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### **The Impact of International Assistance on the Romanian Advocacy NGOs**

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## Abstract

This study assesses the relationship between foreign aid and the contribution of civil society to the consolidation of democracy in Romania. The paper aims to contribute to the ongoing theoretical debate about democratisation from a 'substantive' perspective according to which democracy is understood as a process of maximising the opportunities of citizens to participate and influence the key decisions that affect the society in which they live. Drawing on questionnaire data as well as internal documents, the study specifically looks at the impact of international assistance on the Romanian advocacy groups. On the one hand, it shows that international assistance stimulates the emergence of professional and elite-based NGOs that are relatively well equipped to participate in and influence policymaking. However, on the other hand, democracy assistance programs have a rather paradoxical effect by impeding NGOs' civic engagement with their domestic constituencies. Hence, international assistance has a mixed impact on the contribution of civil society to the consolidation of democracy: it fosters advocacy groups' 'link-up' to the governmental decision makers and international donors while at the same time it hinders their 'link-down' to ordinary people.

## 1. Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, liberal democracy emerged as the only legitimate political regime in most parts of the world. Consequently, international assistance programs surged to the top the neoliberal policy agenda in order to justify external interventions to promote democracy and for reasons of defence in several regions. In order to stimulate democratisation, policy makers use various methods, but one of the most common tools is democracy assistance, meaning aid programmes explicitly designed to strengthen democratic institutions, processes and principles in different countries. In this context, an important share of the international support for democracy promotion in Central and Eastern European countries has been channelled to NGOs with the intention of building and strengthening civil society as a means of consolidating democracy. Subsequently, an extensive NGO sector has emerged in many of these states, largely due to this influx of external funding<sup>1</sup>.

However, aiding democracy abroad remains a highly controversial topic that raises an interesting question: to what extent can international funding stimulate civic engagement and participation in new democracies? Previous research in the field has revealed an ongoing academic debate about the role of international factors in promoting civil society and democracy. The main claim of the supporters of democracy assistance is that civil society represents both the force that can hold governments accountable and the base upon which a vibrant democratic culture can be built<sup>2</sup>. There follows from this the assumption that promoting civil society is key to consolidating and deepening democracy. However, some scholars have claimed that besides its empowering effect, international assistance could also hinder civil society's democratising potential by decoupling civic organisations from their domestic constituencies and making them more accountable to external donors<sup>3</sup>.

This study contributes to the academic debate on the impact of international assistance on civil society by testing the effects of foreign aid in a novel perspective by focusing on how effectively these organisations can perform the ideational functions attributed to them by democratic theory. Previous research has evaluated the impact of democracy assistance on civil society by pointing to the amount of funding and the growing number of NGOs operating in different countries. However, the number of NGOs only

1 Jahn, Egbert / Stewart, Susan: International Support for Democratization Processes in Central and Eastern Europe: The NGO Sector, 2003, project proposal available at: [http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/res\\_prog\\_02/exten\\_04\\_05.pdf](http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/res_prog_02/exten_04_05.pdf), last accessed 29.05.2008

2 Carothers, Thomas / Ottaway, Marina (eds): Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000, p. 4.

3 Henderson, Sarah L.: Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003.

suggests the potential of civil society<sup>4</sup> to contribute to the consolidation of democracy and does not reveal how and to what degree NGOs actually carry out their democratic functions. Therefore, this research goes beyond the conventional approach and shows how advocacy NGOs actually function, what the forms and the intensity of their involvement in the broader society are, and what mechanisms for influencing decision makers they use.

## 2. Civil Society and the Consolidation of Democracy: a Conceptual Framework

Re-conceptualising civil society's participation in policy making and harmonising the fragmented disciplinary and theoretical directions of democratisation will reveal the influence of international assistance on the consolidation of democracy more accurately. In contrast to the supporters of a 'minimal' definition of democracy<sup>5</sup>, in this study I refer to the concept of democracy as a continuous process that implies not only a set of formal rules, procedures and institutions but also substantive rights. According to this 'substantive' approach, 'democracy [is] a process that has to be continually reproduced, a mode of regulating power relations in such a way as to maximize the opportunities for individuals to influence the conditions in which they live, to participate in and influence debates about the key decisions which affect society'<sup>6</sup>. According to this conceptualisation, a consolidated democracy requires not only voters' participation in elections, but also necessarily implies a sustained effort by organised groups of citizens to influence government decision and consequently increase their role in policy making.

Moreover, this paper assumes that citizens' participation in policy making through civil society organisations is *sine qua non* for democratic consolidation as it increases the accountability, responsiveness and legitimacy of democratic regimes. In this sense, I examine participation as a two step process: first, citizens' participation in civil society organisations through internal democratic decision making; second, civil society organisations' participation in governmental policy making representing the interest of their constituencies. Consequently, civil society serves as a link between citizens and government, crystallises the will of the community and voices it at the governmental level in order to advance the common good.

Being aware of the ongoing academic debate and the multiplicity of meanings assigned to civil society, for the purpose of this paper, I will narrow down the notion of civil society organisations to mean public interest advocacy NGOs outside the control of the state that seek to influence it on behalf of public aims<sup>7</sup>. In this sense, civil society organisations are essential for the consolidation of democracy as they can serve both as advocates of the public good and watchdogs of political power.

## 3. Positive vs. Negative Impact of International Assistance on Civil Society

Civil society organisations are often targeted by democracy assistance programs in order to improve their capacity to influence policy making processes and promote citizens' participation, while being themselves models of democratic methods and values<sup>8</sup>. In addition, civil society is seen as a means to 'make de-

4 Mendelson, Sarah E. / Glenn, John K. (eds.): *The Power and Limits of NGOs*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

5 I.e., democracy understood only as electoral democracy.

6 Kaldor, Mary / Vejvoda, I.: *Democratization in Central and East European Countries*, in: *International Affairs*, 1997, Vol. 73, No. 1,

7 Mendelson, Sarah E. / Glenn, John K. (eds.): *The Power and Limits of NGOs*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

8 Carothers, Thomas: *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, p. 211.

mands on the state and hold state officials accountable<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, advocacy groups are also supposed to provide an impetus for better government performance, pushing specific reform ideas, and supplying the government with technical advice and help on designing and implementing particular policies<sup>10</sup>. According to Carothers<sup>11</sup>, donors seem to favour advocacy groups due to their presumed non-partisanship, tendency to technocratic knowledge rather than propaganda, preference for seeking dialog rather than confrontation and the fact that they are typically staffed by young, Western-oriented professionals. More generally, civil society has been understood as an engine for increasing the participation of the citizens and promoting social change<sup>12</sup>.

For this paper, I will employ Carothers' definition of international aid for advocacy NGOs, which emphasises two main forms of assistance<sup>13</sup>. The first is technical assistance – comprising training, advice and information about organisational development and management, advocacy methods, fund raising, issue analysis and media relations. The second form of support is funding by direct grants for projects and programs, including the provision of equipment, particularly computers, fax machines and photocopies. Other aid methods are also pursued, consisting in training for NGO coalition building in order to tackle particular issues within a broad front.

Increasingly, however, critics are beginning to question the extent to which donor-supported organisations really fulfil their democratic functions<sup>14</sup>. Some authors contend that international assistance has tended to focus on elite-dominated groups with limited support in society and weak or nonexistent internal democratic mechanisms for making decisions<sup>15</sup>. Another similar criticism is that many of the CSOs supported by donors in the name of democracy are themselves not internally democratic<sup>16</sup>. Despite their stated intentions, many such groups have failed to establish participatory mechanisms for internal debate and decision making<sup>17</sup>.

Noting that most of the donor-supported civil society groups depend on international aid, scholars such as Edwards and Hulme have contended that the availability of foreign funding has fostered 'opportunistic NGOs'<sup>18</sup>. These organisations were formed with the primary function of seeking out external financial support and adjust their programmes and goals to suit the interests of donors and the funds available<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, critics have argued that organisations remained shallow and dependent on the ideas, contacts and vision of one leader or a small number of leaders, and alternative leadership is limited. This in turn raises concerns about the capacity of the organisations to exist beyond their founding leaders<sup>20</sup>.

9 Diamond, Larry: Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 1994, Vol. 5(3), pp. 4–17, here p. 5.

10 Carothers, Thomas: *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, p. 211.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 212.

12 Sabatini, Christopher A.: Whom do international donors support in the name of civil society, in: *Development in Practice*, 2002, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 8.

13 Carothers, Thomas: *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, p. 213.

14 Sabatini, Christopher A.: Whom do international donors support in the name of civil society, in: *Development in Practice*, 2002, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 8.

15 Carothers, Thomas: *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999

16 Sabatini, Christopher A.: Whom do international donors support in the name of civil society, in: *Development in Practice*, 2002, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 9.

17 Edwards, Michael / Hulme, David: Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Non-governmental Organizations, in: *World Development*, 1996, Vol. 24(6), pp. 961–973.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 Sabatini, Christopher A.: Whom do international donors support in the name of civil society, in: *Development in Practice*, 2002, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 9.

In addition, Edwards and Hulme argue that there is an inherent tension between the constituency of an NGO, which they imply should be the poor and its relationship with international donors<sup>21</sup>. In these cases, the conditions placed on assistance – reporting, organisational development, and the need to recruit English-speaking leaders who can seek out foreign contacts – can distract NGOs from their original mission and their primary constituency. The risk is that groups become more accountable to international donors, what Edwards and Hulme term ‘upward accountability’, rather than to their base, or what they term ‘downward accountability’<sup>22</sup>. Similarly, Sarah Henderson<sup>23</sup>, drawing on a study of Russian NGOs, argues that rather than building networks and developing publics, groups consciously retained small memberships, hoarded information, and engaged in uncooperative and even competitive behaviour with other civic groups.

## 4. Romanian Advocacy NGOs: Case Studies

### 4.1. Case Selection and Methodology

With the aim of testing whether international assistance promotes or hinders the potential contribution of civil society organisations to consolidating democracy, I will focus on advocacy NGOs, which in Romania have received the greatest proportion of support from external donors by a considerable margin. Therefore, one might expect that in these NGOs most of the drawbacks or, conversely, most of the benefits of external assistance would be prominent since Romanian advocacy groups provide typical examples of internationally supported organisations.

In order to investigate the impact of external funding on these organisations, I started my enquiry in 2005 when I e-mailed a questionnaire,<sup>24</sup> comprising both open-ended and multiple choice questions in English, to six of the most visible and active Romanian advocacy NGOs. Four of them completed and returned the questionnaire<sup>25</sup> at that time. I continued to observe the activity of these organisations and gathered relevant information from additional sources such as annual reports, websites and newsletters, until May 2008. While the sample is admittedly small, it nevertheless provides an insight into a group or organisation that work in the area of democratisation and might point out the positive as well as negative effects of foreign funding. I focus my analysis on areas in which most of the criticism regarding externally funded NGOs arises: the level of organisation, membership and leadership; dependence on foreign funding; relations with other domestic and international groups; types of activities, and advocacy style and efficiency.

### 4.2. Level of Organisation, Membership and Leadership

Despite their different areas of work, these groups share one common feature: they are examples of foreign supported civil society organisations and in many ways typify most of the NGOs in Romania that de-

21 Edwards, Michael / Hulme, David: *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*, Westford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1996.

22 Ibid.

23 Henderson, Sarah L.: *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003.

24 I gathered questions from several sources. For instance, I wrote many questions similar to those used in surveys by Henderson (Henderson, Sarah L.: *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003.), Epure et al. (Epure, Carmen / Tigănescu, Oana / Ancuța Vămesu: *Romanian Civil Society: An Agenda for Progress*, CIVICUS Index on Civil Society Occasional Papers, 2001, Vol.1, Issue 9), and one doctoral dissertation student (Mehmet Umut Korkut, CEU, Department of Political Science, 2003).

25 Three executive directors of the organisations and one programme coordinator filled out the questionnaires. They completed the questionnaire in English: Ioana Avadani – *Center for Independent Journalism*, Executive-Director, (questionnaire, May 23, 2005); Emanuel Rauta – *Romanian Academic Society*, Publishing Manager/ Public Policy Analyst, (questionnaire, May 20, 2005); Adrian Sorescu – *Pro Democracy Association*, Executive-Director, (questionnaire, May 23, 2005); Oana Zabava – *Transparency International – Romania*, Executive-Director, (questionnaire, May 18, 2005).

fine themselves as advocacy organisations. Although some of them are affiliated to several international organisations or NGO networks, their staff and leadership is provided by Romanian nationals and all have their headquarters in Bucharest. *Pro Democracy Association* (APD), founded in 1990, is an NGO aiming to promote civic education and participation, and advocates for community and socially oriented democratisation<sup>26</sup>. The *Centre for Independent Journalism*<sup>27</sup> Romania (CJI) was created in 1994 as a project of the Independent Journalism Foundation in New York and it offers courses and training for journalists and media organisations. The *Romanian Academic Society* (SAR)<sup>28</sup>, founded in 1995, is a think tank which aims to contribute to good governance by conducting research on different policy issues and doing advocacy work. Finally, *Transparency International Romania* (TI-R)<sup>29</sup> was created in 1999 and later gained the status of the Romanian chapter of the global anti-corruption coalition, Transparency International.

In terms of organisational structure, most groups demonstrated fairly complex means of internal governance and selection of new leaders. The present leadership is relatively stable, in two cases the president and executive director served for more than 2 consecutive terms. The participatory structures used in this study as a proxy for the level of internal democratisation revealed a mixed picture. On the one hand, two groups out of four ranked the general assembly or the ordinary members as the most important actors influencing the decisions of their organisations. Among the other two groups, one has a rather pro-expert attitude regarding internal decision making ('experts are the most influential in the organisation'), while the other is not a membership-based organisation and ranked the director as the person with the greatest influence on decisions.

In terms of membership, only one group approximates what can be called a 'community-based organisation', that is an organisation whose activities are primarily based on volunteer efforts and work with local communities. This NGO is mainly oriented toward civic education and participation and can boast approximately 1200 members in 30 local branches spread throughout the country. The other groups have an average of 25 members and all of them also use volunteers, although in smaller numbers. In addition, all organisations have paid staff ranging from 5 to 16 full-time employees. Usually, the staff contains experts in different fields, which are relatively well paid in comparison to the average salaries in Romania. Moreover, the groups tend to be elite-based in terms of their leadership and staff. All of the leadership have a university education and most of them have also studied abroad, especially in the USA and/or Western Europe. Furthermore, most of the staff have solid knowledge and expertise in the fields in which their organisation works, and therefore these groups are highly professionalised.

### 4.3. Sources of Funding and Assistance

This section examines the sources of funding and assistance, as well as the advantages and drawbacks of receiving foreign funds. The discussion below draws on the data provided by the four organisations that responded to the questionnaire in 2005. All four groups indicated that they depend on foreign funding for their activities, which accounts for an overwhelming proportion, ranging from 95 percent to 100 percent, of their income. In only in two cases did the fees for the services provided by the organisation to the third parties account for 4 percent of the organisation's income, while members' contributions and donations from Romanian companies represented 1 percent. Moreover all four groups reported an increase in their budget in the last 5 years. The ability to apply for grants and to write project-related evaluations and reports for donors (usually in English) seems to be a *sine qua non* condition for the existence of these groups.

Nevertheless, the international sources of funding are varied. In 2005, the organisations mentioned around 5 different international sources, which provided them with funding annually. When asked which

26 <http://www.apd.ro/>, last accessed on 21 May 2008.

27 <http://www.cji.ro/>, last accessed on 28 May 2008.

28 <http://www.sar.org.ro/>, last accessed on 28 May 2008.

29 <http://www.transparency.org.ro/>, last accessed on 28 May 2008.

of these sources was the most important in 2004, some of them pointed to European donors and others to American ones. However, only one group (TI-R) was heavily dependent on a single donor (80 percent of its total income for 2004 came from only one source). For the other three, the most important donor in 2004 counted for less than 20% in two cases (APD and CJI) and between 20 and 40 percent in one case (SAR). These three latter cases might suggest that the organisation possess a certain degree of autonomy in making decisions since there was no dominant single donor which could dictate its own agenda.

Despite their dependence on foreign sources, many of the advocacy organisations surveyed in 2005 consider external funding to be an advantage. Among the advantages, some organisations mentioned that receiving foreign funding 'keeps you neutral and conserves your objectivity'. Other respondents noted that international funding helps the organisation to have a certain degree of autonomy from politics and the business sector: 'It allows avoiding money with 'strings attached' (mainly politically) or tainted (coming from questionable business sources)'. Besides direct funding through grants, many organisations also received technical assistance in the form of organisational development and management, advocacy methods and issue analysis. Most of them reported that international assistance has increased their capacity to advocate policy proposals on different issues.

However, NGOs mentioned that international funding also has its disadvantages. Some respondents stated that foreign funds do not always match the needs of their organisations. For instance, three groups reported that there were areas in which the organisation wanted to work but could not because of a lack of international funding for that field. Moreover, one NGO leader pointed out that international grants provide insufficient support for the most important activities of the organisation. Other organisations mentioned the lack of funding for building organisational capacity, and explained that donors focus more on the sustainability of different projects than on developing sustainable organisations. 'The international programs do not cover sufficiently the administrative costs. Most donors prefer to work with 'established organisations', but one cannot stay 'established' if not enough resources are allocated for such 'trivial' costs as rent and utilities' mentioned one of the NGO representatives.

#### 4.4. Relationships with Other Groups

This section discusses the relationships of the organisations with other groups and the degree of their integration in the societal and political context. A controversial issue among the respondents to the questionnaire was whether international donors should stimulate NGO coalitions or not. Two organisations actually reported that they have received international support for organising advocacy coalitions to tackle particular issues with a broad front. On the other hand, one respondent noted that this is not a realistic plan: 'Coalitions are effective as long as they are spontaneous and they happen to be spontaneous if NGOs share the same interest with respect to limited number of issues. Competition among NGOs and different organisational interests impede long-term work together'.

Despite different opinions about voluntary or interest-driven alliances, all organisations agreed that working together in a coalition increases their chances of advocating certain issues successfully. The respondents mentioned several reasons for creating coalitions. First, coalitions gather several types of expertise, increasing the value of action. Second, they mobilise joint resources, contacts and levels of influence. Third, NGO leaders believe the more people are involved in an initiative, the more legitimate that initiative is. Fourth, coalitions provide certain issues with more visibility and a better capacity to address all the stakeholders. However, one respondent also identified some problems which arise from working in coalition: 'Advocacy operations are cumbersome when too many organisations are involved. Difficulties appear when donor organisations involve in coalition work, because their grantees tend to follow in order to secure their financial interests, regardless of the issue to be advocated for'. Despite these different opinions, all 4 organisations have had a good experience of coalitions since they were also part of several domestic NGO alliances. Moreover, they also participate in transnational NGO networks dealing with issues on their area of interest.

In general, organisations say they have good connections with other local groups and some of them seem to be quite well embedded in their political context. Most of the respondents openly acknowledged that some parties are more sympathetic to the position of their group than others. Moreover, two respondents mentioned that they often work to ensure the election of political leaders sympathetic to the goals of their organisation. Most of the organisations also reported increased contacts with the media. Usually, they claim to benefit from good visibility in the media, especially at the national level.

#### 4.5. Advocacy Methods and Style

The organisations analysed here engage in various activities to promote their goals. The organisational structure of the groups seems to be connected with the type and style of their advocacy activities. For instance, the organisation that is more community based is more ready to pressure decision makers 'from below', by mobilising public opinion and disseminating information through the media. Moreover, this organisation reported that it contacts members of the parliament and the leaders of the parties more often than it does civil servants or administrative agencies. Other organisations are more expert-based and therefore they argue that expertise on specific issues based on good research and knowledge of best practices is the most important when influencing official decision makers. Their approach is different from the one discussed above. These groups prefer to contact the professionalised personnel of ministries and administrative agencies, which are more responsive to technical arguments than to direct pressure from public opinion. Therefore, these groups often publish research papers, policy analyses and recommendations, and reports based on the monitoring of the implementation of certain public policies. Moreover, some of them claim that personal links between people working in ministries and members of the organisation are also very important.

Most of the groups mentioned that being part of a transnational network of organisations concerned with specific issues supplies them with influence. Being part of a transnational network is usually combined with a strategy based on good connections to and lobbying of international organisations to put pressure on domestic decision makers (i.e. governmental elites) 'from above'. Some respondents mentioned that such pressures 'from above' are particularly efficient when the NGOs' policy proposals coincide with the reform requirements for joining international organisations such as NATO or the EU.

### 5. Conclusion

This paper analysed the impact of international assistance on the participation of civil society in policy-making processes. On the one hand, foreign aid fosters the emergence of highly professionalised advocacy NGOs which are well equipped to advocate policy issues funded by their donors. However, on the other hand, these elite-dominated groups are relatively detached from their domestic constituencies. In other words, the paper demonstrates that democracy assistance fosters NGOs' 'link up' to the policymakers and donors while at the same time hinders their 'link down' to the citizens and the local community. This has been tested by conducting an empirical analysis based on questionnaire data as well as internal documents from 4 advocacy organisations.

Democracy assistance played an important role in the emergence and development of civil society in post-communist Romania. Nevertheless, international funding has fostered a certain type of civil society organisation which is typified in many aspects by the cases discussed in this paper. The groups which manage to receive most of the international funds are not mass-based groups but rather elite organisations and this challenges donors' assumption that such groups can increase citizens' participation in public affairs. While their elite character does not necessarily render them illegitimate, it questions the capacity of these organisations to act as engines of citizens' mobilisation in the democratic political process. As pointed out in this paper, most of them have shallow membership, while their leaders and staff are highly

educated professionals. In addition, their leadership seems to illustrate what Stubbs<sup>30</sup> (1996) called 'the new global professionalized middle class' which has few ties to the grassroots and is a creation of the 'growth industry of democracy promotion and protection'. Many of the staff and leaders of these groups adapt to the norms and values of their donors and share the global perspective. That is, most of them assume a Westernised cultural model, and have experience of studying or working abroad, good connections with foreign donors and international organisations and English language skills.

The ability to apply for grants and to write project-related evaluations and reports for donors, (usually in English) seems to be a *sine qua non* condition for the existence of these groups. Consequently, the NGOs discussed here are less open to ordinary people. Moreover, some of them reported that most of the foreign grants cover only project-related costs and do not provide resources for organisational building or for day to day running costs. As a result, these NGOs constantly have to work on writing project proposals in order to ensure their existence, and this, in turn, might divert their energy from activities such as building up a constituency and increasing membership. Therefore, they often seem to be more beholden to international donors than to the larger public whose interest they claim to represent.

The issue of representation is important as it points to the legitimacy of these groups to act as a link between the people and the government and influence policy making on behalf of the citizens. Critics of democracy assistance to civil society are dismissive of any representative role for the professionalised advocacy NGOs. Moreover, these groups are often seen as the agents of the neoliberal agenda of their donors, and consequently have practically no autonomy. In spite of the criticism mentioned above, the groups analysed here do not necessarily illustrate this pessimistic point of view. Although their existence depends to a large extent on international funding, for most of them the sources of funding are dispersed among a number of donors (public and private) from several countries. In this case, no donor is in a position to dictate an agenda exclusively, and the loss of one large grant does not necessarily threaten the survival of the organisation. This, in turn might, provide them with a certain degree of autonomy.

On a more general level, the case study conducted in this paper might also point to a distressful conclusion regarding the international neoliberal policy agenda in general and democracy assistance in particular. Previous literature has revealed that aiding democracy abroad carries with it the risk of promoting an elitist type of democracy; i.e., the neoliberal model of democratic institutions and policies are transferred and implemented in recipient countries through the contribution of a small set of domestic elites with few incentives to develop ties to the grassroots and stimulate citizens' involvement. Consequently, the broader public remains somewhat alienated from the new democratic institutions and thus participation in policy-making processes remains very low. Again, the result might be the promotion of a shallow type of democracy based on purely formal criteria, which do not reflect the societal penetration of democratic habits and values necessary for the successful consolidation of democracy.

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30 Stubbs, Paul: Humanitarian Organizations and the Myth of Civil Society, in: ArkZin, No. 55, January 1996, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/credib/1996/1121.htm>.