Chapter 14: NGOs, People's Movements and Natural Resources in Cambodia[1].

Roger Henke.

This analysis will focus on the concept of 'civil society' as a means to understand the problems and opportunities for the poor in the new Cambodian political economy: Like other social science concepts civil society is a container for many different types of content. For the purposes of this paper, civil society means the "...domain in which people are free to form independent and autonomous associations to mediate with the state and pursue their political goals"[2] Civil society also connotes, drawing on the work of Gramsci, the domain of contestation of ideological hegemony.

The mainstream perspective on Cambodian governance – the 'neo-patrimonial' model – insufficiently acknowledges the importance of 'ideology' for the organisation and legitimation of state practices. But the ideological contests which play out on the terrain of civil society in contemporary Cambodia have been even less analysed. In this chapter, I reflect upon the ways in which the terrain of civil society emerges as a site of social contestation between three sets of forces: the Cambodian elite, via legitimating ideologies rooted in Buddhist *dhamma* and communist state theory; international donors promoting a 'good governance' agenda; and the poor. This reflection is presented by means of discussing recent efforts by international donors to support the emergence of 'civil society' actors to perform certain good governance functions in the field of natural resource management in contemporary Cambodia. The story shows how donor requirements regarding civil society as 'partners' have resulted in the a proliferation of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The story also shows how the dominance of this NGO-model currently hinders the emergence of a true social movement challenge to state-sanctioned efforts to dispossess the poor from the natural resources on which their livelihoods are based.

Ideological Frames in Contemporary Cambodian Civil Society

Contemporary analyses of the Cambodian state foreground neo-patrimonialism as the most useful model for understanding strategies of state organization and legitimation. With

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[1] This article is based on an unpublished report available from the author: Roger Henke. *People's Movement, NGOs, Donors, and the Cambodian State: Reflections from a practitioner's perspective.* (Phnom Penh: ICCO, 2009)
[2] Bruce Missingham, *The Assembly of the Poor in Thailand. From Local Struggles to National Protest Movement,* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 2003), p.7

respect to legitimation, the most important ideological frame is that of the magical (*boran*[3])
Buddhist interpretation of the dhamma.[4] *Dhamma* has interrelated meanings ranging from
ontological reality, animating energy and power, to moral law which sees existence as moral
in essence and as being all about balance. Actions in themselves are seen as amoral, but
produce inherent 'good' or 'bad' in their effects on the balance of existence, which implies an
acceptance of or tolerance for the 'negative' poles of any continuum. There is no high
without low, so inequality is natural.

This framing highlights a particular moral-ontological understanding of power: here, power is
regarded as expressing fitness to rule, rather than as being dependent upon it.   This
understanding of power as an expression of legitimacy fuels fierce status competition. As
Guthrie describes, the channeling of large amounts of money and resources into rebuilding
temples following the war has been a characteristic of recent Cambodian election campaigns.
Guthrie argues that in engaging in these activities, politicians are trying to access a type of
power known as *parami* (*baramey*), "...a Buddhist technical term for 'highest', 'mastery',
'supremacy' or 'perfection." Guthrie adds that "...in contemporary Cambodia, the word
parami has additional meanings of 'sacred force', 'magical power', or 'energy' ...[that] can
provide real-time benefits...*Parami* can provide protection against enemies and help to
accomplish certain goals. Access to *parami*, or at least the appearance of having access to
parami, is a necessary component of political survival in Southeast Asia." Politicians,
Guthrie argues, have varying amounts of this: Sam Rainsy tried to demonstrate his access to
this sacred power by spending time as a monk in a monastery. Prince Norodom Ranariddh,
First Prime Minister from 1993 to 1997 but now a marginal figures in Cambodian politics, is
believed to have squandered the power he had through "...corruption and associating with bad
people." Hun Sen, on the other hand, "...appears to be a *neak mean bon* (a man who has great
merit) with access to large amounts of *parami*. His survival amidst Cambodia's turbulent

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[3] Alexandra Kent, *Compassion and Conflict: remaking the pagoda in rural Cambodia,* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Department of the History of Religion Yearbook, 2005) р. 131-153.
[4] Roger Henke, "Mistakes and Their Consequences: Why Impunity in Cambodia is Here to Stay," in Edwin Poppe and Maykel Verkuyten (eds.) *Culture and Conflict: Liber Amicorum for Louk Hagendoorn* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2007), p.15-42; another observer describing Cambodian Buddhism as overwhelmingly *boran* (including the personal beliefs of its leadership) is Stephen Asma, *The Gods drink Whiskey. Stumbling towards enlightenment in the land of the tattered Buddha,* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

political waters is proof of his parami as are the success of his religious construction projects such as Wat Veang Chas."[5]

The pursuit of politics and the practice of patronage with this conception of power produce a distrustful and dangerous world characterized by exploitation, deceit, and disproportionate revenge. Cambodian understandings contain both normative rejection of power as exploitation, and a normative acceptance of power as earned. One expression of this is through the mixed messages of generosity and menace that surround gift-giving during election campaigns.[6]

The deployment of reinvented tradition in this manner maintains the legitimacy of inequality of power in Cambodia, but has less to say about the logic of state organisation. With respect to the latter, contemporary analysis of Cambodia neglects the importance of the communist character of the contemporary Cambodian state that was built in the 1980s. Bringing this perspective back in enriches the neo-patrimonial approach in explaining the ideological aims of the current government, which are still organized along democratic centralist lines: the explicit and elaborate program of principles for party and state organization underlying communist regimes in Eastern Europe. [7] Relevant elements of this model are one-party rule, no separation of party and state, and no separation of powers. The importance of this alternative model is that it explicitly justifies an authoritarian state, making for a smoother blend of 'neo' and 'patrimonial' structures and their legitimization than in the mainstream interpretation of what the neo-patrimonial Cambodian state looks like.

In that mainstream understanding the ideological manipulation of tradition by the ruling party is set against the explicit promotion of 'good governance' by international actors and local NGOs. However, this latter, non-authoritarian model focuses on the normative question of how government *ought* to be conducted, rather than providing practical guidance on how to more effectively and efficiently structure what *is* already there. Therefore, the actual incorporation of good governance ideals has been left to a ruling elite for whom the model of state organisation used in the 1980s remains foundational. The result has been an adoption of good governance practices -so selective, that it makes more sense to assess the donor push for

[5] Elizabeth Guthrie, "Buddhist Temples and Cambodian Politics" in John Vijghen (ed.), *People and the 1998 National Elections in Cambodia. Their Voices, Roles and Impact on Democracy*, Working Paper no. 44 (Phnom Penh: ECR, 2002), p. 70-71.

[6] Caroline Hughes, "The Politics of Gifts: Tradition and Regimentation in Contemporary Cambodia," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,* 37.3 (2006): pp 469–489.

[7] The party building history is told by Kristina Chhim, *Die Revolutionare Volkspartei Kampuchea 1979 bis 1989*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000).

good governance in terms of the opportunities it offers the Cambodian state to strengthen itself, rather than as a real challenge.

What has been the effect of these different ideological frames on for Cambodian civil society? Unlike either neo-patrimonial or communist models of governance, both of which strive to co-opt independent organs of civil society quite overtly, "good governance" ideals require a civil society that is organized independently of the state, to play at least two roles:[8] challenging entrenched interests, by demanding realization of constitutional rights and responsive government; and addressing the needs of particular vulnerable groups and remote communities which government agencies find it 'difficult' to access.

The development of civil society since the early 1990s thus reflects two contending forces: the reluctance of government to countenance an independent civil society and the demand by donors, that civil society associations should be created who could assist them in their 'good governance' programs. Contention over this issue between government and donors, and the difficulties faced by organisations attempting to form on this contested terrain, has resulted in the emergence of organized civil society actors which bears particular characteristics. However, similar to understanding the current character of the Cambodian state, understanding civil society development since the introduction of the good governance model, requires a look at what was there previously.

Ovesen et al, in a controversial volume published in 1996, posited a historical lack in Cambodia of strong intermediary institutions between households and the state that could operate as loci of collective social responsibility and social sanctions.[9] Critics of their findings have responded by pointing to some apparently indigenous types of collective action, such as committee activity, often associated with the local pagoda, and collective labor exchange and other episodic mutual support arrangements among kin (bang p'aun).[10] Because such mutual assistance is all event-focused, organised around short-term specific tasks within the immediate local setting, and not based on an enduring formal structure, let alone transcend the boundary of the face-to-face community, these are insufficient to

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[8] World Bank, *Draft Concept Note for a Study of the Civil Society in Cambodia*, internal memorandum, Phnom Penh, 29 September 2006.
[9] Jan Ovesen, Ing-Britt Trankell and Joakim Ojendal, *When Every Household is an Island: Social Organisation and Power Structures in Rural Cambodia.* Uppsala Research Reports in Cultural Anthropology No. 15 (Uppsala: Uppsala University Department of Cultural Anthropology and Swedish International Development Agency, 1996).
[10] See for example, Judy Ledgerwood and John Vijghen, "Decision-Making in Rural Khmer Villages," in Ledgerwood (ed.) *Cambodia Emerges From the Past: Eight Essays* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), p.109-110.

discredit Ovesen, Trankell and Őjendal's overall characterization.[11] There are no larger kinship or caste groups, and religious affiliation is decentralized with an emphasis on the local pagoda. Villages are administrative entities, rather than 'communities' and lack indigenous governance structures. Traditional community-level leadership is normally described as 'informal' and "in contrast to some Asian cultures, the Cambodian family is more loosely organized, with less importance given to the extended family."[12] So culturalist perspectives, such as the neo-patrimonial perspective, produce an image of Cambodia as a 'loosely' organized society, lacking traditional models for intermediary organizations with enduring governance structures and allegiances beyond the immediate living environment. As this characterisation goes, the three decades of civil war, with its accompanying destruction of social life, massive population displacement, and trauma-related breakdown of social trust, has only intensified this 'looseness'[13].

As nothing organised enough to implement their agenda existed, it had to be created: which is what donors, international organizations, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), have done since the early 1990s. As a consequence, three categories of civil society organizations have emerged: informal membership community-based organizations (CBOs); formal membership organizations, in particular trade unions; and Non-Governmental Organizations.

CBOs[14] comprise a great variety of quite different creatures. Indigenous groups with a long-standing pedigree of authenticity are mainly characterized by their event-based character, informal leadership, and independence from either NGOs or government. Pagoda committees, mutual help groups and credit groups (*tongtin)* are commonly-cited examples.[15] Population-specific groups (such as women and youth) for purposes such as peer-solidarity and education were organized under state and party auspices in the 1980s. To some extent they have been revived by NGOs in the 1990s. A third form of CBOs comprises self-help

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[11] See e.g. the assessment of the literature in Tim Conway, *Poverty, Participation and Programmes: International Aid and Rural Development in Cambodia,* Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999.

[12] Bit Seanglim. *The Warrior Heritage. A Psychological Perspective of Cambodian Trauma*, (El Cerrito: Bit Seanglim, 1994) p. 46.

[13] Because of the legitimacy accorded to inequality (through the *boran* understanding of *dhamma* and power), the absence of rule of law, and the absence of intermediary structures between households and the state Ovesen et al. describe Cambodian society as *prototypically* patrimonial, with patronage the only vehicle for personal security and advancement.

[14] "A typical village would have 3 or more such groups (hence it is estimated there are over 30,000 CBOs in Cambodia,." World Bank. Op. cit., (no page numbers)

[15] See for example, A. Pellini, *Decentralisation Policy in Cambodia. Exploring Community Participation in the Education Sector.*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Tampere, 2007.

groups, mobilized by either government or (I)NGOs around income-related or infrastructure maintenance and management issues. Savings and loans groups are most common, but there are also groups for irrigation, fish-farming and other collective production, livelihood training, and natural resource management (community fishery, community forestry), and user-groups for government services. When the issue involved access to interesting resources, government has adopted NGO initiated models and created its own, especially community fishery and more recently community forestry committees. The same is true regarding Village Development Committees, non-sectoral committees with a semi-official status, associated initially with the *Seila* programme for channeling donor funds to local development.[16] These are intended to engage rural people directly in local development, promoting bottom-up planning.

Formal membership organizations are basically limited to trade unions most of which are found in the garment industry. The growth in unionization is to a great extent tied to the garment industry, because respect for labour rights is part of the package guaranteeing Cambodian garments access to US and other international markets. Nevertheless, estimated union membership varies considerably across studies[17], but overall unionization remains low. Unions are typically established at factory level, most unions are weak, and none are financially independent. Political space for union activity beyond strikes at individual factories has consistently shrunk since the early 2000s, particularly following the killing of high-profile union leader Chea Vichea in 2004.

This leaves the donor created NGO sector[18]. Databases of NGOs are all incomplete and not up to date so numbers are questionable[19], but it is a sector with a sizable turn-over, work-

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[16] The *Seila* program, which operated from 1996 to 2006, was a participatory local development program which mandated the formation of particular subnational governance structures, including village development committees, to formulate development plans to be funded through the program.

[17] From 160,000, quoted by the US Department of Labor in their report on *Foreign Labor Trends: Cambodia* (Washington DC: US Dept of Labor, 2003) to 337,000, quoted by Dain Bolwell in his *Cambodia Trade Union Survey,* (Phnom Penh: ILO, 2004).

[18] Government and private interests have also started creating NGOs as a means to extend control over civil society. This is similar to the emergence of government- and factory-controlled labor unions. The government NGO is much less prevalent than the government union, although a career change from NGO director to an important position in the bureaucracy or the CPP is, tellingly, not infrequent. See J. Wilson, *Establishing the Rule of Law in Cambodia: the Role of NGO Regulation and Judicial Reform*, Research Paper for the International Human Rights Internship Program, (Phnom Penh: Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights, Licadho 2005) p.16. and Ray Zepp, "The Aid Industry: A frank discussion of local and international NGOs," in: Ray Zepp. *Experiencing Cambodia*, unpublished paper, (Phnom Penh, 2004), pp.65-78.

[19] Estimates of the numbers of active local NGOs start from 700 upwards, see Council for Development of Cambodia, *Report on Mapping Survey of NGO/Association Presence and Activity in Cambodia*, (Phnom Penh:

force[20] and influence. Seventy per cent of NGO focus on service delivery; while only seven per cent work in areas of 'advocacy', and 'democracy and human rights.'[21] Nearly all LNGOs are localized INGOs, started as INGO projects or programs, have been founded with strong foreign advisory support and/or by Cambodians who returned from overseas or refugee camp or more recently were former INGO staff.

Externally initiated and resourced organizations are usually short-lived and do not survive the period of active involvement of their external patron by a substantial period of time[22]. Good governance promoters are aware of this, and good governance model assessments of *current* Cambodian civil society all suggest that civil society remains comparatively weak. An example from a World Bank report published in 2006 is typical. The authors write: "Compared with other countries, civil society is quite weak and not strongly independent in Cambodia." They attribute this first to historical oppression under the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese occupation, and to the 'mixed feelings' of post-UNTAC governments. Furthermore, the authors argue, "the poverty of the country and the relative prominence of donors and INGO further distorts civil society...[as do] relatively weak values, stemming from the hierarchical nature of Cambodian society (including CSOs) and limited real "civic-ness". [23]

The most common criticisms of NGO governance tend to mirror criticisms of the Cambodian government, and focus on apparent attributes of neo-patrimonial culture: authoritarian leadership style, nepotism, corruption, and secrecy. But the much closer control of donors in the NGO sector, as compared to the state sector, unhampered by the 'sovereignty' issue, has created organizations which are perhaps more 'neo-' than 'patrimonial.'[24]. It highlights the extent of external influence on NGOs, and concludes that "This cadre of "donor-created" NGOs...should not...be equated with the emergence of a broader, indigenous Cambodian "civil society"....[They] are not membership organizations and have no active constituency or

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CDC-Natural Resources and Environment Programme and DANish International Development Assistance, 2006).

[20] 24,000 Cambodian staff (ibid)

[21] CDC, ibid., but it needs repeating that all of these figures are guestimates at best.

[22] Obviously there are many exceptions: to the extent that ownership transfer has occurred they may acquire a life of their own; but many fold up after removal of foreign support.

[23] World Bank, *Civic Engagement in Cambodia: Supplementary material on Civil Society for the Concept Note for a Study of the Civil Society in Cambodia,* internal memorandum, (Phnom Penh, 2006)

[24] The core of the criticism, that NGOs operate as sub-contractors for outside agendas, is not specific to Cambodian NGOs. See e.g. Anthony Bebbington, Sam Hickey and Diana Mitlin, "Introduction," in Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin, eds, *Can NGOs Make a Difference? The Challenge of Development Alternatives.* (London: Zed Books, 2008).

social base." This situation, the authors argue, is perpetuated by NGOs' dependence on international funding, which gives them 'strong incentives to cater to donors' programmatic priorities and reporting requirements and weak incentives to respond and account to grassroots constituencies." In the end, the report found, "An estimated 100 national NGOs dominate the NGO sector, of which "about 30-40 can be considered strong".[25] This finding concurs with the assessment of the Focus on the Global South that,

"*Most CSOs are trapped in the capitalist development 'narrative' themselves and the development industry is a rewarding employer. Many CSOs are involved in important tasks of services provision and crisis management but are unable to challenge the development model that is the source of these crises*"[26].

Despite these problems, donors have no other operational model up their sleeve; consequently the creation and maintenance of NGO- and government-CBOs continues.

The Cambodian Government and Ideological Contestation in Civil Society

While Cambodia observers question the relevance of a 'civil movement without citizens'[27] the Cambodian government apparently thinks otherwise. On the one hand the government has chosen an extremely liberal policy regarding NGOs, making Cambodia a paradise for NGO operators. This policy reflects a government assessment of the Cambodian incarnation of the NGO-model of civil society organisation not as *inherent* challenge to the existing hegemony, and thus useful in the pursuit of both international legitimacy. So donor efforts at strengthening civil society through creating NGOs is supporting rather than reforming existing neo-patrimonial governance. On the other, over the last couple of years, NGOs have been an increasing target of government control and repression efforts. This development is seen by prominent NGO movement 'leaders'[28] as parallel to the CPP's acquisition of unchallenged dominance in the political arena.

Three examples indicate this trend. In 2006 the government picked up its stalled efforts to finalize an NGO law – an idea first mooted in the mid-90s. This was the third serious effort, and it was accompanied by a new draft law and, initially, World Bank support in the form of

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[25] Centre for Advanced Studies/World Bank, *Linking Citizens and the State: an Assessment of Civil Society Contributions to Good Governance in Cambodia,* draft report, Phnom Penh, 2008.
[26] Focus on the Global South, *Work plan 2009 – 2011,* Mimeo, Phnom Penh, 2009.
[27] Kheang Un, *Democratization without Consolidation: The Case of Cambodia, 1993-2004*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Northern Illinois University, 2004, p.272
[28] Personal communication. during various conversations over October and November 2008.

technical advice and organization of an NGO consultation process.[29] The most recent and, according to the shared assessment of most stakeholders, non-resistible round of announcements that the law will be passed in the foreseeable future kicked off with a post 2008 electoral victory statement by Hun Sen last September. Although NGOs remain divided over the issue of engaging with the government about this law this time round the various actors remain talking to each other, and have managed a common statement[30] which can be read as an indicator that even the pro-engagement, basic social service provision NGOs are aware of the potential threat this law may imply. The human rights NGO Licadho issued a report which commented on concerns expressed by the UN Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, Hina Jilani,[31] over an international trend in the use of NGO laws to restrict human rights advocacy. Such laws included provisions which criminalize non-registered groups, impose burdensome registration procedures, limit networking, deny registration in appropriately, limit the independence of registration authorities, impose state scrutiny over and interference in an organizations management, objectives and activities; restrict access to funding, and lead to administrative and judicial harassment.

A second example occurred in late 2005, when various prominent civil society personalities – Mam Sonando, owner and director of the independent Beehive Radio station, Rong Chhun, president of the Cambodian Independent Teachers Association, Kem Sokha, President of the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights, his deputy, Pa Ngoung Teang, and Yeng Virak, Director of the Cambodian Community Legal Education Centre - were arrested along with SRP and royalist leaders and detained on defamation charges[32]. Some of these individuals had strong links with the political opposition, and therefore their arrests can be seen as targeting political rather than civil society; but this was not the case with all. Yeng Virak is a prominent NGO figure with no public political affiliations.

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[29] According to a letter written by the human rights NGO Licadho to various embassies, "Strong reactions by numerous NGOs prompted the World Bank in June 2006 to scale back the objectives of the consultation process to discussing ways to "improve the policy environment for NGOs", which it now explains "may" include the drafting of an NGO law" See Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights Licadho, *Letter and Background Note on NGO Law to Various Embassies*, unpublished letter, Phnom Penh, 2006.
[30] As part of the NGO Forum, *NGO Statement to the 2008 Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum,* Phnom Penh, NGO Forum, 2008. Online at http://www.ngoforum.org.kh/Development/Docs/NGOStatement/2008/2008NGOStatement_Final_English.pdf, accessed 15 February 2009
[31] Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights Defenders, *Report,* UN Doc. A/59/401, (Geneva: High Commnission for Human Rights, 2004), p2.
[32] See Licadho, op. cit.

A third example emerges from the government's recent successful use of the Bar Association of Kingdom of Cambodia (BAKC) to target critical NGOs[33]. In June 2007 the BAKC eliminated the donor funded Legal Fellows Program (LFP) that placed 12 young legal interns with NGOs by refusing to swear in the young interns unless they resigned from the LFP and their respective NGOs. Since then, BAKC has publicly demanded that all NGOs must have a memorandum of understanding with the Bar Association to allow them to employ lawyers, even though there is no legal basis for this statement. The BAKC at the time also insisted, less publicly, that lawyers should not be allowed to work in NGOs as this would prevent them from being independent. In the same period, NGO lawyers defending villagers in the 'Keat Kolny'[34] land grabbing case in Ratanakiri faced a criminal complaint lodged against them with the Ratanakiri prosecutor as well as a complaint with the BAKC accusing the lawyers of inciting villagers in Ratanakiri to file a lawsuit against Keat Kolney to claim their land back; and training villagers in Ratanakiri to talk negatively about Keat Kolney and to misinform the media.

These examples show government's intention of not only suppressing freedom of association but also establishing ideological hegemony. The pursuit of ideological hegemony is, in Gramscian terms, the objective of all governments; it is more apparent for (ex-)communists, whose governance philosophy is quite elaborate regarding the need for ideological 'work'. Furthermore, this perspective explains the politicization of another set of civil society voices –the Buddhist *sangha (or monkhood).*

Re-institution of the *Sangha* in the 1980s was organized by the state and the Supreme Patriarch of the major Mahanikay 'sect', Tep Vong, is a former party official who remains affiliated with the CPP, as does much of the senior sangha.[35] Befitting a communist state, religion has its own Ministry of Cults and Religions that is in charge of appointing the senior leadership of the Buddhist *sangha*. The institution is currently closely controlled by the government/party. One account describes the situation as follows:

"*Like any other Cambodian institution, Buddhism is very politicized and the two main leaders of Buddhism have openly sided with the ruling party since mid 90's. Furthermore, credible*

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[33] The information is based on various internal documents of legal NGOs involved.

[34] For more information on the case, see Andrew Cock's contribution to this volume.

[35] Academic sources documenting the history of this government-Buddhist hierarchy nexus in considerable detail are H. Lőschmann, *Die Rolle des Buddhismus in der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung der Volksrepublik Kampuchea nach der Befreung vom Pol-Pot-Regime 1979 bis Mitte der achtziger Jahre.* Unpublished PhD thesis, (Berlin: Humboldt University, 1988) and Ian Harris, *Buddhism under Pol Pot.* Documentation Series No. 13. (Phnom Penh: DC-Cam, 2007).

information collected has also pointed to high levels of corruption, violence, discrimination and harassment by the leading monk, head monks of specific key pagodas and the abuse and presence of Pagoda Boys (PB) in almost all the pagodas in Cambodia. PB is an officially registered NGO in Cambodia. Its head has publicly stated that the NGO receives money from the prime minister and government officials. The NGO acts as an intelligence group reporting to specific head monks and government officials on the movement and actions of monks and people in each pagoda. Investigations have also highlighted that PB are used to fight violently against other students who are demonstrating peacefully on specific issues".[36]

Asking attention for a Gramscian perspective on civil society should not be read as discounting the relevance of the associational perspective. The two are very much intertwined: ideas need groups to acquire force. When this happens a popular or social movement is borne, wherein a large informal grouping of individuals and/or organizations focuses on specific political or social issues, in other words, on carrying out, resisting or undoing substantial socio-political change.[37]. Ideological control efforts of the government are aimed at preventing the emergence of such a movement. It is telling that 'social movements' are not part of the common typology used above to characterize Cambodian civil society. There doesn't seem to be anything that would fit that label[38].

An emerging social movement?[39]

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[36] This quote is taken from a confidential memo from a human rights organization to my employer in response to a request for an assessment of the potential of Buddhism in Cambodia to contribute to civic-driven change. (Phnom Penh, 20-4-2007)

[37] For a decent overview of social movement theory and research, see David Snow et al. (Eds) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements (Blackwell Companions to Sociology)* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)

[38] Obviously, the observation that donor supported civil society development has been near exclusively focused on supporting NGOs, can be read as indicating an equivalent reluctance on the donor side to support the emergence of socio-political movements. Given the importance of social movements in 'consolidated' democracies this indicates the prioritization of political stability and the role of the state versus market development 'good governance' model over substantive democratization.

[39] The information contained in this section is based on several sources of data: long interviews with foreign advisors to these networks; repeated discussions with various core Cambodian NGO supporters and facilitators; discussions with other donors involved in supporting some of the activities that are part of this development; participation in meetings organized by and/or for network representatives; analysis of informal memoranda, case descriptions, and advocacy material; and on information drawn from other studies and consultancy papers, especially Peter Degen, Frank Van Acker, Niek Van Zalinge, Nao Thuok, and Ly Vuthy, *Taken for Granted. Conflicts over Cambodia's Freshwater Fish Resources*, Paper for 8th International Association for the Study of Common Property Conference, Bloomington, 2000, online at http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/archive/00000245/00/degenp041100.pdf, accessed 9 August 2009; Graham Brown, *CFI Ratanakiri Coordinator 2004-2007, End of Contract Report to Community Forestry International,* unpublished report, Phnom Penh, 2008; Shalmali Guttal, *Supporting Knowledge Generation Among Community Led Networks,* Completion Report of the Pilot Phase of the Project. (Phnom Penh: Focus on the Global South, 2008); Abelardo Cruz, and Meas Nee, *Options for Future Support to Empowering Community-Based Organisations In Cambodia* (Phnom Penh: Forum Syd, 2006); Meas Nee. *CBO working model and strategy for*

In the light of this bleak assessment, donors are quite excited about the emergence of natural resource management activist networks that seem to have a social-movement-like quality. The development of these networks has occurred in the last two years and they have so far remained under the radar of academic and most other Cambodia watchers. Until very recently this was an explicit strategy to avoid government attention, but this seems to be changing. How did these networks emerge and how have they developed to date? What are their relationships with donors, NGOs and the state?

The initial impetus for this network development came from the 'discovery'[40] by a foreign consultant and four Cambodian collaborators of self-mobilized fishing communities in Kampong Chhnang who put up a fight, without any NGO involvement, against what they perceived as unjust encroachment upon their commons. Some of those who made this discovery were motivated to start Community Organising (CO) NGOs, to support these struggles. The foreign consultant supported this move, and also prompted an international NGO to recruit community fisheries activists, rather than (only) LNGO staff in its ongoing programme of Active Non-Violence Trainings. The trainings had been going on for a couple of years already with NGO staff participants only, without resulting in much follow-up action. This time round things were different. Two months later the community activist trainees put the practical skills acquired into practice at an event when 400 people put a stand against armed guards of a disputed fishing lot concession[41]. Six months later some of these CO NGOs took a Kampong Chhnang activist along to Battambang fishing villages, to explain to her peers what her community had done; subsequently, similar actions started happening in Battambang. More Active Non-Violence Trainings were organized in both Kampong Chhnang and Battambang.

Parallel to this the Fisheries Network of Cambodia's NGO Forum[42] started organizing provincial meetings on the inland freshwater economic fishery concessions (fishing 'lots') system. The combination of these community actions and the Forum-coordinated meetings

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CBO pilot project (Phnom Penh: Forum Syd, 2008) , and CORD Asia. *The Community Peace Building Network in Cambodia. A strategic Review 2008.* 2nd Draft for comments (Phnom Penh: Feb 2009)

[40] Like the 'discovery' of Angkor Wat, the phenomenon may not have been new at all. The *mekhyal* leadership skills required for mobilizing a community in times of an acute crisis or anything asking for 'daring' (what Cambodians call ' salty spit') may be different from those required to organise socio-cultural events, or periodically recurring mutual assistance, but they are common enough to have been described in the literature: see e.g. Centre for Advanced Study/Worldbank. *Justice for the Poor? An Exploratory Study of Collective Grievances over Land & Local Governance in Two Provinces.* Working paper. (Phnom Penh: Worldbank, 2006). NGO people and their advisors were just not aware of it

[41] See Degen et al. (2000) about the situation regarding fishery conflicts at that time

[42] Later to become an independent NGO: FACT

constituted the 'fisheries movement,' which achieved astonishing success when the government cancelled more than half of the allotted concessions in the run-up to the first commune council elections in 2002.[43]

In the meantime, one foreigner involved in facilitating the fisheries actions developed an interest in the forestry sector and pursued a similar strategy of working with Cambodian collaborators. The group went to forestry concessions to map resin tree tapping and logging, and helped local activists to start CO NGOs. Again NGO Forum was involved and again Active Non-Violence trainings to community activists resulted in many protests actions, including complaint letters, road blocks, and confiscation of logging equipment. In 2001, NGO Forum organized the first national meeting, concentrating on illegal logging of resin trees in Cambodia.

The CO NGOs started organizing provincial forestry networks which, by late 2001, had federated into a national network. The forestry concession system, which was supported by a World Bank loan, had been put on hold in 2000 because of an NGO Forum complaint to the Bank about rampant irregularities in the sector, and the failure of the Bank itself to follow its own guidelines with respect to Cambodian forestry. Equally important in focusing international attention on the issue was a public rally held in December 2002, in which 240 villagers from forestry communities requested a meeting with the Department of Forestry and an audience with the King to present their comments on the (mostly inadequate) forestry management plans that logging concessionaires had to produce. The submission of these plans was part of the government-World Bank-agreed procedure of 'milestones' to get the logging industry back under control, and free up the frozen loans.

The villagers' action resulted in a government crackdown. Global Witness, at that time the Independent Forestry Monitor appointed by agreement between the government and the World Bank, was kicked out the country and the villagers and all CO NGOs that were involved were harassed to find out who was behind this 'incitement'. Nevertheless, this 'movement' was a success in that the few companies whose plans were finally accepted by the government have not, in fact, started operations again[44].

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[43] The powerful head of the Department of Fisheries was fired, so one might also assume some infighting over the control of the spoils of the lot system to have been part of what made this success possible.
[44] Good histories of the forestry sector are Philippe Le Billon and Simon Springer, "Between war and peace: violence and accommodation in the Cambodian logging sector," In Wil de Jong, Deanna Donovan, and Ken Ichi Abe et al. (Eds.) *Extreme conflict and tropical forests* (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 17-36 ; and Andrew Cock. *The*

As in fisheries, other factors played into this. A government-organised Forest Crimes Monitoring Unit had been established as part of the World Bank's support for the logging concession system. Andrew Cock[45] has argued that a major rationale for this unit was the desire of the political faction led by Hun Sen faction to know who was making money from logging, so they could move in and take it. By 2002 that purpose had undoubtedly been fulfilled. Also, by 2002 the government had hit upon an alternative to forestry concessions: economic land concessions, created on land that was judged to be degraded forest, and within which concessionaires were empowered to clear-cut timber in order to establish cash crop plantations. In July 2002 the Tumring rubber plantation was inaugurated in Kompong Thom as the first operating land concession. This conversion of a forestry into a plantation concession woke those focusing on forestry up to a new reality.

From 2001 onwards land disputes emerged on the agenda of the CO NGOs and they started to bring land activists to Active Non Violence Trainings. But the sector-specific success stories of fisheries and forestry have not proved replicable with land. A major reason is the very muddled land ownership situation: this has produced rival claims referring to different 'traditions' of ownership and usage rights, making issues of right and wrong less clear. Lack of clarity regarding the rights and wrongs of land cases placed a burden of proof on the villagers, both from the perspective of the authorities and from the perspective of supportive NGOs from the legal aid, human rights, and policy advocacy sectors.

For about two years the situation regarding economic concessions remained 'quiet' with forestry concessions inactive and land concessions mostly not yet up and running. But in November 2003 the powerful Pheapimex company began plowing in a land concession planned for pulp and paper production covering more than 315,000 hectares of land in six districts of Pursat and Kampong Chhnang provinces. The community actively opposed the company, and even though violence in the form of a grenade attack was used against the villagers, they prevailed, and Pheapimex stopped its activities here. Instead, it began working on a large concession in Mondulkiri province in 2004.[46] Involved CO NGOs brought people from Pursat to Mondulkiri to discuss their strategies. However, established legal aid, human rights and national advocacy NGOs took a different stance: they were very reluctant to

interaction between a ruling elite and an externally promoted policy reform agenda: the case of forestry under the second kingdom of Cambodia. Unpublished PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 2007

[45] Andrew Cock, op.cit., p.176

[46] As part of the Wuzhishan LS Group; for more information on both concessions, see Environment Forum Core Team. *Fast-wood plantations, economic concessions, and local livelihoods in Cambodia.* (Phnom Penh: NGO Forum, 2006).

support such 'semi-legal' community action (road blocks, equipment sabotage, etc.) and told villagers to refrain from such action in their own best interest (which they did). The established advocacy NGOs' stance was, perhaps, a good illustration of the validity of the government's assessment of the NGO-model as a politically toothless challenge.

What characterized all of the *networking* between activist communities in the examples above was its entirely NGO-driven nature. The initial acts of resistance at the local level were not NGO-driven – although some of them were NGO-supported – but the linkages between activist communities *were* a product of NGO involvement. Two kinds of NGOs were thus involved: the CO NGOs, comprising small community organizers, who all, in one way or the other, had been established with the support of the same international 'vehicle' of a core foreign advisor; and some larger established legal aid, human rights and national advocacy NGOs. The former had formed the coordination committee of an active non violence network covering activities in about 150 villages nation-wide.

By spring 2006 this co-ordination committee had died a natural death. Corruption issues within some organisations, the inability to look beyond their particular sectoral and territorial interest, and bickering over control of the network resulted in a couple of the established support NGOs pulling out and rethinking their networking strategy. The latter had played key roles in the successes of both the fisheries and forestry 'movements' but felt very unsure about how to operate regarding the legal morass surrounding land conflicts for various reasons. This may have been partly because they saw their primary role as 'protection' rather than active mobilization of villagers; partly because they felt threatened by their association with active resistance to authority; or partly because they felt threatened by communities deciding themselves what course of action to follow rather than relying upon their 'NGO patrons'.

At the same time as the shift into contestation over land brought different dynamics into play, things started changing in fisheries and forestry. With the 'fight' over the concession system won, the attention of CO NGOs turned from advocacy to promoting demands for community fisheries and community forestry projects (with land in ethnic minority areas this was later supplemented by communal land titling projects). These banked upon reasonable working relationships with local authorities, tried to make use of (new) legal opportunities, and

diverted attention from stalled concession fights.[47] They focused hopes on 'legalizing' a community's rights on usually quite small areas of commons – but had the unfortunate implication that the rest of the commons were now up for grabs.[48] This is another indication of the way that Cambodian NGOs end up legitimating, rather than challenging, the existing neo-patrimonial nexus of political and economic power.

By mid 2006 the CO and support NGOs and their foreign advisors started thinking about a new mechanism, different from a coordination committee of NGOs. National networking obviously requires structure but structure is a ticket to trouble, as the first incarnation had proven. Structure always and everywhere tends to empower the better resourced, professional organizations at the expense of more informal local collectives, but implications of permanent structure in Cambodia go beyond that universal. The complement of the earlier described preference for temporary/episodic indigenous leadership seems to be a fear that permanent formal organizational leadership is bound to be misused. Whatever the new structure was going to look like, the fundamental change made for the second incarnation was to have community people in charge, rather than NGOs. The participants experimented with a mechanism that comprised a network of community activists with a structure of its own, and a linked 'advisory' committee of some support NGOs that acts as a channel of funding, takes care of reporting requirements, and provides facilitation and access to other support apart from money (training, national and international networking, etc.). The network rallies around issues, rather than sectors and brings people from different sectors (fisheries, forestry, land, ethnic minorities, unions, students, monks) together. Party politics are avoided because of the assessment that association with the opposition is too risky and would prevent the participation of good people with ruling party connections; and because in any case there is an expectation that change *within* the ruling party is more likely than a change *of* ruling party. This explicit strategy of defining the network's challenges as 'issue-based' and not 'political' tend to be interpreted by non-Cambodians as acceding to democratic centralist definitions of politics. However, an alternative reading is that this is rather a sensible pragmatic choice for the time being.

A first structure built upon a representative model, with regional network committees sending representatives to a national network committee, but this created conflicts and was quickly

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[47] In most struggles, time is on the side of the powerful as solidarity is not easy to maintain without an immediate threat, key organizers can be co-opted by individual deals, etc.
[48] This is not to discredit all of these projects. Some use these as 'fronts' for community organizing, but in many cases these projects become ends in themselves.

abandoned for a more organic model that networks *individual* activists. Some of the regional networks do have an existence of their own, especially in the two regions where they receive funding support from INGOs. There is a core group of around ten individuals representing a national leadership, half male, half female, from rural communities all over the country, with another 10 to fifteen active people within an 'assembly' that is much larger. The groups that people come from include the Community Peace Building Network (CPN, the community activists associated with the CO NGO incarnation of the active non violence training network), a group brought together through community-organized training; the regional networks; and other linked or overlapping groups including a donor initiated food sovereignty network, unions, urban groups fighting resettlement, and some individual students and monks.

The relationship between the core group and the advisory group has been built over time through getting people to meet informally so as to slowly break down barriers of distrust. This has resulted in a changed dynamic between individuals. Many network members have extensive and often negative experience with NGOs as they have leadership roles within their communities and, as such, often have positions in NGO-created community based organizations. One of the claims that promoters of the network make is that the effectiveness of CBO is very much leadership dependent; NGOs lucky enough to identify a good leader who then makes his or her CBO work tend to claim the success as theirs. This patronizing bias does not go unnoticed and creates considerable distrust at the community level. Others have been alienated by NGO staff from legal aid or human rights monitoring organizations telling them what to do, as described above.

From early 2007 onwards, with considerable facilitation from supportive Cambodian and foreign advisors, the core group of the network started developing its own advocacy and action plans. Initially everything remained quite fluid and informal, but national-level networking and assistance in building a support structure came with increased exposure to a small but growing group of sympathetic donors who saw this as a social experiment that challenged their assumptions about Cambodian civil society. This has led to the beginning of a 'mutually constitutive dynamic', between donor interests and Cambodian leadership potential, similar to the one that initially resulted in the creation of an NGO dominated landscape in the 1990s.

The problems that keep resurfacing over the history of this movement are not likely to disappear. Initial successes were around specific natural resources, were entirely NGO driven, involving both small CO NGOs and large national NGOs, and would not have been possible without strategic and financial input from some core foreign advisor-activists and 'vehicles'. This reality is reflected in a continuing dependence of some of the Cambodian activists and CO NGO directors upon their foreign mentor and resentment of this dominance by others. The resentment also reflects differing opinions about strategy amongst these mentors, as their differences hinder solidarity amongst activists who are 'affiliated' with them. First, efforts to localize through NGOs quickly brought all the problems of the NGO model (a hierarchical, condescending expert attitude, a self-serving, project and donor-oriented agenda) to the fore, but the follow-up efforts to work towards a community-owned network cannot do without NGO technical assistance and services (like legal aid). That the required attitudinal changes are going to take a lot of time is clear.[49] At the network side of things, the decision to circumvent structure as much as possible and build a network of individuals was an interesting and bold move. Bringing these activists and interested NGO people together informally does seem to have wrought some real change with particular individuals. But they are not the majority and issues of competition, distrust, and naive dependence on outsiders are still prevalent.

Also, as a network of individuals it is not yet rooted in communities. Most members have some kind of leadership role in their community, but for many this is a role tied to a particular natural resource dispute. Although these conflicts have proven to be powerful, and to a certain extent the only rallying points for real larger-scale collective action, this solidarity proves insufficiently enduring once the conflict is over or even temporarily stalled. In addition to this, although hitherto having been at the receiving end of the 'NGO experience' and thus often very critical of NGO staff, the only tested model in town for formalizing structures is the NGO model. The quickest way for the activists to achieve recognition as 'peers', is for them to NGO-ise. And other actors put great pressure on informal entities like this that are in need of material support and legitimacy to register (government) and acquire the necessary organizational infrastructure to live up to planning, reporting and other paper-production requirements for support (donors).

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[49] This is a pervasive problem everywhere; for Cambodia it was insightfully described by Janet O'Leary and Meas Nee in their volume, *Learning for Transformation. A Study of the Relationship between Culture, Values, Experience and Development Practice in Cambodia*, (Phnom Penh: Krom Akphiwat Phum, 2001), but, like anywhere else, this has led to precious little change

This account of the historical relationship between NGOs and activist groups in Cambodia is clearly very different from that in, for example, Thailand or the Philippines. The NGO organizational model comprising a professionalized service provider with social rather than profit-maximization objectives might be similar, and come with similar characteristics, but these characteristics produce very different outcomes, depending upon the initial relationship with the social movement that they support.[50]

The case of the Philippines, where many NGOs emerged as political fronts of an armed highly organized movement[51] is therefore different from the case of Thailand, where many NGOs emerged as the urban supporters of people's movements[52]. Thai people's movements were less well organized than the armed rebellions in the Philippines, but they did set their own agendas. This is again different from Cambodia, where the organization of 'movements' is the outcome of NGO interventions.

The significance of such differences is illustrated by a case in which Filipino trainers were brought in to facilitate training for community organizers in Cambodia. The trainers initiated a strategy of placing community activist trainees as interns with established Cambodian NGOs. In the Philippines, this makes sense, because the NGOs are, in fact, an organic part of the movement. In Cambodia they are not; and therefore a community activist shifting into the NGO world as an intern is very likely to become – or to be seen by others as having become – 'NGO staff', with a different status, orientation and set of interests from those she had before.

A further significant factor is the contradictory nature of donor interests and analyses. On the one hand, donors identify this social experiment as an example of 'potential people power' that needs support to develop on its own terms, following its own agenda. On the other hand, donors make their own independent assessment of the broader context of economic transformation, and the speed with which this disenfranchises increasing numbers of the poor. In response, donors support the production of sophisticated activity plans, which involve the networks but are not initiated or designed by them. Furthermore, money and technical support from donors comes with accountability requirements attached. At the moment, these

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[50] Obviously, more contextual factors are significant, such as the labour market – in Cambodia, until quite recently, an NGO job was the only opportunity for an educated member of the urban middle class who lacked the connections to gain public sector employment to make a decent living.

[51] See e.g. Thea Hilhorst. The Real World of NGOs: Discourse, Diversity and Development. (London: Zedbooks, 2003)

[52] See e.g. Bruce Missingham. op. cit., and Sonchai Phatharathananuth. *Civil society and democratization. Social movements in Northeast Thailand.* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2006)

latter tendencies are resulting in the group of active community members being engaged, more or less full time, in externally initiated, facilitated and funded trainings, advocacy activities, consultations, most of it conducted outside of their own community. These tendencies on the part of donors undermine the ability of community activist networks to organise themselves, and prompt a process of gradual but inexorable NGO-isation.

Members of the community activist networks are aware of the dangers of NGO-isation. Many of the interested donors are also aware of the problems that their involvement might create. But on both sides the combination of the influence of some individuals who are stuck in their ways and thus indeed create the problems feared, and the more general difficulty inherent in the need to judge plans and activities, not only on their own merits, but also in terms of what they mean in the context of everything else that is already happening, makes for a frenzy of training and consultation activity. These training and consultation activities are supposed to equip the network of individuals to become more deeply rooted in their communities. However, it is hard to see this happening because the trainings themselves entail that the activists spend less and less time in their communities.

There are certainly interesting and informed analytic discussions amongst and between activists, their advisors and their closest CO NGO supporters. The need for 'deepening the roots', for a move from networking individuals to a networking of communities, is widely shared, but analysis has not yet transformed practice. Community organizing requires a variety of roles: internally - from mobilisers (who draw on community anger about resource theft to confront the threat), to organizers (who strengthen community solidarity on a more permanent basis), to livelihood- and culture-oriented local leadership (who coordinate the event-based mutual help and other collective action that is always present and needs to become part of the foundation of community solidarity)[53]; and externally – from networkers (linking up with other communities facing similar problems). These roles are often played best by different individuals because they require different skills and personalities. But the 'movement' clearly lacks examples of how to support this deepening in other ways than the creation of CBOs, which is very much an imposition of the NGO model at local level.

Another major component in the above described push for NGO-isation, besides bureaucratization through planning and reporting requirements, is the commodification of activism by the introduction of salaries and per diems. The payment of individuals by NGOs

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[53] This analysis comes from CPN reflections. Personal communication, CPN foreign advisor, 25-11-2008.

for activities introduces the dynamics of contractual relationships on top of those of the gift relationship that comes with outsiders paying the material costs of activities that activists themselves propose. It creates jealousies and de-legitimizes them as activists because they are now seen as NGO employees. That the NGOs pay different individuals to work on their project, thereby pulling the network apart, obviously weakens it. And that they often pay them for things that they were doing up to that point in time voluntarily weakens it even more.

The narrative presented above recounts developments from the emergence of a network of individual activists that felt strong enough to present itself as a civil society actor in the public domain, to the emergence of centrifugal forces that began to break down this solidarity. The time period over which this story played out was about a year. It is common knowledge that organization always comes with problems, and it is anyone's guess what will happen next: a key characteristic of change is that it can be understood in hindsight better than it can be predicted. But the very obvious power differential between outside actors with their own money and agendas, and the internal dynamics of a still-fledgling network of individuals trying to develop a shared understanding of and strategy regarding complex socio-economic transformations, while simultaneously trying to more firmly root that understanding in much wider community solidarity, does not bode well.

Conclusions

The story of community activism around natural resource struggles illustrates the three-way ideological contestation ongoing in Cambodian civil society. A series of natural resource management policies initiated by the government, with backing from donors such as the World Bank, in forestry, fishing and land, were and remain potentially disastrous for the poor. Yet the extreme weakness of the poor in a civil society dominated by neo-patrimonial links of cooptation and sponsorship to a centralizing and authoritarian state offered few resources of resistance. Enter the NGOs, established specifically to contest neo-patrimonialism in the name of good governance: yet here too, we find that the practice of resistance is itself speedily undermined by heavy-handed and ideological pursuit of particularly associational forms and priorities. To the extent that the emergence of a social movement for the protection of the commons is a real civil society challenge to the ideological dominance of the Cambodian state, the NGO-isation of civil society can only be interpreted as supporting that dominance. Regarding the supply-side of the good governance

agenda, Hughes and Un make a convincing argument in this volume for the donor co-creation of the current neo-patrimonial state. Donor efforts regarding the demand-side of that agenda seem to produce a similar outcome: hegemony of the state's agenda, resulting in a further marginalization of the poor.

In general the fast growth of the NGO sector from the 80ies onwards has been accompanied by a continuing debate about NGOs as alternatives to existing (bilateral and multilateral) development approaches. This debate is intertwined with a debate about the interrelationship between civil society, the state and the market. The understanding of NGOs as part of civil society is at the interface of these two debates. As a relatively recent organisational form, how exactly do they relate to other 'more deep-seated' or 'more constitutive' social arrangements or social actors[54] like political or religious movements? The question about NGOs as 'alternatives' assumes a shared recognition of the benefits of a joint existence of movements and NGOs "...within the struggle against hegemonic and repressive structures manifested through the state"[55] and their corporate supporters. Worldwide this kind of mutually supportive relation of NGOs and more 'grounded' movements came under increasing pressure from the early 90s onwards, with NGOs increasingly assuming the role of public service contractor which "...compromised their innovativeness, autonomy, legitimacy, accountability and ability to continue elaborating alternatives"[56].

It was this already compromised model which was introduced by donors into Cambodia. And the model was introduced into a setting without 'more constitutive social movements'. This 'vacuum' seems to have made co-optation of NGOs in Cambodia even more pervasive than elsewhere. And the story told above indicates that a large and monopolistic co-opted NGO sector is a barrier rather than a challenge to real alternatives. The described 'social movement' developments are nowhere close to overcome the dominance imposed by donors, NGOs and the state. The most realistic assessment is probably that they indicate an emerging political awareness, but not yet a political challenge.

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[54] This terminology and most of the argument is derived from Bebbington et al. Introduction, op. cit.
[55] ibid. p.12
[56] ibid. p.14