Civil Society Organisations in the Winds of (Sea) Change – Sheltered from or Driven by Globalisation?

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Among the most prominent challenges and opportunities confronting the Third Sector and Civil Society are multifaceted processes of globalisation. Despite the fact that scholars concerned with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) engage in a worldwide exchange of concepts and theories (for example Civicus, EMES, CINEFOGO, and the Johns-Hopkins-project with its Global Civil Society Series, e.g. Albrow, Anheier, Glasius, Prince, & Kaldor, 2007), the nature of the interactions between processes of globalisation and those organisations inhabiting civil society has remained a black box in many respects.

Previous research on CSOs has focused on their specific qualities and on the challenges that emanate from their relations with the public and the market sectors. Corporate social responsibility, e-philanthropy, output-centred accountability, nonprofit commercialism, are but a few concepts that have been coined in order to describe the reciprocal influences between sectors and their consequences for CSOs. Concepts imported from the business world appear particularly prominent in reshaping CSOs (Kerlin 2006). Globalisation seems to play a major role in such intersectoral change processes, for example, important concepts proliferating in contemporary civil society have their origin in the Anglo-Saxon world (cf. Drori, Meyer, & Hwang, 2006). But will globalisation lead to more homogeneity among CSOs or do simultaneous processes point in different directions?

The panel, drawing on perspectives anchored in organisational theory, is aimed at opening the aforementioned black box and to look at how and to what extent CSOs are affected by pressures related to globalisation, for instance regarding redefinitions of their constituencies, goals and forms of action. It will also examine in which ways CSOs react on globalisation. More particularly, it will explore, in this context, the use of concepts developed by recent strands in organisation theory, such as the population ecology model stressing selection processes (Galaskiewicz & Bielefeld 1998), isomorphic diffusion (Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings, 2002), translation (Czarniawska & Sévon, 2005), editing, or hybridization in interpreting the permeation of boundaries between civil society and the for-profit sector.

Four papers will be presented, all dealing with one or several aspects of the afore-sketched themes. Following the presentation of all papers, a discussant (Ingo Bode) will provide a comparative account of the evidence and arguments put forward, in order to examine which responses have been given to the questions raised by the panel and what remains open to further investigation.

Key readings


1.) Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose:\footnote{French proverb: the more things change, the more they are/become the same}: Managerialized CSOs Look the Same Everywhere, Do They?

Abstract

Civil society organizations are in the limelight currently, both positively and negatively: positively, because many governments re-discover the third sector as an important source of initiative, innovation and service provision, as witnessed by the stark increase of public-private partnerships. At the same time, critics abound who view CSOs as amateurish, inefficient and lacking proper governance - hence the recurring call for greater professionalization. And indeed, many CSOs have adopted, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or not, methods, approaches and ideas from the for-profit world. This development has been described as nonprofits becoming "business-like"\footnote{e.g. Dart 2004}, marketized\footnote{e.g. Eickenberry/Kluver Drapal 2004}, professional\footnote{e.g. Cumming 2008}, rationalized\footnote{e.g. Hwang/Powell forthcoming}, commercialized\footnote{e.g. Young/Salamon 2003}, managerialized\footnote{e.g. Roberts et al. 2005}, etc. We will use the term "managerialism" to refer to these changes.

The exact nature of CSO managerialism often remains fuzzy and hardly operationalized. Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory allows us to develop a more concise understanding of the phenomenon. Building on Luhmann\footnote{e.g. 1980; 1995; 2003}, we understand managerialism as an expectation structure and a discourse (semiotic).

Luhmann\footnote{2000; 2003} understands organizations as social systems that reproduce themselves by way of decisions. In other words, in every organization there is a structure upon which both expectations and decisions are based. By looking at decisions in a particular organization, we can deduce what expectations are being followed, and to what degree these expectations are managerialist ones. Luhmann\footnote{1995:279-356} distinguishes three dimensions of meaning: the factual, the social, and the temporal. For a managerialized organization, the factual dimension involves such things as how explicitly the organizational purpose is spelled out; to what extent people, time, and finances are viewed as resources and accounted for as such; and how intensely the organization emulates the “rational” management cycle of planning, execution, and evaluation. In the social dimension, managerialism manifests itself in such ways as understanding oneself as a legal persona, formalized communication channels and positions, a view of people as personnel lead by managers, and by conceptualizing the environment as markets. Finally, the temporal dimension of managerialism involves such things as acceleration and time pressure, detailed planning, and forecasting.

As a discourse, managerialism can be understood as a group of statements that are perceived as coherent by speakers and that delineate structural expectations in an organization, constraining and enabling decisions in the organization and thereby exerting power. Managerialism as a discourse thus manifests itself in CSOs as a typical set of decision premises in the sense of Luhmann's organization theory.

With this basic understanding of managerialism, this paper examines the question whether managerialism presents itself uniformly in different national contexts, or whether there are significant differences depending on political, cultural, economic, etc. circumstances. In other words, is managerialism in CSOs a globally uniform phenomenon, or are there local variants?

To examine this question, we chose a sample of five Austrian and five Irish CSOs. All of them qualify as highly managerialized according to our initial theoretical understanding. Organizations are matched with regard to industry, size and societal functions. We conduct group interviews with members of each organization and subject these interviews to critical discourse analysis (see for example
Wodak/Meyer 2009). This enables us to gain insights whether managerialism in CSOs is a globally uniform discourse or whether there exist local differences. Moreover, the analysis enables us to deepen and possibly modify our understanding of the various dimensions of managerialism.


2.) Searching for Solutions: Irish Civil Society Reactions
to Global and Local Crisis and Altered Conditions of Support

Abstract

There has been growing academic interest over the past year in the impact of the global financial crisis on civil society organisations and the nonprofit sector\(^2\). What makes the Irish case particularly interesting is the suddenness and severity of the financial crisis after a long period – some fifteen years – of economic and nonprofit growth. The Irish nonprofit sector is on the cusp of a potentially profound shift in the conditions of support for nonprofit organisations. It is a state-dominant sector, with 59.8% of the money moving through it originating in the public purse (Donoghue et al, 2006; Donoghue, 2008). With the threatened collapse of state resources to the nonprofit sector, the conditions of support have shifted, perhaps irrevocably. It is far from clear what the solutions are, and what forms altered conditions of support may eventually take. The purpose of this paper is to document the nature of the crisis facing Irish civil society and the organizational reactions observed, and then to explore how organizational theory can inform our understanding of how organizations may respond to altered conditions of support. The paper will address the nature of the crisis in Ireland, the way organisations are responding, apparent opportunities and threats that may arise and finally a reflection on the role of academic centres in time of crisis.


\(^2\) For example, see the papers from the 2009 Centre for Social Investment (CSI) Symposium, Heidelberg, The Global Crisis: What is Next for Social Investment, Nonprofits and Philanthropy?
Abstract

In recent years, the term ‘network society’ has become a commonly used label to describe central characteristics of contemporary society. Following Castells (1996, 2004), a network society is characterised by a new type of social organisation that differs from other types of organising the social world, such as hierarchy, market and community. Networks are characterised by their relative openness, lack of centralised authority and by their abilities for boundary spanning – vertically, horizontally and geographically. A central defining feature is the importance of digital technologies in enabling and sustaining networks on a large scale (van Dijk, 2006).

It is reasonable to assume that the emergence and development of a network society will affect CSOs as well as other types of organisations. In the case of membership organisations, which is our interest here, one may hypothesise that new types of relations between CSOs and their members emerge, and that the channels for influence by members are transformed. These processes, in turn, may lead to changed conditions for governance within the CSOs, and also serve to reformulate traditional challenges for governance, such as the balance between elective and administrative power and the problem of democratic legitimacy.

The paper will present and discuss a case study that focuses on how membership based CSOs are influenced by and adapt to an emergent network society. The case that will be treated is Amnesty International Norway. The main question of the paper is which are the consequences of the interaction between Amnesty Norway’s hierarchical structure and a network structure when the use of digital technologies is intensified. Which collective ties are maintained or shaped within this interaction? To which extent are hierarchical structures challenged? Is the relation between local activism and central professionalism altered in the process? The paper dwells on a combination of methods, including analysis of digital tools, qualitative interviews with key persons and a member survey.
4.) E-governance in a Globalized Context

Abstract

The development of the network economy reinforces the need for civil society organizations (CSOs) to have a clear understanding of the potential benefits of information technology (IT). The objective of this paper is to explore the relationship between voluntary organisation internet strategies and the context of globalization. There are two main conceptual models that are pertinent to the study of this relationship. The first model is *ePhilanthropy* which refers to an economic vision of CSOs. In this case e-donors have a central place and e-communities are seen as a means by which to endorse fundraising campaigns. This model reacts on globalization by helping CSOs become more efficient actors responding to social demands worldwide. This tool is supposed to work even for small CSOs and its key factors are reactivity and interactivity. The second model refers to the socio-economic vision of CSOs. In the second model intercreativity takes precedence over interactivity. The main goal is not to obtain external resources but to bridge the digital divide among CSO multi-stakeholders. All cyber activists are supposed to be equal and success stories are about making team efforts and experimenting with new forms of participatory and democratic governance. We can call this model *eSolidarity*. The paper relies on case studies about voluntary organizations operating in a global context. Research results show the complexity and richness of CSOs internet strategies and the need for a transdisciplinary approach towards IT questions in CSOs.