



**Conference:**

## **ARE WE ON THE RIGHT TRACK? PARADIGM REVIEW BY CSOs AS DEVELOPMENT ACTORS**

### **WORKSHOPS FOR PRAGUE CONFERENCE**

Preliminary remarks:

- The issues/paradigms of the 6 workshops have been assorted in order to animate the reflection and discussions. They are not necessarily contradictory and the aim is not to come to decide on right/wrong or good/bad, but to review paradigms and approaches by contrasting them with each other.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights should not be questioned as such.
- All workshops will have a special focus on the gender aspect and impact of the different paradigms.
- A second question to be addressed by all workshops: where are CSO “caught between traps” due to external stakeholders

### **WORKSHOP 1 – APPROACHES (NGO COHERENCE)**

<b>PEOPLE-CENTRED (Approach)</b>		<b>POLICY-CENTRED (Approach)</b>
<b>Consumer economy</b>	<b>? VERSUS ?</b>	<b>Ecological Footprint</b>
<b>Fair Trade</b>		<b>Trade Justice</b>
<b>Local Needs</b>		<b>Global Public Goods</b>
<b>Charity</b>		<b>Causes</b>

*NGOs often put forward their support to individuals and specific groups. NGOs tend to be “people-centred” – in contrast to governments and donors which usually address the collectivity. The privileged relations with partner NGOs and local communities are considered as being one of the comparative advantages and factors of NGO effectiveness. Instruments like micro-credit, fair trade and food aid focus on the situation of individuals and communities and their implementation and tools are based on the principles of a market-based model of consumer economy. Long-term effectiveness and sustainability of people-centred projects is however often undermined by external, systemic forces such as the economic rules.*

*On the other hand, global challenges need global responses. Concepts of Global Public Goods (incl. Global Commons) and the Ecological Footprint have been developed to ground more holistic/ interdisciplinary and policy-oriented approach to development and other global issues. The principle assumption is that without (some effective form of) global governance and (systemic) internalization of externalities of current economic model (such as carbon tax) no progress is possible. Global Public Goods emphasize the (inter)dependence of domestic policies and the need for new forms of international cooperation to effectively tackle health, finance, equity, environmental, knowledge and peace policy challenges. But the concept is too complex and distant from every day realities of poor people to allow effective mobilization of civil society. Ecological Footprint challenges the assumption of some development groups that successful integration into current global economy is the key to poverty alleviation and sustainable development. But the recommendation of ecological groups (like limiting air travel) are costly and hardly universally feasible. Trade justice lobbies for changes to the rules and practices of world trade so that poor people and the environment benefit. But its approach and means are “anti-establishment” and often perceived as “utopist”, which undermines its impact and does not show immediate (local) results for people fighting for a decent life. But are those criticizing the global systemic causes equally critical of bad national rules and policies of developing countries (corruption, unaccountability of local elites)? To be fair, this crucial debate must not deny that it has important political dimension (left-wing vs. right-wing approaches)*

NGOs have been successfully working with both approaches. Both can be seen as complementary (in synthetic concepts like EcoFairTrade) or as contradictory (as for instance food sovereignty vs. “trading out of poverty”).

## WORKSHOP 2 – RIGHTS-BASED DEVELOPMENT

<b>SYMBOLIC POWER</b>	<b>? VERSUS ?</b>	<b>PRACTICAL TOOL</b>
<b>Political and Citizen Rights</b>		<b>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Local Enforceability</b>
<b>Human Rights</b>		<b>Rights of Non-humans/Nature</b>
<b>Universal Declarations, Working on causes</b>		<b>MDGs, Working on needs, charity</b>

In their policy work and in development education, many NGOs claim to be guided by the rights-based approach, to fight the structural causes of poverty and to support collective responses (whereas human rights are individual rights). But when it comes to fundraising, ex-ante evaluations or project design, NGOs do not hesitate to put forward the needs and dignity of individuals, “human stories” and NGO’s characteristics as charities.

The way they are formulated, Social, Economic and Cultural Rights can not become enforceable. By claiming those rights to become “hard” human rights, NGOs water down the recognition and the achievements regarding enforceability of Political and Citizens Rights.

Beyond the question of internal coherence of NGOs, the “contiguum” is addressed.

## WORKSHOP 3 – SELF DETERMINATION (WILL TO CHANGE)

<b>TRADITION</b>	<b>? VERSUS ?</b>	<b>MODERNITY</b>
<b>Cultural Conventions</b>		<b>Universal Human Rights</b>
<b>Culture</b>		<b>Rights to facilitate development</b>

A rural, indigenous community in the Amazon region: threatened by multinationals (timber, gold, ...), without technological means, exposed to “Western” cultural values, with ancestral habits and “governance”.

A traditional community in Northern Africa: Women have their traditional roles, privileges and duties, but they are discriminated in their social, political, economic and sexual rights.

NGOs are largely against aid conditionalities, but want Gender to be mainstreamed in all programmes and policies.

How to support such communities? Should our paradigm be to respect their culture and tradition, even if the community’s choice is to “westernize”? Or educate them about and encourage them to adopt western-inspired social models that have been proven elsewhere to facilitate development (such as property rights) even if that might challenge their traditional culture? Promote technology so that they can participate in international campaigns against multinationals? Challenge ancestral habits which cement poverty and other forms of deprivation? Is change-prone vs. change-averse attitude culturally determined?

## WORKSHOP 4 – SOCIETAL (POLITICAL) MODELS

<b>PRAGMATIC</b>	<b>? VERSUS ?</b>	<b>IDEALIST</b>
<b>Poverty eradication</b>		<b>Participatory democracy</b>
<b>Economical democracy</b>		<b>Social democracy</b>
<b>Conflict prevention</b>		<b>Empowerment</b>
<b>Economic liberalism and growth</b>		<b>Quality of Life and Sustainable Human Development</b>
<b>Aid effectiveness</b>		<b>Good governance</b>

According to their statistics, Vietnam and China have managed to reduce poverty in a horrendous manner through (socially-engineered) economic liberalism – without any democracy and very weak civil society. Venezuela reduces poverty – through petrol exports and a leadership which many consider as demagogic. Guatemala, Kenya or Bangladesh have vibrant civil societies and are relatively democratic, but do not manage to reduce poverty substantially and conflicts are recurrent. Cuba has a relatively high human development index but no democracy. US efforts to promote (their concept of) democracy has failed in many countries.

Many sectors of Civil Society oppose the current economic model based on unconditional liberalism and eternal growth. They do not believe in the Donors’ mantra “growth leads to development and to a reduction of poverty”. But what is our alternative model? Gender and environmental NGOs have developed some approaches...

What should be the lesson for NGOs? Under which conditions does democracy foster development? How can development strengthen democracy? Where should NGOs “start” their work?

## WORKSHOP 5 - MIGRATION

<b>DEVELOPMENT HINDRANCE</b>	<b>? VERSUS ?</b>	<b>NATURAL RIGHT AND NECESSITY</b>
<b>Prevent brain-drain</b>		<b>Freedom of movement</b>
<b>Political stability - Prevent xenophobia in Europe</b>		<b>Economic benefits -Sustain European Pension system through immigration</b>
<b>Fight trafficking</b>		<b>Leverage of remittances</b>
<b>Equal legal status of immigrants (dignity)</b>		<b>Limited rights of immigrants (exploitation)</b>

Freedom of movement is a human right. Millions of people from transition and developing countries risk their lives to reach an economically (or politically) developed country with the aim of supporting their desired quality of life and families back home. The EU puts conditionalities to aid flows so that partner countries prevent migration outflows, in particular of unskilled labour, in fear of cultural friction and social instability. At the same time Europe and the US promote “targeted migration” of highly educated persons adding to the brain-drain. Unequal or illegal status of “non-targeted” immigrants tends to result in their exploitation and attacks on their human dignity. However, ageing rich countries need a wide range of younger, cheaper and flexible immigrants if they want to sustain their economic growth and pension systems for the next 50 years. NGOs accuse governments of brain-drain, fight trafficking and question the “development potential” of remittances. By opposing restrictive migration laws and insisting on open, multi-cultural societies, European NGO loose public support and can be accused of fostering xenophobia. NGOs do capacity building in developing countries which, in many cases, leads to migration. Which can be a coherent response of NGOs to these challenges?

## WORKSHOP 6 – EMPOWERMENT AND CHANGE

<b>EVOLUTION</b>	<b>? VERSUS ?</b>	<b>CONFLICT</b>
<b>Macro – improvements (statistics)</b>		<b>Micro – setbacks (regional differences, local costs/trade- Partnership (Direct Budget Support)</b>
<b>Aid and conditionalities</b>		<b>Engineering Social and Political change</b>
<b>Development Cooperation</b>		<b>Fighting (power) inequalities</b>
<b>Poverty eradication</b>		<b>Focus on other forms of deprivation (what is missing in</b>
<b>Focus on poverty (MDGs)</b>		<b>Focus on the public in the North (development education, awareness-raising, consumption patterns)</b>
<b>Focus on the South (development projects) and the global system (policy coherence)</b>		

For some (mainly Southern) NGOs, development aid is one of the most effective tools for cementing global inequalities, even more efficient than colonialism. It puts Developing countries’ governments in a position of inferiority and dependence while rich countries can “calm” their bad conscience (historical debt). However, many NGOs push for increasing the quality and quantity of aid (CONCORD AidWatch, GCAP, Accra-Aid Effectiveness). Is there also a disguised self-interest (in more funding for NGO development work)?

Aid is deemed to be a main tool for fighting poverty. Do NGOs, by insisting on aid, adopt the donors’ (WorldBank) model of development? Does aid cement societal power imbalances and therefore foster the exclusion of women and various minorities? Must CSO rather address inequalities, and how? Statistics on poverty depend on definitions. Brazil has more than 100.000 millionaires but misery in the favelas is indescribable.

Poverty goes beyond monetary and economical aspects. Many “macro” successes have very real “micro” costs (China). In addition, is poverty the only or the main problem? How about other forms of deprivations (vulnerability, uncertainty, stigma etc.)? Is MDGs the right or the only approach? What is then missing in MDGs? What should come after 2015? History shows that social and political change comes mainly through conflicts. To what extent should development be a paradigm of cooperation (development projects) and to what extent it should be a paradigm of conflict (political activism)? Change is needed to make the world a better place for the oppressed. But elites defend the status quo. Empowered individuals and communities can challenge the dominating elite and claim their rights. But can't that also backfire against Europe and even civil society (democratically-elected Islamic or Hindu anti-western radicalism)?