless, superficial and sensationalized. On these occasions the mass media are sooner a hindrance than a help, and civil society groups have a job to re-educate the public from journalistic misinformation. Unfortunately, much treatment of global economic issues by the mainstream mass media has had a more dubious quality.

Moreover, mass media reporting about economic globalization has often lacked a sharp critical edge that would enhance civil society efforts to promote public debate on this subject. Indeed, much of the contemporary mass media are big businesses, many of them globally organized. Lots of publishers and broadcasters are also closely tied to governing circles. Such mass media organs have little interest in encouraging challenges to the status quo of economic globalization. To be sure, many major newspapers have published occasional feature articles that critique current workings of the global economy, including its poor democratic credentials. However, big media organs have rarely if ever adopted a persistent fundamentally critical editorial line on existing patterns of economic globalization. Meanwhile, alternative media without major commercial stakes and motivations tend to struggle at the margins in most parts of today's world, if indeed they exist at all.

Apart from coverage of the global economy in general, the quantity and quality of press treatment of civil society initiatives more specifically can also help or hinder these activities. On the positive side, public visibility through the mass media has allowed a number of civil society associations and their leading spokespersons to gain large audiences and increase their followings. In particular, newspapers and television have substantially raised the profile of the so-called 'anti-globalization movement' since the so-called 'Battle of Seattle' protests against the WTO in late 1999. In contrast, however, the World Social Forum has thus far failed to gain headlines in most of the world press, even though this initiative has attracted tens of thousands of participants for several years running. Nor have the mass media given much attention to the day-to-day work of civil society associations, that is, outside the limelight of periodic street demonstrations and 'people's summits'. To

*Many mass media in Thailand and America portray activists as terrorists, so it is hard to get people to understand and support NGOs.*

Reawadee Praserjareonsuk  
NGO Coordinating Committee on Development, Bangkok

*The editorial line in all the main Brazilian newspapers is neoliberal. Very little critique is published. It's a sort of totalitarian situation. People are not free to get good information and think critically on what is happening.*

Octávio Ianni  
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of São Paulo

*A mobilization of 10,000 people does not count if TV, radio and newspapers don't cover it.*

Suriyasai Katasila  
Campaign for Popular Democracy, Bangkok

*Brazilian civil society initiatives on the global economy – the debt plebiscite, the publication of the World Bank Country Assistance Strategy, the Social Watch report – these have not been major media stories. They have been important events for civil society circles, but not for the general public.*

Liz Leeds  
Ford Foundation, Rio de Janeiro

The success of ATTAC in stimulating public education and debate in France about economic globalization can be attributed in good part to a high media profile. Indeed, the movement was largely launched through the journal *Le Monde Diplomatique* in 1998. Ever since, ATTAC has continued to attract regular and detailed – even if often critical – coverage of its activities and proposals across print and electronic media in France.

*We work for several years to develop very solid positions, and then the press just says we are against trade and not credible. A stinkbomb gets thrown at a demonstration and our message does not penetrate to the mass of population.*

Warren Allmand  
Rights & Democracy, Montreal

this extent the mainstream press have tended to focus more on stunts and occasional violence surrounding civil society events than on the substantive issues of economic globalization that the associations wish to highlight. In addition, many journalists have oversimplified and caricatured civil society positions on the global economy, for example, by suggesting that ‘NGOs are against trade’. Hence the mere fact of mass media attention is not necessarily a plus for civil society groups; the nature of the coverage is also important.

Given the significance of the mass media in shaping images and impacts of civil society initiatives concerning economic globalization, it is vital that activists be adept at working with these circles. Most civil society practitioners would do well assiduously to cultivate contacts with the mass media, so that these channels are available to spread messages when, where and how the organization wishes. In this vein several civil society groups have held special workshops to inform journalists about the nature of their organizations and programmes. In addition, civil society associations can wherever possible support the efforts of alternative media to generate ‘engaged knowledge’ rather than ‘spectator knowledge’.

In a word, civil society bodies should aim to have the mass media work for them rather than the other way around. Regrettably, things have to date not generally happened this way. In the worst cases, it is not that the mass media protects the rights of civil society, but that civil society needs protection from the mass media.

## Political Culture

The four environmental circumstances considered so far – resource levels, networks, official positions, and mass media conditions – relate to *actor attributes*. That is, they involve characteristics that civil society associations and other players in the politics of the global economy do or do not have. The remaining two environmental influences discussed here – political culture and social hierarchies – concern *structural conditions*. These features relate to the general social order rather than to actors per se.

*Media interest in civil society is fickle and superficial.*

Françoise Saulnier  
Doctors without Borders (MSF), Paris

*We lack a media strategy. Sometimes we even forget to issue a press release.*

Chanida Chanyapate Bamford  
Focus on the Global South, Bangkok

Instituto Ethos, an NGO in São Paulo that promotes corporate social responsibility, has systematically cultivated positive media attention. It has two designated staff for contacts with the mass media and sends a monthly information circular to a hundred journalists. To promote high-quality coverage of CSR, the organization also sponsors five annual prizes for mass media reporting of the subject.

Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians and Jose Bové of the Peasant Confederation in France are examples of civil society leaders who have (with different personal styles) successfully used the mass media to advance the causes of their respective movements.

The authoritarian heritage of tsarism and communism has substantially inhibited civil society development in contemporary Russia.

*Brazil has a long tradition of patrimonialism, with an overbearing centralized state that weakens society. In the middle of the twentieth century President Vargas adopted the Italian Fascist model, where the state organized the interests of various social sectors into associations, rather than having self-generated civil society organizations.*

Carlos Afonso  
Third Sector Information Network, Rio de Janeiro

'Political culture' refers to the established ways that questions concerning the acquisition, allocation and exercise of power are handled in a given social context. For example, some countries, regions or sectors of society might have long-standing rituals of citizen mobilization and a deeply embedded democratic political culture. In such settings 'politics' by definition means striving to gain equal opportunities for all constituents to engage in free, open and responsible collective decision-taking. In contrast, other environments are utterly lacking in a democratic political culture. Needless to say, it is far easier for civil society associations to realize their democratizing potentials *vis-à-vis* the global economy in a context that is in principle sympathetic to democracy than in a non- or anti-democratic environment.

In today's world, political culture is largely a function of the type of state that has reigned over a given population. In some locations, an overbearing state has restricted the possibilities to develop an autonomous civil society. For example, in communist and fascist regimes the authorities have generally taken the lead in organizing – and closely monitoring and controlling – whatever civic associations might exist. For their part, highly centralized 'developmental states', as found in much of the contemporary South, have often looked warily upon civil society associations that emerge and operate outside official control. On the other hand, liberal states have usually treated self-generated civil society associations as a normal and expected part of politics. Even if governments in these countries have not always liked what civil society groups say and do, the political culture has enshrined the right of such associations to exist. Regional and global governance bodies that are dominated by liberal states have generally also accepted civil society activism in principle, even if these multilateral agencies have not always dealt with it comfortably in practice.

The type of state in a given context tends to relate closely to the general type of citizen in that environment. For example, some political cultures are marked by a strong tradition of citizen activism. In these situations, children may well be educated in a democratic spirit from an early age. In contrast, other political cultures are defined by deference and fear towards governing authorities. Monarchy, populism and certain religious faiths have often had these de-

*In our culture we cannot work as civil society without government, so it is better for civil society to work with government rather than oppose it. Good democracy in Egypt is civil society with government.*

Nady Kamel  
Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), Cairo

*Concerns about democracy are at the fore of French citizen action on globalization because of our French Revolutionary tradition.*

Bernard Cassen  
ATTAC France, Paris

*History of the last hundred years – the pre-colonial kingdoms, colonialism, Amin – tends to keep Ugandans quiet. We have taken structural adjustment with silence.*

Nduhukhire Owa Mataze  
Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi

*The patron-client system is strong in Thailand. We have a heritage of slavery, servitude to the nobility, and an acceptance of power from above. We had a constitution in 1932, but Thai people did not start to question politics until 1973.*

Sarawut Pratoomraj  
Coordinating Committee of Human Rights Organizations of Thailand, Bangkok

*Various mass revolts aside, 'public opinion' has not been a force of note in Russian politics. The big public debates in Russia are about art, culture and literature rather than politics. On political questions people are very dependent on opinion leaders to set their agendas. There is a strong idea that state authority should take care of the problems, not the people themselves.*

Elena Vartanova  
Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University

*In Brazil we have a tradition of populism, not social involvement. Now people are realizing that they have to participate.*

Aspásia Camargo  
International Centre for Sustainable Development, Brasília

politicizing effects in the past. More recently, a culture of consumerism and entertainment has frequently lured people – including younger generations in particular – away from active citizenship. In consumerist situations, people tend to take flight into soap operas and shopping centres rather than confront domination. Needless to say, a culture of political passivity seriously militates against civil society initiatives regarding democracy in the global economy, or indeed any other issue.

Likewise, an environment of pervasive cynicism about politics can greatly discourage citizen activism through civil society associations. It is obviously hard to mobilize people who do not believe that political action matters or that change is possible. Indeed, in contexts where citizens tend to regard all governance and business as corrupt, many people may look sceptically on the motives of civil society organizations as well, doubting that civil society could be a space where persons of integrity could pursue public interests. Needless to say, civil society activists who confront such widespread attitudes can readily become disheartened themselves.

Another problem of political culture – one that poses particular difficulties for civil society work on global issues – are nationalist, statist and territorialist mindsets. In many contexts across the contemporary world, people have deep-seated habits of conceiving of the political arena solely in terms of the territorial national state. Indeed, some political environments are marked by strong isolationist tendencies. Clearly civil society associations that work on global economic issues have greater struggles to attract attention and support to the extent that their prospective followers are not accustomed to think globally.

Of course political cultures – including their features that work against democratizing activities by civil society groups – are not fixed. Habits of oppression, deference and cynicism can be overcome. Active citizenship can be vigorously promoted. However, just as political-cultural practices have usually built up over long periods of time, so they generally do not change overnight either. The construction and maintenance of political-cultural environments in which civil society activity to democratize the global economy thrives requires patient and persistent efforts over the long term.

*There is no democratic tradition in Russia. Only a very narrow part of the population thinks of themselves as living in a democratic setting.*

Ksenia Yudaeva  
Centre for Economic and Financial Research, Moscow

*How can we motivate youth to activism? They live in a society that discourages citizen engagement. Young people regard politics as a profession and decide it is not for them.*

Philippe Herzog  
Confrontations, Paris

*Many people are willing to sacrifice their freedom in passive consumption of globalization. There is no hope for democracy if the young generation only follows consumerism.*

Pakorn Lertsatienchai  
Siam Children Play, Bangkok

*It is difficult to ask people to act out their citizenship in a situation that has never changed, where people have never had results from action.*

Sadi Baron  
Movement of Dam-Affected People (MAB), San Carlos, Brazil

*Politics in Brazil is quite isolationist, with very low world awareness. It is not easy to raise interest about things that are not happening here. Only very politicized groups follow global developments.*

Fernando Cardim  
Institute of Economics, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

*People in Uganda tend to see global issues as remote. They don't make the connections between local poverty, credit and land issues and the global economy.*

Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi  
Uganda Women's Network, Kampala

*Most people in Russia do not know anything about globalization. There is no public debate and inadequate information. The theme is only addressed in sophisticated journals and the Internet, the readers and users of which are a very small proportion of the population. Nobody is interested in enlightening*

## **Social Hierarchies**

Then there are the various social hierarchies that can stand in the way of achieving democracy through civil society. These arbitrary subordinations may relate to age, caste, class, country, culture, faith, gender, race, sexual orientation, urban/rural divides, and more. It was noted in Part 2 of this report that democratic deficits in the contemporary global economy have resulted in good part from entrenched structures of social inequality. Thus the majority of the world's people today are unable to secure much education about, involvement in, and control over governance of global production, exchange and consumption because of the accident of the social position into which they were born.

Of course, different contexts manifest structural subordinations in different ways and to different extents. For example, class relations are more fluid in some countries, regions and sectors than others. Some environments are marked by greater tolerance of cultural, religious and sexual diversity than others. However, structurally unequal opportunities – for instance, those connected with masculinism, racial discrimination and urban-centrism – can in some contexts be so pervasive and so deeply rooted as to seem almost immovable. Clearly, the intensity of structural stratification in the environment where a civil society association operates strongly affects the organization's abilities to advance democracy in the global economy.

Civil society groups can also more easily counter structural hierarchies when the surrounding environment is attuned to reducing social inequalities. In other words, if the governing authorities, mass media, schools, business sector and other actors in a given context are sensitive about structural inequalities and committed to decreasing them, then civil society efforts to combat racism, sectarianism, sexism and the like work on fertile soil and are more likely to book progress. In contrast, if the general setting is one marked by unawareness of or indifference towards arbitrary social subordinations, then equality-promoting civil society associations face a very steep uphill struggle indeed.

Heightened awareness of gender inequalities in Uganda – on the part of government, donor agencies and society at large – has created an environment where women's associations have over the past decade gained unprecedented space to work.

An environment of general religious tolerance has allowed Christian-based civil society organizations to operate without major difficulties in predominantly Buddhist Thailand.

## Conclusion

Together, circumstances related to resources, networks, official positions, the mass media, political culture and social hierarchies have enormous effects on the capacities of civil society associations to realize their potentials to increase public education, public debate, public participation, public transparency and public accountability with respect to governance of the global economy. In a word, the environment matters – hugely. In particular, we should not expect civil society organizations to deliver types and degrees of democracy that their socio-historical situations do not allow them to achieve.

This is not to suggest that civil society associations should treat their context passively and resign themselves to the limitations that environmental circumstances impose. True, external influences on civil society work may well lie beyond the control of citizen groups. However, as various points in the preceding discussion have suggested, civil society groups can confront and lessen the impacts of negative environmental conditions like resource limitations and oppressive governments. It is therefore crucial that civil society practitioners have thorough knowledge of their context, understanding both the opportunities and the obstacles for democracy that this situation presents. Such awareness helps civil society associations to promote the maximum possible democratization of economic globalization in their respective environments.

In Russia, civil society organizations generally work with few resources, little transborder or cross-sectoral collaboration, indifferent or antagonistic official circles and mass media, a political culture that makes little place for civil society, and deeply entrenched social hierarchies. In Canada, by contrast, civil society associations generally have more resources, considerable networking across borders and sectors, relatively sympathetic official policies, considerable media attention, well-established political conventions that respect civil society activity, and widespread efforts (if not always very successful) to recognize and redress structural inequalities.

## Part 5

# Realizing the Potentials: Internal Practices

Important though environmental circumstances are in enabling or constraining the democratizing potentials of civil society associations in regard to the global economy, outcomes cannot be attributed to outside forces alone. The practices of civil society organizations themselves are also important. In order for civil society associations to maximize their democratizing impacts on governance of the global economy, they need to look inside, at their own operations, as well as outside.

Questions about the democratic standards of civil society associations have increased as their visibility in and influence on contemporary governance have grown. True, many of these critiques have come from hypocritical self-interested official and business circles that seek to deflect civil society challenges to their own

conduct and power. Yet these criticisms often have considerable grounds all the same. For moral as well as practical reasons, the problems of democracy within civil society must be addressed. In particular, civil society associations often need to maintain high democratic credentials if they hope to sustain and expand their influence on governance of the global economy.

Indeed, for each of the main contributions of civil society activities to a more democratic global economy, as discussed in Part 3, there are corresponding internal democratic challenges. Thus, while civil society associations can enhance public education, they must also ensure that they are sufficiently educated themselves. While civil society groups can encourage open public debate, they must also respect differences

of opinion within their own circles and guard against cooptation by outside forces. While civil society initiatives can promote public participation, they face challenges to offer equal opportunities for all people to participate in their own activities. While civil society bodies can foster public transparency and public accountability in governance actors, they must also maximize their own visibility and answerability to constituents and the public at large.

The following pages explore these issues of civil society competence, openness, autonomy, access, transparency and accountability in turn. As in other parts of the report, this discussion combines a general analysis in the left column with related civil society testimonials and experiences from diverse contexts in the right column.

*We must have democratic ways of conducting the struggle. We cannot defer democracy until after the victory.*

Luis Bassegio  
Pastoral for Migrants, Roman Catholic Church, São Paulo

*If civil society organizations are going to deal with democracy issues, then they also have to have a self-critical reflection on how they work themselves.*

John Foster  
North-South Institute, Ottawa

*There are terrible civil society organizations just as there are terrible multinational corporations.*

Alexandr Buzgalin  
All-Russian Social Movement 'Alternatives', Moscow

*We need a democratization of civil society itself: its attitudes, its activities, its composition.*

Philippe Herzog  
Confrontations, Paris

## Competence

As indicated earlier, civil society associations can have significant democratizing effects on the global economy by enhancing public education about transworld communications, finance, investment, migration and trade. However, these potential benefits – and indeed all civil society activities regarding economic globalization – are compromised to the extent that the activists themselves are not competent to handle the issues.

To be sure, some civil society groups rank among the best sources of information and analysis on the global economy, including for governing circles. However, other associations have suffered from limited knowledge. Even relatively well-funded business forums and think tanks sometimes have only one or two staff people who are aware of the precise nature of regulations that govern global economic activities, as well as the institutional processes and deeper structural forces that produce those rules. Too many civil society associations lack a budget heading dedicated to human resource development. Moreover, civil society networks often lack good mechanisms to share what competence they do have regarding the global economy and its governance.

Of course, it is good when civil society campaigns on economic globalization have moral values, good intentions and sharp intuitions on their side. Yet these important foundations are not enough by themselves. A loose and crude analysis that is, for example, high on knee-jerk polemics and low on detailed investigation may grab public attention in the short term, but not empower people very much in the long run. Moreover, various civil society groups have lost credibility with sloppy (mis-)use of data concerning the global economy.

Some civil society groups have undertaken lengthy, patient studies of economic globalization, but others have been tempted to pursue quick publicity at the expense of careful research and reflection. Moreover, a number of activists on economic globalization issues have had short attention spans. Their interests have flitted from one issue to the next, as fashion has shifted from debt to trade, then to

*As a first step to make a democratization of globalization, civil society needs to develop knowledge and mobilize intellectual resources to produce agendas for change.*

Silvio Caccia Bava  
Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG), São Paulo

*Globalization campaigners are not very good on analytical expertise. We need more than generic slogans to understand the games that are going on. We need a real ability to engage.*

Gerry Barr  
Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Ottawa

*There is very limited professional formation in Russian civil society regarding globalization. Often the discussion is very shallow, quite empty talk, spouting ideology rather than real analysis.*

Andrei Kortunov  
Moscow Science Foundation

*Some consultations with the World Bank are quite technical. You must be acquainted with the subject so that you have something relevant to offer. Sometimes the authorities provide space for civil society input, but there is no civil society capacity to occupy it.*

Vincent Edoku  
Uganda Debt Network, Kampala

*We don't do ourselves a favour with overstated diatribes against international trade agreements. People look at you as Chicken Little or feel disempowered.*

Marc Lee  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Vancouver

*NGOs have been very badly prepared on questions of global finance. They don't know what rights to demand and what mechanisms to address. Few people really engage in a debate or say anything very concrete.*

Fernando Cardim  
Institute of Economics, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

the Tobin tax and on to intellectual property rights, etc. In consequence, these civil society groups can fail to persevere with any campaign long enough to achieve major and lasting results.

Superficial civil society activism also frequently neglects to move from purely negative protest to include positive proposal as well. To be sure, opposition and destruction of harmful arrangements is an honourable and valuable endeavour. However, proposition and reconstruction are also required. It is one thing to call for new governance arrangements for the global economy; it is another thing to work out what they should be. Sustainable civil society initiatives need positive visions with specific suggestions. To be sure, numerous groups have sought to go beyond anti-globalization to alter-globalization. The World Social Forum process illustrates these endeavours especially well. However, many other associations could give more attention to this task. Indeed, they might otherwise provoke an official and wider public backlash against the perceived 'anti-ness' of civil society.

This is not to say that civil society initiatives on the global economy need large numbers of professionals who follow the same training, develop the same analysis, and rely on the same information as the governing authorities. Of course, civil society practitioners can operate more effectively if they comprehend the jargon and the statistics that flow in official circles. Yet 'competence' does not mean that civil society activists have to purvey the same expertise as the regulators. On the contrary, as stressed before, part of the democratic value of civil society activity is to generate debate by challenging ruling orthodoxy and advancing alternative views. However, whether campaigners take a conventional or a different perspective, they do need a solid understanding of the global economy.

How can such competence be increased? Unfortunately, educational institutions offer very few courses on the global economy and its governance that are geared specifically to civil society practitioners. Learning materials are rarely addressed – as this report attempts to be – to civil society audiences. As a result, too much civil society capacity rests either on 'academic' training that does not adequately link theory with action or on 'practical' on-the-job training that does not

*A problem with most civil society organizations is that they have short breath and do not stick with an issue for the long term.*

Alaa Ezz  
Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation, Cairo

*The anti-globalization movement is always confronting. We need also to sit down and think about what is to be done.*

Kamal Abbas  
Centre for Trade Union and Workers Services, Helwan, Cairo

*Civil society has to avoid 'actionism'. We need sometimes to act less and reflect more. It is not necessary to be active every moment. Analysing, reconsidering and learning are also so important.*

Chaiwat Thirapantu  
Civicnet, Bangkok

*The danger is that, ill-informed, we could adopt positions that have negative implications for us.*

Alexsandre Bougaev  
All-Russian Confederation of Labour (VKT), Moscow

Since 1955 the labour movement in Brazil has had an Inter-Trade Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies (DIEESE) to provide campaign-related research. In addition, DIEESE has helped to organize training for labour unionists on global economic issues, especially regional and world trade arrangements and negotiations.

The Paris-based International Association of Technicians, Experts and Researchers (AITEC) gathers together professionals to investigate problems of public concern and produce study documents for social movements. Among other topics, AITEC working groups have investigated debt-reduction schemes and international financial institutions.

A Peace and Human Rights Resource Centre has been set up in Bangkok to provide civil society organizations in Thailand with more effective information gathering on globalization and other subjects.

adequately link day-to-day advocacy activities with a wider and deeper understanding of the issues.

With well-trained people, civil society associations can also build up their own research capacity on global economic issues. In-house research programmes with specially designated policy analysts can produce information and ideas that respond directly to the organization's needs. When, as is often the case, individual civil society bodies lack sufficient means to set up their own research units, they could pool resources to support joint centres. (Of course, such collaborative efforts must avoid dominance of larger over smaller partners.)

For the rest, many civil society actors could enhance their competence by collaborating more extensively than they have tended to do with academics, consultants and other specialists on the global economy. True, many scholars have unfortunately shown little inclination to contribute to civil society politics. Moreover, practitioners and researchers often think and work in quite different ways, so that dialogue between them can be problematic in some contexts. But 'doers' and 'thinkers' have cooperated very productively in numerous civil society initiatives on economic globalization. Moreover, sometimes academics can serve as effective intermediaries between other civil society groups and official circles.

In sum, if civil society associations are to be effective public educators and campaigners on economic globalization, they need to devote considerable energy to determining: precisely what is going on in the global economy; exactly what they want; and specifically what should be done to reach the desired goals.

## Open Discussion

The second main civil society contribution to a democratic global economy discussed in Part 3 – namely, the promotion of public debate – can be compromised to the extent that the associations themselves are not receptive to an

Serving as a think tank for the Roman Catholic Church, Justice and Peace in France has prepared reports on globalization, debt, trade and supranational economic institutions in response to demand from priests and lay activists to be better informed on these issues.

*We need to get knowledge of economic globalization deeper into civil society. Otherwise the brain of civil society is limited to a handful of intellectuals.*

John Dillon  
KAIROS: Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, Toronto

In the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, the Joz de Fora Federal University offers several programmes (including coverage of globalization questions) specifically designed for social movement activists. The academics involved give their teaching time voluntarily, and the university provides the facilities free of charge.

In Uganda, the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) aims to build up a team of analysts on issues such as globalization.

*Collaboration between practitioners and researchers poses very big problems of different languages and different understandings, but when it happens well it produces interesting results.*

Alexander Sungurov  
St Petersburg Center of Humanities and Political Studies 'Strategy'

*We do not have much money to send people to global meetings, but we always send different people – especially from our local members – in order to build their capacity with international experience.*

Flávia Barros  
Brazil Network on Multilateral Financial Institutions, Brasília

*We like to think of civil society as people like ourselves, but a lot of civil society are not our friends. We have to be ready to accept civil society views that are contradictory to our own.*

Warren Allmand  
Rights & Democracy, Montreal

open discussion of multiple positions. Indeed, closed minds can also undermine the capacities of civil society groups to provide well-rounded public education and inclusive public participation.

Some civil society groups concerned with issues of economic globalization have unfortunately operated with tight ideological constraints on internal debate. For example, many research institutes concerned with global finance, investment and trade have worked within the limited confines of a single academic discipline, usually Economics. Many business associations have been unwilling seriously to engage with arguments that challenge conventional understandings of the global economy. Likewise, many faith-based groups have closed their ears to views outside their own religion. Meanwhile many social movement organizations have promoted their vision of progressive change as an unchallengeable truth.

In all such cases, doctrinaire civil society actors disregard a democratic duty to hear contrary approaches and engage with adversaries in respectful debate. Of course, this obligation to dialogue ceases when opponents threaten violence. Indeed, certain ‘uncivil’ groups have gone to the extremes of inflicting physical harm and even political killings on their opponents. On the other hand, many civil society associations close their ears to alternative views well before they are in any significant danger.

A few – and happily it has been only a few – civil society contributors to this project have expressed outright fear of questioning their organization’s established views regarding the global economy. Just as some governments, political parties and firms suppress internal discord and division, some civil society associations impose a strict organizational discipline that disallows any dissent. Such intolerance not only undermines the democratic ethos. It also deprives the organization of internal debates that could generate helpful new ideas, greater clarity of vision, and increased precision of strategy.

Other civil society groups constrain internal debate more subtly. For instance, many associations have a heavily centralized leadership, where significant decisions are mostly taken within a small directorate. In this situation other staff of the organization and the membership (where the association has one) may have

*The Russian Orthodox Church can be quite closed, affirming that its vision is unique and cutting itself off from dialogue with other faiths and countries. Yet in spirit the Orthodox faith is in fact quite open.*

Georgy Tchistiakov  
Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow

*It’s unfortunate that only a small group of people have set the direction of Uganda civil society regarding the WTO. We need more inputs and a broader discussion.*

Perry Arituwa  
Uganda Joint Christian Council, Kampala

*What attracted me to ATTAC was the collection of different perspectives. All opinions are represented. There is a rich dialogue. It is very interesting.*

Claude Piganiol-Jacquet  
ATTAC-France, Women and Globalization Group, Paris

*The National Education Policy (2000) of the Central Workers Union (CUT) in Brazil holds that its learning programmes ‘should stimulate the debate among several opinions ... so that the different conceptions appear, get to know each other, face each other and search union elements’.*

*Our organization has lots of diversity: political scientists, lawyers, anti-poverty workers, trade unionists. We come at issues from different perspectives. There is lots of scope for debate within our broadly shared priorities. We don’t have a party line.*

Marc Lee  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Vancouver

*The 52-person directorate of the National Union of Students in Brazil includes representatives of all political streams. Seven main groups and various fractions within them make 20-25 groups in all.*

Felipe Maia  
National Union of Students (UNE), Brasilia

*The Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies sends invitations to its conferences based on quotas to ensure that different political perspectives are represented.*

little opportunity to advance contrary views and proposals. Indeed, many if not most civil society leaders do not regularly and proactively invite their followers to critique their positions. Many a local branch finds that their civil society organization has few if any real channels for bottom-up initiatives. Likewise, more powerful groups within a civil society coalition may – inadvertently or deliberately – marginalize views from the smaller partners.

Overcoming problems with openness to debate within civil society circles is partly a question of attitude. Associations can accept and indeed positively encourage discussion of multiple views, both within the group itself and with outside parties. Indeed, if handled constructively, internal disagreement can generate more rather than less solidarity in a civil society organization. Unity in diversity arguably can yield the greatest and most sustainable strength.

Along with nurturing attitudes that support debate, civil society associations can also take concrete measures to promote pluralism. For example, some groups have deliberately sought to have different political streams represented on their governing council. Many civil society organizers make sure to invite people with contending viewpoints to their meetings. As a further way to broaden perspectives, numerous organizations have also actively pursued cross-sectoral dialogues within civil society – for example, between academic, business, labour, NGO and religious groups.

Of course, such initiatives should not aim to paper over differences and create artificial consensus. That again would dampen rather than enrich debate. However, respectful discussion of rival visions in civil society – conversations held in a spirit of listening and learning – can help all parties better understand themselves as well as others.

## **Autonomy**

Another problem that can compromise civil society potentials to advance

Conference panels are also composed on this principle of generating discussions between contending views.

*When I develop a policy for our organization I invite members to give input and critique the proposals.*

Reawadee Praserjareonsuk  
NGO Coordinating Committee on Development, Bangkok

*We want space to cooperate with others. Muslims have something to tell the world, in a spirit of mutual respect and for the benefit of humanity.*

Muhammad Abdul Halim Umar  
Centre for Islamic Economics, Al-Azhar University, Cairo

*In order to get a plurality of views we include supporters of various political parties (conservative, liberal, social democrat) on our board.*

Shauna Sylvester  
Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS), Vancouver

*Our organization is a meeting ground for business, trade unions, NGOs and government. It is a place where the Landless Peasants Movement (MST) can talk to McDonald's.*

Marcelo Linguitte  
Instituto Ethos, São Paulo

*The deal is that we stop the protests and they will open the dialogue.*

Nicola Bullard  
Focus on the Global South, Bangkok

*Civil society in Russia is dependent. We prefer not to risk offending our state and our employer.*

Yuri Milovidov  
Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), Moscow

democracy in the global economy is cooptation. An association may, to one degree or another, be captured by special interests that dictate its priorities, analyses, proposals and activities. To be sure, no political actor can hold total independence from all external influences. People are invariably part of and reliant upon a larger social whole beyond civil society. However, many civil society groups to a significant extent become tools – willing or not, witting or not – of other forces.

The greater the autonomy of a civil society organization from centres of power, the more it can stimulate public debate without constraint. The greater the independence of a civil society group, the more it can demand public accountability without fear of reprisal. Conversely, the more an association is coopted, the more it is restrained from voicing certain views and holding the powerful to account, so limiting its democratizing effects.

Cooptation of civil society can occur in relation to actors as well as to deeper social structures. In terms of actors, civil society associations can become tools of other more powerful players in politics. For instance, a civil society group may fall under the control of a governance body, a political party, a firm, a foundation, a family, a powerful individual, or some other agent. With actor cooptation, civil society organizations are subordinate to, and liable to manipulation by, other (often undemocratic) bodies.

In terms of structures, civil society activities can – even contrary to their intentions – advance the specific interests and dominance of, for example, the North, capitalism, westernism, masculinism, racism, urbanism, etc. With structural cooptation, civil society associations become uncritical – perhaps even unknowing – agents of ‘the system’, including its less democratic aspects. Cooptation by actors and structures can happen concurrently, of course.

Losses of autonomy by civil society groups can be blatant as well as subtle. Cooptation is obvious when other parties intervene in the operations of a civil society association with bribes or imposed staff appointments. On other occasions civil society actors surrender their independence more tacitly, including through self-censorship (some of it even unconscious) that diminishes or abandons

*We cannot afford the luxury of making explicit political comments about how donors like the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Bank work.*

Mario de Mello Dias  
Brazilian Foundation for the Conservation of Nature, Rio de Janeiro

*You have to be careful about the politics. If you express criticism of globalization, you fear that funders will stop their support.*

Delius Asimwe  
Makerere Institute of Social Research, Kampala

*Our main trade union is not a real trade union. It is a Soviet inheritance that is organized to support government and control workers.*

Ludmilla Alexeeva  
Moscow Helsinki Group

Business associations with concerns about the global economy have often had notable state involvement. In Egypt, for example, the Minister of Trade appoints the head of the General Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce as well as six positions on its 34-member Board. Similarly, in Thailand, the Federation of Thai Industries stands under the supervision of the Minister of Industry. In Russia, half of the executive board of the Moscow International Business Association comes from government. In Brazil, government funds the main business associations.

*Large-scale government funding of civil society organizations in Canada makes us different from the USA and Europe. Even the international programmes of trade unions get government money. Dependency on government funding encourages a culture of politeness.*

Diana Bronson  
Rights & Democracy, Montreal

*The Thai Government has tried to organize ‘civil society’ into ‘Civic Forums’ across the country. In some ways this is hardly different from the communist system, where everything is brought under state control.*

Amara Pongsapich  
Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

criticisms of authorities and/or reigning social structures.

Many concerns about cooptation involve the relations between civil society groups and governance bodies. With official capture, civil society associations become docile servants of governance agencies at state, suprastate and/or substate levels. Such ‘civil society’ can be used to rally support, especially for unpopular public policies. In this vein governance bodies have sometimes themselves formed civil society associations – on the authorities’ terms, of course. Examples include state-created business forums and trade unions; think tanks established largely on the instigation of multilateral economic institutions like the World Bank; and government-organized NGOs (so-called GONGOS). In such bodies, appointees of governance agencies may occupy *ex officio* seats on the board of the civil society organization, so making the authorities’ presence directly felt. In addition, states and other regulatory bodies may finance civil society bodies: for example, with core grants, contracted project work, special tax and fee exemptions, or funds to attend official meetings. Governance agencies may sometimes also offer employment (with enticing pay and benefits) to civil society figures, so that activists ‘cross over’ to the official sector, either temporarily or permanently. Here ‘NGO’ comes to mean ‘Next Government Official’. Questions of cooptation can also arise when civil society representatives accept invitations to join official delegations to multilateral conferences or even to hold consultations with official policymakers. For example, sometimes ‘dialogue’ with officials can have the effect of defusing a conflict without addressing the issues that give rise to the discord. More subtly, civil society associations may adopt official discourses in the hope of gaining more attention and respect from governance bodies. Equally, of course, regulatory authorities may capture critical vocabulary from civil society circles and neutralize its transformative potential. Such has arguably been the fate of notions like ‘sustainable development’, ‘ownership’, and indeed the very ideas (interpreted in certain ways) of ‘governance’ and ‘civil society’.

Similar issues of cooptation can arise in relations between civil society associations and political parties, the more so when the party in question holds state power. Citizen organizations attached to communist and fascist parties provide prominent examples of this kind of dependence. Trade union connections with social-democratic parties can slip into cooptation by ruling elites as well. In

*There is a marriage between Transparency International and the World Bank. Leading TI figures are former Bank officials. For TI the World Bank is not a target, but a partner.*

Wafula Oguttu  
Transparency Uganda, Kampala

*Too many NGOs take an instrumental approach to the IFIs, aiming to access funds, which compromises their critical role.*

Jorge Durão  
Association of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE)  
Rio de Janeiro

*Government together with the World Bank invite you 3-4 times and you begin to think you had better keep quiet. People know that three-quarters of their money comes from government. Do you shoot down government and lose your funds? No, you go to many meetings and you become buddies.*

Nakanyike B. Musisi  
Makerere Institute of Social Research, Kampala

*Donors are very selective in the issues that they support. We have to respond to their interests in order to survive.*

Rungtip Imrungruang  
Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Bangkok

*In Uganda many parliamentarians have an NGO as a way of mobilizing support in their constituency.*

Nyangabyaki Bazaara  
Centre for Basic Research, Kampala

In Brazil, the General Workers Central (CGT) and the Syndicalist Force (FS) were created largely on the initiative of employers. In Russia, the All-Russian Confederation of Labour (VKT) has its headquarters in the offices of the company from which it draws most of its members.

*When Northern NGOs get money from transnational corporations they begin to see the positive possibilities of compromise and reform.*

Reawadee Prasertjareonsuk  
NGO Coordinating Committee on Development, Bangkok

other situations individual politicians have set up civil society bodies as fronts to serve their personal ambitions, even to the extent of buying votes.

Cooptation can also transpire in civil society relations with market agents. Companies may establish, supervise, fund or otherwise influence and control civil society associations. These constraints on autonomy are especially evident in relation to business forums, many of which serve primarily as lobbies for corporate special interests rather than the wider public good. In addition, a number of NGOs and think tanks are heavily dependent upon business sponsors. Even some trade unions are largely creations of employers rather than workers.

Private benefactors, too, can have coopting influences on civil society actors. Philanthropic foundations and wealthy individuals may – both bluntly and subtly – shape the agendas and tactics of civil society initiatives so that the associations bolster rather than challenge those in power. Critical questions can of course be asked in this sense regarding the independence of the present foundation-supported project and report!

In addition to cooptation of civil society associations by other actors, there is also cooptation by prevailing social structures. Such capture by ‘the system’ can occur even in civil society groups that have no particular dependence on state or market agents. Sometimes this loss of autonomy happens quite unintentionally and unconsciously.

For example, even civil society organizations that operate autonomously from capitalist governance and business bodies can still be cogs in a capitalist system. After all, much of contemporary civil society is a money-spinning industry, with substantial funds to create jobs, hold conferences, write reports, supply welfare services, and so on. Even when civil society efforts like development cooperation programmes and human rights campaigns get their funds from public contributions and voice an explicit attack on imperialism, they may still subtly and unknowingly help to sustain that undemocratic situation. For instance, some humanitarian relief activities may redirect energies from critiquing capitalism to repairing it.

*Our board is made up entirely of corporate people, but I told them from the start that we would say things that will hurt them. They have been living with that for five years and have not once asked for the Centre to promote their private interests.*

Ahmad Galal  
Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies, Cairo

*It is simple to integrate some parts of international civil society into global capitalism and destroy them as an alternative force.*

Alexandr Buzgalin  
All-Russian Social Movement ‘Alternatives’, Moscow

*NGOs can also be party to processes that create a simulacra of democracy, such as the whole cycle of UN social conferences, which have had dubious effectiveness.*

Jorge Durão  
Association of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE)  
Rio de Janeiro

*It is important for Russian civil society organizations to become more rooted in the Russian population. We are often accused of being spies financed by foreign money.*

Evgeny A. Shvarts  
WWF-Russia, Moscow

*The Quebec government provided two-thirds of the funds for the People’s Summit alongside the official hemispheric meeting in April 2001. That’s in the Canadian tradition of the state facilitating civil society development. It’s not cooptation, though. Look at the demands that came out of the People’s Summit.*

Jessie Smith  
Real Alternatives Information Network, Vancouver

*Does global civil society tame capitalism, or does global capitalism use civil society to its own benefit?*

Heba Nassar  
Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University

Similar dynamics may unfold in relation to the other undemocratic structures described in Part 2 of this report. Thus even South-based civil society associations may in practice reinforce structures of Northern dominance, for example, through their funding arrangements. Even civil society critics of Northern and capitalist primacy in today's global economy may serve as agents of western cultural dominance. As the discussion of access in the next section elaborates, civil society associations can also become tools of male, urban, white, heterosexual domination. In these situations, too, cooptation into prevailing social structures limits the degree that civil society groups generate public debate and public participation.

To be sure, questions of autonomy and cooptation are often more complicated and nuanced than the preceding stark characterizations suggest. For example, are government funds necessarily tainted if they come from the taxpaying public of a democratic state? Might private donors support opposition groups in civil society without strings attached, on the ethical conviction that dissent is essential for a healthy democracy? Is it not possible to work *with* the authorities without becoming *of* the authorities? Is compromise always cooptation? Might the mission of a civil society group actually oblige the association in some situations to take sides in party politics and/or to encourage its leaders and staff to take official appointments? In any case, should a distinction be made between the political alignments and choices of individuals in a civil society organization and the autonomy of the organization itself?

As already noted, complete autonomy is almost never available to a civil society group. The vast majority of associations have high dependence on actors outside civil society for their legal recognition, their resources and their reputation. In addition, just about all civil society bodies operate substantially within existing social structures, however reluctantly they might use, say, capitalist global finance or westernist global communications technologies. Groups that pursue total self-sufficiency and absolutely defy all prevailing power relations in the global economy have not generally lasted long or made much impact. The issue for civil society associations is therefore not to chase a mirage of total independence, but to maximize autonomy.

*It is better to work with government than to fight it. The point is not to cross government's red line and have them push you back. Rather, you push government to redraw the line and give you more space.*

Alaa Ezz  
Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation, Cairo

*Some people say it is not healthy to be too friendly with official circles and forget the real issues. My view is that we have to use the available spaces. You go into the discussions with a concrete point of view that arises out of pre-negotiation in civil society. Cooptation happens when you are not sure of your position and have not done your homework. Then you can be swayed.*

Jane Nalunga  
Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations, Kampala

*In Egyptian civil society you have to make concessions to be heard by government. At the same time it is difficult to be seen to represent civil society when you work closely with government. Advocates in civil society face a difficult negotiation between independence (where they will have no influence) and government control.*

Bassma Kodmani  
Ford Foundation, Cairo

*Civil society groups can take money from government so long as they stay true to their own objectives and have lots of leeway in how they execute the project.*

Suthy Prasartset  
Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

*It is a key democratic challenge for civil society: how far to build bridges with political parties and governments, and of what kind.*

Kjeld Jakobsen  
Central Workers Union (CUT), São Paulo

*Civil society organizations can work with government, but we have separate responsibilities. We have to decide when, where and how far to collaborate.*

Jackie Asiimwe-Mwesige  
Uganda Women's Network, Kampala

Four general suggestions can be made to this end. The first is critical self-awareness. Autonomy is promoted when a civil society body continually considers what interests its partners represent and what influences they exert on the association's aims and activities. More autonomous civil society groups are usually those that are highly alert to problems of cooptation. Such organizations carefully think through the implications of their alignments: both whom they support and from whom they accept support. Whenever such civil society associations decide to back and/or receive backing from a given political party, governance agency, business player or foundation, they remain a *critical* friend and always retain the option to break links if the relationship unacceptably compromises their mission and autonomy.

A second tactic for maximizing autonomy is advance strategic planning. Civil society groups are generally more able to retain control over their agenda if they have precisely mapped their goals and activities ahead of making approaches to prospective funders for support. Organizations that lack a clearly and firmly established vision are more likely to be swayed by donor preferences.

Third, a civil society association can advance its autonomy by obtaining resources from multiple and diverse sources, in order that it becomes hostage to none. As much as possible, it might seek to obtain core funds and contributions in kind from a large membership. Where the nature of the civil society group's work or the poverty of its constituents preclude a significant membership base, the association can bolster its autonomy by spreading funding among multiple donors. Where possible, the association can pursue self-funding with non-profit income generation, for example, through conferences, publications sales, and 'social business' such as fair trade schemes.

Fourth, civil society groups engaged with global economic issues can promote their autonomy by continually adjusting their agendas and discourses so that they keep critical distance from official priorities and languages. This is not to advocate any and all opposition for its own sake. However, civil society associations can work to counter the widespread tendencies of governing authorities in the global economy to attempt to reduce dissent with lip service to critics.

Vigilance against cooptation paid off in the case of the Civil Society Forum in Moscow in November 2001. The Presidential Administration initiated and paid for this event and at first intended that the meeting should endorse the establishment of a government body to oversee civil society. However, several human rights associations led a determined resistance to this plan, which the government dropped, and in the end one of the civil society rebels co-chaired the opening plenary with President Putin.

*We tailor our own agenda and then go shopping to funders. It takes a lot of doing, but then funders come to your priorities rather than the other way around.*

Amal Sabri  
Association for Health and Environmental Development, Cairo

The Toronto-based Maquila Solidarity Network has spread its funding across a number of trade unions, eleven religious organizations, five foundations and several NGOs. In Cairo, the Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation has insisted on having 10-12 different donors for each of its activities in order to prevent control by any single benefactor. The Moscow-based Interrepublican Confederation of Consumers Societies (KonfOP) has taken no money from business circles and gets its resources from a mix of membership dues, grants, magazine sales, and legal fees. In Bangkok, Focus on the Global South has made sure to have varied donors – twenty as of mid-2002 – in order to retain its policy independence.

## Access

Along with issues of competence, open debate and autonomy, a democratic civil society association must also address questions of access. How far is civil society a political space where all citizens have equal possibilities to engage problems of economic globalization? Or are opportunities for involvement in civil society limited and uneven, especially in favour of people from privileged social groups? Who does, and does not, get to participate in civil society activity concerning the global economy?

As seen in Part 2 of this report, structural social hierarchies constitute a principal source of democratic deficits in the contemporary global economy. As suggested in Part 3, civil society activities can promote democracy by advancing public participation in governance of global communications, finance, investment, migration and trade. However, as noted in Part 4, these efforts can be complicated when structural subordinations are especially intense in a given environment and when other actors like government and the mass media are not committed to reducing them.

In addition, this democratizing potential of citizen action concerning the global economy can be compromised to the extent that civil society itself is not a level playing field. Indeed, individual civil society associations, as well as civil society as a whole, can mirror, perpetuate, and sometimes actually exacerbate the structural inequalities that mark the contemporary global economy. Clearly it is difficult – and certainly inconsistent – for civil society groups to address structural democratic deficits in the global economy if their own activities reproduce those social hierarchies.

Unequal access to civil society is manifested in various ways. For example, people from certain social groups can tend to have more opportunities than others to become members, employees, leaders and funders of civil society associations. Persons from some social categories can gain greater – often far greater – access to the resources needed for effective civil society action on the global economy. That is, they obtain more education, money, advanced information and

*Civil society has lots of organizers, but they do not necessarily represent a lot of people.*

Fred Guweddeke  
Makerere Institute of Social Research, Kampala

*The credibility of citizen movements depends on the extent to which they have real participatory decision-making in their own organizations. This poses a constant challenge.*

Tony Clarke  
Polaris Institute, Ottawa

*In Thailand the subordinated people normally have no right to be a stakeholder who participates in solving their own problems.*

Supensri Pungkoksung  
Friends of Women, Bangkok

*The most excluded are not directly represented in civil society. It is always someone else who represents them.*

Benedicte Hermelin  
Solagrall, Paris

*Ideally civil society is a place where everyone participates, but it is not happening now.*

Sungee John  
National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Windsor

*The profile of civil society in Russia, as in the majority of other countries, does not reflect that of the general population. Today the social basis of the majority of associations is the urban intelligentsia - quasi-middle class of Soviet times.*

Evgeny Shvarts  
WWF Russia, Moscow

*The Internet is a big breakthrough for citizen information, but there are no more than two million users in Russia, and as a rule they are people who already understand the situation.*

Yuri Vdovin  
Citizens' Watch, Saint Petersburg

communications technologies, media attention, travel, workspace, etc. Discrimination – both overt and subtle, both deliberate and unintended – has the result that some individuals gain greater weight in civil society than others with similar personal merits, in terms of setting agendas, formulating strategies, determining tactics, implementing programmes, and evaluating results. These hierarchies of social power within civil society frequently parallel structural subordinations in the global economy at large, of the kinds described in Part 2.

For example, civil society activity concerning economic globalization has often replicated North-South hierarchies of power. On the whole, the strongest civil society associations working on the global economy have been based in North America and Western Europe. Of course, many civil society groups in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Pacific have made notable contributions to the politics of economic globalization. However, even the best-resourced civil society associations in the South have usually not matched North-based academic, business, NGO, labour, professional and religious bodies. Northern elements have also generally held dominant positions in transborder civil society organizations and networks. In consequence, Southern civil society associations have often adopted Northern agendas and activities, also when the issues concerned were not the highest priorities for the Southern ‘partners’. In this respect, harsher critics have dismissed so-called ‘global civil society’ as a neocolonial affair. It is certainly plain that civil society has not been a place of North-South equality, including for associations that have proclaimed such equality as their goal. On the contrary, thus far, civil society activity regarding economic globalization has on the whole sooner perpetuated and perhaps even enlarged North-South gaps.

Further uneven access to civil society engagement of global economic issues has prevailed on geographical lines within countries. For example, in most cases this activity has been heavily concentrated in the national capital and perhaps one or two other major cities. More generally, too, urban residents have had easier access to civil society programmes concerning economic globalization than rural dwellers. Even in the minority of cases where civil society organizations have local chapters scattered across a country, these branches often have little entry to or influence over the head office. Meanwhile regional power differences within

*If we go to see the President, it is better to bring along the muzungu [white] foreign investors. Then he listens more.*

William Kalema  
Uganda Manufacturers Association, Kampala

*We have only incidental relations with farmers associations in developing countries. Our international links are with the EU, North America and Australia/New Zealand.*

Joseph Garnotel  
National Federation of Agricultural Unions (FNSEA), Paris

*The ICFTU is very Euro-centric and dominated by US-UK. Most of the proposals, visions, and ideas come with an industrialized country perspective. Other countries and different trade union traditions need to be better represented.*

Composite view taken from the Central Workers Union (CUT) in Brazil, the French Democratic Labour Confederation (CFDT), the All-Russian Confederation of Labour (VKT) and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR)

In Uganda a think tank like the Economic Policy Research Centre and a business association like the Uganda Manufacturers Association cannot compare in resources and influence to counterparts in the North.

*Development activists from industrialized countries must go beyond patronizing, emotional or token gestures and commit themselves to build effective partnerships with people in the South. In order to effect change, the need for mutual sharing of intellectual and financial resources as well as policy and advocacy strategies is crucial.*

Iris Almeida  
Rights & Democracy, Montreal

Capitals like Cairo, Paris, Moscow, Bangkok and Kampala have dominated the civil society scene in their respective countries. Indeed, locals often refer to Cairo as ‘Egypt’. Brazil and Canada have several focal points for civil society activity regarding the global economy, though all of these sites are major urban centres.

countries have meant that, for instance, Upper Egypt has been marginalized in civil society activity on global issues relative to Lower Egypt. Likewise, the western provinces of Canada have had less say relative to the eastern provinces, and the southern states of Brazil have figured more strongly as centres of civil society than the north and northeast.

Other discrimination in civil society activity on the global economy has followed class lines. To be sure, a number of social movements that address transworld economic issues have drawn their leaders and followings mainly from underclasses like fisherfolk, peasants, low-paid workers, and slum dwellers. However, elite circles have generally dominated those elements of civil society (such as business forums and think tanks) that have the largest resources and the highest access to governance circles in the global economy. Moreover, associations of big business have normally had decidedly greater access to multilateral trade negotiations than groups representing small business. For their part, bankers associations and economic research institutes have enjoyed privileged access to institutions governing global finance. Many NGOs, too, have drawn most of their personnel and members from elite quarters. Indeed, NGO jobs can be highly coveted in poor countries, where a small privileged layer of the population has often obtained the largest share of NGO funding. Meanwhile the mainstream trade union movement has mainly represented a relatively privileged 'labour aristocracy' of formal, permanent, full-time employees rather than more vulnerable circles like home workers, domestics, migrants, part-timers, sex workers, self-employed street traders, and the long-term unemployed. In short, although many contemporary civil society associations talk of involving 'the base', 'the grassroots', 'popular organizations' and 'local communities', actual opportunities for underclasses to participate in these movements have often been severely limited. Indeed, many among the 'caviar left' in civil society have maintained scarcely disguised disdain for purportedly 'uneducated' and 'irrational' 'lower' classes.

Civilizational structures of dominance have also marked much civil society activity on economic globalization. In civil society, as in the overall global economy, Western Judeo-Christian cultural frameworks have generally prevailed over other social orders. The Muslim Brothers in Egypt and the Buddhist-inspired

*Russia lacks mechanisms for participation by civil society organizations from the regions at the federal level. As a result, certain NGOs in Moscow are trying to represent the interests of the whole NGO sector, to control all public institutions, and to receive all the resources.*

Staff of the Siberian Civic Initiatives Support Center, Novosibirsk

In spite of an emphasis on developing local activism, the leadership of groups in France like ATTAC, the Centre of Research and Information on Development, Greenpeace and Survie remains highly centralized in Paris.

*NGOs tend to be middle-class professionals who speak for a grassroots reality that is not theirs. The World Social Forum is very important for world elite networks, but I don't see the links to the realities of the excluded.*

Amelia Cohn

Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, São Paulo

*Within civil society poor people are seen as weak. Drag us in when you need to look good in the photo opportunity, but otherwise we're sidelined.*

Josephine Grey

Low Income Families Together, Toronto

*As a farmer no one takes you seriously. Society perceives us as a joke. Why would we be interested in the IMF? Why would we get involved in a world movement?*

Veerapon Sopa

People's Network against Globalization, Thailand

*There is an uncontrollable bad filtering going on in Egyptian NGOs. You need to know English, have computer skills and a good educational background to get a position.*

Yousri Mustafa

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

*The language that ATTAC uses is not adapted to popular classes.*

Dominique Plihon  
ATTAC-France, Paris

Spiritual Education Movement in Thailand are exceptions that demonstrate the rule. Likewise, African and Eastern Orthodox civilizations have found limited expression and influence in civil society engagement of global economic issues in Uganda and Russia, respectively. Meanwhile indigenous peoples have had only marginal involvement in civil society activities in Brazil and Canada concerning the global economy. Instead, across the world, civil society associations addressing economic globalization have overwhelmingly approached the issues with western, modernist, rationalist knowledge. Nor have people in this mainstream generally had much understanding of, or made much time for, other worldviews. In addition, civil society activists with fluency in languages of western origin, especially English, have usually had much greater opportunities to influence economic globalization than those who use other languages. When it comes to engaging the institutions that govern global production, exchange and consumption, civil society actors who are versed in technical economics have generally obtained more hearing than people with other kinds of expertise.

Civil society activism regarding economic globalization has also tended to replicate the gender inequalities of world politics as a whole. To be sure, large numbers of women have participated in civil society activities concerning the global economy, particularly in the ranks of NGOs and social movements. In exceptional cases, like the NGO sector in Canada, broad gender equality has also prevailed in the leadership of civil society work on economic globalization. However, on the whole men have held the reins in this sphere. For example, women have generally exercised quite limited influence in business forums, labour organizations, religious bodies and research institutes that address global economic issues. Across all of civil society, men have figured disproportionately on the boards, executives, delegations and professional staff of organizations, while women have provided the bulk of administrative support. Needless to say, women with disadvantaged class, racial, age, rural and/or South-based positions have faced greater marginalization in civil society than elite, white, middle-aged, urban, Northern women. However, gender subordination has meant that, structurally, women have had less access and influence in civil society engagement of economic globalization issues than men with an otherwise similar social profile.

*Feminists in the West often harp on the wrong chords and do us as women in Egypt a great disfavour.*

Heba Handoussa  
Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey, Cairo

*How can the Malbree people, indigenous nomads in the north of Thailand, be involved? It is very difficult to understand their suffering, and we have no system to address their needs.*

Surichai Wun' Gao  
Campaign for Popular Democracy, Bangkok  
*Civil society work on global education has been dominated by Anglophones. It is necessary to have a Francophone counterbalance.*

Jean St-Denis  
Unions Central of Quebec (CSQ), Montreal

*Does everyone speak English? Do you have to speak English to go throughout the world?*

Tem Tarat  
Assembly of the Poor, Mae Mun Man Yuan Village, Thailand

*Men take the decisions in civil society and leave women in a supporting role of cooking and childcare. Women activists who attend late meetings get negative gossip from the neighbours about being a poor mother or having an extramarital affair. Women in civil society have to be strong and tolerate a lot of criticism from their husbands, families and neighbours.*

Supensri Pungkoksung  
Friends of Women, Bangkok

As its explicitly gendered name suggests, the Muslim Brothers in Egypt include no women delegates in either their 300-member representative assembly or their 20-member guidance bureau. Men even supervise the women's sections of the organization. Indeed, taking civil society in Egypt as a whole, no association has a female leadership unless it is specifically geared to women's issues.

*Men talk big about gender equality, but they won't give up their position to a woman, that is clear.*

Benedicte Hermelin  
Solagrail, Paris

Racial subordination in civil society activism on global economic issues has generally gained less attention than gender discrimination, but it has been no less substantial for that. The relative absence of people of colour in citizen campaigns on global trade, finance, etc. has been striking in countries with multiracial populaces like Brazil, Canada and France. First-generation immigrants and other diaspora groups from the South have been particularly invisible in movements in the North regarding economic globalization. At least one author has been prompted to ask, ‘Where Was the Color in Seattle? Why was the Great Battle [against the WTO] so White?’ Certainly participation in – let alone leadership of – civil society activity on the global economy has not reflected the racial composition of national and world populations, and various activists from subordinated racial groups have argued that race discrimination has operated in civil society no less than in society at large.

With regard to age group, civil society involvement with economic globalization has on the whole had disproportionate inputs and leadership from the generation between 40 and 60 years. True, student and other youth circles have sometimes played a prominent part in civil society initiatives on the global economy, like street protests in the North concerning the G7, IMF, World Bank and WTO. Even in these contexts, however, the younger generation has often complained of domination of the activities by middle-aged leaders. Indeed, veteran civil society professionals have frequently regarded youth mainly as a source of numbers and/or low-paid and voluntary labour, rather than as serious colleagues and potentially equal contributors. Much of civil society faces major challenges to offer youth participation, influence and a sense of belonging. Meanwhile, the subordination of the elderly in civil society has been such that not a single person in the more than two hundred discussions for this project mentioned the older generation as a distinctive group with its own particular stakes in the global economy, for instance, in terms of pension payments and care services. Likewise, very few civil society associations have taken any steps to incorporate the views of children into their work on economic globalization.

The list of marginalized groups can be further lengthened to include the bodily disabled, sexual minorities and more. Indeed, no civil society groups in the seven countries covered in this project have advocated for the specific interests in

*Over two-fifths of delegates to the 2002 World Social Forum were women, but many panels had no women on the podium.*

Nancy Burrows  
World March of Women, Montreal

*White domination of the anti-globalization movement is a real problem. Unfortunately we do not yet have cross-racial solidarity. Leaders in the movement have to show racially dominated people that they are welcome.*

Mouloud Aounit  
Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples (MRAP), Paris

*Much as civil society may talk about inclusiveness and non-discrimination, at the international level it is predominantly white.*

Joe Oloka-Onyango  
Faculty of Law, Makerere University, Kampala

*The CUT Commission on Racial Discrimination has been unable to get funds for a secretariat so that we can pursue our agenda more fully. In the last CUT national congress we were given the floor for only three minutes.*

Isabel Christina Costa Baltazar  
Central Workers Union (CUT), Rio de Janeiro

*Older generations should not judge youth on their standards of what is productive for society. They assume we are passive in an age of globalization, but we can be active. We can take in the trends and cultures of globalization in ways that older people cannot.*

Chanchai Chaisuk Kosol  
Siam Children Play, Bangkok

*The first World Social Forum in 2001 gave lots of lip service to youth, but there was no one under 40 on the podium.*

Patty Barrera  
Common Frontiers, Toronto

In an exceptional case of ‘grey power’ on globalization issues, the older generation has contributed the majority of activists in the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand.

economic globalization of the disabled (e.g. in relation to social welfare expenditure) or sexual minorities (e.g. in relation to gay migration).

Taking all of these discriminations in sum, civil society involvement in economic globalization is seen to have been heavily structured along all the lines of subordination that mark contemporary social relations more generally. When civil society gives voice in governance of the global economy to ‘the people’, some parts of the people have had greater voice than others. In the worst cases, civil society groups can actively obstruct participation of the subordinated people whose interests they claim to promote. At other times the marginalization is subtle, perhaps to the point of being unnoticed by the civil society players themselves. On these occasions even well-meant civil society activity can unintentionally add to the country, region, class, civilization, gender, race, age, and other hierarchies that have skewed opportunities for participation in the global economy.

So what might be done to counter social hierarchies in civil society activity concerning economic globalization? To be sure, problems of uneven access in civil society should not distract attention away from discrimination against subordinated groups in the global economy at large. However, civil society associations are unlikely to advance equality in that broader arena very successfully if they do not at the same time promote equality inside their own ranks.

A first general suggestion would be for civil society organizations to conduct continual self-critical appraisals regarding access to their activities. Greater equality of opportunity to participate is more likely to be achieved to the extent that existing inequalities are openly recognized and frankly discussed. For instance, each meeting and each initiative in civil society work on the global economy warrants the opening question: who is missing? In addition, every association could do well to assign a given board member, a senior staff officer and/or an internal committee with responsibility to monitor and report on the association’s performance regarding access issues. The organization might also include social profiles of its executives, personnel and members in its reports to stakeholders, with statistics related to age, gender, etc. Uncomfortable though

The Foundation for Child Development in Thailand and Save the Children in Uganda are rare in involving children themselves in the design and evaluation of their projects on child labour.

*The sexual minorities movement supports the global democracy movement, but the global democracy movement has made little space for lesbian and gay issues.*

Sylvia Borren  
NOVIB (Oxfam Netherlands), The Hague

*It is important that NGOs and people’s organizations do not always put forward the same spokesperson, no matter how charismatic that individual might be. People begin to wonder whether this person really represents the whole of the association. If the point is to empower the grassroots, then let them speak.*

Prasong Lertratanawisute  
Thai Association of Journalists, Bangkok

*Yes to inclusion and participation, but you can get so worried about these issues that no decisions ever get taken.*

Robin Round  
Halifax Initiative, Whitehorse

*How can we be inclusive in the construction of a democratic global public space? It is a real problem.*

Christophe Aguiton  
ATTAC-France, Paris

*The consumer movement cannot work only for the middle class. We must also work for people who cannot afford to become members.*

Marilena Lazzarini  
Institute for the Defence of the Consumer (IDEC), São Paulo

The Soviet past notwithstanding, issues of equal opportunity are rarely discussed in most contemporary civil society associations in Russia.

such self-scrutiny may be, civil society groups can in this way systematically sensitize themselves to any social discriminations in their own midst. Of course, honest self-reflection and well-intentioned determination to improve access are not by themselves sufficient to achieve a level playing field in civil society work on economic globalization. However, gaps in opportunities for participation in civil society are unlikely to narrow if questions of improved access are not permanently and prominently on every group's agenda.

A second broad way that peripheral circles can gain better access to civil society activity concerning the global economy is to have associations (or sections within larger organizations) that are specially geared to such groups. Thus Southern voices are often likely to obtain more hearing through South-based civil society associations. Underclasses are likely to gain greater participation in social movements that highlight their needs. Faith-centred organizations and other culturally focused bodies can offer places where marginalized understandings of the global economy get more audience. Similarly, women's movements, black organizations, youth groups, and provincially based civil society bodies provide spaces where otherwise subordinated people can assert their views. In other words, social equality in civil society may be enhanced to the extent that the sphere includes associations that are specifically dedicated to representing marginalized groups. This is not to suggest that civil society should be entirely composed of segregated sections that only advocate the particular interests of one or the other subordinated group. On the contrary, full-scale fragmentation of civil society would undermine campaigns for more democratic globalization, as the frequent failure to span racial divides illustrates. Nor are equality-seeking associations immune from various democratic deficits of their own. However, organizations that focus on marginalized people are a positive feature inasmuch as they tend to be more sensitive about discrimination in civil society and to generate more initiatives to counter it.

For their part, civil society organizations that do not specifically advocate for subordinated groups in the global economy can nevertheless take proactive measures to include persons from socially underprivileged positions in their leadership and staff. For example, certain seats (or a designated proportion of seats) on the association's board can be reserved for women, subordinated classes,

Recognizing that it had been monopolized by older men, the Uganda Co-operative Alliance has in recent years disaggregated its data on age and gender lines.

*Our organization has adopted a programme of gender sensitization, but it is not at all easy. The initiative has provoked some internal conflict, and I don't see us moving away from our male-dominated leadership in the near future.*

Jorge Durão

Association of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE)  
Rio de Janeiro

In France, Agir Ici has carefully monitored the age, class and gender profile of its membership.

Initiatives specifically dedicated to making space for underclasses in civil society activities concerning the global economy include the Movement of Dam-Affected People (MAB) in Brazil, the Charter Committee on Poverty Issues (CCPI) and Low Income Families Together (LIFT) in Canada, and the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand.

Associations that have given particular attention to economic globalization and its impact on women include Women for Global Economic Justice in Canada, the Alliance for Arab Women in Egypt, the Women and Globalization group in ATTAC-France, the Moscow Centre for Gender Studies in Russia, the Women and Globalization group under the auspices of the NGO Coordinating Committee on Development in Thailand, and the Uganda Women's Network.

Civil society initiatives to create platforms for racial minorities in the global economy include Afro Reggae and Géledes Black Woman's Institute in Brazil, the First Nations Assembly and the Filipino Nurses Support Group in Canada, and the Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples (MRAP) in France.

Civil society associations that specifically open spaces for younger people in the politics of economic globalization include Check Your Head in Canada, the Centre of Young Managers (CJD) in France, and the Foundation for Child Development in Thailand.

minorities, young people and/or peripheral regions. In addition, civil society bodies can make special efforts to recruit, train and retain professional staff from socially disadvantaged circles. Normally it would be preferable to have equal opportunities in appointment and employment as a formally declared and systematically monitored policy.

Civil society associations can also take deliberate steps to include people from socially underprivileged circles in their activities concerning the global economy. For example, organizations can waive or vary fees and membership subscriptions in order to encourage participation from disadvantaged quarters of society. In addition, civil society bodies can make a point of inviting (and where necessary financing) persons from marginalized groups to join conference delegations, festivals, official policy consultations, public demonstrations, seminar panels, and other events. Further measures can be taken to encourage the active participation (as opposed to a token presence) of these guests by, for instance, providing thorough advance briefings, reserving programme slots for them to speak, supplying any necessary translation facilities, and generally creating a welcoming atmosphere. Moreover, civil society associations can sponsor events – like youth forums and surveys of poor women – that offer specific platforms for subordinated people to voice their perspectives on the global economy. Larger associations can appoint specially designated outreach workers to involve groups that tend to be excluded from civil society activities. In these and other ways, civil society organizations can shift some efforts from speaking for subordinated groups to broadening opportunities for those circles to speak for themselves.

Physical proximity is a further way that civil society associations can facilitate participation in their activities by socially disadvantaged circles. It helps to locate offices and to stage events near to subordinated classes, marginalized countries and underprivileged minorities. Thus civil society organizations that advocate for the South in the global economy do well to site branches if not their headquarters in the South. Holding global meetings of the World Social Forum in Brazil and India has both symbolic and substantive importance. Likewise, civil society associations that focus on underclasses in the global economy suitably have a permanent presence in poor neighbourhoods as well as the city centres of Geneva, London and Washington. No doubt it is more comfortable at a global congress

In Canada the Forestry Stewardship Council includes a specially designated chamber for indigenous peoples among its four constituent negotiating parties, thereby promoting greater involvement from First Nations.

When elections for the global executive of *Vía Campesina* yielded an all-male committee, the procedures were amended to double the seats and include a woman leader from each world region.

The Central Workers Union (CUT) in Brazil has had a rule since 1994 that at least 30 per cent of the Executive Board must be female, a level that was exceeded in 2000.

The Uganda National Farmers Association charges minimal membership fees in order to maximize opportunities for participation.

A number of civil society groups in Canada – including the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Rights & Democracy, the Social Justice Committee, and the Steelworkers Humanity Fund – have regularly invited their partners in the South to visit Canada to join events and talk with both politicians and ordinary citizens. For example, 250 people from 33 countries were hosted in conjunction with the 2001 Quebec Summit.

The Winnipeg-based Erosion Technology Control Group (ETC) draws its ten-member board from nine countries. Rights & Democracy also includes people from the South on its board.

In Russia the Interrepublican Confederation of Consumers Societies (KonfOP) has used a youth education programme to recruit and train its local activists. In 2002 the organization also transferred control of its executive to younger advocates.

*We have decentralized to get closer to farmers. Our staff in Kampala has dropped from 60 to 15, and even this rump spends three-quarters of its time in the villages. UCA used to be a distant boss; now there are direct links.*

Leonard Msemakweli  
Uganda Co-operative Alliance, Kampala

than in a slum, but the suffering of the oppressed is better heard at close range.

Implementation of the preceding suggestions would by no means eliminate social inequality in civil society, let alone in the global economy at large. However, pursuit of such measures across civil society could certainly make a notable dent in the problems. In general, civil society groups need to handle questions regarding access with greater care than they have shown to date. Like governance and market actors, civil society associations have a democratic obligation to engage with and open space for all parts of the population. Of course, each individual civil society organization need not be expected to provide an equal platform for every social group, but civil society as a whole should do so. Civil society activism on economic globalization loses democratic legitimacy to the extent that certain stakeholders lack equal opportunities to be involved. The measures that a civil society organization does or does not take to maximize participation in its own activities by marginalized and vulnerable groups is an important indication of its overall commitment to democracy.

## Transparency

Like access and participation, another point where civil society practice needs to conform to wider democratic norms is transparency. As seen in Part 3, one of the principal democratizing effects that civil society activity can have on the global economy is to make governance of this sphere more visible and open to public scrutiny. On the face of things, then, it would be contradictory if the civil society associations themselves operated in obscurity.

In a democracy, citizens may rightly expect civil society associations publicly to reveal matters such as:

- mission and purpose
- policies followed in pursuit of those aims
- methods of work
- intended beneficiaries

The Hemispheric Social Alliance, a trans-American civil society network formed in 1998 to advocate alternative forms of regional integration, has thus far sited its secretariat in Mexico and Brazil (rather than Canada or the USA).

The Centre for Trade Union and Workers Services maintains its head office in the working-class slums of the industrial town of Helwan rather than in downtown Cairo.

*Global civil society reflects the realities of power in the world, but perhaps attenuates them, too.*

Mustapha Al-Sayyid  
Centre for Developing Countries Studies, Cairo

*If we are not involved, there is a danger that others will define 'global democracy' for us.*

Victor Kuvaldin  
Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow

*Profound disconnects need to be overcome within the movement if civil society is to take 'globalization from below' seriously.*

Tony Clarke  
Polaris Institute, Ottawa

*Don't ask about the transparency of civil society of Brazil. We have very little. We need to have figures and reports of results as an antidote against populism.*

Aspásia Camargo  
International Centre for Sustainable Development, Brasilia

*Some people are concerned about governance within the Council of Canadians: for example, how our campaigns are chosen; how we weight the input that we receive, etc.*

Steve Staples  
Council of Canadians, Ottawa

- size and profile of membership (where relevant)
- organizational structure and decision-taking procedures
- names, positions and contact information of officers and staff
- location of offices and opening times
- sources and uses of funds
- internal and external evaluations of projects and programmes
- links with other civil society associations and networks

Moreover, in a democracy such information about civil society activities should be easily obtainable by any stakeholder who wants it. The material should be conveyed by means (publications, broadcasts, websites, public meetings, etc.) that between them are readily available to all interested parties. In addition, the civil society group should present the information in a language and style that fits the various audiences. Transparency *vis-à-vis* government officials may well not count as effective visibility in the eyes of illiterate slum dwellers. The association should also release the information at a relevant time, rather than when it has become obsolete or politically useless. Thus, for civil society organizations just as for governance bodies, transparency lies in the mode and timing of presentation as well as in the content of what is disclosed.

Some civil society associations have made extensive and often quite creative efforts to tell the public about their aims and activities. In certain cases they have even hired specially designated staff to conduct their public communications. Such proactive groups produce and widely distribute any number of books, brochures, CDs, newsletters, posters, reports, comics and videos about themselves. They maintain full, lively and regularly updated websites. They reach the public via the mass media with advertisements, articles, broadcast materials, letters to the editor, and press conferences. These organizations may also spread information about themselves by means of public forums and open houses.

On the other hand, many civil society associations that work on global economic issues have underestimated the importance of public communications and have not practiced anything close to full transparency. They have not published much of the information listed above about themselves. They may also be unable or unwilling to provide it when specifically asked. Their brochures and websites, if

*We have to work continuously to disseminate our image: through websites, newsletters, radio programs, newspaper interviews, receiving visitors, etc. But public communications are difficult and expensive. A 15-minute professional video to explain our work would cost 200,000 baht (US\$4,500).*

Kaninka Kuankachorn  
Thai Volunteer Service, Bangkok

Examples of civil society groups that prominently indicate their sources of funding (for instance, on their letterhead and websites) include the Brazil Network on Multilateral Financial Institutions, the Maquila Solidarity Network in Canada, and Greenpeace in Russia.

*I wanted to run for the leadership of the union, but the procedures were not clear: how one becomes a candidate, how one conducts a campaign, what funding rules apply, etc.*

Yuri Milovidov  
Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), Moscow

*Social Watch needs to present its reports [on pursuit of United Nations development targets] in ways that are accessible and relevant to social movement realities.*

Amelia Cohen  
Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CEDEC), São Paulo

*Transparency can be achieved in any form, so long as people can take ownership of the information and become empowered vis-à-vis the organization.*

Wafula Oguttu  
Transparency Uganda, Kampala

The Uganda Debt Network concertedly promotes public awareness of its work with 45,000 copies of a newsletter that is, among other things, inserted into one of the main national newspapers.

*Civil society groups don't get enough of the information that we produce onto our websites, and a lot of it is not readable by the general public.*

Pat Mooney  
Erosion Technology Control Group (ETC), Winnipeg

they have them at all, are often highly incomplete and out of date. They provide few if any contact details and may not welcome visitors who nevertheless manage to find them. In short, civil society organizations can become just as closed and secretive as the governance apparatuses that many activists would like to open up. It is a sad comment that, nowadays, the Bretton Woods institutions perform relatively respectably on transparency criteria in comparison with quite a number of their civil society critics. Indeed, the Global Accountability Index published by the One World Trust in 2003 rated the IMF and the WTO higher on transparency than several leading global civil society organizations.

Frequently this poor practice has resulted from sloppiness, as civil society actors have given insufficient priority to their own transparency. Indeed, some associations have not put the matter on their agenda at all. Few people interviewed for this project raised issues concerning their transparency unprompted, and most had relatively little to say on the subject.

Regrettably, in certain cases civil society organizations have sought deliberately to mislead the public about their nature and purpose. For example, some civil society groups have circulated inflated figures regarding their membership and other levels of support. Likewise, various associations have knowingly made exaggerated claims about their impacts. Quite a number of civil society bodies have also actively concealed information regarding their finances.

Opacity in civil society activities concerning the global economy is democratically dangerous on several grounds. For one thing, a nontransparent civil society association might pursue a hidden agenda. The organization in question may conceal its control by certain companies, governing authorities, or political parties. Indeed, the 'civil society' body might itself be a commercial enterprise or political party in disguise. Thus bona fide civil society groups do well to practice transparency as a way of defusing possible public suspicions about their work. In addition, full disclosure on the part of well-intentioned civil society associations can have the effect of indirectly exposing nontransparent imposters.

Another risk to democracy is that shortfalls in public disclosure by civil society

*Given low levels of Internet access in Uganda, our website communicates more to outside stakeholders than to local beneficiaries.*

Godber Tumushabe  
Advocates Coalition for Development & Environment, Kampala

*Our website conceals more than it reveals. Our website badly needs updating. recurrent confessions from multiple civil society groups*

*Transparency has become a top priority in our work. We do not yet publicly declare our sources of income, but will have to do so in the future.*

Rungtip Imrungruang  
Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Bangkok

Most of the main trade union confederations in Brazil substantially exaggerate their memberships. They count the total number of employees in the workplaces where they are the recognized representative of labour, rather than the number of actual paying subscribers.

*Hidden agendas are an abuse of power and backfire on civil society as a whole.*

Alaa Ezz  
Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation, Cairo

*A seemingly 'transparent' report may still evade some critical questions. Which parts of the story are being told and not told? That is also crucial.*

Hussein Mursal  
Save the Children UK, Kampala

*Network forms of organization are more flexible, but they also tend to be more opaque. Their leaders easily become a band of cronies, and that readily alienates their followers.*

Christophe Aguiton  
ATTAC-France, Paris

groups can prevent ordinary citizens from learning about – and then choosing to back or resist – the activities in question. Transparency deficits thereby work to limit public participation in civil society. Indeed, since secrecy frequently operates as a tool of privilege, failures of transparency can reinforce the structural inequalities of access to civil society described earlier.

In addition, looking ahead to the next point of discussion, negligence in respect of transparency can undermine a civil society association's democratic accountability. Lack of disclosure makes it harder for stakeholders to hold the organization answerable for its deeds and/or inactions.

Finally, civil society groups need to attend to transparency in order to enhance their democratic legitimacy in the eyes of governing authorities. On numerous occasions officials have – often quite understandably – refused to engage with civil society associations whose character and aims are unclear. To be sure, some regulators in the global economy have used challenges about transparency as a way to avoid confronting their critics in civil society. However, in such situations moving to full disclosure would allow civil society organizations to deprive the authorities of this evasion tactic.

Of course, obligations on civil society associations to be transparent come with qualifications. After all, in certain circumstances full public transparency can threaten a democratically motivated civil society organization. Many citizen groups work in highly undemocratic environments where too much disclosure could be their undoing. For example, many pro-democracy groups for good reason went underground during apartheid rule in South Africa. Openness towards an oppressive regime can actually undermine rather than promote democracy. Likewise, civil society groups that help illegal immigrants cannot practice full transparency if they are to fulfil their mission.

Many other times the context of decisions concerning transparency falls between the extremes of complete democracy and complete repression. Countless civil society associations operate in weakly democratic settings where they need to make delicate judgements about the ways, extents and moments that they can go public. Such dilemmas have confronted civil society practitioners just about

Some 50 associations in Uganda held a fair at a central Kampala hotel in 2001 and 2002, inviting government, parliament and the general public to attend and learn more about civil society work.

*Every year our Centre holds an open house. There we present an activity report for the preceding year. We also present current projects and services and explain how organizations can participate in and use them. The guests fill in questionnaires, from which we learn about their attitudes to our Centre and get suggestions of how we might improve our work.*

Rosa Khatskelevitch  
Centre for the Development of Non-Governmental Organizations, St Petersburg

*NGOs have underestimated the importance of transparency. We should open up and report on what we do. Not doing so creates distrust and makes us more vulnerable. If we are not careful this issue can be used against us.*

Surichai Wun' Gaeo  
Campaign for Popular Democracy, Bangkok

In three of the seven countries covered in this project, certain civil society associations dealing with global economic issues were fearful that too much public divulgence would lead to undemocratic suppression of their activities.

The Homeless Workers Movement (MTST) in Brazil operates in substantial secrecy, since state authorities could otherwise quash its strategy of illegal occupations of housing for the urban poor.

*We do not publicly name the members of our board. That way we can invite prominent people who for political and professional reasons could not otherwise serve.*

Ivan Blokov  
Greenpeace Russia, Moscow

*The transparency question is difficult. If you are fully open about your mode of working, including the internal conflicts, the media have a field day with it.*

Benedicte Hermelin  
Solagrail, Paris

everywhere on earth at one time or another. Thus, as with autonomy, judgements about the transparency of civil society activities are not always straightforward.

However, the default position should be to disclose. In other words, civil society associations need to make the case for concealing rather than for revealing. The democratic position should be: when in doubt, be transparent. All too often, civil society groups are (like governance agencies and market players) tempted to put the order the other way around.

In any case, the purpose of any limitation on transparency must be to protect democratic rights, and *not* to escape democratic responsibilities. Moreover, where a civil society association decides that secrecy is democratically justified, the organization should be committed to full retrospective disclosure – and accountability – once conditions improve.

## Accountability

A final major issue that affects the democratic credentials of civil society engagement of global economic issues is accountability. Like any other democratic organization, every civil society group has an obligation to answer to its stakeholders for its actions and omissions. Associations should monitor, evaluate, report on, and learn from their fulfilment (or not) of their responsibilities towards those whom they purport to serve.

Regrettably, accountability has all too often been a weak spot in civil society activities concerning economic globalization. Associations involved in this area have rarely welcomed accountability, for example, as a process to improve their democratic credentials and their wider operational effectiveness. Indeed, relatively few practitioners interviewed for this project raised issues of accountability or, if they did, had very much specific to say about their duty to answer to their constituents. This superficiality was not surprising, inasmuch as relatively little writings and conferences have explored issues of civil society accountability in

*Greenpeace's work on global issues is fairly elitist. The 20-30 people who lead the activism on global problems are quite disconnected from grassroots groups.*

Bruno Rebelle  
Greenpeace France, Paris

*Power in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions is tremendously centralized. The ICFTU has only one General Secretary, only one executive committee meeting per year, and a general meeting of member associations only once every four years.*

Kjeld Jakobsen  
Central Workers Union (CUT), São Paulo

*Civil society in Thailand is less accountable than government and business. No one in civil society exercises oversight. There is no professional society, no mechanism to punish misconduct.*

Gawin Chutima  
Development Support Consortium, Bangkok

depth.

Most civil society groups have in place very limited and decidedly unimaginative accountability mechanisms. At best, the organizations tend to have no more than loose oversight by a board (often composed largely of friends, who are in some cases paid), periodic elections of officers (with low rates of participation and sometimes dubious procedures), occasional general meetings (with sparse attendance), minimalist reports of activities (that few people read), and summary financial records (which often conceal as much as they reveal). Such pro forma accountability does not usually actively engage the association's stakeholders; nor do these exercises promote genuine organizational learning. Thus – in civil society just as much as in governance and market circles – formal accountability may fall well short of effective accountability. It focuses on compliance with authorities rather than organizational learning and responsiveness to constituents.

Worse still, a number of civil society players in the politics of economic globalization have not met even minimalist standards of accountability. Such groups lack a clear constituency and operate without any public mandate. Their leadership is self-elected and stays in office indefinitely. They rarely if ever consult their supposed stakeholders. They do not report publicly on their activities. They lack rigorous financial monitoring. They offer aggrieved parties no channels for complaint and redress. Such civil society actors are utterly disconnected from any popular base. Hence one hears cynical talk of MONGOs (My Own NGOs), NGIs (Non-Governmental Individuals), briefcase NGOs (BRINGOs), come-and-gos, self-serving religious and trade union elites, etc.

Indeed, many civil society practitioners express scepticism about the need to develop their accountability. They do not see how demonstrations of accountability are related to their mission. They see only risks and no returns in the exercise. They regard it as an overly expensive undertaking. And they argue that the real accountability problems lie with actors other than themselves – governments, corporations, etc. (This paragraph is largely taken from L. Jordan, 'The Importance of Rights to NGO Responsibility', unpublished paper, 2003.)

The widespread neglect of accountability issues can greatly compromise civil

*We are not liable to any institution, even the government. There is no control on our work. We never produce reports of our activities or financial accounts. That's a bureaucratic interventionism that belongs to Soviet times.*

Leonid Todorov  
Institute for the Economy in Transition, Moscow

*In Thailand the problem is power relations within civil society organizations and between civil society leaders and the masses.*

Chaithawat Khaw  
Institute of Political Development, Bangkok

*Anti-globalization NGOs are unelected by anyone and lack much indigenous support. They have to fly people in from all over the world to get numbers. Yet they are accepted by the media. It's absurd.*

Fred McMahon  
Fraser Institute, Vancouver

Trade unions in Brazil and Russia obtain only a minority share of their revenue from membership subscriptions. This financial situation reduces the imperative to go to the shop floor and listen to rank-and-file workers.

*When workers become union leaders they often betray their class. This is true all over the world.*

Somsak Kosaisook  
State Railway Workers Union of Thailand, Bangkok

*In civil society you bring in your friends with similar views to you, but of course you need to check the behaviour of friends, too. It's not from a lack of trust, but to make sure that things go well.*

Veerapon Sopa  
People's Network against Globalization, Thailand

*In civil society politics today we immediately hear the accusing question: who are you? What is your legitimacy? These challenges were not made so strongly before Seattle.*

Bruno Rebelle  
Greenpeace France, Paris

society potentials to democratize the global economy. For one thing, unaccountable civil society organizations generally fail to correct shortcomings in their performance and thereby underachieve. In addition, unaccountable civil society associations can lose moral credibility and indeed can give the whole sector a bad name. Unaccountable civil society actors can also reflect and reinforce low democratic standards in society at large.

Moreover, neglect of accountability can be politically costly to civil society work. As recent developments around civil society activism on global economic issues has shown, authorities readily seize upon accountability deficits to reject the legitimacy of civil society associations. Many politicians, officials, business leaders, journalists and academics have asked why unaccountable civil society actors should have the right to influence the course of economic globalization. In this light, civil society organizations need to become more accountable if they wish to retain and expand their involvement in and impact on governance of the global economy.

How can this greater accountability be achieved? Before constructing any specific accountability mechanism(s), a civil society association needs clearly to identify its stakeholders. Accountability is always *to* someone. The stakeholders of a civil society organization might include its beneficiaries, its funders, its staff, its volunteers, its members, its branches and chapters, its partners in civil society networks and coalitions, its regulators and other governance agencies, private-sector bodies, and the general public. Sometimes stakeholders are found not only in the present, but also in the past (e.g. victims of former slavery) and in the future (e.g. tomorrow's victims of current ecological degradation). In principle, a civil society group should answer to all of its various constituents, albeit not necessarily in the same ways and to the same extents.

Once a civil society body has mapped its stakeholders, it can consider how best to be accountable to them. A host of mechanisms are available. Some are internal, in the sense of being undertaken by the civil society association on its own. Other mechanisms are external, in the sense that outside parties take the lead in their formulation, execution and review.

*NGOs are not representative of villagers. We do not have the answers for them. We need to listen more than talk. The villagers are the stakeholders. You have to ask them.*

Prasittiporn Kanonsri  
Friends of People, Bangkok

*Civil society organizations are a source of employment and stature in Uganda. Many people use donor money to set up an NGO because they can't get starting capital to launch a business.*

N.I. Nkote  
Makerere University Business School, Kampala

*We need a democratization of legal activism in civil society. We must be sure that our work as professional experts rests on the perspectives of marginalized groups whom we represent. Litigation must be run with consultation of the people affected in the case.*

Gwen Brodsky  
Poverty and Human Rights Project, Vancouver

*Our organization is very self-consciously democratic. We hold elections every year. Every policy is allowed on the convention table. Any member can initiate a policy measure. We have to be sure that power remains in the hands of the rank and file.*

Darrin Qualman  
National Farmers Union, Saskatoon

*This is a great job, but you have to let it go to others, to renew the organization with younger energy.*

Lyndsay Poaps  
Check Your Head, Vancouver

Egypt's International Economic Forum has broken the mould in business associations in Egypt by fixing maximum terms for its officers. The Federation of Thai Industries likewise limits its chairperson to two two-year terms.

Internal accountability mechanisms include previously mentioned measures such as the election of officers and representative assemblies, oversight by boards and general meetings, and published reports of activities and finances. The challenge is to take such mechanisms beyond paper exercises to become veritable accountability systems. To be effective, elections and general meetings need to involve wide participation in searching debates of a civil society group's past policies and possible future courses. Accountability might also be enhanced when civil society organizations limit the length of time that their leading decision-takers can hold office. Meanwhile reports – if they are to be useful tools of accountability – need to present detailed self-critical examinations of the association's activities. A properly accountable civil society body also needs to ensure that its reports actually reach – and can be readily understood by – the relevant stakeholders.

Another potentially helpful internal accountability measure is stakeholder consultation. Such engagement with constituents avoids the undemocratic situation where a civil society vanguard unilaterally tells disempowered followers what to do. Stakeholder consultation brings feedback from constituents into all phases of a civil society organization's activities, from the determination of objectives and strategies to the evaluation of results. Dialogues with stakeholders can occur in the shape of periodic ad hoc discussions, or they can be regular exchanges formalized under a memorandum of understanding. As for the format, stakeholder consultations may transpire by means of survey questionnaires, group discussions, individual interviews, or detailed research into activities, projects and programmes. Of course, effective consultations depend on an adequate commitment of resources as well as good communication flows. For example, the stakeholders must receive adequate and timely information and have ample opportunities to ask questions. In addition, the venues of consultations must be accessible and comfortable for all parties involved. The civil society practitioners must listen well and respond conscientiously. If carefully conducted along such lines, stakeholder consultations can do much to connect civil society actors to their bases and ensure that the association is speaking *with* as well as *for* its constituents.

Learning networks among civil society associations are another way to promote

*Civil society groups that become active in global forums tend to get more and more distant from citizens. It is crucial to create spaces for links back to citizens.*

Peter Padbury  
ex-Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Ottawa

The leadership of ATTAC-France is in constant contact with its scores of local groups: through correspondence with ordinary members and attendance of their meetings.

*In the dispute over trade in softwood lumber, all affected groups came together in workshops to produce a grassroots-driven made-in-BC solution that incorporated local views into an international agreement.*

Jessica Clogg  
West Coast Environment Law, Vancouver

*Much as you would want to work thoroughly on the ground and have grassroots movements behind you, in practice things move so fast at the international level that there is no time to consult with stakeholders and still lobby effectively in global negotiations. This poses a moral dilemma.*

Amal Sabri  
Association for Health and Environmental Development, Cairo

The development advocacy group Agir Ici in France offers systematic feedback to supporters of its advocacy work. The association regularly calls on the public to send a postcard to specified governing authorities about a particular issue of concern (recall p. 41). Several months after the close of such a campaign, Agir Ici provides every participating citizen with an assessment of the results.

*NGOs keep track of each other. Some groups have a dubious agenda, but we have our own social control through rumour and forum discussions.*

Reawadee Praserejareonsuk  
NGO Coordinating Committee on Development, Bangkok

Accountability was utterly absent in the selection of civil society participants in plenary round tables at the UN-sponsored International Conference on

accountability. In such cases, civil society groups engage in ad hoc or formalized processes of sharing experiences and practices, with a view to receiving constructive criticisms from peers and improving performance. Needless to say, participants must approach these exercises in a spirit of mutual support rather than as an occasion to score points against each other.

Other mechanisms to advance accountability in respect of civil society activities involve outside evaluators. Often the external player is an official body. For example, many states require that civil society bodies register with and report to national and/or local authorities under a statutory regime. In addition, certain suprastate bodies like the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) run official accreditation schemes for civil society groups that wish to gain access to their proceedings. If official regulation is run with openness and integrity, it can help to promote good practice in civil society. However, such arrangements have an unavoidable core tension, given that official regulators come from the same governing circles that civil society groups are trying to hold to account. Moreover, as seen in Part 2 earlier, most governance in the global economy rests on dubious democratic credentials, which raises the question why weakly accountable official bodies should determine how civil society organizations are held to account.

An alternative approach is to use nonofficial regimes for civil society accountability, much as many companies have followed voluntary corporate responsibility schemes. For example, civil society associations can abide by a nonofficial code of ethics, a self-regulatory code of conduct, a code of good practices, or some other externally administered quality assurance scheme. The 'accountability industry' has elaborated numerous such frameworks, although this approach does not equally suit all associations and all stakeholders. Under these arrangements, civil society groups seek to demonstrate their accountability by showing that they meet a set of general standards for the sector. Compliance might be verified with a periodic performance report, cases studies of good practice, and/or a numerical measure such as an 'accountability index'. Of course, key questions arise concerning who defines, implements, monitors and enforces any such standard. The scheme could be a constructive quality control, but it could also be a whitewash affair, a bureaucratic tyranny, or money wasted on

Financing for Development (FfD) at Monterrey, Mexico in March 2002. A self-elected group of NGOs that had been following the FfD process assembled 84 'representatives'. In a number of cases the selection committee had minimal information about the nominated participants.

The NGO Steering Committee of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development created an elaborate self-regulatory framework for promoting accountable civil society involvement in UN work on environment and development. The process became increasingly burdensome and fractious until it collapsed in 2001.

*Who gets in with the UN accreditation system? How does your ordinary NGO from Thailand get in next to the big organizations with Northern perspectives?*  
Chanida Chanyapate Bamford  
Focus on the Global South, Bangkok

*Why should governments call the shots if they are not democratic themselves?*  
Jessica Clogg  
West Coast Environment Law, Vancouver

The Philippine Council for NGO Certification has developed a highly rigorous scheme of self-regulation in civil society. Its code of conduct, completed in 1998, has been applied to more than 350 civil society organizations as of end 2002.

To address accountability issues a number of civil society groups in India formed a Credibility Alliance in 1999. After consultations involving hundreds of associations, this coalition produced guidelines for 'minimum norms', 'desirable norms' and 'good practices'.

Following consultation of its members, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation in 1995 issued a self-regulatory Code of Ethics. Under this scheme, Council members agree to comply with the various guidelines and undertake an annual update recertification. Complaints under the code can be taken to a designated Ethics Committee.

ignorant consultants.

Other external evaluations of civil society practice can be ad hoc exercises. For example, official and/or nonofficial assessors might review individual projects or programmes of a civil society association. Other evaluations might audit the organization in relation to its finances, its gender sensitivity, its transparency, or its stakeholder consultations and other participatory practices. Academic studies and journalistic investigations of civil society activities can also serve the role of ad hoc external evaluations.

Whatever the accountability system – internal or external, mandatory or voluntary, regular or ad hoc – it should include an effective complaints procedure. Stakeholders must be able to submit grievances about a civil society association and to get redress where warranted. When a stakeholder and a civil society group cannot resolve their differences by themselves, an independent adjudicator is needed, such as a court, an ombudsperson, or a quality assurance board.

Likewise, accountability procedures should include follow-up actions by civil society associations. Effective accountability is not accomplished as a pointless bureaucratic routine where papers disappear into bottom drawers. Rather, constructive accountability is a learning process where civil society groups build on past successes and avoid repetitions of past mistakes. It is furthermore good practice for civil society associations to inform assessors and stakeholders of the actions they have taken in response to reports, consultations, evaluations and complaints.

Needless to say, civil society accountability is a complicated issue that cannot be answered with simple formulas and universal blueprints: no size fits all. Indeed, different types of stakeholders often require different kinds of accountability measures. In the politics of accountability, each mechanism serves the needs and interests of some stakeholders better than others. To take one obvious example, written reports are of little use to illiterate constituents. Accountability measures can also lack sensitivity to class, culture, gender and race. Hence, if a civil society organization is not careful, it may end up with accountability mechanisms that serve its powerful stakeholders (like funders and governments) more than its less

The Ekaterinburg-based association Free Will has sought to adapt an international standard of NGO accountability for NGOs in Russia, though the scheme is not yet implemented.

SGS Group, a large global verification, testing and certification company, has proposed an 'NGO 2000' scheme as a single worldwide public standard for good governance of NGOs.

*Accountability should not be a paper scheme and public relations exercise. What is the benefit at the end of the day? Accountability measures should respond to a real desire and be a real control mechanism.*

Rosa Khatskelevitch  
Centre for the Development of Non-Governmental Organizations, Saint Petersburg

*It is imperative to advance our internal democracy and the participation of members. Professionalization has its problems. Campaigns become the initiative of staff without a demand from members. We have adopted a 'Charter 2002' of guidelines to improve our internal democratic practices.*

Hélène Ballande  
Friends of the Earth, Paris

*We invited outsiders with whom we had not previously worked to participate in our programme review in 2002. It was risky, but we needed to listen to people who think differently. They gave fresh inputs and asked questions that we had not thought to ask.*

Maude Mugisha  
East African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women, Kampala

Under its strategy 'Fighting Poverty Together (1999-2003), ActionAid has given particular attention to developing methodologies of NGO accountability to the poor themselves. Similarly, the Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP) started in 2000 has given special attention to raising accountability to the recipients of emergency relief.

In Uganda, Save the Children UK asks its beneficiaries to undertake their own yearly evaluation of project work. These assessments are published in the annual report alongside the staff's own self-monitoring exercises.

powerful constituents (including its supposed beneficiaries).

Indeed, it may not be possible for a civil society group to be accountable – or equally accountable – to all of its stakeholders. For example, the accountability demands of authorities may be difficult if not impossible to reconcile with the needs of members. Accountability to the present generation may conflict with accountability to future descendants. In short, a civil society organization is never able to be fully and evenly accountable to all constituents at the same time. Careful – and obviously political – choices of priorities have to be made (and defended).

Further complexity arises around accountability inasmuch as each civil society group requires procedures that suit its context. For example, different cultural understandings and practices may warrant different kinds of accountability measures. Cultural diversity should not be an excuse for anything goes, of course, but different cultures can need different kinds of accountability regimes. For instance, assessments related to a formal code of conduct may suit urban professional circles but not rural indigenous groups.

As for the political context, associations that work in an undemocratic environment understandably need to approach accountability mechanisms differently than organizations that operate in favourable political circumstances. One cannot expect human rights bodies in contemporary Burma to be accountable in the same way as consumer groups in Sweden. Moreover, given that political circumstances change (for instance, with the fall of Suharto in Indonesia), civil society bodies need periodically to review – and where suitable to revise – their accountability mechanisms.

Transborder civil society associations can face particularly acute challenges of devising accountability mechanisms that function equally across often widely varying cultural and political contexts. The same accountability formulas might not work for Greenpeace France and Greenpeace Russia. (By the same token, global governance agencies and global corporations arguably need to apply different accountability schemes in their diverse operational contexts, too.)

In advocating for the garbage collectors of Cairo, the Association for the Protection of the Environment draws all staff except technical experts from the beneficiary community. The garbage collectors themselves also have representatives on the board of the organization and contribute to meetings of the NGO coordinating committee that addresses their affairs.

*All civil society need not conform to western accountability standards with boards of governors, etc. We should have multiple forms of accountability to correspond with the richness of cultural diversity.*

Juree Witchitwatakan  
Transparency Thailand, Bangkok

*We have devised our own accountability system that promotes self-monitoring, learning and involvement of beneficiaries. Then the Europeans come in and impose their mechanisms without bothering to look at what we already have in place.*

Norah Owagara  
Uganda Change Agent Association, Kampala

*International NGOs report to their headquarters. They are not accountable to people here.*

Wafula Oguttu  
Transparency Uganda, Kampala

To be sure, too, accountability mechanisms need themselves to be held accountable. Civil society groups must have channels of appeal and redress against erroneous or unfair charges. More generally, every accountability regime should be reviewed from time to time (with all relevant stakeholders) to determine whether it actually serves to maintain and improve standards in civil society. Among other things, care must be taken that an association does not put so much time and effort into accountability exercises that it is distracted from fulfilling its core objectives. Cumbersome procedures and overzealous evaluators can be more hindrance than help. Accountability mechanisms must be designed in such a way that the benefits justify the commitment of resources.

Finally, civil society actors may reasonably remind their stakeholders that accountability goes two ways. Authorities, funders, members, coalition partners and beneficiaries should meet *their* responsibilities to civil society associations as well as vice versa. Although it is right to require more accountability of civil society activities regarding economic globalization than has generally prevailed thus far, it is wrong to lay too many problems of democratic accountability in the global economy at the door of civil society. On the contrary, unaccountable governance agencies and unaccountable corporations have generally brought far more harm in economic globalization than unaccountable civil society groups.

## Conclusion

As the preceding lengthy discussion indicates, civil society can in various instances be part of the problem as well as – or even instead of – part of the solution regarding democratic deficits in the global economy. Like any power, the power of civil society can be abused.

Of course, shortfalls in the democratic performance of civil society associations in no way diminish the need for far-reaching democratization of other – frequently much more powerful – players in the global economy. Nor should civil society organizations be held to higher democratic standards than governance institutions,

*How can civil society associations be accountable like other organizations given our limited resources? If government and corporations want us to be so internally democratic, they must see that we get the resources to do it.*

Gothom Arya  
Peace and Culture Foundation, Bangkok

*Proper accountability requires resources. If we are to travel 400 kilometres and convene meetings with grassroots constituents, that takes funds.*

Jackie Asimwe-Mwesige  
Uganda Women's Network, Kampala

*How to do democracy in civil society is a crucial question: how to run good elections; how to select the beneficiaries of programmes; how to communicate well with the community.*

Nady Kamel  
Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services, Cairo

*Democratic globalization starts with yourself.*

Andrew Kitongo  
Uganda Old Folks Concern, Mbale

*Democracy in civil society involves more than statutes. Democratic practice is more – and more difficult.*

Bruno Rebelle  
Greenpeace France, Paris

which often fail more miserably than civil society groups. In other words, it must not be forgotten that Part 2 of this report describes deeper problems than Part 5.

Nevertheless, it must be said that many civil society actors in the politics of economic globalization have put more weight on their democratic rights than their democratic responsibilities. After all, it is generally easier to proclaim one's rights – in this case, to advance public education, public debate, public participation, public transparency and public accountability *vis-à-vis* governance agencies. It is harder to fulfil one's obligations – in this case, to be competent, tolerant, autonomous, accessible, transparent and accountable oneself.

Yet it is vital to redress shortcomings of democracy within civil society. Failures in this regard compromise the ability of civil society groups to address the more significant failures of democracy in the global economy, that is, those involving governance circles. Civil society efforts to democratize global production, exchange and consumption are more credible – and arguably also more successful – to the extent that these campaigns themselves are conducted democratically. Associations should pursue democratic goals with democratic means. If they do not, public trust and support for civil society is undercut, and an important form of global citizen action is undermined.

When civil society bodies do not adequately address their own democratic standards, they are vulnerable to challenges regarding their legitimacy: that is, their right to exercise authoritative influence in politics. Solid democratic credentials can and should be a prominent part of the legitimacy of any civil society association. Internal democracy is not the only basis for a civil society organization to claim legitimacy (other criteria might include professional expertise and moral rectitude). However, for civil society groups, as for governing authorities, democratic practice provides crucial if not indispensable grounds for affirming one's legitimacy.

As has been repeatedly stressed in the preceding discussion, democracy in civil society is complicated and difficult. The process can also be expensive, time-consuming and inconvenient. None of the six main issues of civil society democracy highlighted above is straightforward. Democratic practice requires

*It is ironic that civil society groups fighting for global democracy are often among the most undemocratic organizations themselves. Still, many recognize the problem and are trying to deal with it.*

Jessie Smith  
Real Alternatives Information Network, Vancouver

*When you point a finger, you need to do it with a clean hand.*

Perry Arituwa  
Uganda Joint Christian Council, Kampala

*We can address government attempts to discredit civil society by being more transparent and accountable than the government itself.*

Ubonrat Siriyuvasak  
Campaign for Popular Media Reform, Bangkok

*Some NGOs lack any democratic legitimacy and discredit the rest of us.*

Anne-Christine Habbard  
International Federation of Human Rights, Paris

*There are no guarantees that civil society will not reproduce the toxicity of rivalries and dominance that marks states and firms. We need a permanent self-critique to avoid these contaminations.*

Patrick Viveret  
Pierre Mendès France International Centre (CIPMF), Paris

*I want to see a civil society that can challenge itself and make necessary shifts.*

Maude Mugisha  
East African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women  
Kampala

*Civil society organizations face lots of challenges regarding their own governance, but funders won't support the development of better structures. Everyone wants to fund projects rather than processes.*

Will Horter  
Dogwood Initiative (formerly Forest Futures), Victoria, BC

innumerable delicate judgements. Moreover, democracy in civil society is an endless challenge: it is never achieved once and for all. Democracy in civil society – like democracy in general – is hard work.

To be sure, responsibility for democracy in civil society does not lie only with the associations themselves. A conducive environment along the lines described in Part 4 can also greatly facilitate these efforts. Civil society organizations are more able to address internal democratic challenges in situations where the governing authorities, the mass media, and the overall political culture encourage them to do so. Likewise, some contexts generate more material resources for civil society, so that associations have more means at hand to promote their own democracy. That said, whatever the environmental circumstances, effective internal democratization of civil society does not happen without major initiative and commitment from civil society practitioners themselves.

*As long as you are committed to evaluating and learning, it's OK that democracy in civil society is not perfect.*

Robin Round  
Halifax Initiative, Whitehorse

*Democracy in civil society is important, of course, but it is not the main obstacle to democracy in the global economy.*

Ibrahim El-Essawy  
Third World Forum, Cairo

## Part 6

### Critical Issues for Future Action

*Civil society is trying to turn things around in globalization, but it is not clear where we should go. Building global democracy is not like building a national state. Citizen action on the global economy is a plug, but it is not clear where the socket is.*

Darrin Qualman  
National Farmers Union, Saskatoon

*This report raises more questions than answers. To build up understanding and mechanisms of participation for civil society mobilization on globalization will be a long struggle.*

James Mwesigye  
National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda, Kampala

*Civil society activities may be only a small spot in society, but we have to keep working.*

Saree Aongsomwang  
Foundation for Consumers, Bangkok

As preceding sections have indicated, this report offers a complex answer to the question, ‘What is the role of civil society in democratizing the global economy?’ To assess the performance of a civil society association in this regard one needs to:

- (a) consider the association’s contributions on the six fronts of public education, public debate, public participation, public transparency, public accountability, and redistribution;
- (b) examine its abilities to maximize opportunities of democratization within environmental parameters of resources, networks, official positions, mass media conditions, political culture, and social hierarchies; and
- (c) explore its efforts to optimize internal democratic practices with regard to competence, openness, autonomy, access, transparency, and accountability.

With so many variables in play, it is plain that civil society activity is neither a panacea nor a catastrophe for democracy in the global economy. Civil society should not be romanticized nor demonized. Depending on the association and its context, civil society activities can be a benefit or a bane for rule-by-the-people in economic globalization.

At various junctures this report has made implicit and explicit suggestions that might help civil society groups to maximize their contributions to, and minimize their detractions from, democracy in the global economy. To wrap up this report, these points can usefully be drawn together in a single compact list, as below. Most of these suggestions are quite general, as the manner and degree of their implementation depends on the specific context to which they are applied. Nor should this list be regarded as a statement of universally relevant ‘best practices’. Civil society actors in different contexts can certainly learn from comparing their experiences and taking inspiration from each other. However, something that counts as democracy promotion in one situation might well weaken it in another. Indiscriminate transfer of civil society practices between often hugely divergent situations can cause considerable harm.

Keeping these key qualifications in mind, a civil society association that wishes to democratize the global economy might consider the following broad approach:

#### A. Developing Strategic Visions

- Make democracy a high priority in its own right, not just a secondary concern relative to issues such as conflict resolution, environmental care, labour protection, or poverty eradication.
- Give careful thought to conceptualizing democracy in relation to the global economy and to assessing the specific forms that democratic governance of the global economy could and should take.
- Elaborate a precise diagnosis of the democratic deficits relating to the particular global economic problems that concern the association.

#### B. Building a More Democratic Global Economy

- Devote concerted efforts to public education about economic globalization, perhaps even at the price of less lobbying of governance institutions.
- Expand spaces for public debate about the global economy and its governance.
- Create venues for direct and indirect public participation by all citizens in regulation of the global economy.
- Demand the maximum possible public visibility from agencies that govern global production, exchange and consumption.
- Perform a vigorous watchdog role over governance bodies and business enterprises in the global economy.
- Further the creation of effective official accountability mechanisms in respect of players in the global economy.
- Promote the redistribution of world resources in favour of structurally disadvantaged circles.

#### C. Building a More Conducive Environment for Democratization through Civil Society

- Avoid overly ambitious aims and projects that extend a civil society association beyond its (often severely constrained) resource capacities.

- Pursue innovative schemes to increase resources for civil society advocacy work on the global economy.
- Seize opportunities to pool efforts in networks of civil society groups, especially across countries and across sectors.
- Lobby to gain and retain maximally enabling legislation with respect to civil society activities.
- Circumvent, where necessary and possible, official measures that arbitrarily suppress the democratizing potentials of civil society.
- Help official bodies to develop optimal procedures and attitudes for constructive civil society inputs to policy processes.
- Cultivate relations with the mainstream mass media so that they work for civil society and not the other way around.
- Promote the development of alternative media.
- Exploit those aspects of a reigning political culture that encourage civil society activity; acknowledge and take account of those aspects that do not.
- Be acutely aware of the social hierarchies that work against democracy in the global economy and support moves by other actors to combat those subordinations.

#### D. Building a More Democratic Civil Society

- Bolster the competence of the association with long-term, careful analysis of the global economy and its governance.
- Nurture greater collaboration between academic researchers and other civil society actors.
- Urge academic institutions to develop courses and other learning materials regarding the global economy that are specifically geared to civil society practitioners.
- Guard against dogma and encourage internal debate.
- Maintain constant vigilance against relationships and practices that compromise the democratizing potentials of the association.
- Engage in strategic forward planning, so being able to approach prospective supporters with a clear self-defined agenda.
- Keep critical distance from official and corporate priorities and discourses.
- Obtain resources from multiple and diverse sources in order to be hostage to none.
- Engage in continual self-scrutiny of the organization's accessibility, especially for disadvantaged social groups.
- Promote civil society associations and activities that specifically advocate for subordinated social circles.
- Take proactive steps to include people from socially underprivileged positions in the administration and activities of the association.
- Pursue the maximum possible public transparency of the association.
- Have a clear picture of the association's stakeholders.
- Devise suitable means for regular, close and responsive consultations of the association's various constituents.
- Submit the association to constructive external evaluations of its projects, programmes, finances and governance processes.
- Ensure that stakeholders can take their grievances concerning the civil society association to an effective complaints mechanism.
- Develop learning networks for exchanges of experiences with other groups (including from other parts of the world and from other sectors of civil society) that work for greater democracy in the global economy.

## Appendix 1

### List of Abbreviations

APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ATTAC	Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens
BIS	Bank for International Settlements
CSR	corporate social responsibility
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSC	Forestry Stewardship Council
FTAA	Free Trade of the Americas Agreement
G7	Group of Seven
G8	Group of Eight
G77	Group of Seventy-Seven
IASC	International Accounting Standards Committee
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFI	international financial institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISMA	International Securities Market Association
IT	information technology
MDB	multilateral development bank
MERCOSUR	<i>Mercado Común del Sur</i> (Southern Common Market)
MP	member of parliament
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RITIMO	<i>Réseau d'Information Tiers Monde</i> (Third World Information Network)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## Appendix 3

### Contributing Individuals and Associations

NB: In most cases civil society practitioners have contributed in their personal capacity rather than as official representatives of an association.

Many (though not all) of these associations can be readily contacted through their websites, as found with a straightforward Internet search. Other contact information for the contributing persons and groups can be obtained from the project team via the email addresses listed on the front cover of this report.

Ação pela Tributação das Transações Financeiras em Apoio aos Cidadãos (ATTAC Brasil)

[Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens]

Antônio Feix, member, Porto Alegre group

Geraldo Feix, Co-Coordinator, Porto Alegre group

Action for Development (ACFODE), Kampala

Grace Alice Mukasa, Executive Director

ActionAid Uganda, Kampala

Jane Ocaya Irama, Policy Coordinator

Adult Education Association of North-West Russia (AEANWR), St Petersburg

Anatoly Snissarenko, President

Advocates Coalition for Development & Environment (ACODE), Kampala

Godber W. Tumushabe, Executive Director

Afro Reggae, Rio de Janeiro

Marcia Florencio, Social Coordinator

Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), Cairo

Hamsa Abdul Hamid, Head of Women's Section

Nouri A.R. Hussain, Secretary-General

Julian Randriamasivelo, Head of Africa Section

Agir Ici pour un Monde Solidaire, Paris

[Act Here for a World of Solidarity]

Françoise Vanni, Director General

Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo

Mohamed El-Sayed Said, Deputy Director

Alliance for Arab Women (AAW), Cairo

Hoda Badran, Chair

All-Russian Confederation of Labour (VKT), Moscow

Alexandre N. Bougaev, President

All-Russian Social Movement 'Alternatives', Moscow

Alexandr V. Buzgalin, Coordinator  
 Amis de la Terre, Paris  
 [Friends of the Earth]  
 Hélène Ballande, Acting Director  
 Anti-Globalization Egyptian Group (AGEG), Cairo  
 Wael Khalil  
 Arab Committee against the Naturalization of Agriculture and Water,  
 Cairo  
 Mohamed Hussein Rida, Secretary  
 Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR), Cairo  
 Ibrahim Allam, Executive Director  
 Mohsen Awad, Deputy Secretary General  
 Mohammed Faiq, Secretary General  
 Arab Research Center (ARC), Cairo  
 Hesham Eissa  
 Helmi Sharawy, Director  
 Abdul Ghaffar Shukr  
 Arom Pongpangan Foundation, Bangkok  
 Sakool Zuesongdham, Chair  
 Asia Foundation, Bangkok  
 Ruangrawee Pichaikul Ketphol, Senior Program Manager  
 Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia), Bangkok  
 Chalida Tajaroensuk, Programme Coordinator  
 Asian Institute of Technology, Pathumthani  
 Ghotom Arya, Registrar  
 Assembly of the Poor, Thailand  
 Boonmee Kamruang  
 Tern Tarat  
 Suan Sangsom  
 Suwan Mingkwan  
 Wanida Tantiwittayapitak, Adviser  
 Assessoria e Serviços a Projetos em Agricultura Alternativa (AS-PTA),  
 Rio de Janeiro  
 [Tools and Services for Projects in Alternative Agriculture]  
 Gabriel Fernandes, Documentation Centre Coordinator

Jean Marc von der Weid, Public Policies Program Director  
 Association Internationale de Techniciens, Experts et Chercheurs  
 (AITEC), Paris  
 [International Association of Technicians, Experts and Researchers]  
 Gustave Massiah, President  
 Association for Health and Environmental Development (AHED), Cairo  
 Mohamed Hassan Khalil, former President  
 Amal I. Sabri, Director, Environment and Development  
 Programme  
 Hani Mohamed Serag, Coordinator of Health Policies & Systems  
 Programme  
 Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE), Cairo  
 Ezzat Naeim Guindy, Development and Training Officer  
 Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation (AEEC),  
 Cairo  
 Alaa Ezz, Secretary General  
 Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Bashkortostan (AWEB), Ufa  
 Elena Makhmutova, Chair  
 Association pour une Taxation des Transactions financières pour l'Aide  
 aux Citoyens (ATTAC France) [Association for the Taxation of Financial  
 Transactions for the Aid of Citizens – France], Paris  
 Christophe Aguiton, Responsible for International Relations  
 Bernard Cassen, President  
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