

Marginal and Mainstream? The UK Third Sector: History and Policy Contexts

Alternative Forms of Non-Governmental Organisation

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INTRODUCTION

- A history of NGOs as ‘agents of aid’ in developing nations
- Post 1990’s – the ‘exporting’ of UK models of ‘the third sector’/civil society to Eastern Europe
- Promotion of NGO’s as a response to Pacific Rim economic crisis
- Questions: is the ‘export model’ appropriate?
Which model?

A (VERY) SHORT HISTORY

From Lewis (2005)

Providers	C19 voluntary organisations as <i>providers</i> with little competition or support from state
Complementary	C20 first half <i>Complementary</i> role of voluntary sector where state services absent or underdeveloped (hospitals, social care)
Supplementary	Post War Welfare State more comprehensive public services – <i>supplementary</i> role for voluntary action – additional or specialist services e.g. hospices, CAB or challenging and campaigning roles e.g. Shelter, CPAG
Partners	Post 1980 period variously described – mixed economy of welfare, neo-liberalism, <i>'Era of Partnership'</i> (latter particularly strong in state policies for sector)

SIZE AND SCOPE

- 870,000 civil society organisations (2006-07)
- Estimated total income: £116bn
- 1,347,000 paid staff
- 170,905 registered charities
- Estimated total income: £33.2bn (£16.9bn 1996-97)
- Earned income (£17bn) growing faster than voluntary income (£13.6bn)
- 634,000 paid staff (2.2% of the UK workforce)
 - Full time 63% Part time 37%
 - Female 71% Male 29%

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

Growth but no change?

- Density and affluence
 - a variable geography of the sector? ‘Charity deserts’?
- By sub-sector
 - Social services (23%), education (18%), culture/recreation (13%)
- The large...
 - Major (£10m+): 0.2% of charities but 43% of total income
- and the very small
 - Minor (£10K): 55% of charities but 0.8% of total income

AND CONFUSIONS?

- Charities, Charitable sector
- Voluntary Sector
- Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)
- Third Sector
- Non-Profit Sector
- Mutuals and co-operatives
- Social economy and social enterprise (Community Interest Companies)
- Civil Society
- ‘Below the Radar’ groups and activities
- First and third force organisations
- Plus ‘sub-sectors’: BME organisations, Refugee and Migrant Organisations, Community Based Organisations, Faith Based Organisations

(SOME) RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

‘the sheer rate of change latterly experienced in this sector, has caste the English policy environment as hyper active by EU standards’.

Kendall 2009

For example

- The Compact (1997 – revised 2009)
- PAT 9: promoting community self help (1999)
- Cross-cutting review (2002): promoting third sector delivery of public services
- 2006 Charity Act (modernisation)
- Capacity building (professionalisation)
- Social Enterprise strategies (2004 onwards)
- From double devolution to big society
- From Active Community Unit to Office for the Third Sector to Office for Civil Society
- Etc etc

UK CIVIL SOCIETY IN WIDER CONTEXT; KEY ISSUES

1

- Which tradition: service delivery, philanthropy, self help, (radical) mutual aid. Dimensions of class and community history
- Accountability – to whom?
- Funding and sustainability
- Public perceptions: the distrust of ‘charity’, public services ‘on the cheap’ – who funds and why?
- Loss of vision (NCVO: 2012 Vision Statement 2003); more income, growth in service delivery, increased regulation – and social justice?

UK CIVIL SOCIETY IN WIDER CONTEXT; KEY ISSUES 2

- The ‘push’ to social enterprise
- Addressing democratic deficit – but which model of democracy?
Representative, deliberative, participatory? Government or governance?
- Closing down spaces for autonomous/radical action?
- The co-option of community by the ‘far right’/for political ends?
- The personal costs of activism: risk in risky societies/communities?
- Blurring private/public/voluntary boundaries: hybrid organisations?
- Regulation, innovation and independence?
- The ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ – a coherent Third Sector?
- Partnerships or competition
- Social return on investment: third sector costs – and benefits?
- Full cost recovery: preparing for a ‘new future’?
- Responding to globalisation – community as an antidote/panacea?

THE POLICY VISION(S)

- Prime Minister *“Government and the sector fulfil complementary roles in the development and delivery of public policy and services, and.....the Government has a role in promoting voluntary and community activity in all areas of our national life”*. November 1998
- Clare Short, as International Development Secretary, NGOs a key role in International Development
 - Key roles for (Southern) NGOs seen as:
 - building a popular base for development
 - lobbying governments and international institutions
 - helping to empower the poor. January 1999
- And the Big Society/Small Government agenda?

MAINSTREAM OR MARGINAL?

- Mainstreaming voluntary sector provision in a mixed economy of welfare
- Marginal – campaigning, advocacy and (actual) community interests – cultural identity, organising for social purposes
- AND
- The issue of power and power relationships

AND FINALLY

- Do the issues and questions raised have a wider resonance beyond the UK?
- To what extent do culture and histories 'shape' voluntary action
- The future of third sector activity with a global economy in recession: funding, roles and expectations.