

THE ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE: KYRGYZSTAN AND SCOTLAND

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The associational life: Kyrgyzstan and Scotland

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Abstract:

Donors have used Tocqueville's work on democracy in America as a basis for their strategy on civil society building in the post-soviet area. This article examines how ideas of Tocqueville have been translated into actual activities of donors in the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan. It is argued that, in practice, donor activities have deviated from Tocqueville's ideas. Donors were interested in Tocqueville's statement that the operation of different political and civil associations generates democracy. Since their ultimate goal was to build democracy in the newly independent countries, they made this statement an underlying principle of their activities. However, in fact, donors have merely promoted NGOs, which have been modeled on their western equivalents, under the banner of the associational life. To assess how successful donors have been in NGO promotion in Kyrgyzstan, NGOs in Scotland, which are taken as a model, are compared to ones in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz NGOs differ from their Scottish counterparts considerably. There is a common tendency among Kyrgyz NGOs to follow western ones, particularly with regard to their organisation. However, they are extremely donor dependent. This has a number of consequences, such as undermining the independence of NGOs. To tackle this problem, NGOs need to find other sources of funding, such as membership fees, donation, philanthropy and others. However, the sense of joining, volunteering for and donating to NGOs is very low in Kyrgyzstan. Political associations should be promoted in Kyrgyzstan since it is they, which diffuse the sense of and skills of association. These associations should be numerous and diverse. They should also welcome the independence of their members and promote peaceful debate and joint decision-making.

Key words: Tocqueville, civil society, donors, associations, voluntary organisations, non-governmental organisations.

Introduction

Tocqueville's work on democracy in America has served as a basis for a strategy of western aid agencies (donors) on civil society building in the countries of Central Asia as well as in the rest of the former communist bloc: 'it is Alexis de Tocqueville's ghost that wanders through the corridors of the World Bank...' (Edwards 2004:10). An explanation for why donors have referred particularly to Tocqueville lies in their main aim, which has been to assist newly independent countries in their democratisation and market liberalisation (Giffen et al 2005). Based on Tocqueville's work, donors have concluded that democracy can be built through promoting the associational life, backed with civic engagement (Giffen et al 2005:10). They have also asserted that citizens' associations are a potential guarantor of good governance and the rule of law, seen as an essential prerequisite for the successful development of a liberal economy (Giffen et al 2005:9). Consequently, donor activities have aimed at promoting associations of citizens to build democracy and to promote a market economy.

How Tocqueville's work has been translated into actual activities of donors in civil society building in the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan is interesting, not least because in practice donor activities have deviated from ideas of Tocqueville. Donors have exclusively promoted non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are non-profit organisations concerned with social and political issues, under the banner of the associational life; whereas, according to Tocqueville, the associational life is the operation of numerous different political and civil associations (Tocqueville in Hall and Trentmann 2005). Furthermore, in their civil society building activities, donors have used 'a methodology of development of the countries and organisations they represent' (Shishkaraeva et al 2006:54) that is, of the western countries and organisations. For example, Aksartova (2005:4) states that American donors have modelled

Kyrgyz NGOs on American non-profit public interest and advocacy organisations. However, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan differ from their western counterparts. They are not based on voluntarism, independence and philanthropy, the fundamental principles of classic NGOs (Ruffin 1999). Despite a general trend among Kyrgyz NGOs to follow western ones, especially with regard to their organisation, they are extremely unsustainable, with their main problems dependence on donor funding and lack of connection with public.

This article is based on the findings of my research on civil society in Kyrgyzstan and in Scotland as well as the secondary literature and proceeds by (1) looking at what the associational life in Tocqueville's conception was and how donors have materialised it in practice, and (2) comparing Kyrgyz NGOs to western ones, which have served as a model for creating and promoting NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, to see how successful the attempts of donors in NGO promotion have been.

Qualitative interviewing was my main method of data collection. However because of time and budget constraints, a distinct interviewing technique was used for each country, a compromise that is allowed in cross-national research (Hantrais and Mangen 1996:9-10). I adopted semi-structured interviewing for Scotland, and asynchronous online interviewing, facilitated by email, for Kyrgyzstan (Madge and O'Connor 2002:92, Clarke 2002:4). It is worth noting that at the point at which I undertook the research I was much more familiar with the Kyrgyz case: I had four years of ethnographic research experience in Kyrgyz civil society, whereas Scottish civil society was an entirely new area of research.

I conducted interviews with five Scottish organisations¹. Initial research indicated that civil society organisations (CSOs) in Scotland comprised of voluntary organizations, trade

unions, faith-based organisations, housing associations and professional organisations. I decided to interview representatives of each CSO type. I chose organisations, which I believed would yield the most information, e.g. the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) was chosen because it represented all trade unions in Scotland and would therefore be able to provide information about its member trades unions.

As a result of interviews with the STUC and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organizations (SCVO) and a church-based organization ‘World Exchange’, it became clear that the voluntary sector played a particularly important role in Scotland. For this reason, I focused on this sector for the rest of my research. I recruited more voluntary organisations by advertising my research interests in an e-journal, ‘Third Force’. Seven voluntary organisations responded. However, only two of them actually participated in my research. Overall, I conducted four interviews with voluntary organisations and two interviews with other CSOs.

In Kyrgyzstan, five organisations took part in my research². I chose international organisations³ (IOs) working on civil society, together with Kyrgyz NGOs, since they are the key actors in Kyrgyz civil society. I used an online database, Counterpart Consortium⁴, to choose Kyrgyz NGOs. I recruited different NGOs specifically to allow for different perspectives to be present. Since I was using asynchronous online interviewing, it was important that NGOs had email. Only one NGO out of six contacted agreed to participate in my research. Because of this, I recruited two NGOs using snowball sampling. Altogether I interviewed two IOs and three

¹ Scottish organisations involved in my research: Scottish Council for Voluntary Organizations, World Exchange, Scottish Trades Union Congress, Age Concern Scotland, Network of International Development Organizations in Scotland.

² Kyrgyz organisations involved in my research: Association of Educational Establishments ‘Education Network’, Ecological NGO ‘Tabiyat-Ug’, Civic Foundation on Micro-crediting, International Foundation for Electoral System, Counterpart Consortium.

³ International organizations are donors and international NGOs.

⁴ <http://win.cango.net.kg/>

NGOs. Both Scottish and Kyrgyz interviewees hold managerial and research positions at their organisations.

Documents, provided by interviewees, such as public documents, minutes and various reports constituted another source of data. I also used online documents provided by the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Cabinet⁵. In addition, this paper draws on participant observation of Scottish voluntary organisations, conducted when I was an intern/volunteer in the SCVO, and while working for a voluntary organisation in Edinburgh for six months.

Kyrgyz NGOs are compared to Scottish ones because Scotland has long had a vibrant civil society. The strength of Scottish civil society can be ascertained from its active participation in the campaign for the devolution of power in Scotland. A wide range of different associations, such as political parties, non-profit organisations, trade unions, and others, conducted a determined campaign for devolution, including through an array of important publications such as Claim of Right for Scotland, Scotland's Parliament and Scotland's Right (Scottish Parliament). A recent assessment of Scottish civil society which used CIVICUS⁶ indicators has confirmed its strengths: in fact, the findings suggest that civil society in Scotland is stronger than civil societies in other European countries such as Germany and the Czech Republic (Ruchir 2006:7).

⁵ Documents downloaded from the websites of the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Executive, and the Cabinet Office: Explanatory Notes to Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Bill, Communications Act 2003, Human Rights Act 1998, Chapter 42, Report of Scottish Charity Law Review Commission, Research Briefing Paper of the Information Centre of the Scottish Parliament 'The Impact of Devolution on the Media in Scotland', Scottish Compact (the Scottish Executive and SCVO), Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (c. 52).

⁶ 'CIVICUS is an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world' (<http://www.civicus.org/new/default.asp?skip2=yes>)

The associational life from Tocqueville

For Tocqueville, associations are the loci of democracy, are ‘the mother of all sciences’ (Tocqueville in Hall and Trentmann 2005:111). They enable a society to self-rule itself and act as a check on the government, while their multiplicity and diversity prevent a majority from dominating in the society. These are the factors which make democracy work (Taylor 2006:98). Tocqueville distinguished two types of associations: political and civil. Political associations are where politics is debated peacefully and consensus is achieved jointly (Tocqueville in Hall and Trentmann 2005) and they include local self-government, juries, parties and public opinion (Kumar 1993:381). Civil associations are concerned with private and economic interests of people and they include churches, moral crusades, schools, literary and scientific societies, newspapers and publishers, professional and commercial organisations, organisations for leisure and recreation (Kumar 1993:381). For Tocqueville, political associations constitute a political society and civil associations constitute a civil society (Kumar 1993:381, Bryant 1995:146).

Tocqueville asserted that there should be a right for, a sense of, and skills of association in a society in order for associations to exist and operate. In other words, people should be able to associate. They should also have a support for and the necessary skills to do that. According to Tocqueville, the significance of political associations in creating the sense of and teaching the skills of association is enormous: people who came together in political associations not only debated politics but also learned what it meant to associate and how to do that, and for him after learning the principles of association, people transfer their new skill to the civil aspects of their lives. For this reason, Tocqueville claimed that political associations were ‘great free schools to which all citizens come to be taught the general theory of association’ (Tocqueville in Hall and Trentmann 2005:113) and also that:

In political associations, Americans of all conditions, minds, and ages, daily acquire a general taste for association, and grow accustomed to the use of it. There they meet together in large numbers, they converse, they listen to each other and they are mutually stimulated to all sorts of undertakings. They afterwards transfer to civil life the notions they have thus acquired and make them subservient to a thousand purposes (Tocqueville in Hall and Trentmann 2005:115)

At the same time, Tocqueville argued that civil associations laid the basis for political ones by being a platform for the formation and exchange of people's outlook: 'It is there that feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed' (Tocqueville in Kumar 1993:381). In other words, while political associations generate the sense of and skills of association, civil associations form and renew the viewpoints of people. Therefore, it can be said that political and civil associations are the conditions for each other's existence and operation.

For both political and civil associations, the independence and freedom of their members are important. To illustrate why, Tocqueville contrasted European and American political associations of that time. In Europe, political associations had had a military structure with few selected leaders, whom members obeyed implicitly. Tocqueville said that people who had been members of such organisations were not free because they renounced their opinion by knowingly handing over their right to express opinions to their leaders. In America, he noted that associations in a formal way recognised the independence of each individual. Although members of associations strive for the same end, they are not required to follow the same path: 'No one abjures the exercise of his reason and his free will; but everyone exerts that reason and that will

for the benefit of a common undertaking' (Tocqueville in Hall and Trentmann 2005:108).

To sum up, then, the associational life in Tocqueville's work involves the operation of various political and civil associations. It is important, however, to emphasise that the associational life is not equalled to civil society. For Tocqueville, civil society is a part of the associational life, which covers the private and economic aspects of people's lives. Furthermore, the examples of political and civil associations taken from Tocqueville's work show that these can be not only of a voluntary character but also of a communitarian one. This means that associations can be based on neighbourhoods, religion, and have an ultimate goal to benefit their community; whereas, voluntary organisations put the interests of individuals at the centre. Nevertheless, the independence of members is recognised. The stress is on political associations, for it is these which for Tocqueville provide checks on the state and diffuse the sense of and skills of association to other spheres of people's lives.

The key idea, which donors have drawn from Tocqueville's work and used as an underlying premise in their development activities, is that the associational life generates democracy (Giffen et al 2005). The above overview of Tocqueville's ideas has indicated that the associational life lies in the operation of political and civil associations, and emphasised that these should be numerous and diverse because it is these factors which make democracy work (Taylor 2006:98).

In practice, donors have promoted NGOs under the banner of the associational life (Carothers 1999, Petric 2005). Why donors have limited themselves to NGOs because they have assumed that Kyrgyzstan, along with other former communist countries, did not inherit a 'civic culture' from Soviet times. Based on this assumption, donors created NGOs from scratch (Earle 2005). Nevertheless, other work (Garbutt and Heap 2002) has argued that different associations

such as trade unions, housing associations, and professional associations existed in Soviet times, and these could have been involved in donor activities after independence. However, they were left out. Furthermore, the donors did not support political parties. This is interesting because it would have been logical to support political parties and associations since, according to Tocqueville, it is these which promote democracy and generate the associational life.

The enormous enthusiasm of donors in Kyrgyzstan for NGOs has led them to seeing these as coterminous with civil society, and growth considered an indicator of its growth (Carothers 1999, Howell and Pearce 2002, Petric 2005). Nevertheless, donors have also maintained an official definition of civil society as an arena between the government and market, in which social associations operate (Chainchian 2003). The above review of Tocqueville's work has shown that civil society exists through the associations concerned with private and economic interests of people, while the associations dealing with politics Tocqueville classified as political society. It is apparent that the donors' definition importantly differs from Tocqueville's by excluding the market and giving more political functions to social associations.

It can be said, then, that donors have materialized a core idea of Tocqueville but in a different way. In practice, for donors NGOs have become both civil society and the associational life. This gives rise to the question of how successful the attempts of donors to create and promote NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have been. The answer depends on the fact that donors have used western NGOs as a model when creating and promoting NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, so for this reason it is important to study western NGOs and then compare Kyrgyz ones to them. The next part of my discussion does this.

NGOs in Scotland and Kyrgyzstan

In Scotland, NGOs are typically called voluntary organisations. A detailed look at the voluntary sector of Scotland suggests that its popularity and number have been growing since 1980s. It has overshadowed trade unions, which used to play a leading role two decades ago and in 2006 there were around 45,000 various voluntary organisations in Scotland (SCVO statistics 2007). These differ from each other in their purpose, organisational structure and size. Their activities cover a wide range of domains, such as social care, politics, economy, education, healthcare, culture, recreation, environment and charity. Some of these attract more voluntary organisations than others. For example, 45% of the voluntary sector concerns social care and development. Cultural and recreational voluntary organisations, such as arts and sports groups, dominate the second half of the sector (20%) (SCVO statistics 2007). And also Scottish voluntary organisations work on different levels: community, city and nation, while few of them work at the international level.

Voluntary organisations in Scotland can be subsumed under two broad categories: (1) recreation and culture and (2) service provision and advocacy campaign. The first category includes such institutions as arts and sports groups. The second category consists of institutions dealing with the social and political issues. These organisations are legally recognised bodies and have public aims. They are also institutionally organised; that is, they have office space, paid staff, raise funds regularly and other attributes of the organisation. Most importantly, their key mission is to provide services for their target audience and to influence the government.

The organisational structure of the voluntary organisations depends on their particular purpose and activities. Cultural and recreational voluntary groups are usually organised by people drawn together by their similar private interests on a voluntary basis. For such

organisations, voluntary participation is more important than a financial one. The voluntary organisations which are concerned with social-political issues, service provision and lobbying, are institutionally better organised. These are legally recognised bodies which work in the public interest. They also often have office space, paid staff and funding sources. Membership of such voluntary organisations is open for all people, who find their mission and activities interesting and useful. However, an impression has emerged from research that the membership of such bodies is different from how seen in Tocqueville's work. At present, members use services that are provided by the voluntary organisations, but do not take part in decision-making, with this the preserve of a board. The role of members is therefore more passive than described in Tocqueville's work, where the voice of every member is heard in debate and decision-making.

An example of an institutionally organised voluntary organisation in Scotland is Age Concern, which is concerned with issues important for older people. It has a strong organisational structure. It employs a large number of staff. It also has a great number of members. Its key activities, which are provision of services for older people and lobbying their interests on the government level, cover the whole nation. It has a special department for fundraising. Its funding comes from donations, legacies, and the government. Its membership is open for all people from its target audience (from a visit to Age Concern Scotland, 1 July 2005).

Another example, provided by one of my interviewees, illustrates what a voluntary organisation means at the community level in rural areas:

“If rural people in a certain area do not have a bus service, they can establish a voluntary organisation to deliver a bus service for their community. They can turn to the local council to get funding to realize their initiative. If there is no fund in the local council, they look for other source” (from an interview with Ruchir Shah, SCVO, lines 28-32, 5 May

2005)

Both examples show that the voluntary organisations are considered as a tool for self-help and self-rule. They also indicate that voluntary organisations can be a means to interact with different levels of government. My research shows that, all in all, there is a healthy relationship between the voluntary sector and the government in Scotland. The government is keen to collaborate with the sector and it has signed an agreement with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, which represents the whole sector. It also involves voluntary organisations while developing different policies. The government striving for collaboration with the voluntary sector and other associations can be connected to the fact that the present Scottish government was established in large part thanks to them (Paterson 2002), for it was such institutions as voluntary organisations, trade unions, political parties and other associations which led the campaign for the devolution of power.

And in relation to devolution, my research findings indicate that Scottish voluntary organisations attach great importance to it. Because of it, they have a positive view of government. Furthermore, government is an important source of funding for the voluntary sector, with 39% of sector's income coming from this source in 2006. Nevertheless, the Scottish voluntary organisations try to generate other funding to stay independent, and self-generated 50% of their income in 2006 by trading, renting and investing, with the percentage of self-generated income having grown by 5 % since 2004 (SCVO statistics 2007). The relationship between the Scottish government and the voluntary sector can be summed up using the following comment by one of my interviewees:

The government cannot exist without the voluntary sector. The sector does what the government should do. However, it does not aim to replace the government. It aims to be there in order to influence the government (from an interview with an employee of Age Concern Scotland, lines 58, 61-63, 1 July 2005)

The next important finding of my research is that volunteering and donating play a crucial role in the operation and development of the voluntary sector in Scotland. The significance of these factors for the voluntary sector was emphasised repeatedly by the interviewees. The statistics provided by Volunteer Development Scotland suggests that, in 2005, 38% of adults formally volunteered. This is 1.2 million volunteers. On average, 1.6% of Scottish household expenditure (£6.30 per household per week) was donated to the sector during 2004-2006 and comprises 4% of the sector's income (SCVO statistics 2007).

NGOs in Kyrgyzstan came into existence as a result of donor activities in civil society building. Since the early 1990s, when donors first started their activities in Kyrgyzstan, there has been a major proliferation of NGOs, the number of which has grown enormously: from 800 in 1996 (Kazybekov 1998), there were 14,173 in 2006 (NGO survey 2006). Kyrgyzstan has become the country with the highest NGO density in Central Asia (Garbutt and Heap 2002). It could be said that such an impressive growth of NGOs is a considerable achievement for Kyrgyzstan, especially bearing in mind the donor view that there was no civic culture after the communist rule (Earle 2002). However, it is important to recognise that only a limited number of these NGOs actually operate. In fact, according to a recent survey, only 19% of its NGOs are active (NGO survey 2006). It has been assumed that such a small number of actively functioning NGOs is due to the fact that there are few funding opportunities for them in Kyrgyzstan. Most NGOs are involved in working with social problems and providing legal assistance, advocacy and

lobbying (Shishkaraeva 2006:73). Obviously, they need funds to carry out their initiatives and projects and donors are almost the only source of this. NGOs emerge with the hope of obtaining funding from donors, but the competition for funding is fierce and many soon cease functioning.

NGOs work in different spheres of social life, such as social care and development, law and human rights, politics, economy, education and science, health, agriculture, culture and others. Their main activity is the implementation of projects financed by donors. Every donor has its own mission, which it tends to promote through which projects of NGOs they choose to finance. Consequently, activities of the Kyrgyz NGOs depend heavily on donors. Furthermore, my research indicates that there is a tendency among its NGOs to have a very broad mission statement. It has been presumed that having a broad mission enables NGOs to be flexible and match the field of donor activities in order to get funding, but it also means they do not have specific expertise and are in direct competition with each other.

On the whole, most NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have a legal status, an organisational structure, office space and staff, because they need these to meet the requirements of grant programmes. Aksartova (2005:19) points out that donors require NGOs to be legally recognised non-profit organisations, to have paid staff, raise funds, and have purposes, which are in the public interest. Most Kyrgyz NGOs are based in cities and have highly educated and professional personnel, which has been seen as connected to the lavish funding opportunities provided by donors, which have attracted professionals from other sectors, especially from the public sector (Roy 2002:141-142, Petric 2005:322-323). Moreover, to achieve success with donors, NGOs need to acquire specific skills, such as speaking the 'donor language', and operating in a 'donor' way, which cannot be used outside of the donor-NGO context. As a result, the NGOs and their personnel seem strange and unfamiliar to other people in their own society (Aksartova 2005:236),

especially to the target group of many donor programmes, the rural-based poor (Earle 2005, Petric 2005, Roy 2002).

My research suggests that most Kyrgyz NGOs have a small number of members and volunteers. Other research (Petric 2005) has indicated that members of NGOs are usually the local elite, while an IFES survey⁷ (Pototskii and Sharma 2001) shows that joining and volunteering for NGOs is not popular among the population and only 10% of respondents would volunteer for an NGO, while 74% would not. More than half of the respondents gave a positive reply to the question of whether it was possible to form voluntary groups without the participation of the government, even though the survey shows the actual participation of people in NGOs, the effect of NGOs on their lives, and even their awareness of NGOs is low. Figure 1 below shows some of the results of the IFES survey.

Figure 1

Have you been a member of any NGO?	
Yes	2%
No, but have heard about them	51%
No, have not heard	43%
Don't know	3%
Have you been affected by NGOs?	
Yes, positively	7%
Yes, negatively	1%
Both positive and negative	3%
No	85%
Are you aware of any non-government organizations that are active in your community (your city, town)?	
Yes	14%
No	53%
Don't know	32%

The relationship between the government and the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan is precarious. The ultimate expectation of donors from NGOs is that they will be able to work with the government and influence it (Giffen et al. 2005). However, Aksartova (2005) has argued that Kyrgyz NGOs want government involved in their activities only because of expectations of donors. Donors have become the connecting link between the government and the NGOs. My research shows that NGOs tend to work with the government and other institutions affiliated with it because this is one of the requirements of the grant programmes of donors. In some cases, the government or institutions affiliated with it are supposed to make a contribution to a project and my research suggests that this is usually a contribution in kind. For example, one NGO interviewee said that the government body involved in a project had provided a lorry so the project concerned could collect rubbish in the city.

To sum up, there is certainly an adequate number of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. However, their number does not correspond to their held activity. Only a small number of NGOs actually work in practice. Most NGOs are institutionally organised with a legal status, office space, paid staff and so on. However, their main problem is dependence on donor funding, which undermines their independence and leads them to become non-specialist. Furthermore, many NGOs lack connections with the people, who elsewhere would be involved in running them. Most people in Kyrgyzstan are not aware of NGOs and do not want to volunteer for them.

Kyrgyz NGOs and Scottish voluntary organisations compared

The above review of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and voluntary organisations in Scotland was undertaken to see how successful the efforts of donors to create and promote NGOs in

⁷ This survey was carried out by IFES (International Foundation for Election System), a US based international non-governmental organisation (www.ifes.org).

Kyrgyzstan have been because donors have modelled Kyrgyz NGOs on their western equivalents. The review shows that Kyrgyz NGOs share a number of similarities with Scottish voluntary organisations, being concerned with service provision and advocacy campaigns. The Scottish organisations are legally recognised bodies and have the aim of representing the public interest, they have office space, paid staff, engage in fundraising activities and so on. Donors have required Kyrgyz NGOs to have the same features and modelled Kyrgyz NGOs on this type of western structure. By and large, their organisation looks like that of their Scottish counterparts. However, organisation is the only aspect that Kyrgyz NGOs and Scottish voluntary organisations have in common. What is more important are three salient differences between them.

The first difference is that Kyrgyz NGOs are dependent on only one source of funding, while Scottish voluntary organisations have different sources of funding including donation, philanthropy, government grants, self-generated funds and others. It is very important for groups and organisations in civil society to have different sources of funding for this enables them to stay independent, a very significant factor. In case of Kyrgyzstan, its NGOs are extremely dependent on donor funding, which consequently has influenced their activities, because donors finance only those projects whose goals comply with the goals of their mandate. Furthermore, the Kyrgyz NGOs tend to have flexible and open mission statements, which enable them to match projects to the mandate of a donor, with the result that projects sponsored by NGOs are determined by the goals of a potential donor's mandate rather a particular mission or a targeted problem, which the organisation focuses on. The second difference is that Kyrgyz NGOs have few members, who mostly tend to be the local elite and the proportion of the population volunteering for NGOs is very low, while Scottish voluntary organisation tend to have an active

membership involved in their work. The membership of a Scottish voluntary organisation depends on its target group and is open for those who find its mission and activities interesting and useful, while in Kyrgyzstan, there is the divorce between the NGOs and their target audience. The third difference is that Kyrgyz NGOs have a precarious relationship with the government, while in Scotland, the relationship between voluntary organisations and the government has been built and maintained by both sides. In Kyrgyzstan, it has mostly been built under influence from donors.

These differences between the situation in Kyrgyzstan and Scotland are concerned with service provision and advocacy. Kyrgyz NGOs differ from the Scottish sector in another respect too, with regard to their activities. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan work mainly on social-political issues, while Scottish voluntary groups and organisations are not limited to the social-political sphere but also cover cultural, recreational, religious and other domains.

The key problem facing NGOs in Kyrgyzstan is their dependence on donor funding, which has greatly influenced their activities. The problem could be addressed by finding other sources of funding, such as membership fees, donation, philanthropy and so on. They could also benefit by attracting volunteers from the public. For this to happen, it is necessary that people join, volunteer for and donate to the NGOs. In other words, according to Tocqueville, people should learn what it means to associate and the means of doing that, but participation of people in NGO activities remains very low. Consequently, the question arises of how people can be encouraged to associate with each other, to join, volunteer for and donate to the NGOs. Tocqueville's work indicates that it is political associations which diffuse the sense of and skills of association. Consequently, it follows that political associations should be promoted in Kyrgyzstan around a number of preconditions. A wide range of political associations should

exist in a great number. They should recognise the freedom and independence of their members. Their aim should not be to control or undermine the government but to debate, reach internal consensus and act together. In addition, a communitarian as well as voluntary type of non-profit organisations should be promoted.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the actual ‘on the ground’ activities of donors in building civil society in Kyrgyzstan deviate from ideas of Tocqueville, whose work has been used by such donors as a basis for these activities. The core idea taken from Tocqueville’s work is that the associational life generates democracy. In other words, donors believe that democracy can be built when an array of political and civil associations operate. However, in practice, donors promote only NGOs in the name of the associational life. Furthermore, the definition of civil society used by donors differs from Tocqueville’s conception of the term. For Tocqueville, civil society is a part of the associational life and consists of private associations and economic institutions. For donors, civil society is a separate sector between the government and market and filled with social associations. Notwithstanding this definition, in the grip of an obsession with NGOs, donors reduced civil society to them.

Moreover, donors modelled Kyrgyz NGOs on western NGOs. In this regards, the author has sought to see how successful the efforts of donors in NGO promotion have been by comparing Kyrgyz NGOs to Scottish ones, which are concerned with service provision and advocacy campaign. The latter was taken as a model. As a result, it was concluded that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan differ from their western counterparts. Notwithstanding a common tendency among Kyrgyz NGOs to follow their western equivalents with regard to their organisation, they became

extremely dependent on donor funding. Consequently, this factor influenced their activities and undermined their independence. Furthermore, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan lack connection with people. They have few members and volunteers.

The author has suggested that, to tackle the problem of dependence on donor funding, Kyrgyz NGOs need to find other sources of funding such as membership fees, donation, philanthropy and others. They also need to attract volunteers from public. However, as has been shown above, there is low sense of joining, volunteering for and donating to NGOs among people. It has been suggested that, in order to increase people's participation in activities of NGOs, there is need to foster the sense of and skills of association. According to Tocqueville, it has been suggested that political associations should be promoted. However, certain rules should be followed. These associations should be numerous, diverse, and with free membership. Most importantly, their aim should be to debate politics by making every voice heard and to reach a decision jointly and peacefully. In addition, it has been asserted that not only a voluntary but also a communitarian type of associations should be promoted.

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