



# ANNEX: FRAMING PAPER FOR THE PROJECT

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Carold Institute is dedicated to understanding and supporting the evolving nature of Canadian voluntarism and voluntary organizations as well as the growing range of activities of Canadian civil society. The philosophy behind the Carold programme is that a healthy volunteer sector is an integral component of a vibrant democracy. In recent years the language has broadened and the notion of voluntarism has expanded to encompass the diverse activities undertaken by Canadian and international civil society.

Civil society has been defined as ' an arena, separate from the state, the market and the individual household, in which people organize themselves and act together to promote their common interests.

Over the past year the Board of Directors of Carold has undertaken an internal review of its programming priorities. This project, "Building Local and Global democracy" is the result of that review.

The project is designed to create an ongoing dialogue amongst carefully selected participants over a period of about two years. The dialogue will try to foresee the role that Canadian civil society has to play within a modern democracy, and especially how it does so within a rapidly evolving context of globalization. It will put special emphasis on lessons derived for Canadian as well as international civil society which help them to meet the challenges of democracy enhancement and building. It bears mentioning that the impact of 9/11 and its aftermath is a major factor in the thinking behind this project.

## CONTEXT SETTING

### THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON DEMOCRACY

The inexorable advancement of globalization is cutting across all aspects of human activity, impacting upon the work of governments, the corporate sector and civil societies. This phenomenon has led to a spectacular growth of an internationally-oriented civil society. It is impossible to ignore the ‘swarming’ impact of those civilians around the world who marched to protest the Iraq war, or who now gather regularly at the annual meetings of the World Bank, IMF or WTO, amongst many others. The rise of the anarchist movement also redefines traditional voluntarism as does the “New Diplomacy”, an increasingly systematic development of alliances between international civil society and Southern governments. While the process of globalization is enhancing international cooperation and understanding and while it has already made global interdependence a living reality, it is also, in many cases, widening the gap between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak.

All of civil society operates within and is affected by the external social and political context. The process of globalization continues to broaden this context for Canadian civil society and in order to better understand what, at first glance may appear for some to be a Canadian phenomenon; it has become essential to look at it from a global perspective.

The rapidity of globalization has left our current political structures in its wake, structures which were designed for another era. Issues that once were appropriately within the domain of national governments have now become internationalized. The same holds true for voluntary action. Increasingly, Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) realize that in order to attain their objectives, be they in the domain of environment, or health, or youth, etc., their efforts will only be effective if concerted action is taken at an international level.

Just as many political structures have become outdated, so have many of the traditional civil society alignments. In particular there has been a rapid growth of civil society in the South, as well as within much of the former Soviet block, and the traditional donor-recipient relation between the resource rich NGOs of the North and their Southern ‘partners’ is no longer viable. Throughout the South there is a growing concern that their traditional allies, northern-based NGOs, have now become part of the problem.

This is leading to a somewhat paradoxical situation in a country like Canada. On the one hand, those Canadian ‘International’ NGOs, with their extensive international experience and knowledge, are in imminent danger of becoming outdated if they do not change their ways. On the other hand, domestic Canadian

organizations, who have developed knowledge and constituencies around local or national Canadian issues, are being forced more and more to function on an international level.

### **AN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE VACUUM**

This rapid and global realignment of political and social forces has created a political vacuum, and most importantly a democratic vacuum, or as it is often referred to, a democratic deficit. This is as true for civil society as it is for governments.

Globalization has eroded the sovereign capacity of the nation state. Increasingly, the private sector, which is accountable only to a shifting group of shareholders, is taking decisions that, while affecting national economies, are beyond the control of national governments. The only global governance body which has some claim to being democratically based, the UN, is losing more and more of its authority to other multilateral bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the gathering of the heads of state of the richest western countries (the G8); and now the L20 (an expanded club of the powerful states); organizations which are dominated by the wealthy countries and which cannot reasonably claim to be globally democratic. The UN itself is dominated by its Security Council, with veto powers given to those few powerful member states whose inclusion reflected the political realities of immediate post WW2.

Thus, at the very time when more and more governance issues must be dealt with globally, the rigid and outmoded traditional governance structures continue to stand in the way of change while key decision making bodies forge ahead with decreasing accountability to citizens.

This situation is now seriously compounded by the hegemonic aspirations of the current American administration. Their refusal to be party to a growing number of international treaties and their lack of constructive participation in key multilateral bodies is also eroding the probability of creating a new form of democratic global governance.

To date there appears to be relatively little political will by the Northern governments to seriously democratize the current system of governance. Surprisingly perhaps, it is international civil society, NGOs, academia and the unions, which is rising to challenge this impasse and which is giving increasing visible leadership towards defining a form of governance premised upon, and structured to be accountable to all peoples of the world.

### **IMPACT UPON CANADA**

At the national level of governance, Canada, like other countries, is losing control over certain aspects of its sovereignty. Multilateral trade agreements increasingly form the basis for Canadian economic decisions, and these same agreements have direct impact upon traditional national policy matters such as culture, environment, and the desired extent of governmental intervention.

The growing inability of the Canadian government to exercise ultimate control over issues previously within its domain impacts, in turn, on Canadian civil society. As a result, our CSOs are increasingly involved in two broad approaches. On the one hand they are attempting to influence the global agenda, typically, but not exclusively, by dealing directly with multilateral agencies, including the UN. Normally this is done in collaboration with NGOs from other countries, often under the aegis of an international umbrella organization.

At the same time Canadian civil society remains vigorous in its efforts to influence domestic issues, again typically by mobilizing a concerned constituency to apply public pressure at the appropriate governmental level.

### **INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO COUNTER THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT**

In some parts of the world, particularly in the South, civil society is using its collective capacity to try to strengthen their national governments in order to help them resist pressures from the Northern dominated private or multilateral sector.

Also, a series of new civil society international fora have emerged, including the World Social Forum in Brazil, CIVICUS in Johannesburg, the Montreal International Forum and most recently, Ubuntu in Barcelona. The common interest of these new groupings is to strengthen the ability of international civil society to impact upon global democracy.

Importantly however, from the local to the global level, there is also a growing effort by civil society to play a direct role in governance. These approaches range from an increasingly articulate and youth-led defence of anarchism, to a UN reform, which would include formal inclusion of international civil society, to a sustained call for “peoples’ parliaments”.

In effect, the traditional democratic model conceived in the West is under attack. For some activists, it is an issue of reform, while others are calling for an entirely new form of democratic governance.

It is also important to note that much of the ‘attack’ on the current form of governance is passive in nature. A growing number of Canadian and other citizens appear to be opting out, refusing to support the current system, refusing to vote

and/or deliberately destroying their ballots, and turning their political energies elsewhere.

## **ENGAGING PRACTITIONERS TO BUILD LOCAL AND GLOBAL DEMOCRACY**

While, in many respects, Canadian civil society is healthy and even thriving, the rather ambiguous governance situation as described above has prompted Carold to launch this project. Increasingly, Canadian civil society is required, willingly or otherwise, to function within a global context.

In some parts of the world, including to an important degree, Canada, a climate of fear has emerged, stemming from the horrors of 9/11, but sustained by a media frenzy and cynical political manipulation. This climate includes a sense of poorly defined foreboding, and has led to fear-based governance that can justify curtailing civil liberties in the name of democracy.

Canadian and other civil societies are in the process of trying to move into this growing democratic vacuum. This has, in turn, led to an important backlash against them, one that questions their legitimacy, their accountability and whether they are suitable representatives of their constituencies. In the view of Carold, this backlash, threatening as it does a freely functioning civil society, gives a sense of urgency to this project.

The project is highlighted by some distinct characteristics favouring open communication and interaction. It consists of an ongoing dialogue over a period of two years in which case studies involving issues and/or methods considered to be of importance by the project participants were identified; The preliminary findings of these case studies were presented at G05 (Global Democracy: Civil society Visions and Strategies), an international conference which took place in Montréal in May 2005.

These presentations allowed Carold group members to get feedback on their specific research as well as on the overall project. . This feedback will be integrated into the final phase of dialogue and any eventual conclusions and recommendations.

### **ONGOING DIALOGUE AND CHOOSING PARTICIPANTS**

By hosting continuous reflection seminars, the Carold Institute hopes to observe the dynamic within a group of committed civil society representatives sharing their perceptions on globalism, democratization, citizenship and learning. The selection of group members was based on a fair representation of Canada's bilin-

gual heritage, and the need for gender-balance as well as professional and ethnic diversity.

Each member brought his/her own expertise on democracy-building initiatives. The continuous and open dialogue enriched the familiarity each had on this matter but also helped the group to choose case studies and papers that reflected the diverse preoccupations of group members. This allows for a more holistic understanding of the challenges to and lessons of democracy-building.

### IDENTIFICATION OF CASE STUDIES

The Carold Board participated with selected participants in an open analysis of the project's central theme. They then identified five major themes, each of which was suitable for a case study. The five sub-themes were:

- New Forms of Governance
- Security
- The Social Economy
- Education
- Aboriginal Communities

After extensive analysis and dialogue amongst the Board members, six case studies and authors were identified. These are:

- Porto Alegre and the Participatory Budget: Civic Education, Politics and the Possibilities for Replication; author, Rebecca Abers
- *Équiterre de l'idéalisme à l'action individuelle et politique / Équiterre: From idealism to individual citizen and political activism* ; author Sidney Ribaux
- *La démocratisation de la connaissance: L'expérience des pratiques de recherche dans le domaine de l'économie sociale misant sur un partenariat université-communauté / Democratizing Knowledge: Research Experiments Based on University-Community Partnerships*; author Yves Vaillancourt
- Capacity Building in Kitimaat; author Mark Selman
- Security and Citizens: New Definitions and New Partnerships, author Punam Khosla

In addition a paper was commissioned, which while not a case study, has given an analytical overview of the possible social and democratic implications of new security measures introduced into Canada following the events of 9/11. This paper is entitled:

- Security for a Civil Society; author Christine Laliberté

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Beyond the insights and lessons from specific case studies, several important crosscutting issues emerge.

First, some of the terminology dealing with the fundamental issues underlining this project remains ambiguous to many and is open to diverse interpretation. Often a different word is used to describe what appears to be a similar, if not the same phenomenon.

Examples include the usages of: the third sector/ the voluntary sector/the civil society. The search for a new model of democracy has led to the inter-usage of the following terms; representative democracy, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy, and direct democracy.

Moreover, given the issues that are being dealt with, civil society and global governance concepts are both relatively recent in academic and activist parlance, it is not surprising that there are overlapping and/or duplications in the terminology. However, it does indicate to Carold that some of our basic terminology has to be clarified and standardized.

Second, case studies also reinforce the need to better understand the relation between local and global democracy building. This is a recurring issue and, indeed, for each case study, this appeared to be a difficult linkage to establish. It is essential that this linkage emerge 'naturally' and that the inherent premise of this project, that local and global linkages are paramount, not be applied in an abstract or forced manner.

Lastly, beyond case studies, at first glance it appears that for those working at the local level, some issues confronting the daily realities of the constituents are, with time, identified as being rooted in a regional or global economic or political context. It is less obvious that those who work on an international level are sensitive to and plugged into local realities. In fact, in some instances, it is obvious that 'outside' activists are prepared to sacrifice local interest to their perception of the needs of the 'greater good'.

