

Are NGOs Harbingers of Democratization in Tanzania?

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KEPA'S WORKING PAPERS 23, 2008

ISSN 1796-6469

ISBN 978-952-200-084-2 (PDF)

ISBN 978-952-200-083-5 (PB)

LAYOUT: JUKKA-PEKKA JÄNKÄLÄ

COVER: SUVI SAVOLAINEN



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Acronyms

CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Tanzanian ruling party)
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FemAct	Feminist Activist Coalition
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GONGO	Government Organized Non-Governmental Organization
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LHRC	Legal and Human Rights Centre
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MKUKUTA	Mkakati wa Kukuza Uchumi na Kuondoa Umaskini Taifa (Tanzanian PRSP II/NSGRP)
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture (Tanzania)
NSGRP	National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (PRSP II/MKUKUTA)
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PMS	Poverty Monitoring System
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
REPOA	Research for Poverty Alleviation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TACAIDS	Tanzania Council for AIDS
TANGO	Tanzania Association of Non-Governmental Organizations
TCDD	Tanzania Coalition for Debt and Development
TEN/MET	Tanzania Education Network/Mtandao wa Elimu
TGNP	Tanzania Gender Networking Programme
UCLAS	University College of Lands and Architectural Studies
UNGO	Union of Non-Governmental Organizations in Morogoro
VPO	Vice-President's Office (Tanzania)

1. Introduction

According to current development thinking of donors, civil society, and NGO as part of it, are seen as harbingers of democratization in the so-called developing countries. Civil society development has received increasing levels of attention from donors over the last few decades, and more and more development funds are being channelled to civil society organizations in developing countries. This paper aims to look at the question of what is the basis of all this, what is the actual role of NGOs in democratization? Do NGOs work effectively in order to strengthen democracy in the context of changing aid relations and the new architecture of aid and thus, do they respond to the expectations of the current donor discourse which, puts a lot of emphasis on the belief that a strong civil society can consolidate and strengthen democracy?

In the course of this paper I will argue that this discourse ignores the various conceptions and critique on civil society and is based on only one version, which is the liberal democratic one. It is also a very simplified and over-generalized version. For this current understanding, a strong and plural civil society is necessary to guard against the excesses of state power and sometimes even the mere existence of autonomous organizations is seen to strengthen the institutional arena and widen citizen participation as well as empower local communities. However, the picture looks quite different in present day Tanzania, which is the focus of this paper. The role of NGOs is more and more shaped by external donors and the global development policy and defined in the donor discourse on civil society. Before going to this discussion, I will take a brief look at the background, how did we come here?

In 1989, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the world entered a new era described as “the end of history”¹. Freeing economies from state intervention was presented as the way to restore global economic growth. Previous confidence in the state as the main source of development was questioned and more emphasis was put on markets and economic liberalization. Big government was a bad government, and the crisis of the welfare state

led to more interest in the private sector and independent associations.²

The “liberal project” of the Bretton Woods institutions with emphasis on free markets and privatization was brought to Africa at the end of the 1980s in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes. The ever-decreasing role of the state brought forth debate on civil society and “an associational revolution” of independent organizations, NGOs, to take on the task of service delivery, previously assigned to the state. With the successful struggles against authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe and Latin America and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the democratization potential of civil society was (re)discovered. Enormous expectations were attached to the role of NGOs and other civil society organizations in this new global policy agenda.

African states were seen “weak” or “soft” and driven by clientelist and patrimonial interests. The prevailing academic discourse and donor practices turned the focus outside the state, in the private sector and the civil society. The “bad governance” practised by African states was seen as the primary obstacle to development³. Further, lack of democracy has been identified as one of the most important reasons for the lack of development in Africa⁴. Thus, the discussion about democracy and civil society is not only about political rights but also about the future development of Africa. Although this paper focuses on Tanzania, the processes discussed here are not only characteristic of Tanzania, but similar processes are under way in other countries worldwide.

Decades of development assistance to Africa show little evidence of improvements in the lives of the people and the consolidation of democracy. In the case of Tanzania, the Household Budget Survey⁵ shows that there was no appreciable reduction of poverty in the last decade, particularly in the rural areas and inequalities have, in fact, increased. According to the Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2005 by REPOA and the Michigan State University⁶, less than half (42 percent) of the Tanzanian respondents gave a positive or relatively positive assessment of the state of democracy in their country. Thus, the 2005 survey gave a more negative assessment of the state of democracy compared to Afrobarometer surveys

¹ Fukuyama (1992).

² Tvedt (1998, 166).

³ Bayart (1993); Hyden (1983); Ake (1996).

⁴ Ake (1996).

⁵ National Bureau of Statistics (2001).

⁶ Chaligha (2005, 9).

conducted in 2003 and 2001. Further, in the 2005 survey, 70 percent of the respondents said that people have to be careful of what they say about politics “often” or “always”. In light of this situation, democratization issues are very relevant for Tanzania.

It is evident that how donors choose to operationalize the concept of civil society can be crucial in influencing the formation of civil society and, in particular, inhibiting or promoting indigenous forces of social and political change⁷. I will provide an analysis of the current situation in relation to the concept and meanings given to civil society. In other words, in the following chapters I will look at how this current donor understanding of civil society is played out in a specific African context: present day Tanzania.

In Chapter 2 I will look at the concept of civil society as a vehicle for democratic change in Africa. In Chapter 3 I will take a closer look at Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as a particular part of civil society taken on as the embodiment and practical agents of civil society. I will also present some of the NGO discussion in the Tanzanian context. In Chapter 4, the present donor discourse on civil society and democracy, the key concept of this paper, is presented. In Chapter 5 I will discuss some practical examples of donors and NGOs in Tanzania. In Chapter 6 I will take a closer look at the relations between the state and NGOs in Tanzania through three practical cases. The first case discusses the current NGO law and the process that led to it, the second case represents a conflict between the Minister of Education and an education NGO called HakiElimu and the third case looks at the role of NGOs in the context of the current aid architecture of poverty reduction strategies and civil society consultations. These practical cases are followed by conclusions.

This paper is based on my Master’s thesis “NGOs as harbingers of democratization? The case of Tanzania”⁸. The material for the thesis was collected between 2003 and 2006 in Tanzania when I was working as a Project Adviser with KEPA Tanzania and the interviews were conducted in Dar es Salaam in 2006.

2. Civil society and NGOs in the African development discourse

2.1 Spread of the concept of civil society: Optimist and pessimist views

Starting in the 1980s, the concept of civil society spread to the development discourse as well as practice. The exponential growth of civil society organizations or NGOs during that period was closely connected to this. Civil society has become an important political objective around the world and there has been a lot of discussion on whether there is civil society in Africa and how to strengthen the existing ones. The arguments vary from denial of the usefulness of the concept to suggestions for its adaptive use⁹.

Civil society optimists believe that civil society is an important political goal, and, regardless of its Western roots, it is still a valid model for development in Africa. Civil society has even been identified as “the missing key to sustained political reform, legitimate states and governments, improved governance, viable state-society and state-economy relationships and prevention of political decay”¹⁰. This optimist view supports the idea of civil society as a counterbalance or watchdog of the state. Many donor agencies and organizations embrace this view and the idea that civil society in Africa is a ‘good thing’ which needs to be encouraged and ‘built’ is widely spread¹¹.

The concept of civil society has also received a lot of critique, especially when looked at in the context of Africa. One strand of the critique is based on the fact that the concept was born in the countries of the West in connection to a certain historical moment and the changes brought about by it. Thus, the critics see the concept as not suitable to describe societies in different time, culture and political environment.

It has also been argued that many of the issues at stake have long been part of the legacy of

7 Howell (2000, 20).

8 Kukkamaa (2007).

9 Lewis (2002).

10 Harbeson et al. (1994, 1-2).

11 Lewis (2002, 575).

colonialism, even if the term itself was not employed until a few decades ago¹². The nineteenth century missionaries spoke in favour of civil liberties for colonized peoples, and the non-civil and barbarian was to be transformed to become civil. The ideas of civil society driven by Western donors can be seen as a continuation of the colonialist tradition.

It has also been pointed out that there are numerous examples of democratic regimes in Africa before colonial times and the principles of democracy and democratic values are neither novel nor alien, but rather, indigenous to Africa¹³. It is only the current liberal democratic form, based on multipartism and free elections, that is the focus of the current discourse on democracy and is contingent on the interests of donors. The idea of democracy is viewed almost exclusively as a Western concept of which African societies now stand in desperate need.

The civil society concept of donors is based on a (neo)liberal democratic framework where the state, civil society and the private sector are separate and autonomous spheres of the society¹⁴. When acting as a watchdog of the state and the markets, and as an arena for active citizens' participation, civil society is in a key position to bring about and to strengthen democratic change. The increasing weight of civil society is also connected to the perceived inability of the state to take care of its tasks. However, when operating with a certain version of civil society, the liberal democratic understanding of free and rational individuals coming together for common interests, the donors leave out ethnicity, class and tribe, but also other factors that affect social and political change in Africa.

The Comaroffs¹⁵ have also noted the connection between civil society and the institutions it presupposes with the rise of Western liberal democracy. But this was also a product of the emergence of the international bourgeois order, and more pervasively, of the capitalist relations that sustained it. Indeed, the viability of civil society hinges on the health of its middle classes, and thus, the Euro-American prescriptions for the establishment of civil order elsewhere turn on an imagined re-creation of the stages of Western civilization, focusing on one in particular: the consolidation of eighteenth- and nineteenth

century capitalist society, with its characteristic social and cultural arrangements, its right-bearing subjects, its refined manners¹⁶.

From this follows a paradox, the concept itself is connected to the middle-classes as the triumphant of civil society in formation and at the same time, the middle-class, elitist, nature of local associations in Africa is increasingly criticised.

2.2 Towards a more inclusive definition of civil society

It has been noted how in supporting the creation and development of organizations such as women's groups, credit associations, law societies, business associations and local, developmental NGOs, donors have defined civil society as an arena of formal and modern associations, distinct not only from the state but also from an amorphous array of informal and traditional associations¹⁷. Actually, this view resembles remarkably the old modernization theory that regards development as a process towards one general type of society similar to West. This discourse provides a normative vision of how things should be modelled to follow Western experiences.

One of the points that the cynics raise is whether a more inclusive definition of civil society is needed in the African context. This view points out that perhaps we need to include the "traditional" primordial sphere in the definition¹⁸. This would include ethnic organizations, patronage networks, and even some traditional authorities.

According to Orvis¹⁹, patron-client networks are so pervasive in Africa because they provide crucial resources to all involved. Africans gain employment, political position, and help in a crisis from their patron-client networks. The nature of patron-client relationships takes the form of the reciprocal obligations of moral ethnicity. Strong but imprecise norms demand that patrons provide essential resources to clients when needed, while clients provide loyalty and support to patrons as asked. These patron-client relationships are generally considered antithetical to both democracy and civil society. These kinds of networks are informal groups that pursue their

12 Comaroff & Comaroff (1999, 16).

13 Nwauwa (2005).

14 Howell (2000, 8).

15 Comaroff & Comaroff (1999, 18-19).

16 Hardt (1995, 42) in Comaroff & Comaroff (1999, 19).

17 Howell (2000, 14).

18 For example Orvis (2001).

19 *Ibid.* (2001, 24).

collective interests vis-à-vis the state, often retaining some autonomy from the state, and providing a means- however imperfect- of both political participation and accountability. Kasfir²⁰ has also noted “how little of African politics the conventional concept of civil society captures”. He suggests dropping the normative elements in the definition, in order to include ethnic and other types of political activity that are usually ignored.

It has also been argued that concepts such as class and gender contribute far more to understanding recent political change than can the concept of civil society²¹. For example, Tripp²² has shown that the values, dynamics and extent of women’s organizations in Tanzania, and the political values and capacities women get from them, are best understood in terms of gender, as is their contribution to democratization in Tanzania. In fact, the women’s movement has been the strongest civil society movement in Tanzania.

Further, the state-civil society dichotomy is regarded overstated, as we will also see in the course of this paper. Ferguson²³ notes that the assumption of the existence of a vertical state/society opposition is false. Power in Africa has long been exercised by entities other than the state, most recently the World Bank and other international financial institutions, alongside Western donors. Representatives of this view argue that the dichotomy between state and civil society does not reflect realities in Africa²⁴. The notion of civil society would only apply if it could be shown that there were meaningful institutional separations between a well organized civil society and a relatively autonomous bureaucratic state. Instead, constant interpenetration, or straddling of the one by the other is observed.

Many critics of the concept of civil society in the African context argue that African societies are not “modern” enough for such Western phenomenon to flourish. Or, on the practical level, that they are in need of capacity building. However, these characteristics should not be seen as traditional or primordial, but as part of contemporary African societies²⁵. Piot²⁶ argues that when describing African societies as traditional, we fail

to get at local understandings of social relations. African societies should be described as composed of individuals constantly involved in, and defined through, relations. Additionally, these theories assume “a bounded society - and thus presumes that it can account for social practice by reference to dynamics that are strictly internal to the society at hand”²⁷. This assumption contradicts this paper, which looks at the current context of postcolonial order of things and development aid, which affect the local Tanzanian civil society as much as patterns of local social life. The Tanzanian civil society can be looked as fashioned within, not outside, the encounter between Europe and Africa.

It is interesting in all these accounts described above, that they argue that there is something very different at work in the societies in Africa that we cannot adequately describe with Western concepts and understanding. The fact that the concept of civil society is part of “modern ideology” and is permeated by individualism implies that in order to understand African societies, in this case the Tanzanian society, we need to move beyond the existing conceptualizations and focus on what is actually happening on the ground.

In this chapter I have tried to emphasize one general point: the Western conception of civil society is riddled with contradictions and paradoxes and is increasingly regarded as unsuitable to describe the current situation in Africa. However, this issue is not considered by donors and the international aid industry in their quest to support civil society in Africa. In the next chapter, I will take a look at NGOs as the manifestation of civil society.

20 Kasfir (1998).

21 Allen (1997).

22 In Harbeson et al. (1994).

23 Ferguson (1998, 3-4) in Lewis (2002, 577).

24 Chabal & Daloz (1999, 17).

25 For example Olivier de Sardan (2001; 2003)

26 Piot (1999, 18).

27 *Ibid.*, 17.

3. Non-governmental organizations

In the current development discourse, civil society based on the Western model of organized associations is seen as a precondition for development and democracy. NGOs appear to be almost natural institutional embodiments of the liberal conception of the term. “Non-profit organizations”, “non-governmental organizations” or “private voluntary organizations” are seen as representatives of the “civil society sector” and all these concepts are often used interchangeably.

However, as the concept of civil society, the term “NGO” has no clear and precise definition. The term itself defines this kind of associations through a negation, what they are not: NGOs are by definition non-governmental. Or, this negative conception tends “to portray the government negatively, conversely implying a positive image of NGOs”²⁸. This is a central part of the neo-liberal discourse on civil society embodied in the current donor discourse.

Most of the research on NGOs in Africa has been done within the donor agencies, with an objective of responding to the challenges that donors face in their work. Thus, they do not question the underlying assumptions of the prevailing discourse. Another different approach to studying African NGOs has concentrated on labelling and classifying them. These kinds of studies also rest on the normative view of what type of NGOs are “good”²⁹ and what kind of NGOs are “bad”³⁰.

In the Tanzanian context, the government discourse on NGOs is based on the legal framework provided to guide the work of NGOs in the country³¹. The NGO Act of 2002 defines an NGO as:

“a voluntary grouping of individuals or organization which is autonomous, non-partisan, non profit making which is organized locally at the grassroots, national or international levels with for the purpose of enhancing or promoting

economic, environmental, social or cultural development or protecting environment; lobbying or advocating on issues of public interest of a group of individuals or organization, and includes non-governmental organizations established under the auspices of any religious organization or faith propagating organization, trade union, sports club, political party, or community-based organization; but does not include a trade union, a social club or a sports club, a political party, a religious organization or a community-based organization”³²

As the Tanzanian government’s definition shows, NGOs are often differentiated from people’s organizations or grassroots organizations. In the Tanzanian context, these are called community based organizations (CBOs), which are local and informal membership-based groupings. The definition also excludes trade unions, political parties and religious organizations, which are normally seen as part of civil society.

Tvedt³³ defines NGOs as “all organizations within the aid channel that are institutionally separated from the state apparatus and are non-profit-distributing”. The emphasis on the aid channel is central to Tvedt’s definition. However, this could be disputed depending on how the aid channel itself is defined. Does that mean only those NGOs that receive funds through the aid channel? If that is the case, many of the NGOs included in the Tanzanian government definition would not be included in Tvedt’s definition. In the Tanzanian context, it seems that Tvedt’s definition is not sufficient, as it can be argued that there are hundreds or thousands of NGOs that do not receive donor funding, but have registered as NGOs *in order to seek* donor funding. This is an important distinction, and these organizations are unquestionably part of the aid channel and affected by it. However, Tvedt’s definition allows us “to understand how the aid channel interacts with society at large, how it impacts on the organizational landscape in a particular country and how it is influenced by particular traditions”³⁴.

Tvedt³⁵ also lists NGO “articles of faith” or a “list of dogmas” on which the position and standing of the NGO channel within the aid context rests. In comparison with governments, NGOs are claimed to be better at:

²⁸ Theunis (1992, 16).

²⁹ For example, people’s organizations, grassroots movements, and so on.

³⁰ For example government NGOs or GONGOs, briefcase NGOs, family NGOs, and so on.

³¹ NGO Policy of 2000 and NGO Act of 2002.

³² United Republic of Tanzania (2002, 4).

³³ Tvedt (1998, 12).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 128-129.

- 1) reaching the poor;
- 2) obtaining true participation of the beneficiaries;
- 3) achieving the correct relationship between development processes and outcomes;
- 4) working with the people and thus choosing the correct form of assistance for them;
- 5) being flexible and responsive;
- 6) working with and strengthening local institutions;
- 7) achieving outcomes at less cost;
- 8) ability and preparedness to experiment with unorthodox ideas and practices;
- 9) patience coupled with a strategic perspective;
- 10) ability to undertake people-centred research;
- 11) faster learning through, and application of, experience and
- 12) better ability to articulate rural needs.

However, “after two decades of evaluations and reports of thousands of NGO projects, research has not been able to draw definite conclusions or to show empirically that NGOs possess these comparative advantages”³⁶. Further, the main problem is that the organizations are viewed as if they possess some universal characteristics, regardless their history or the kind of relations they enter into with states and beneficiaries. This does not take into account the heterogeneity of the sector.

Recent literature on NGOs is full of studies that aim to break the “articles of faith” or the perceived “comparative advantage” of NGOs. These studies claim that NGOs do not perform as effectively as it had been assumed in terms of poverty reach, cost effectiveness, sustainability, flexibility and popular participation. Even when NGOs’ service provision costs are cheaper than the government’s, they fail to reach most of the needy due to limited resources, smallness of scale, localism and limited capacity.³⁷ Michael³⁸ has examined why African NGOs have not gained the power we would expect them to have - the power that their counterparts in other parts of the developing world now wield. Even though the prominence of NGOs in the continent has risen, we are yet to see reorganization of power

relations in African development. African NGOs remain weak.

By using NGOs as channels to implement programmes and channel aid, donors can in fact weaken these organizations as representative and accountable institutions within civil society. Further, it is argued that “they have become reduced to creating safety nets for the poor, no longer fulfilling a transformative function”³⁹. Hyden⁴⁰ notes that NGO debates may have been “too instrumental”, with too great a focus on development management issues and too little on how such organizations contribute to democracy, in particular how they reduce neo-patrimonialism or the private appropriation of rights and advantages given by the state.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ For example Bebbington & Riddell (1997); Igoe & Kelsall (2005).

³⁸ Michael (2004).

³⁹ Igoe & Kelsall (2005, 17).

⁴⁰ Hyden (1997, 32).

4. Donor discourse on civil society and democracy

The prevailing version of democracy within the donor circles grants civil society a central role as the liason between the state and its citizens. It also regards NGOs as a significant part of civil society, which they also strengthen through their activities, which in turn supports the democratization process. For this discourse, a strong and plural civil society is necessary to guard against the excesses of state power and sometimes even the mere existence of autonomous organizations is seen to strengthen the institutional arena and widen citizen participation as well as empower local communities.

According to the donor view, it is believed “that the existence of an active civil society is crucial to the vitality of political democracy” and “the nurturing of civil society is widely perceived as the most effective means of controlling repeated abuses of state power, holding rulers accountable to their citizens, and establishing the foundations for durable democratic government”⁴¹. This view, thus, is constructed of the following elements and it can be seen to transform abstract ideas of social theory into a normative prescription:

- Civil society is a separate and autonomous sphere of plurality of associations in a society divided into three independent spheres: the state, the market and civil society.
- Civil society guards against the excesses of state power and assures state accountability, by
- Widening citizen participation,
- Empowering local communities and
- Enhancing good governance and democratic rights.

Too little caution might be exercised in jumping from this list of potential activities and roles to the actual formation of democracy – the causative links between civil society and democracy are by no means clear. For example Encarnacion⁴²

notes that “the current faith in civil society’s capacity to affect the consolidation of democracy has been overestimated and the precise manner of how civil society interacts with the democratization process has been misunderstood as well. Indeed, the prevailing view of civil society as an infallible democratic miracle worker is arguably the most problematic conventional wisdom to be attached to civil society in the last years. It amounts to a myth.”

The donor view is acted out in various forms. Often it is part of the democracy and good governance policy package transferred to Africa. It has taken the form of supporting the monitoring of government programmes by NGOs or providing capacity building to local NGOs through organizational support and training as well as technical advice. It is widely acknowledged that it is from the aid system and its ideological underpinnings that the term “civil society” has actually gained so much currency during the last few decades. As we will see later, this donor view forms a central part of the current aid consensus and is played out in various donor policies and programmes in Tanzania, as elsewhere in Africa and international development cooperation.

⁴¹ Kasfir (1998, 1).

⁴² Encarnacion (2003, 4).

5. Donors and NGOs in Tanzania

According to the prevailing donor discourse, as we have seen above, society is divided into three independent sectors: the state, the market and the civil society – each with a different function. A central part of this view is the spreading belief that “only civil societies can do certain things, or perform certain functions best”⁴³. NGOs were seen to perform more efficiently than government agencies at responding to local needs. However, in countries like Tanzania, it is important to add one more sector into this triangle model, that of donors. As Igoe and Kelsall note, the role of donors in African societies is obscured by the fact that officially they have no role⁴⁴. Further, the idea that donors stand outside African societies usually revolves around assertions that they cannot interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign governments. “The reality of the matter is starkly different, however, since donors interfere in the internal affairs of African countries all the time”⁴⁵. During the course of this paper, we will also see how this donor discourse moulds civil society and NGOs, as well as the government, in practice.

Tanzanian NGOs are heavily donor dependent and look for funds from donor agencies. According to various estimates, official sources account for the greatest proportion of funding to NGOs in Tanzania. For example in neighbouring Kenya, it has been estimated that 80-95 percent of NGOs are dependent on donor funds⁴⁶.

The central question is what kind of civil society are the donors supporting in Tanzania. As several studies have noted⁴⁷, when supporting civil society, donors put a lot of emphasis on control, accessibility and monitoring in the selection of supported organizations and this often leads to the creation of professional project administrators who have to deal with massive administrative demands from the donors. In addition, there are no criteria to judge NGOs, so most of the donors do what other donors are doing: support

the same NGOs. This has led to a rapid growth of some urban professional NGOs at the expense of the majority of rural organizations.

Michael⁴⁸ has reported the low confidence donors have for local NGOs and sites how donors complain that they have difficulties in finding suitable NGOs to fund. This might be one of the reasons for the concentration of donor funding for a select few organizations. For example, a donor basket fund established to support civil society organizations’ engagement in various activities during the 2000 general elections in Tanzania ended up supporting only 24 large NGOs because of a lack of quality proposals. The Review of the Basket Fund Election 2000⁴⁹ concluded that the basket ended up “supporting weak organizations with good proposals and dismissed some strong and credible organizations with weak proposals”. This is one of the central challenges in the competitive funding modality based on funding proposals that many donors use. This has also led to capacity building programmes focusing on training NGOs in proposal writing and reporting skills.

This approach has led to opportunistic approaches when NGOs are looking for funds: currently in Tanzania there is a lot of donor money available for activities combating HIV/AIDS. These kind of activities are supported by organizations like the Clinton Foundation, the Global Fund and TACAIDS. According to Reuters⁵⁰, “worldwide Aids funding has jumped from \$250 million in 1995 to more than \$8 billion in 2005”. The Regional Commissioner of Mbeya was complaining that almost all NGOs registered in his region work on HIV/AIDS and orphans, the results of poverty, but do not concentrate on poverty eradication⁵¹. In some cases, certain groups created by a policy intervention of donors might not ultimately fit in well with the prevailing political vision. For example, an analysis on the work of an INGO in a hunter-gatherer community in Southern Africa found within it an assumption that Western civil society ideals are lacking locally, and therefore, need to be transferred and built⁵². This is a common line of thinking among many donor supported programmes in Tanzania, which focus on *building the local civil society*.

43 Keane (1998, 35).

44 Igoe & Kelsall (2005, 23-24).

45 Ibid.

46 Edwards & Hulme (1997, 7).

47 For example Hossain et al. (2003, 104-105).

48 Michael (2004).

49 Institute of Education for Democracy (2000, 14) in Hossain et al. (2003, 105).

50 The African (2006).

51 Mwaibale (2006).

52 Garland (1999).

Lack of capacity is widely seen among donors as the most prominent impediment for the development of civil society in Tanzania. According to Gould and Ojanen⁵³, “lack of ‘capacity’ is, among other things, a generalized and depoliticized means of legitimizing external intervention”. They further argue that capacity-building interventions constitute the exercise of disciplinary power – of introducing standards of “proper” behaviour. This trend in the neo-liberal governance extends the reach of external regulation to the quality of state-society relations as donor agencies fund and implement schemes for building the capacity of the local civil society to participate in consultation, policy advocacy and other development policy processes⁵⁴. This is seen as a process whereby donor agencies attempt to mould the state-society relationship into a model that supports the new aid relations and building of consensus for the current approach. I will come back to this view later on.

In the next chapters I will look at this discussion through specific Tanzanian cases. As the space is limited here, I am not providing a historical analysis of the Tanzanian situation, as that can be found elsewhere⁵⁵. However, briefly, usually the development of civil society in Tanzania is divided into three phases⁵⁶. These are the colonial period, the post-colonial period up to 1990, and the period after 1990 when the country entered an era of broad liberalism in all fronts (economic, political and social development). I will add a fourth phase, a period which is characterised by increased donor involvement and a democracy role ascribed to advocacy oriented civil society organizations as well as the explosion of the number of NGOs, a process which has started since the beginning of the new millennium and the focus of this paper.

5.1 Emergence of the NGO sector in Tanzania

Gibbon⁵⁷ has stressed that “the heightened presence of NGOs and community development groups should not be seen simply as a popular response from ‘below’ to the state’s increasing

inability to deliver ‘development’”. He identifies two central factors that are “the partial disintegration of much of the classical post-colonial pattern of rural production and exchange” and “a parallel disintegration of the living standards of public sector administrative and professional staff. These trends have been responsible for a massive diversification of survival activities amongst former peasant and other petit-bourgeois strata”. He notes “voluntary” and/or “community” organizations as one kind of activity with “promising returns”.

Many of the NGOs emerged as a response to growth in political and especially financial incentives on the part of the donor community. Tvedt⁵⁸ criticizes functional approaches that see the growth of the NGO sector in a given country as a response to state or market failures. Instead, it should be seen as a response to increased donor funding. NGOs “have mushroomed in response to external funds and rapid political changes, both concerning types of organization, value orientations, development rhetoric and in which sector they work”⁵⁹.

According to a brief issued by the NGO Council in 2005, there were about 700 NGOs re-registered under the new NGO law of 2002. According to the National NGO Policy⁶⁰, there are about 3,000 local and international NGOs in Tanzania. The estimations vary widely and some estimates go up to 8,000 NGOs⁶¹, but it could be argued that the 700 or so most recently re-registered ones represent the most active part of Tanzanian NGOs⁶².

Furthermore, the NGO sector is not evenly distributed in geographical terms. According to a NGO mapping made by a Tanzanian NGO, Hakikazi Catalyst⁶³, poorer regions in Tanzania have fewer NGOs. The research shows that Dar es Salaam, while having 7 percent of the population, hosts a whopping 45 percent of the NGOs. The regions where the percent of NGOs is higher than the percent of the population are Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Zanzibar and Kilimanjaro. The same trend seems to apply within urban areas. For example in a study commissioned by the Ur-

53 Gould & Ojanen (2003, 83).

54 *Ibid.*, 84.

55 For example Toni Haapanen (2007) or my full Master’s thesis Kukkamaa (2007).

56 For example Kiondo & Mtatifikolo (1999, 4-6).

57 Gibbon (1994, 16).

58 Tvedt (1998, 53).

59 *Ibid.*, 64.

60 United Republic of Tanzania (2001, 4).

61 Mercer (2002).

62 This figure consists of both international and local NGOs.

63 Hakikazi Catalyst (2002a, 3).

ban and Rural Planning Department of UCLAS⁶⁴ it was noted, that most CBOs and NGOs in Dar es Salaam were found and operated in middle to high income areas. The study also noted that the general thinking that NGOs are established by the poor urban residents was not supported. Even if the poor created their associations, operations would be rather difficult because some of the social networks needed to access funds are hardly available to or sustained by the poor.

We will come back to these points below and argue that these professional urban NGOs, that constitute the most visible part of the Tanzanian civil society, have an effect vis à vis the state, but this has nothing to do with the donor view of empowering the people and widening avenues for participation. The present system hardly has an effect on the existing power structures and, thus, on democratization.

5.2 Service delivery or advocacy?

The older or more traditional service delivery approach of NGOs is much criticized nowadays. Service delivery activities of NGOs are seen to maintain the status quo and relieve the state from its responsibility to provide social services for the people. For example, it has been stated that “voluntary provision of social services is full of holes: incomplete coverage, amateurism, high turnover, duplication, unsustainability, differing approaches, core area concentration and problems with equitable distribution”⁶⁵. Similar points have been found in numerous evaluation reports. The evaluations commissioned by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the development activities of Finnish NGOs in Kenya and Tanzania⁶⁶ focus on the unsustainability of the service provision projects of Finnish NGOs and their local partner organizations due to inadequate planning and participation, as well as low levels in administrative and managerial skills. Thus, these projects have not been more effective and efficient than government service provision. In most of the cases, NGO services are not provided for free, and user fees are collected for maintenance. Also, unequal and patronizing donor-re-

ipient relationships, elsewhere referred to as a domineering ‘big-brother’ relationship, seemed to feature in many of the studied projects.

I would argue that the Tanzanian NGO field is divided into mainly rural service delivery organizations and urban advocacy organizations, which are highly professional and elite-based. The latter group comprises of the handful of organizations that most of the donors are supporting, and they do not lack resources to carry out their operations. “Many Dar es Salaam based advocacy coalitions represent elite groups of networked NGOs, plugged into regional and international networks, familiar with donors and government”⁶⁷. Clearly those within the so called aid channel described above. Further, these networks share the same players. For example many of the members of TGNP are members of TANGO or TCCD, and so on. Mercer⁶⁸ notes how “these NGOs have become increasingly disconnected from their constituencies as they shift their gaze upwards and outwards, enveloping themselves in the concerns of international development discourse and donor-managed reforms” and argues that “while engagement with domestic policy making is important, NGO participation in the donor-managed reform process nevertheless reflects the interests of donors and the IFIs more than the concerns of poor Tanzanians. This, among others is a clear indication “that the gap between Tanzania’s urban NGO elite and the grassroots constituencies they claim to represent will continue to grow”⁶⁹.

The Tanzanian NGO networks, such as TANGO, TCDD and TGNP, have been formed in response to wider changes in Tanzania’s political economy. The most significant being the lengthy and complicated reform process being undertaken by the government, under the supervision of the IFIs and the international donor community. It has been argued that one of the strong points of the reforms, and the PRSP in particular, has been in providing an incentive for NGOs to work together towards a common goal. Several of the advocacy networks have been established in response to donor initiatives, like TCDD which aims to bring NGOs together in order for them to have a collective input into the drafting of the PRSP. However, all this raises the following questions: “How sustainable is an NGO coalition if it has been initiated externally?” and “How effec-

64 Urban and Rural Planning Department, University College of Lands and Architectural Studies (1999, 6).

65 Robinson & White (1997, 2).

66 Kunguru et al. (2002) and University Consultancy Bureau (2004).

67 Mercer (2004, 55).

68 Ibid., 56.

69 Ibid.

tive can it be in representing the interests of the disenfranchised if the agenda is being set elsewhere?”⁷⁰ These are important points that can be applied to a wider context and NGOs are given only so much room for manoeuvre within the parameters defined by donors and the state. I will come back to these points below.

6. NGOs, state and donors in Tanzania

In general, the relationship between the government and NGOs in Tanzania has been described as that of suspicion and mistrust. The changing aid relations, that include the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process and direct budget support, might even have increased the government being more defensive and suspicious towards NGOs as they become more active in scrutinising government performance. On the other hand, it can be argued that the government also needs NGOs even more than before to legitimize the participation of civil society in its plans and programmes. As Abdelrahman⁷¹ has stressed, “the perceived role of the state in dominant conceptions of civil society is extremely naïve in assuming that the state can be neutral and that it will restrict itself to the role of guarantor of the social order”. Further she notes, as will be shown in this chapter, that the boundaries between state and civil society are never fixed, but changing all the time. Also, Fowler⁷² notes that “state sensitivity and regime responses set an important limit to NGO influence on political processes, and official aid agencies’ promotion of a political role for the NGO community is bound to impact on relations between NGOs and the state”.

In the following chapters, I will present three detailed cases which paint a picture of the current ambivalent relations between the Tanzanian government and the NGO sector. The first one is the lengthy NGO legislation process aimed at, on the one hand, providing an enabling environment for NGOs, and on the other, controlling and coordinating NGO activities. The second case describes a conflict between the Minister of Education and an education NGO, HakiElimu. Finally, I will look at the implications of the changing aid relations to the relations between the government and NGOs. This will reinforce the picture of the current ambivalent relations between the government and NGOs, and we will see the actual state of the Tanzanian NGO sector with regards to democratization. The empirical evidence here also suggest that the state has a much more active role than the donor discourse on civil society

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷¹ Abdelrahman (2001, 30-31).

⁷² Fowler (1993, 330).

suggests, and I will show how the state, as well as donors in Tanzania, shape the context in ways that limit the choices available to NGOs. The control that governments exert over the NGO registration process and their ability to monitor and deregister local NGOs is the most obvious manifestation of state power over NGOs. Power “would allow African NGOs to criticise or engage with their governments without jeopardy, to be valued, recognised and rewarded partners of government in national development activity, and to have real policy influence over the governments in their countries”⁷³. This is not the case in present day Tanzania.

6.1 NGO legislation

The relationship between the government and civil society in Tanzania has historically been characterized by the state’s constant efforts to create political hegemony⁷⁴. With the multi-party politics, liberalization and democratization, the government has formally lost much of their former control over civil society. However, the government has not either given up and new control mechanisms are put in place. The most notable being the recent NGO Act of 2002.

The Aid Management and Accountability Programme (AMAP) of the Ministry of Finance has been linked to the emerging government efforts to control NGOs in the multi-party era⁷⁵. AMAP was to develop mechanisms to check the accountability of NGOs for donor funds channelled through them. The Embassy of Norway in Dar es Salaam is recorded to have pioneered and provided initial funding for the programme. However, AMAP did not last long because of emerging conflict of interests and the process was transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and later, in 1995, to the Vice-President’s Office (VPO) which hosted the NGO Unit⁷⁶. By July 1997, the process had taken a completely new shape in the development of the National NGO Policy drafted by a National Steering Committee.

The NGO legislation process started from the initiative of the Ministry of Finance, which is the organ coordinating government cooperation with donors. However, the aid flows going

to NGOs are not reported to the Ministry- actually, they are not reported anywhere. Thus, it has been noted that the government wanted to start the legislation process in order to control and to have access to these huge amounts of uncoordinated funds flowing to NGOs from abroad.

Until 2002, the activities of NGOs and other civil society organizations were guided by a number of ordinances dating back to the colonial times. This system caused a lot of confusion and according to the NGO Policy⁷⁷, “allowed for misuse of power, fraud and abuse”. The Policy states that “all existing laws dealing with NGO matters shall be harmonized and a new law be enacted to cater for NGOs”. Since a comprehensive description of the NGO Policy process can be found elsewhere⁷⁸, I will not go to the details here and instead, concentrate on the more recent NGO Act of 2002.

While the development of the NGO Policy has been seen as an important indication of improving relations between the government and civil society⁷⁹, the consequent law, on the other hand, was a backlash against these former developments. The drafting of the NGO Policy started in 1996 in order to guide the growth and operations of the NGO sector. The government recognised the need to work together with NGOs as “partners in development” and the main objective of the policy was to provide an enabling environment for NGOs to operate. The existing laws for registration were outdated and the government wanted to facilitate better cooperation between NGOs and the government as well as between NGOs themselves.

Additionally, the policy aimed to put in place registration procedures, which are transparent, decentralized and which will facilitate better coordination of NGOs while safeguarding the freedom of association as well as to strengthen the relationship between the government and civil society. The policy drafted institutional mechanisms for NGO coordination, namely an NGO Coordination Board and an NGO National Body, which are explained in more details in the NGO Act of 2002. The most notable item in the Policy was that “a new law shall be enacted to cater for the current deficiencies in NGOs registration, de-registration, appeals and termination”⁸⁰.

⁷³ Michael (2004, 20).

⁷⁴ Lange et al. (2000, 18).

⁷⁵ Kaiza (2005, 25).

⁷⁶ Currently the unit is hosted by the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children.

⁷⁷ United Republic of Tanzania (2001).

⁷⁸ Lange et al. (2000).

⁷⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁸⁰ United Republic of Tanzania (2001).

The drafting process of the consequent law was very different from the participatory process conducted during the preparation of the Policy. The NGO Act was unanimously approved by the parliament in November 2002. It was rushed to the same parliament vote as the Terrorism Law, and NGOs had not seen the final version of the law. A few selected NGOs had taken part in one government consultation earlier, after which the Vice President's Office (VPO) promised them time to prepare their own comments- a promise which never materialized. President Moi of Kenya was also present at the parliamentary session, and gave an impressive speech on linkages between opposition parties and NGOs. During the debate in the parliament, many examples were given on NGOs performing contrary to their constitutions. For example, a case was cited, whereby a person whose NGO was given a large amount of money, had deposited the money into his personal account⁸¹. Another case was also cited where an NGO used only 5 million Tanzanian shillings⁸² for the intended HIV-project and pocketed the rest from a budget of 28 million.

A group of NGOs urged the government to postpone the tabling of the Bill until a larger proportion of NGOs has given their input⁸³. The approval of the law led to disapproval from NGOs, which heightened in November 2002, and the NGO Bill Core Group was formed to lobby the government and parliament for amendments to the new law. The Core Group was formed by several prominent Tanzanian NGOs, such as Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), TANGO, Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), HakiArdhi and HakiElimu. The campaign was not successful. However, on several occasions, the NGO Bill Campaign has been seen as the starting point for NGO coalition building around issues of national policy concerns⁸⁴.

The NGO Act Coalition regarded the new law as unconstitutional, as it makes registration of NGOs compulsory. They emphasized the fundamental freedom of association and expression enshrined in the Constitution. As some of the sections of the law were changed in the tabling process, the NGOs were also concerned that no changes were made accordingly to other sections of the law, and hence the internal contradictions in the law. NGOs also saw the NGO Act as "con-

trary to the roles of civil society organizations specified in key Government policies, including the NGO Policy of 2001 itself"⁸⁵.

The NGOs also criticised the following deficiencies in the law⁸⁶: The title of the law: "*An Act to provide for registration of Non-Governmental Organizations with a view to coordinate and regulate activities of NGOs and to provide for related matters*". The NGOs' claim that the title itself buries the positive intentions of the Policy, and the emphasis is rather on control and regulation; The law is silent on the already existing laws currently used to register and bind various NGOs⁸⁷; The law provides financing for the NGO Board (of mainly government representatives) but none to the NGO Council (of mainly NGO representatives); The right to appeal to the courts of law is denied and the minister responsible has the final say in all appeals; Section stating that NGOs shall be compelled to respect the people's norms and traditions and public interest, concepts which are not clearly defined. These kinds of restrictions can curtail NGOs working against customs, such as female genital mutilation or domestic violence; The punishments for not complying with the requirements are too harsh and unclear, including imprisonment. The Act recognizes NGOs as legal entities, but maintains that the liability will be that of the leaders of the NGO and not of the organization; The law requires NGOs to harmonize their activities in light of national development plans and thus curtails freedom of expressions and undermines the non-governmental nature of NGOs and finally, The law requires all NGOs to submit audited accounts on an annual basis, a requirement many small and forming NGOs may not be able to fulfil⁸⁸.

The report of the NGO Act Campaign⁸⁹ notes an interesting response from the government. Some NGO activists gathered in Dodoma, the capital city, to lobby Members of Parliament (MPs), were intimidated by security men, even some pro-NGO MPs "were intimidated within the parliament", and as the lobbying campaign was a new phenomenon to Tanzanian politics, some MPs "viewed it as disturbance and lack of

81 Reuben (2002).

82 1 Euro = 1825 Tanzanian Shillings (3.4.2008).

83 Pact Tanzania (2003, 5).

84 For example Kaiza (2005).

85 NGO Act Coalition (2002).

86 Pact Tanzania (2003, 8).

87 To date, this concern has still not been addressed and is an area of confusion.

88 This concern has somehow been solved during the implementation phase, as the smallest organizations with limited budgets do not need to provide audited accounts. However, the law has not been changed.

89 Pact Tanzania (2003, 7).

respect” from the side of the NGOs. The report also notes an interesting response from the opposition. NGOs were told that “any motion that will be moved by the opposition regardless of its sensitiveness and importance to the Tanzanian society shall be opposed by the ruling-party MPs”⁹⁰.

NGOs continued the campaign for amendments. In the Consultative Group meeting in December 2002, President Mkapa responded to donor criticism against the law, commenting that as most of the NGOs “have emails”, they are urban centred, rich, and hence, detached from the grassroots”⁹¹. In a donor statement on governance⁹² it is stated:

“We welcomed the Government’s NGO Policy and were encouraged by the level of participation in the process leading to the Policy. When the NGO Bill was under preparation, the key was to get the right balance between regulation and creating an enabling environment in which NGOs can operate. Unfortunately, we can not agree that the NGO Act as approved by the Parliament meets this test. We also feel that the process of tabling the Bill in Dodoma did not follow the spirit of openness and consultation. We are concerned about the tone of the Act and its implications for the NGO sector in Tanzania”.

Donors also urged the government to organize additional consultations and to ensure that the law “will be implemented without contradicting the NGO Policy, the Constitution, and international standards on human rights and freedoms of association and expression”. The NGOs agreed to go on with activities concentrating on preparing a full review of the law with international non-profit law experts and to draft an alternative law, as well as to disseminate information to the wider public through district awareness campaigns and a publicity campaign. They also decided to refuse to take part in preparing the rules and regulations for the law, as they would not recognize it without amendments. In 2005, the parliament amended the law, but the changes were very small and disappointing for the NGOs. Positive changes were defining the term “non-partisan” to mean “not seeking political power or campaign for any political party”. “Not for profit making” was changed to “not-for-

profit sharing”. Other amendments called for by the NGOs were not considered.⁹³

By 2007, the NGO campaign had “died out”. Lack of donor funding for the process is not the least of reasons for this campaign fatigue. The government still aims to control NGOs and is very suspicious of their activities, as for example the case of HakiElimu in the next chapter illustrates. In February 2006, the newly elected President Jakaya Kikwete maintained the government’s commitment to scrutinizing NGOs’ accounts. He said that the government had realised that “some HIV/AIDS orphans’ NGOs spend donor funds on personal comforts, instead of channelling to would-be beneficiaries”⁹⁴. Examples like this are continuously cited in the Tanzanian press. Titles like “Arusha MPs fault NGOs”⁹⁵ and “Project meant to help the poor said to misuse funds”⁹⁶ are seen on an almost daily basis.

All these examples have led to public mistrust on NGOs. The general public, represented in newspaper articles and letters to the editor, continuously express the tarnished image of NGOs in Tanzania. NGOs are seen as self-serving organizations, “doing little more than creating jobs for friends and relatives” or being there “to tap money from donors abroad, that eventually ends up in the pockets of CBO and NGO officials”⁹⁷. Or as one letter to the editor put it, “NGOs have become gateways for quick riches”⁹⁸.

Ndegwa⁹⁹ points out in the case of NGO campaign against a similar kind of legislation in Kenya that the NGOs formed a coalition and decided to mount “oppositional action only after their own existence had been threatened”. This “suggests that NGOs are not inherently opposed to a repressive state”. In Tanzania, NGOs did not oppose the Anti-Terrorism Law which also curtails citizens’ freedoms. It is only when their own work was threatened that they started to protest and “make noise”.

90 *Ibid.*, 8.

91 *Ibid.*, Annex 9.

92 *Consultative Group Meeting (2002)*.

93 *Semezana (2005, 12)*.

94 *The Guardian (2006)*.

95 *Ubwani (2006)*.

96 *Mgamba (2006)*.

97 *The Guardian Editorial (2004)*.

98 *Mwalundele (2005)*.

99 *Nwauwa (1996, 52)*.

6.2 The case of HakiElimu

HakiElimu¹⁰⁰ belongs to the most active and professional NGOs working in the education sector in Tanzania. It works “towards more children having access to quality education through facilitating the participation of the public in the sector’s management. It has also been involved in researching and assessing the sector’s performance”.¹⁰¹ In September 2005, the Minister of Education and Culture, Joseph Mungai, banned HakiElimu from performing any activities related to basic education in Tanzania. According to the Education Circular No. 5 of 2005, titled “*Interdiction of HakiElimu from undertaking and publishing studies regarding Tanzania’s schools*”, the Ministry banned “HakiElimu from undertaking and publishing any articles/studies regarding Tanzanian schools” and threatened to “take stern measures against any school/college which does not adhere to these directives”. According to the Minister, HakiElimu’s “advertisements on TV and radio¹⁰² paint the image of education system negatively”¹⁰³.

In addition, a report published by HakiElimu, “*Three years of PEDP Implementation: Key Findings from Government Reports*”¹⁰⁴, angered the Minister of Education. According to the report, primary school enrolment was lower in 2004 compared to 2003. Additionally, the report shows that while school enrolment and teacher recruitment have generally been on an upward trend, it is the poor quality of education, institutional weaknesses and sustainability concerns that cast a shadow on the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP)¹⁰⁵. The Minister of Education and Culture was quoted as saying that HakiElimu was “waging a propaganda war against gains made in the education sector” and accusing the NGO on publishing the findings “merely meant to impress the donors”. He also said that “the Ministry was ready to work with NGOs as stakeholders but not those undermining

achievements already made”¹⁰⁶. In addition, the Minister threatened HakiElimu with de-registration. President Mkapa endorsed the ban; in fact, this coincided with his trip to Finland to participate in a seminar organized by the Helsinki Process, which promotes open and inclusive dialogue with the marginalized groups of the society on the effects of globalization. Mkapa commented on the events, saying that, “the government will stand firm and resolute against those hell-bent to belittle its achievements and mislead the people”¹⁰⁷. Additionally, since early 2006, HakiElimu has been explicitly excluded from consultation meetings between the government and civil society, even when the organization had been elected to represent CSOs. For example, in February 2006, the Government instructed the Tanzania Education Network (TEN/MET) to exclude HakiElimu from its delegation to the national education sector review. HakiElimu is the official representative of the TEN/MET in the education Resource Allocation and Costs Efficiency (RACEF) working group, but had been excluded from it throughout 2006.¹⁰⁸

HakiElimu’s response to these charges was that they were doing the right thing pursuing their mission for quality education. They were just pointing out how to improve the current state of affairs. In a statement issued by HakiElimu, it was noted that “the report is based on *facts* gleaned from these [government] reports, not any new research conducted by HakiElimu”¹⁰⁹. It is interesting that the report was sent for comments to the Ministry for Education and Culture before being published, but no feedback was received.

The ban was widely condemned by Tanzanian NGOs. They regarded it as unconstitutional, against the freedom of opinion and expression, and the NGOs urged the Government to lift the ban and to “promote open dialogue, public debate and full participation of civil society in all policy processes, including education”¹¹⁰. A statement from 40 NGOs under the FemAct coalition states: “We consider this an attack on all NGOs’ activities and well-meaning citizens of this country, as well as an attack on one of the 40 member-organizations of the FemAct coalition. We therefore demand immediate lifting of the ban and

100 The name means “right to education”.

101 Kabendera (2006).

102 HakiElimu was showing TV spots that campaigned against corporal punishment and sexual harassment at schools.

103 Mkinga (2005).

104 HakiElimu (2005).

105 The Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) received funds released through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and aims to reach the Millennium Development Goals on the education sector.

106 Ubwani (2005).

107 Lipili (2005).

108 HakiElimu (2007a).

109 HakiElimu (2005).

110 NGO Policy Forum (2005).

an apology to HakiElimu”¹¹¹. Another statement signed by 96 NGOs similarly stated, “We fail to see the justification and legal basis for MOEC actions. We view these actions as a threat to CSOs in Tanzania to enjoy their rights and fulfil their responsibilities”¹¹².

The case stimulated a lot of discussion on the freedom of opinion and expression and the role of NGOs in Tanzania. Several newspapers published articles in favour of HakiElimu and the issue was widely commented in the Letters to the Editor columns. As Kayoka¹¹³ notes in his column: “*the talk of decentralized, people-centred governance is but a hollow talk and dream to end when we wake up in the morning*”. And “*In Tanzania, we are used to culture of silence; you don’t speak when your rights are trampled upon [...] It has been, and still is a country where, those speaking the truth, daring to challenge authority and ask their voices to be heard are demonized, ostracized and unjustifiably subjected to public ridicule*”.

There are various interpretations on the motives of the Minister behind the ban. Most common analyses state the timing as the most crucial factor. The ban came out only a few months before the presidential and parliament elections to be held in December 2005. CCM, the ruling party, didn’t want to be ridiculed on their accomplishments in front of the general public and donors. PEDP has been shown as one of the biggest successes of the government in its poverty eradication efforts on the road to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Another reason cited was that through its activities, HakiElimu was encouraging people (*wananchi*) to raise questions where things seem not to be on the right track. The points raised by HakiElimu were not new. The NGO has been an active participant in the education sector development programmes’ working groups of the government. What was new, was that these concerns were made public at a crucial time for CCM’s future.

After the elections, the new Minister of Education and Culture, Margareth Sitta, was reported stating that: “the NGO should apologize if the government is to lift the ban”¹¹⁴, and additionally, “HakiElimu should also write to the Minister, pleading guilty of upsetting the government and

the public at large and pledging to abide by laid down procedures”¹¹⁵.

In February 2007, HakiElimu agreed with the Prime Minister “to move beyond past misunderstandings” and the Government agreed to “take legal measures to remove bans placed on HakiElimu”. However, an additional control measure was added: HakiElimu’s publications must be approved by the Chief Education Officer before publishing and distribution to schools.¹¹⁶

There have also been similar incidents, which have not generated similar outcries in the media and have been left mostly unnoticed. This is the challenge posed by the decentralization of NGO registration and coordination according to the new law. For example, Maduhu¹¹⁷ reports a case in Magu district, where the District Commissioner banned an orphans’ NGO from operating with no explanation. There are also less overt attempts to control NGO activities at the local level. For example, UNGO received a letter from the Regional Commissioner requiring them to invite local authorities to all events organized by the NGO. These cases show that everything is not what it seems to be in the official language of the government. This case also illustrates that when concentrating in building the capacity of NGOs for holding the government accountable, one of the main approaches of donors to support NGOs and strengthen civil society, the fact that this may not be possible is not taken into account. NGOs are only given as much space as the government considers necessary. When conflicting views arise, NGOs are not taken seriously, or stern measures are taken to curb these views. Threatening with deregistration, like in this case, is perhaps the strongest way to show this. All this means that civil society organisations, in this case NGOs, are not independent actors in the society, but instead work in harsh conditions regulated by the state.

6.3 The discourse and practice of participation: co-optation and control or true involvement?

The positive developments in cooperation between the government and NGOs cannot be

111 Mkinga (2005).

112 TEN/MET (2005).

113 Kayoka (2005).

114 Luhwago (2006).

115 Kimati (2006).

116 HakiElimu (2007b).

117 Maduhu (2006).

underestimated. NGOs are increasingly invited to participate in policy formulation forums, and “NGO consultations and hearings” are organized on various sectors. Tanzania was announced to be eligible for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative in 1992, and in order to qualify for debt cancellation, the Tanzanian government was obliged to fulfil a number of conditions. One of these was to prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which was to be carried out “in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders”¹¹⁸. However, this has been called “process conditionality” of consultations, as the World Bank does not require that contributions made in this process be taken into account in the actual policy-making¹¹⁹. Also, Mercer¹²⁰ describes this kind of new partnership between the IFIs and donors, the state and NGOs as a “performance”. As we will see in the course of this chapter, who participates is an important question. Here I shall note that this has not transferred into permanent structures of participation of the wider civil society and several shortcomings have been noted in the current consultations. For example, in the event of CSOs’ participation in the Tanzania Consultative Group meetings, which is the main event of the government and donors to review progress of development policies and programmes, NGOs and other CSOs have not been sufficiently represented. In 2001, 35 NGOs issued a statement and some of the points mentioned in this statement still apply today.

First of all, CSOs are not granted enough time for preparation and little information is provided in advance on the purpose, focus and method of the event in question. According to the NGO statement, “the short timeframe and lack of substantive information are hardly conducive to meaningful civil society participation”. “The process has turned into a last minute scramble to register for the meeting, with clear disadvantages for groups located outside Dar es Salaam.”¹²¹ In the case of the CG meeting in 2001, the informal meeting with CSOs took place only after the formal session of the government and donors, and only a small number of CSOs were invited to the first meeting as silent observers. The NGOs asked, “what is the point of bringing in CSOs when the main overarching issues have already been decided?”

118 Gould & Ojanen (2003, 6).

119 Ibid.

120 Mercer (2003).

121 NGO Statement (2001)

Thus, there is a huge gap between the rhetoric of participation and practice. This gap has also been noted in the PRSP formulation process¹²². The NGOs selected to participate represent a very limited group of mainly Dar es Salaam based professional NGOs, which are conversant with the issues at hand. CSOs participating in the formulation of the PRSP I were invited individually. Other studies have also noted these recent developments and argue that “an elite stratum of civil society is now beginning to emerge”¹²³. This is also the group many of the donors prefer to support. Shivji, in his soul-searching exercise on NGOs in Tanzania, also acknowledges that “most of our NGOs are top-down organizations led by the elite [...] most of them are urban based [...]. Yet, we must recognize that we did not develop to serve the needs of the mass of the people, nor have we managed to do this. The relationship between us and the masses therefore remains, at best, that of benefactors and beneficiaries.”¹²⁴

One NGO leader¹²⁵ noted that “these are the people who are at the inside already, who get the information or the cream of this nation [...] they come from urban areas [...] so I think when we see that most of the well-performing organizations are either formed by people who worked in the government before so its no wonder there is more such organizations in the urban areas”. And “when we go to some villages they have never even heard of the word NGO at all”.

This is a circle that demands for even more professionalism from the participating NGOs. A leader of an NGO¹²⁶ noted that there is “an increase in doing proper research before speaking up, because we want to speak up facts”. The tendency towards professionalization has been a focus of much criticism as it runs against “the comparative advantage” of NGOs explained above. This is a global tendency and it shuts out many actors from the society and further limits participation.

Gould and Ojanen¹²⁷ found a new corps of NGO policy advocates “who are not necessarily ‘movement veterans’ – grassroots activists with deep ties to a social cause – but development professionals” tied in the PRS process and “whose vocational skills have been moulded” by the bureaucratic demands of the development indus-

122 Gould & Ojanen (2003).

123 Kelsall (2002, 602).

124 Shivji (2004, 1).

125 Interview 1.

126 Interview 1.

127 Gould & Ojanen (2003, 74).

try. Evidently, this and the growing need for civil society participation in the monitoring of the PRS has led to the concentration of donor support on capacity building of NGOs in policy advocacy. The effects of this are reinforced when we note the prevailing donor dependency Tanzanian NGOs suffer from. Very few NGOs have independent financial sources and when applying for donor funds, they will have to adjust their priorities according to the priorities of the donors.

An additional aspect can be added to this mix: the close relationships between NGO and government personnel. A large number of NGO directors hold, or are on leave from, government jobs, are retired or ex-government employees. Government-NGOs "linkages are often enhanced by material but also by cultural and social connections between elites, as NGO staff often come from or seek to join the same relatively small bourgeoisie"¹²⁸. This is a significant trend, especially if we look at the donor discourse where NGOs are seen as opposing the state and having a central role in keeping the state accountable. While being the most visible at the national level, among the Dar es Salaam-based NGOs, this trend also prevails at the district level and illustrates how unclear the state-NGO relations, in fact, are. For example, in Mufindi District, there are two district NGO networks, which are competing against each other. One network is run by the District Planning Officer under the District Council and the other one by an independent NGO. I came across similar arrangements and local government authorities running the district "NGO show" for example in Magu district whereas in Iringa, the District Community Officer has his own NGO. Rawlence¹²⁹ recorded a similar processes in Zanzibar and examined what happens "when the state becomes civil society". In situations like these, it is difficult not to question where the NGO funds coming to the District Council actually go, in view of the corruption common in Tanzania. For example, TACAIDS is distributing all of its NGO funds through district councils. In Morogoro this has led to complaints that NGOs do not stand a chance to access these funds, as they go to GONGOs or other NGOs close to the local government.

Through this new mode of participation through consultations, it can be argued that the government is no longer only trying to co-opt NGOs in the service delivery structure of the state, but that this limited group of mainly Dar

es Salaam based professional advocacy NGOs are also co-opted to the government reform processes, as they are able to work only within donor-led agendas of the PRS. As White¹³⁰ argues, incorporation rather than exclusion is often the best means of control. Further, it is possible that "the pluralizing effects of civil society organizations can democratize only their 'space', not that of grassroots communities that remain disempowered"¹³¹. Also Gould and Ojanen¹³² note in connection to the formulation of the PRSP I: "There was certainly no possibility to engage with critical advocacy groups on the real causes of poverty and the responsibility of the creditor community for the plight of the Tanzanian poor". This has been seen as "fast-track model of democratic planning"¹³³.

Shivji¹³⁴ writes in his commentary on the Tanzanian NGO sector:

"NGOs are cast the role of 'partners': partners of the state; partners of the donor-community; partners in development; and partners in good governance. We get involved in the so-called policy dialogues in which the triad – NGOs, the government and donor representatives – participates. We attend workshops as stakeholders. Donors, who fund policy-making, and their consultants who make policies, seek us out for consultation. All this goes under the name of people's participation and involvement, or what is called, 'good governance'. What is the implication of this type of participation on democratic governance in our countries?"

The role left for NGOs in policy dialogue is to support and legitimize government policies rather than to question them. An incident took place in February 2001, during the visit of top executives from the IMF and World Bank in Dar es Salaam. Some NGOs arranged a small demonstration outside Hotel Sheraton in order to criticize the impoverishing effects of the conditions of the Bretton Woods institutions. The demonstrators were arrested, and the police assaulted some of the activists.¹³⁵ This shows how strictly the government controls NGOs' activities, when they act independently outside the CSO "consultations".

NGOs' participation serves to legitimize the status quo. Few NGOs provided access to these

¹²⁸ Dorman (2005, 41).

¹²⁹ Rawlence (2005).

¹³⁰ White (1996).

¹³¹ Ndegwa (1996, 16).

¹³² Gould & Ojanen (2003, 58).

¹³³ Ibid., 51.

¹³⁴ Shivji (2004, 2).

¹³⁵ Kontinen (2006).

processes wants to risk it by being too critical. It is difficult to believe that this was the intention of HakiElimu either. Most of the NGOs' advocacy activities are built around these processes of the government and donors. The current mode of CSO participation is organized around the Poverty Monitoring System (PMS) and the associated Participatory Poverty Assessment exercise where "a highly selected mode of non-state participation is now integral"¹³⁶. An NGO activist noted these developments in an interview:

*"at least they [the government] are trying now to include some representation of CSOs, specifically in all the MKUKUTA¹³⁷ meetings [...], in the technical working groups, also in the clusters and Public Expenditure Review workshops, we have seen that they cannot do without us."*¹³⁸

This point has also been noted in the context of service delivery. After the failure of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, the "good governance" agenda emerged in the 1990s to curb protests and this led to the co-optation of NGOs to a re-packed programme of service delivery, "a social initiative that could be more accurately described as a programme of social control"¹³⁹. The latest developments have been traced to the HIPC initiative and the international civil society mobilisation by which it was preceded¹⁴⁰. "The promise of debt relief – operationalized in HIPC – has been a lodestar for the Tanzanian government. Often in the teeth of internal criticism, it has done almost everything in its power to earn the forgiveness of external creditors. Of late, this has extended to a more accommodating attitude to 'civil society'. Part of the catalyst for this new attitude has been the PRSP."¹⁴¹

Gariyo¹⁴² notes that governments in East Africa tend to see NGOs as an extension of state policy. "They are expected to implement government policy instead of charting their own independent agenda." This change of government approach to work with NGOs was noted in the NGO Policy ("partners in development") and reinforced in the NGO Act ("NGOs need to work in support of government policies"). This legitimizing role accorded to NGOs is seen by many

to originate from donor pressure, thus following the prevailing donor discourse. The government and NGOs:

*"are moving to the same bed, and the people are being marginalized. So now it's like the government hears the big NGOs and says now the people have spoken, which is wrong."*¹⁴³

*"I'm seeing more and more government coming to NGOs to learn how to do certain things so there is more improvement but mainly it's not, only a few NGOs are doing better, but many are dead, dying."*¹⁴⁴

Consequently, it can be argued that those modelling their activities according to the donors' needs are able to survive and benefit from their co-opted role. Those outside the system (or Dar es Salaam) barely survive. The co-opted NGO activists apparently benefit from their new role.

One NGO employee¹⁴⁵ expressed his frustration on the activities conducted by his NGO. If he was the leader of the NGO:

"I could forget about MKUKUTA, I could forget about trade network, and just concentrate on one thing [improving the adherence of NGOs into code of ethics] and we could go and talk about the same thing, and finally NGOs really [would perform and have an impact] We are talking about MKUKUTA to NGOs in Songea and accountability [of the government], but NGOs in Songea are not accountable to whoever."

"We are busy, if I'm invited to a meeting, I'm seeing this invitation from the University of Dar es Salaam to discuss about what, Union, now I'll be there. But if it's about talking to the people, no!"

There is a growing frustration on the activities performed by NGOs that concentrate on the government agenda and undermine the real needs of the sector. NGOs fit their activities into the existing structures instead of trying to change them. By modality this activism has been referred to as "workshopocracy"¹⁴⁶. It has even been suggested that the NGO Policy Forum should organise itself in a way that to some extent mirrors the structures of the official PRS and PER groups¹⁴⁷.

The donor discourse, on the other hand, rests on the assumption that NGOs have the capacity and desire to mobilize and socialize their members and the wider society¹⁴⁸. However, as has

¹³⁶ Evans & van Diesen (2002) in Gould & Ojanen (2003, 58).

¹³⁷ A Swahili acronym for the PRSP II, the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP).

¹³⁸ Interview 1.

¹³⁹ Manji & O'Coill (2002, 11).

¹⁴⁰ Kelsall (2002, 602).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Gariyo (1995, 136).

¹⁴³ Interview 2.

¹⁴⁴ Interview 2.

¹⁴⁵ Interview 2.

¹⁴⁶ Kelsall (2001, 140) in Kelsall (2002, 604).

¹⁴⁷ Hakikazi Catalyst (2002b).

¹⁴⁸ Kassimir (1998, 56) in Dorman (2005, 42).

been shown above, the participation of Tanzanian civil society rests on a small group of professional NGOs, supported by donors, to interact with the government in a professional manner. Gould and Ojanen¹⁴⁹ also stress the fact that non-state actors are seen as brokers via which “the poor” can be brought directly to the policy arena and this representative function is the basis of their participation in these processes.

Further, the whole issue of civil society participation has been strongly criticised. For example, Ojanen¹⁵⁰ shows, how the donor rhetoric of civil society participation undermines the basis of representative democracy, the parliament. In her study in Tanzania and Uganda, she shows how national parliaments are sidelined in the formulation of the PRSPs and civil society organizations “inside the system” participate in “semi-formal decision-making structures”.

All these cases show the current ambivalent and complicated relationship between the government and NGOs and the complex nature of the ongoing processes. The case of Tanzania is not unique, and it reflects international developments. Similar attempts to curtail NGO activities have also been seen in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, and Uganda among others. On the one hand, the government needs NGOs to assist in service delivery and to legitimize their actions; on the other hand, the government is full of suspicion towards NGOs, especially those concerned with advocacy work and receiving resources from abroad. This means that for NGOs to fulfill their democracy-enhancing role, they need much more space for action than they currently have.

Shivji¹⁵¹ criticises Tanzanian NGOs on the lack of solidarity with people’s organizations. He states that “NGOs appear to have played the role of undermining traditional people’s organizations”. He sites the trade unions as an example. Recently, trade unions have been involved in struggles against foreign capital and workers struggles, “while we, the NGOs, participate in stakeholder workshops discussing poverty reduction strategy papers, we seem to be oblivious of the creation of poverty, through redundancy and robbery of public goods in the name of privatizing social services”.

There is an ongoing debate on the role of NGOs in the Tanzanian society. This has been shown by the NGO legislation process, the case

of HakiElimu as well as various articles in the media. As the state states that NGOs should not be “political”, many NGOs abide by this imperative to avoid de-registration or other negative consequences. It is widely seen that suspicion from both sides seriously hampers cooperation and collective action. Further, the PRS process can also be seen to depoliticise political issues of poverty reduction and democratization. Instead, these political issues are treated as merely technical problems to be solved by technical experts and development agencies that ignore local historical and political realities.

149 Gould & Ojanen (2003, 61).

150 Ojanen (2003).

151 Shivji (2004, 4-5).

7. Conclusions

The NGOs discussed in this study represent the majority of organizations supported by donors in the name of democratization and civil society development. As we have seen, the prevailing donor discourse has clear implications for the state and development of democracy in Tanzania. In the beginning of this paper, I asked what is the role of NGOs in the democratizations process in Tanzania. This role is shaped by external donors and the global development policy, defined in the donor discourse on civil society. This has many implications. First of all, we have seen how the NGO field in Tanzania is changing in the context of changing aid relations and the new architecture of aid. NGOs are not engaged as much with service delivery activities as they used to and instead focus on advocacy activities connected to the promotion of the governance agenda defined by donors.

Secondly, power relations between the state and civil society do not seem to be changing. CCM has been in power since the independence and throughout this time, has managed to work up ongoing processes according to the interests of those in power. NGOs and civil society are given only so much room for manoeuvre within the parameters defined by donors and the state that is deemed necessary. Control of NGOs is an every-day practice. This control is also shaped in the context of the PRSPs and this had led to the co-optation of some of the most powerful NGOs as we saw above. In spite of the increased role accorded to NGOs, their current work is not affecting the existing power structures of the state nor increasing the involvement of new groups in these central processes, important objectives of the donor discourse. Thus, it is difficult to see NGOs as originators and vehicles for a political reform in Tanzania.

The donor narrative and current donor practices overlook the circumstances where NGOs emerged as a direct consequence of changes in donor policies. Thus, the emergence itself cannot be argued to be democratic. Other attributes connected to NGOs cannot be taken as self-evident. Such are the watch-dog role of NGOs, closeness to the grassroots and representation of the poor and marginalized as described in the NGO "articles of faith". It is important to note also, that

the emergence of NGOs can destroy or hinder the emergence of civil society as much as they may be able to build it.

Further, it is also important to point out the fact that civil society is not inherently positive and good. Attaching inherent qualities on spheres of society is questionable, and their interlinkedness should also be taken into account. It is also clear from the evidence presented above, that we need a deeper understanding of African politics in connection to the "democratization discourse" of donors. The current interpretations of civil society tend to idealise it. While the African state is regarded as weak and driven by primordial interests, civil society is regarded as everything against that. What this assumption is based on is not clear. For example, those within NGOs who are in the best position to take advantage of donor funding are often urban-based educated elites, professionals or civil servants with access to information and contacts, only available in capital cities where donor organizations and embassies are located¹⁵². Thus, increased funding to NGOs may actually undermine the building of a representative and participatory civil society at the grassroots level.

One of the first steps to be taken should the democratization of the democracy assistance and development cooperation called for by Hossain et al.¹⁵³. They suggest the right to contest and participation in decision-making as defining a more democratic system of development cooperation. Current democratization efforts by donors in developing countries are defined more by undemocratic practices and approaches, including aid-conditionality, selectiveness and agenda setting. The role left for NGOs in policy dialogue is to support and legitimize government policy, rather than to question it. In other words, NGO participation serves to legitimize the status quo. Few NGOs that are provided access to these processes want to risk it by being too critical. In this way, most of the NGO advocacy activities are built around these reform processes. Thus, when analyzing certain civil societies, the influence of donors should be taken into account. In the context of Tanzania, the influence is remarkable: from the emergence of the sector, to the initial roles of service delivery, to recent change in the advocacy role and concentration on the donor-led agenda of poverty reduction, good governance and democracy.


¹⁵² Mercer (2002, 15).

¹⁵³ Hossain et al. (2003, 35).

The focus of donor interventions should rather be on improving the organizations' relationship with external environment and not to focus on internal aspects and weaknesses of the organizations. Hudock¹⁵⁴ argues that the most crucial factor is the resource-dependence of the Southern NGOs on external donors, which undermines their work with their beneficiaries. Thus, changes to donors' structures and operations would benefit Southern NGOs more than capacity building on internal weaknesses such as ability to manage resources and financial administration. This would alter the way in which NGOs are able to interact with their environment and it would help to decrease the uncertainty associated with that environment, which ultimately subjects Southern NGOs to external control. Changing the context would then change the ways in which Southern NGOs behave. One example is the lack of funding for operational costs and focus on specific projects. The uncertainty associated with this type of funding makes it very difficult for Southern NGOs to operate strategically.¹⁵⁵ Changing donor procedures by making them more democratic and transparent would strengthen local NGOs more than any amount of capacity building and training. This also corresponds to my view of the Tanzanian NGOs. Instead of seeing them as passive recipients of these ongoing processes they should be seen as active actors who interpret and model their activities according to this donor-led agenda to suit their own needs.

Having said all this, I wish to emphasize an argument against pathologizing NGOs. Instead, we need to have a deeper understanding of the context at hand, the nature of African politics which cut across the activities of the state, as well as NGOs. More research is needed to look at the actual activities of people in Africa at the local level, be it in churches, the cooperatives or various self-help groups. Perhaps there we can find the basis for a broad-based social movement that is able to push for social transformation.

As we saw above, our (ethnocentric) ideas are permeated by the modern ideology, the ideology of individualism, developed through centuries in the Western world. The civil society discussion was born in this context and now has spread to the so-called developing world, in the form of the donor discourse. As I have argued here, it would be more useful to look at the actual processes and

characteristics of the societies in question to see how change can be promoted. If we merely rely on Western conceptions or imprint African societies as traditional and in need of *more* Western modes of action, we are doomed. 

¹⁵⁴ Hudock (1999, 38).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

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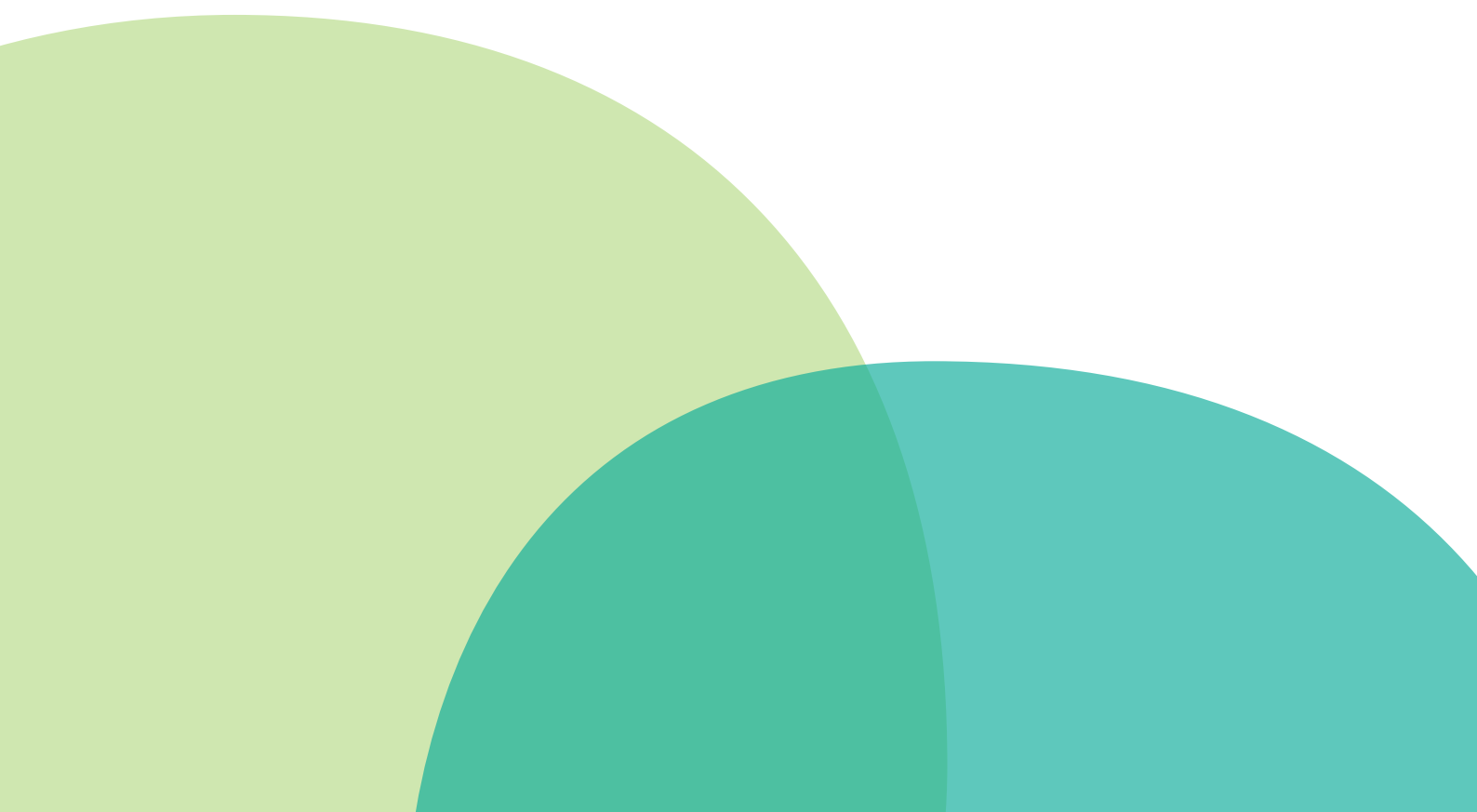
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Are NGOs Harbingers of Democratization in Tanzania?

Current development thinking of donors regards civil society and non-governmental organizations as vehicles for democratization, while at the same time NGOs function mainly for channeling aid. How do actions and expectations meet?

Tiina Kukkamaa argues in this report that the current conception of civil society does not really correspond to the options NGOs have, especially in Africa. The report examines current discussions on the role of civil society in development and democratization, followed by an analysis of the relations Tanzanian NGOs have with donors and the state through practical examples and three detailed cases.

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