IDPR, 41 (4) 2019 https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2019.18

Sarah Peck

Managing precarity? Civil society groups and donor retreat in the Eastern Caribbean

Money is a crucial, yet contested aspect of global development. This article focuses on the monetary flows connected to civil society organisations (CSOs). CSOs have traditionally been conceptualised at the bottom of vertical aid chains, exemplifying their dependence on international donors. The retreat of traditional donors from regions such as the Caribbean has the potential to alter the way CSOs operate and their engagement in development activities. Based on empirical research with CSOs in Barbados and Grenada this paper explores the perceived impact of donor withdrawal from the region and discusses three key strategies civil society groups employ in this context. The paper argues that despite feeling increasingly vulnerable, civil society groups are responding by continuing to creatively draw on diverse social, emotional and financial resources to manage this precarity. However, some of these efforts add to the insecurity felt by civil society groups further increasing their fragility. This paper then aims to add to the body of work that is re-evaluating different aspects of global development finance in changing financial times.

Keywords: civil society, financial precarity, international donors, the Caribbean, entrepreneurialism

Introduction

Money is recognised as an important component within the global development industry and can be used proactively to achieve desires and aims, but it also embodies insecurity, unpredictability and risk (Green et al., 2012). This article focuses on the monetary flows connected to one sector of the development industry, civil society organisations (CSOs). CSOs have been projected as alternative avenues for development, but also critiqued for not being effective development actors (Banks et al., 2015; Bebbington, 2004; Edwards and Hulme, 1996). Despite these concerns, civil society groups remain important in the development arena, with significant amounts of money flowing through them (DFID, 2016; OECD, 2008). Money is important for civil society work, and forms a substantial part of the day-to-day challenges of sustaining civil society activity. Using empirical data from research with civil society groups in the Eastern Caribbean, this paper explores the perceived impact of donor withdrawal from the region and discusses three key strategies that civil society groups employ to manage this precarity.

Sarah Peck completed her PhD at the University of Sheffield, Department of Geography, Winter Street, Sheffield S10 2TN; email: sarahpeck248@gmail.com

The paper continues as follows. It begins by examining the literature on civil society groups and development financing. Dominant narratives project civil society groups as passive recipients of development funding, but they are also starting to be reconceived as more active entrepreneurial agents within financial interactions. The paper then moves on to an empirically based discussion of the everyday experiences of Caribbean civil society actors, which demonstrates that civil society groups are feeling increasingly precarious due to reductions in donor support and are responding by continuing to draw creatively on diverse social, emotional and financial resources to manage this vulnerability. The paper concludes that some of these efforts add to the insecurity felt by civil society groups, further increasing their fragility. This paper adds to the body of work that is re-evaluating different aspects of global development finance in changing financial times.

Civil society organisations: passive recipients of development financing

Significant amounts of money flow through third sector organisations and civil society groups which are seen as important economic actors (O'Reilly, 2011). Connections between civil society and money have predominantly been conceptualised through 'Western' viewpoints, which concentrate on international flows, aid and remittances, with less attention paid to the economic systems of development that arise from the global South and how traditional aid systems are contested and negotiated (Pollard et al., 2009). Studies directed at civil society have concentrated on flows of foreign aid and its effects (Bebbington, 2004; Kaag, 2011), the regulation and delegitmisation of organisations associated with foreign funding (Dupuy et al., 2015), and professionalisation driven by the demands of increasingly neoliberal donor agencies (Ahmad, 2003; Mawdsley et al., 2002). Donor funding is often seen as responsible for building particular civil society landscapes, and the aid system is considered a powerful force, shaping civil society in a number of complex ways including organisational formation, language spoken and programmatic focus (Banks et al., 2015; Bebbington, 2004; Kamstra and Schulpen, 2015; Mawdsley et al., 2002).

CSOs are often conceptualised at the bottom of the aid chain; they are reliant on foreign aid and the whims of donors, with increasing pressure to be upwardly rather than downwardly accountable (Banks et al., 2015). This places NGO accountability firmly in the domain of donors, and civil society as a subservient part of the aid industry (Amagoh, 2015). CSOs can become primarily accountable to donors and less responsive to their constituents, decoupling groups from the communities they work with (Baillie Smith and Jenkins, 2011; 2012; Banks et al., 2015; Mawdsley et al., 2002). Focusing on the role of the international donor downplays considerations of the way that money is negotiated, collected and used, the social processes involved and the agency and entrepreneurialism of civil society actors.

This minimising of civil society agency within development financing is also reflected in the spatialised discourses of development, where the global North accepts and relishes responsibility for 'developing' an implicitly inferior global South (Noxolo, 2006; Power, 2009). The divisions between North and South are problematic and have been critiqued for not reflecting the changing development landscape to incorporate relatively new development actors, such as China and Brazil (Mawdsley, 2013; 2017), yet they remain regularly used development categories, with 'traditional' donor countries still wielding considerable power (Mawdsley, 2017).

Dominant narratives project civil society groups as passive recipients of donor money, with concerns focused on how international donors shape organisational structures, roles and accountability. This is changing, aligned with alterations in traditional aid architecture, yet the importance of alternative, non-Western economic spaces for civil society remains less explored, with less attention paid to civil society agency within financial interactions (see AbouAssi, 2012; 2014; Bebbington, 2004; Mawdsley et al., 2002 for exceptions). Following this line of thought, the paper will now turn to consider how civil society groups are being reconceived as more active agents within development financing and how contemporary civil society financing connects to ideas of entrepreneurialism.

Greater agency: a more entrepreneurial civil society within a changing development landscape?

The dominance of the North/South divide and the prominence of international donors as key development actors has more recently been challenged by transformations in international aid architecture. This includes the increasing prominence of Southern donors and their attempts to shift discourses of aid to more horizontal relations (de Renzio and Seifert, 2014; Mawdsley, 2012; Quadir, 2013), greater domestic challenges in donor countries in terms of economic prosperity and perceptions of aid, and the rise of the private sector as an important development actor (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014; Mawdsley, 2015; 2017; McEwan et al., 2017). Alongside the introduction of these 'newer' actors, retreat of 'traditional' donors has become a feature of the international development landscape (Hayman, 2012). Aid withdrawal has been considered in the context of aid sanctions connected to particular political conditionalities and demands, for example, improvement in human rights (Crawford, 1997; Neumayer, 2003). More recently, attention has been paid to shifting trends in aid withdrawal associated with the changing economic status of both recipient and donor countries, accentuating a tendency to reduce foreign aid to many emerging economies (Dubochet, 2012; Hayman, 2012).

With a concern about reduced financial resources, particularly from 'traditional' international donors, civil society groups have responded by looking to governments for greater financial involvement (Huyse and de Bruyn, 2015) and engaging with what Mawdsley (2012) calls non-DAC donors, whilst others have dabbled in utilising social enterprise models (Cieslik, 2016; Hailey and Salway, 2016), corporate donors (Mendonca et al., 2016) and international philanthropy (Hay and Muller, 2014).[1] This dovetails with the encouragement of entrepreneurial attitudes in development processes and indeed wider society. This spirit of entrepreneurship is intimately connected to neoliberal modes of governance, with Scharff (2016, 108) claiming that 'the neoliberal self is an entrepreneurial subject', extending neoliberalism from an economic practice to a subjective experience (Freeman, 2014; Ilcan and Rygiel, 2015). The term entrepreneurial embodies a sense of creativity, innovation, flexibility, self-governance and the individualisation of responsibility (Freeman, 2014; Scharff, 2016). Entrepreneurialism is also associated with interactions with the market, risk taking and the development of new ideas (Mack, 2016; McFarlane, 2012; Roberts, 2010).

The production of the (social) entrepreneurial subject is increasingly becoming a focus for development interventions (Dolan and Rajak, 2016; Walker et al., 2008), with civil society groups and NGOs encouraged to adopt entrepreneurial do-it-yourself attitudes (Galvin and Iannotti, 2015; McFarlane, 2012). These studies highlight the potential of the entrepreneur to self-manage local development, with citizens taking greater responsibility for their own development, removing responsibility from the state (McFarlane, 2012; Thieme, 2015). The creation of young entrepreneurs in informal economies aims to harness the improvisation and dynamism present in these circumstances and transform it into engagement with inclusive market-based economies (Dolan and Rajak, 2016; Thieme 2015; 2017).

Whilst less attention has been paid to civil society finances away from international donor funding, one way in which civil society actors are becoming more entrepreneurial in their work is through the increased adoption of social enterprise models of working and the use of institutional models and cultures drawn from business management (Cieslik, 2016; Edwards, 2014; Galvin and Iannotti, 2015; Roberts, 2010). With this comes charges of elitism and the social economy on which it is based presents both opportunities and threats for civil society (Cieslik, 2016; Edwards, 2014). Shifting from a non-governmental structure to a social enterprise model highlights the individual as the agent for change, with the few influencing the many (Galvin and Iannotti, 2015; McFarlane, 2012; Thieme, 2015). This sense of entrepreneurship is also associated with the privatisation and individualisation of responsibility and the importance of increasing resilience rather than agitating for political change (Ilcan

1 The DAC (Development Assistance Committee) is part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with the majority of its member states drawn from Europe, North America and Australasia. Non-DAC donors are donor countries outside of this group.

and Rygiel, 2015; McFarlane, 2012); a discourse that reduces the importance of public institutions for social provision, encouraging autonomy, market-based problem solving and the individualisation of failure (Ilcan, 2009; Ilcan and Rygiel, 2015).

Civil society groups are increasingly being considered as more active agents within development financing, particularly in the context of a changing aid architecture and increasing emphasis on the importance of entrepreneurial attitudes within development processes. In one sense, the drive towards entrepreneurship promotes ingenuity, agency and creativity, but this optimism neglects the complexities associated with the entrepreneurial, including the potential for entrepreneurial attitudes to further depoliticise civil society and limited considerations of the social relations in which entrepreneurship takes place (Cieslik, 2016; Thieme, 2015).

Context and methodology: civil society and sustainable development in Barbados and Grenada

This paper is drawn from a wider collaborative research project that explored the role of CSOs working in the sustainable development field in Barbados and Grenada. Located in the Lesser Antilles group of islands, Grenada has a population of 110,694 (July 2015 estimate, CIA, 2016a) and is a member of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. Barbados, with a population of 291,495 (July 2016 estimate, CIA, 2016b) is often thought of as a geographical and cultural outlier to the other Eastern Caribbean states. Barbados and Grenada share histories of slavery and migration, colonial rule and independence struggles (Beckles, 2006; Brizan, 1984; Steele, 2003). Echoing other Caribbean nations, radical constitutional reform in the middle decades of the twentieth century prompted the uptake of universal suffrage, whilst the impact of British colonial rule remains evident in the centralised political structures of both islands. This is tempered by suggestions that the traditional 'Westminster model' of governance is not wholly appropriate for small island contexts (Bishop, 2011; Steele, 2003).

Alongside much of the wider Caribbean region, Barbados and Grenada are both economically and environmentally fragile. They experience significant economic volatility, with economies that are heavily reliant on precarious tourist industries, whose success is threatened by environmental vulnerability (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015a; 2015b; Wiltshire, 2015; World Bank, 2016). Despite this, both islands demonstrate high levels of human development, with Barbados ranked marginally above Grenada on the Human Development Index (HDI), (UNDP, 2016a; 2016b). Whilst the importance of these achievements is cause for celebration, continued development on both islands is threatened by economic inequality, high unemployment, environmental fragility, cultural erosion and growing social inequalities (Bishop, 2010).

It is in this context that civil society groups are working towards sustainable development, incorporating a diverse range of ideas, with activities including climate change adaptation, food and energy sovereignty and security, improving health and well-being, and conserving the regions' natural and built resources. In the 1970s and 1980s, the newly independent Caribbean was seen as a priority for states and non-governmental institutions of the USA, the UK and Canada, and civil society groups became recognised as important development actors in the region (Webson, 2010). Since then, however, CSOs have been criticised for: being inefficient development actors (Peters and McDonald, 2010), their financial ineptitude, limited community accountability (Ward, 2010), and becoming co-opted by the state (Girvan, 2012).

This paper is based on the responses of civil society actors from groups based in Barbados and Grenada, forty-five of whom took part in the project between September 2015 and March 2016. The project sought to understand more about the everyday experiences of civil society actors in this context. Participants were recruited deliberately via internet searches and snowball sampling. This resulted in semi-structured single encounter interviews with representatives from different civil society groups in Barbados and Grenada and occasional invitations to observe relevant activities. The research methodology also included 'zooming-in' on seven of the participant organisations to focus on the details of the lived experience of civil society through repeat interviews and participant observation with these groups. Repeat interviewing was used as a way of exploring in more depth the emergent themes arising from the interviews, developing rapport with participants and gaining a deeper knowledge of their stories and histories. These interviews were also complemented with participant observation in a variety of settings and activities, aiming to look at civil society from a different angle and provide another perspective on day-to-day routines and activities. In this context, interviewing and participant observation were used together to build a more comprehensive understanding of civil society.

The people who took part in the research were very often the founders or directors of the civil society groups contacted. This situation evolved partly through deliberate sampling, in that the research was keen to understand the stories of those who shape civil society and who make key decisions about civil society activity. Although people involved with civil society groups on a more informal or irregular basis may have perspectives on civil society that differ substantially from civil society leaders, this research project was keen to focus on people who are heavily engaged in civil society action. The involvement of civil society leaders was also practical, in the sense that one or two individuals, who are supported on an ad hoc basis by other more transient members, dominate many groups in the Caribbean. Inevitably, this led to civil society founders taking part in the research, as they are the primary human resource for their organisation. In some of the interviews the founders of the organisation brought along another representative, often a key member of the group.

The research gathered data from a wide variety of CSOs, incorporating groups of different forms, working at a variety of scales and through different types of engagement with sustainable development, aiming to get a sense of the civil society activity associated with developmental concerns in Barbados, Grenada and the wider region. Although relatively small community-based groups dominate the civil society landscape in Barbados and Grenada, there is significant diversity between these groups, the activities they undertake and how they operate. Alongside these community-based groups, established CSOs operate at both the local and national level, for example, working on civil society activities in a particular locale, contributing to national policy forums and advocating to the government. Some civil society groups actively position themselves as organisations that support other civil society groups, build their capacity and advocate for the sector more widely. Despite this diversity, the majority of participants in the research were from small community-based groups with few full-time, paid staff. Thirty-three interviews were conducted with actors based in Barbados and twenty-six in Grenada, with interviews ranging from forty-five minutes to over two hours in duration. The majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face at a location of the participant's choosing, with seven undertaken via Skype. In efforts to maintain anonymity and confidentiality I have used pseudonyms in this paper and also altered location names and other identifying details to aid the preservation of organisational anonymity within the research. The interviews were audio-recorded (with permission) and transcribed by the author, with data coded and analysed manually.

Financial insecurity: the changing development landscape in the Eastern Caribbean

It is important to highlight the pertinent aspects of the economic and development landscapes for civil society in the Eastern Caribbean, and the way that civil society actors perceive these environments. Over the last three decades, both Grenada and Barbados have transitioned from exported oriented agricultural economies with varying degrees of success (Payne and Sutton, 2001). Barbados's sugar monoculture has been replaced with an economic environment that is now dominated by the service industry, with tourism and offshore finance making significant contributions to foreign direct investment (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015b). A similar situation is found in Grenada, where nutmeg has traditionally been a major source of foreign exchange and employment, with the service industry again becoming central and Grenada embarking on a period of 'homegrown' structural adjustment (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015a). High (Barbados) and upper middle income (Grenada) country status hide the volatility of the both the Grenadian and Barbadian economies, associated with their exposure to external economic forces, environmental vulnerability and isolation (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015a; 2015b; World Bank, 2016). It is within these economic contexts that civil society experiences little financial assistance available locally, perceptions of diminished contributions and increasingly difficult access to global funds.

The dominant literature on civil society has a tendency to position international aid as the primary space of economic relations (Banks et al., 2015). Civil society groups in Grenada and Barbados have previously, and to some extent continue to, receive funding from a variety of multi and bilateral donors, including Oxfam GB, the Commonwealth Foundation, Gesellshaft fur International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, the German corporation for international co-operation), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the European Union. Many civil society groups expressed concern about financial insecurity, often associated with donor retreat from the region. This trend was attributed to changing income status to middle and high-income countries, the global recession making donor funding less available and the discursive way in which the region is no longer seen as a development priority. This can be contextualised within the changing global development landscape, particularly shifts in aid flows connected to economic transitions in both donor and recipient countries (Overton et al., 2013). These thoughts are illustrated in this excerpt from my conversation with Pam, the founder of a civil society group in Grenada:

> To describe what kind of adjective I can use: humongous, unimaginable, unreal. It provokes significant discussion because the Caribbean I think had given so much and continues to give so much for the developed countries … I have to admit quickly without hesitation that the support that we've got in the 70s, late 70s, up until the 90s has been significant and has done tremendous for all countries, our human resources, our physical development. And I remember saying to an organisation in the UK actually, it's like you're punishing us because we used the resources to develop our people ... But I think by and large the Caribbean has come a long way from the images that is portrayed in terms of fundraising and that's what I call a punishment … I know that economies are struggling, I recognise that there is a lot of poverty and vulnerability in developed countries. So against that background it has become a humongous challenge … In 2013 we had to just chop the staff because we just couldn't pay people, we had a lot of work but we can't pay people and that kind of situation was really, really, really very, very difficult emotionally and socially. It was my grays [referring to her hair] from that [laughs] trust me. My grays definitely came more out of that. (Pam, founder Grenadian CSO, 1 February 2016)

Clare, an NGO practitioner in Barbados, spoke in a similar vein contending that:

> One thing that has been developing in the Caribbean region is that many of the islands in the Caribbean have been re-classified by the World Bank from low-income countries to high-income countries and that changes the donor perspective of the region and interest in funding the region. But you know we are based on the ground, we know

> that the GDP [gross domestic product] is improving, that doesn't mean that every community is being affected and the wealth doesn't rise across the board, so we still try to concentrate our programming and efforts in communities and countries and sectors that most need help … I would say that it's good and bad that the country has moved from developing to developed. That's good for the country in terms of perspective from tourism and its global image but it's … there's still the need to help, and that restricts some of the donor funding that's available. (Clare, Director Caribbean regional NGO based in Barbados, 7 October 2015)

Pam and Clare illustrate the perceptions of many civil society groups; that there is a temporality to the changes in international funding, with adequate support available from the 1970s through to the 1990s, which has been heavily reduced. Clare elaborates further on the temporal shift towards reduced funding to the Caribbean region, explicitly connecting these changes to alterations in Caribbean country classification. These categorisations present another way through which to imagine and differentiate between nation states, one that directly influences how development is articulated, operationalised and financed.

These perceptions are echoed by data on aid to the Caribbean region, with both Barbados and Grenada showing a general trend for reductions in net official development assistance (ODA) received between 1983 and 2010 (World Bank, 2018). USAID statistics demonstrate that foreign assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean declined in the 1990s, returned to an upward trajectory in the 2000s as many countries in Central America received reconstruction assistance following Hurricane Mitch in 1998, and declined again more recently following the global financial crisis and developmental changes in the region (Meyer, 2018).

Viewing aspects of civil society work as vulnerable and insecure is relatively neglected within development studies, as Baillie Smith and Jenkins (2017) point out, vulnerability is usually associated with the beneficiaries of development aid rather than those who are actively embedded in the development industry. Being part of the global development industry, in this case as civil society actors, produces its own vulnerabilities and insecurities (Baillie Smith and Jenkins, 2017), particularly in the changing financial context. In my conversation with Pam quoted above, she exemplified the insecurity felt by many civil society groups, tracing the impact the reduction in development financing has had on her organisation, and articulates the anxiety, emotions and even bodily changes that have occurred as her group has found it progressively more difficult to acquire funding from international sources. The majority of civil society actors interviewed voiced their concerns about these reductions in international funding and many organisations have started to adopt strategies to offset these financial pressures. Civil society groups are, therefore, responding to this vulnerability in an effort to secure their position and continue the work that they do. The paper will continue by discussing three key mechanisms through which civil society groups make themselves more resilient to financial uncertainty and sometimes even harness this financial precarity. Firstly, CSOs create diverse financial networks, secondly they build their reputation and finally CSOs are reframing self-sustainability as an opportunity.

It is important to note that CSOs have not always adopted these strategies purely in response to the changing donor landscape. Rather, the perceived reduction in donor funding has been a significant driver in their adoption and places greater pressure on the success of these alternative financial mechanisms for civil society sustainability.

Being accountable: negotiating diverse financial networks

Almost all of the civil society groups interviewed articulated the importance of developing more informal and entrepreneurial mechanisms to sustain their finances. Civil society groups are using the market to generate income, providing consultancy and administrative services, encouraging diaspora and philanthropic donations, taking part in a 'barter' style economy where knowledge and labour are traded in a non-monetary way, and using self and family financing. These financial arrangements are not discrete but are engaged with simultaneously and alongside the more formalised circuits of international donors. This diversity was not restricted to certain groups; rather it is something that is common to many of the research participants.

The way that civil society groups craft these diverse financial networks is exemplified in this commentary from one of the research participants, Colin, the founder of a Barbadian CSO. In order for Colin to develop his community organic farm in a deprived suburban area of Barbados he had to establish circuits for the transmission of financial capital into (and out of) his project. Initially he reached into his own pocket, just to get things started. About four months later 'a friend came by, told us about the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and that was how we got our first project' (Colin, founder Barbadian CSO, 26 September 2015). Colin also obtains other flows of financial capital through multiple sources, firstly through the market:

> What we're doing now, which is to be self-sufficient, is to get some money coming in from the crops that we're putting into the ground … we're taking the next two or three months as a growing period to get to that stage and we're taking the next month to try and build a nursery so we can sell some seedlings so we can source some revenue … so we can consolidate with that. (Colin, founder Barbadian CSO, 26 September 2015)

Colin also actively sought out donations from the private sector including from an electrical company and a financial services company, emphasising here the importance civil society groups place on making and maintaining personal connections:

> Sagicor [a financial services company], we told them, you know one of our recurring costs every month is irrigation so they're going to put us in their budget for next year

> … You've gotta reach out though. You have to actively; I've got a list I call on. You've gotta follow up, you've got to follow up. You've got to leave some time each week for correspondence and for callings. (Colin, founder Barbadian CSO, 9 October 2015)

Colin's example articulates the importance of multiple financial flows to many civil society groups. Civil society groups, like the one Colin is involved in, are constructing a number of financial networks connecting civil society, their friends, the market, the private sector and a multi-lateral donor.

These complex networks were not unusual, with many participants outlining their financial reliance on strategic connections with others. The sense of multiple connections does not assume horizontal relations without power differentials; rather it shows the diverse financial relations within which civil society work is entangled. These networks also extend across national borders, incorporating diaspora groups and crowd-sourced funds from interested individuals overseas, challenging the traditional Eurocentric North-South binary prevalent in development discourses (Mercer et al., 2009). Here civil society actors are going beyond the vertical relations and uneven geographies more usually associated with development finance and crafting their own financial networks (Noxolo et al., 2012).

One key aspect of these more informal financial circuits is the importance civil society groups place on accountability within them. Financial accountability within civil society scholarship has predominantly been conceived within the realm of donor-led processes, with CSOs becoming increasingly divorced from their local constituents (Baillie Smith and Jenkins, 2011; 2012; Banks et al., 2015). Many civil society groups are developing processes to ensure accountability to different donors and devising alternative modes of demonstrating financial responsibility. This accountability to others within their financial circuits extends into the actions and practices of civil society, with informal financial circuits driving civil society to develop their own forms of regulation and accountability mechanisms, as Trevor and Pam, CSO founders, illustrated when talking about how their groups are devising accountability mechanisms for the diaspora and private sector contributions:

> The accountability is very, very important because … you know what happens in several organisations you send food or money and there is not accountability and you keep it for yourself … lt is very, very important to us and that is why Facebook is also important, how do we keep in touch with them … Even myself when … I travel I make sure I arrive early. If I go to New York I see the people there and say this is what we've been doing, this is what's happening. (Trevor, founder Grenadian CSO, 7 March 2016)

> It [referring to the donations] comes from individuals like a past principle of a school, so it comes from professionals but it comes largely from the private institutions, the

> banks, the electricity companies, your credit unions … We try hard to practice what we preach so we provide them with reports I mean a letter goes every year soliciting their support but it goes with content [about the programme] … and … in addition to that we send out an unaudited financial report … So I think that has built confidence … and people say I know that programme so the private sector's confidence is very well placed from that. (Pam, founder Grenadian CSO, 1 February 2016)

These two examples show how civil society groups are being creative and crafting networks of accountability that are very different from those prescribed to them through dominant methods of development finance. Civil society groups are not powerless in crafting their own financial networks, and have developed systems of regulation that deviate from the project plans and budgets utilised by international donors. There is agency for civil society actors in how they develop appropriate accountability mechanisms within their financial networks, challenging the often-Eurocentric nature of development financing and assumptions that civil society groups are only upwardly accountable to international donors. These relations are not about vertical dependency relations; they project a more horizontal version of accountability, in Trevor's example through Facebook or his personal mobility. The development of these different accountability mechanisms allows civil society to be responsible to their donors in a way that is not forced on them from 'outside'. Trevor is able to use his own skills and knowledge to develop avenues for accountability that feel more relevant for their civil society work. This emphasises the agency, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of civil society groups in forming these networks.

Maintaining your reputation

The second strategy adopted by civil society groups to manage their financial vulnerability is perhaps most often associated with the tenets of entrepreneurship; the ability to craft an individual brand with a 'unique selling point' (Scharff, 2016). The success of individual civil society actors in obtaining money is often reliant on their reputations, as well as the social connections and the knowledge they have at their disposal. This accentuates the importance of individual actors developing and maintaining their own 'brand' and reputation to encourage donations. Civil society finance moves into the private domain of the individual, with civil society actors viewing themselves as the visible product that people are investing in (Ilcan, 2009; Scharff, 2016). Alyson, the founder of a Grenadian CSO, exemplified this idea as she explains here in reference to crowdfunding:

> We realised people would come and help and crowdsourcing [is] a lot better than getting some hand up from some charity saying what our wants are … I don't mind reporting on the use of it and I don't mind because I want to keep up our status to one

> day get more ... I've got to maintain my presence, on LinkedIn on Facebook, people have to see who I'm connected to, read my reviews and then they'll trust us and donate. (Alyson, founder Grenadian CSO, 5 February 2016)

Some civil society groups, such as Alyson's, are actively using relatively new and innovative technologies to expand the geographies of their financial inputs, with crowdfunding becoming an increasingly popular modality. Originally started as a form of deriving startup capital for small businesses or as a way of funding cultural projects (Langley, 2016), crowdfunding is now being considered by a number of civil society groups as a viable source of funding their work. Crowdfunding has the potential to foster new social ties and the potential to bring not only financial benefits but also broaden the reach of the organisation, bring on board new associates and supporters, and to gain knowledge. It may also create a more democratic form of development financing, where the civil society group is directly accountable to the donor. There is a risk, however, that it could reproduce precarious and vulnerable social relations for civil society, and insecurity of who they are, the skills they have and how they are being judged, this time seemingly on a more personal level. Rather than being about the project or the professionalism of the organisation, the success or failure of crowdfunding rests heavily on the shoulders on civil society founders. Civil society groups articulated that for crowdfunding to be successful, the leader of the organisation must maintain a pristine reputation, both virtually and physically, to be able to attract donations, projecting the self as a viable business (Scharff, 2016).

The majority of the participants understood developing and sustaining their reputation as key to financial success. Civil society groups felt their reputation was shaped by how they engaged with different sources of finance, with some groups using financial conduct as a form of questioning and delegitimising other organisations. Here we can see that how civil society groups engage financially can legitimise and delegitimise their actions, as Pip, the founder of a Grenadian CSO, articulates comparing his organisation to others:

> My organisation never got any significant money from anybody because we always had this challenge of not receiving money from any [environmental] destroyer, where as other organisations … they didn't have that problem. They could have taken money, when we told them that one time we couldn't take it, they didn't understand. (Pip, founder Grenadian CSO, 27 February 2016)

Developing a particular brand for their civil society work and maintaining their reputation within financial endeavours was seen as crucial by many civil society groups. Civil society actors are also aware of the importance of developing a brand in order to enhance their financial resources. This is juxtaposed with insecurity and vulnerability, as Alyson explained above. There is a tension within the realm of financial responsibility for civil society; in one sense they are increasing their agency and in another there is the risk of individualisation of responsibility, reliant on projections of particular identities and reputations (Edwards, 2014; Ilcan, 2009).

Reframing self-sustainability

The processes of adopting diverse economic networks and maintaining one's reputation are two ways in which civil society actors resist the vulnerability associated with financial uncertainty. It would be easy to see the use of these diverse economies as solely a response to the existential threat of less donor money, considering the loss of financial opportunities described earlier, but the multiplicity in civil society finances can also be understood as an opportunity to change the way that development is enacted. This change is underpinned by a desire for independence and greater autonomy. For many civil society groups, crafting their own financial networks challenges the power-geometries of development systems and the parent-child model of financing, and places greater responsibility for financial attainment in the hands of civil society actors (Noxolo, 2006; Power, 2009). Civil society groups frame the development of multiple economic circuits as a way of effectively contributing to sustainable development. They see money as an extension of Western hegemony in development processes, and as a space of quiet contestation to challenge the power-geometries associated with development financing. As Timothy, the chief executive of a Grenadian CSO, commented:

> It still smacks of ... it smacks of ... it can be patronising. It can be extremely patronising, it's almost like you know, it's the whole Red Indian thing. Look a white man's magic and you know for some of us who have lived abroad, we said don't come, please don't come patronising, throwing something at ... throwing some shackles at people … They'll look at it and think that's a lot of money but actually if it's not efficient, it can do more damage, because what you get is a lot of failed projects and the next project that comes in is tarred with the same brush before its even started. Oh here we go again. (Timothy, chief executive Grenadian CSO, 2 February 2016)

Many civil society actors use money to negotiate the dominant neo-colonial doctrines implicit in international donor money and the perceived reduction of their own agency in their work, rejecting and disconnecting themselves from the inequalities embedded in international aid (Noxolo et al., 2012). In Timothy's quote, we can see how he feels that international aid has denied Southern development actors of agency and subdued their creativity. He shows how power flows through money, the use of the word shackles implies the way development aid can restrict and restrain civil society actors, juxtaposing the power of aid with the powerlessness of recipients (Noxolo et al., 2012). Lincoln, the founder of a Barbadian CSO, explained:

> Now we're raising our own money to help us… and what it helps to do is to build your own capacity because you're now thinking differently, managing your organisation differently, it forces you to manage differently … If you want to be able to speak freely you must have your own power base, you must have your own income, you have to have your own independence because if people are giving you they expect you to tow their line. (Lincoln, founder Barbadian CSO, 9 October 2015)

Here Lincoln articulates the thoughts of many civil society actors, connecting the ability of civil society groups to raise their own money with transitions of power. He speaks of being able to think and manage differently with their own sources of money, of being able to build his group's capacity, and again connects international aid with the strangulation and constraint of civil society work. Some civil society actors actively chose to remove themselves from the international donor system and this rejection of international aid makes an attempt at challenging the hegemonic power-geometries associated with this type of funding, turning to an innovative mechanism such as crowdsourcing attempts to shift power to communities to organise themselves, challenging who decides how development is enacted (Massey 2004; Raghuram et al., 2009).

Civil society actors connected this desire to move away from institutional donor funding with greater emphasis on 'locally' driven mechanisms, where decisions are made about what development might entail by civil society actors themselves and actions driven by perceptions of local need. Lincoln's statements above articulate the importance of decision-making and organising at a local level, something that feels restricted within the realm of international funding. Civil society groups also felt that diversifying their financial arrangements has the potential to bring them closer to those they seek to represent, as Liam, the founder of a Grenadian CSO, illustrated:

> It has recently occurred to me that having no funds may be useful because everyone expects NGOs to have lots of money to throw at cocktail parties and mini banquets and if we say look we're doing this with no funds no benefits to ourselves it may be that people listen to us more. (Liam, founder Grenadian CSO, 3 March 2016)

Seeking to move away from being solely reliant on international donor money, the adoption of multiple funding mechanisms offers opportunities for civil society actors. It allows them to challenge the dominant power relations they feel are associated with international aid and the way that it restricts their activity and strangles their voice and creativity. There is a sense of injustice about the way that aid replicates the racialised hegemony of colonialism, with alternative funding mechanisms offering potential to contest these relationships, nurturing agency and freedom for civil society actors in their work. The creation of financial networks and the opportunities crafted by civil society actors through these relations challenges the dominant spatialities associated with international aid, contesting the dominance of North over South and of vertical accountability (Raghuram et al., 2009). This challenges existing asymmetrical geometries of power within development discourse, ascribing a more active subjectivity to civil society actors (Massey, 2004; Noxolo et al., 2012; Power, 2009).

Conclusion

Civil society finances are comprised of informal networks of finance that are crafted intentionally by civil society groups. International donors and nation states have tended to dominate conversations about civil society finance, with responsibility for development situated in the global North. The changing development landscape, and in particular the retreat of traditional donors from regions such as the Caribbean, places greater emphasis on the need to consider how civil society groups gain money beyond these dominant sources and what these processes tell us about the role of civil society within development. Civil society groups are responding to changes in the donor landscape in three key ways by: actively creating diverse financial networks to sustain their work; reframing their thoughts on self-sustainability; and emphasising the importance of maintaining their reputations. By listening to the everyday experiences of civil society actors, the burden they experience to finance their work and the way obtaining money is embedded in their everyday lives, this research demonstrates that civil society actors can no longer be viewed as passive subjects within financial processes. This contributes to a change of identity for civil society actors, projecting them as agentic and entrepreneurial.

Civil society actors are creating their own diverse and informal financial networks as part of their work, striving, as Noxolo et al. (2012) articulate, to form their own networks, histories and identities. Informal funding sources are thought to offer more opportunities to work in ways that are not connected to international donor agendas set outside of the country. Even when there is not an outright rejection of international donor money, civil society actors create relational arrangements to rework the way that this money drives development. These mechanisms embed civil society more substantially within the local and transnational social fabric. They are more reliant on the success of local business, the conditions of the local market or diaspora connections. The informality of financial arrangements means the financial responsibility for civil society rests more heavily within the relational networks of particular civil society actors and the contextual economic and social environment of the Caribbean.

Financial diversity explicitly challenges the unequal power-geometries embedded within international donor funds, and the paternalism that is felt through these methods, with alternative sources of funding seen as an opportunity to reclaim moments of power within development processes. These acts of quiet contestation confront the narratives of the 'first world' being constructed through its ability to effectively and successfully develop the 'third world' (Noxolo, 2006). Diverse financial sources also offer potential for the development of different forms of accountability.

Civil society activity in the context of donor withdrawal is not limited to the Caribbean region (see for example INTRAC, 2018) and the research on which this paper is based suggests that financial models for development need to incorporate discourses of a more agentic civil society. This agency can be recognised within the context of international donor funding through increased collaboration with CSOs during the grant-making process, greater acknowledgement of the variety of forms through which accountability can be demonstrated, and by increasing the availability of smaller amounts of funding for grassroots groups.

As this paper has argued international donors are only one (and potentially a declining) facet of financial support for CSOs. Within the global models of development finance it is increasingly important to acknowledge the diversity of financial sources that many CSOs utilise and to move towards models that value and interrogate these less traditionally dominant forms of financial support. This variety, however, should be seen in the context of continued vulnerability. These shifting financial arrangements should not be seen as a panacea to civil society's funding dilemmas. Rather they are part of a set of processes that need to be critically reflected on by both civil society activists and those 'outside', inevitably asking questions about the role and influence of donor agencies. Informality and diversity do not necessarily preclude marginalisation. Accusations of the apolitical nature of civil society caused by international donor funding are not necessarily overcome through diversification, as the reputation, identity and social resources these channels rely on can be politically precarious. Voices marginalised through international donor money can also be side-lined through an inability to build informal sources of funding, particularly if they lack social bonds, capital and resources, which underpin the creation of many informal financial networks, potentially limiting the ways in which civil society groups in Barbados and Grenada, and elsewhere, can engage in sustainable development.

Acknowledgements

This paper is drawn from research supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (grant number ES/J500215/1), a doctoral studentship in collaboration with the Commonwealth Foundation. My thanks go to Dr Daniel Hammett, Professor Jean Grugel and Dr Chasca Twyman for their support, advice and guidance. My thanks also go to the reviewers and editors for their constructive feedback.

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