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# Getting Transition Right: A Rights-Based Approach to Diversity And Inclusivity

Tuesday, November 5, 2013

## Media content from this session

Throughout the session we've been producing newsletters, conducting interviews and taking photos.

You can access all of these materials online, should you want to share them further with your own network, or simply remember your time here at Schloss Leopoldskron and Salzburg Global Seminar.

Newsletters can be downloaded from the Session Page under 'Session Media': [SalzburgGlobal.org/go/508](http://SalzburgGlobal.org/go/508).

Interviews with speakers and Fellows can be found here: [SalzburgGlobal.org/go/OurFellows](http://SalzburgGlobal.org/go/OurFellows). You can also hear our podcasts from these interviews on our SoundCloud stream: [SoundCloud.com/SalzburgGlobal](http://SoundCloud.com/SalzburgGlobal).

All the photos from the session are available to download from [Flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal](http://Flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal) and to view and share on [Facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal](http://Facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal).

We'll also be publishing a full-length report from this session in early 2014.



Fellows Abouaoun, Gebreel and El-Taraboulsi share their thoughts on how best to get funding

## Finding Legitimacy and Funding Grassroots support & evidence-based research can help convince donors to invest

**Since their revolutions, the four focus countries have seen a boom in civil society groups – but how can so many groups find sources of funding to sustain the changes they want to bring about?**

This was the key question for the Fellows in the last panel-led discussion of the session.

Despite the ill-feeling directed towards the state that led to the revolutions in the first place, civil society groups are still not widely viewed by ordinary citizens in the region as more reliable than government or public institutions.

Key to changing this is sustainable funding that enables civil society groups to actually deliver on their promises.

That funding might come from international or local donors, but both options have their positives and negatives [see centerfold feature from last year's session on 'Philanthropy in Times of Crisis and Transition'].

Too often, international funding comes with its own agenda and favors short-term projects that can show quick

results, rather than investing in the long-term, generational change that is needed to build diverse and inclusive societies.

But many civil society NGOs in the region are self- or privately funded; with their limited funds they are unable to hire the expertise they need to deliver.

There is also a prevailing sense that there are bigger problems to deal with than diversity management, such as security.

Civil society actors focused on diversity and inclusion need to convince donors of the chicken-and-the-egg relation between diversity management and security; more inclusive societies are more stable and thus more safe and secure. Stability and awareness raising must happen at the same time.

Civil society organizations not only need to present clear and focused plans, they also need to garner grassroots support in order to gain a greater sense of credibility and legitimacy for their cause.

Evidence-based research can also help convince donors to invest in NGOs'

programs. Such research should be participatory and inclusive to ensure that it truly reflects the complexity on the ground.

Other potential partners and donors such as government and the media shouldn't be dismissed. Civil society groups should consider building alliances with the "good guys" in these sectors.

As with the policy building session on Saturday, one key observation to come out of this discussion was the capacity building that needs to be done so that civil society groups can adequately request funding.

In addition to greater funding, new laws, especially in countries such as Libya where civil society was virtually non-existent prior to the revolution but where now there exist over 1000 such organizations, need to be enacted, protecting NGOs, especially as they start to grow in to the role of lobbying politicians for policy changes, rather than just focusing on delivering their own programs.



Fellows of session 499 discussed the best options and strategies for philanthropy – especially private charitable institutions – to help build and sustain open and more equitable societies, especially during and emerging from times of crisis.

## “Philanthropy is like acupuncture”

### Wise words from Session 499, applicable at Session 508

Louise Hallman

**“Philanthropy is like acupuncture,” declared Hakan Altinay, senior fellow for global economy and development at the Brookings Institution, during the Salzburg Global Seminar session on ‘Philanthropy in Times of Crisis and Transition: Catalyzing Forces of Change’. It’s not about the size of the needle, he explained, but where you put that has the biggest impact.**

This, he argued, could especially be said about philanthropy in times of crisis and transition. The amount of money philanthropic foundations and other donors grant to NGOs and their projects is less important than which NGOs and which projects, and in which areas – geographic and societal – these projects operate.

In the audience were 28 philanthropy experts, hailing from a diverse range of backgrounds, from those working for big foundations in the USA and Europe, to those working in regional, local and community philanthropy in countries of recent crisis, such as Libya, entering a new transition phase (e.g. Egypt), as well countries in prolonged transitions

and prolonged crises, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, respectively; all arrived at Schloss Leopoldskron, Austria, to share and compare their own experiences and expertise of working in such countries.

Times of great political change and crisis can open up a country to philanthropy in a way not previously seen before, or simply offer a new partner by way of a change of government. But whilst new bodies into which philanthropic foundations and other donors can deftly push their monetary acupunctural needles might appear through times of crisis, several key issues still arise.

First and foremost, where do you put the “needles” of funding? What are the key issues and causes to be funded? Which are the best NGO partners to fund to deal with and promote those issues and causes? How do you deal with the multiple transitions that may be happening at the same time at different levels and in different area of one country?

“If we’re good and put needle in right place, we’re effective,” Altinay elaborated. If the needles are just poked in where they are not needed, i.e. the

funding is not well-placed, then: “we just annoy people!”

Times of crisis might open up new areas of need, particularly in governance capacity building, but as countries move into times of transition, many of those same challenges from before the upheaval still exist. “When people leave the squares, it’s poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, women’s marginalization and economic disempowerment – all of the issues we were dealing with before, we’re dealing with now, only in a more open and honest environment,” offered one Fellow working the Middle East and North Africa.

But in the MENA region, there is an identified “matching problem” – not only matching money to issues but also matching funding with local donors. Time spent ensure the best match might seem slow, but it will be well spent when it means that the impact is better assured.

If the area for “treatment” has been identified, just who is the acupuncturist? And for how long should the treatment be administered? International, local and individual philanthropy all have their roles to play.

As countries enter crises, large international foundations are able to swoop in and pump in vast sums of money very quickly. They have the human and financial capital to mobilize swiftly. But just as quickly, they can leave.

“Foundations need to ensure they have a humane exit strategy,” recommended one Fellow, to avoid sudden losses of funding for small NGOs and to aid transition. But in turn, NGOs also need to always plan for the big donors’ exit.

If the big international donors are assumed to be leaving once the crisis is over, local philanthropy needs to be ready to be involved for the long haul, beyond the crisis and throughout the transition. Local philanthropy often gives local NGOs the legitimacy they sorely need, especially if such times bring with them a wave of new found nationalism and/or a renewed distrust of “foreign agents”.

But often these local philanthropic organizations lack the capital to fund large projects, leading NGOs to seek funding from multiple donors; multiple donors means multiple reports and higher workloads piled on already stretched resources. Besides giving the larger grants, this is where larger international or more experienced foundations can help, by helping to establish networks of donors that can work together rather than in silos or worse, competition. This networked approach can help towards that all important “humane” exit strategy and ensure continued sustainability of civil society organizations, long after the big boys have gone home.

Individual donors, too, can play an important role in building NGO capacity in crisis and transition countries as they can often help avoid the (sometimes vindictive) bureaucracy faced by NGOs when trying secure funds from institutional donors. Individual giving can often be more speedy and flexible as well as offering an independence and credibility, but it can also be more narrowly focussed and less ambitious.

However, as one Fellow pointed out: “You can’t get a better buy-in for a larger donor than proving you have ‘crowdsourced’ lots of small donations.”

All these funders are needed to ensure effective treatment, and the most effective treatment is long-term investment; we’re not talking 3-4 years but 20-30 years.

Besides the ‘where’ and ‘who’, there is also: how? In times of limited funds, particularly in Europe, some donors have moved from cause-led grant-makers to impact-led grant-makers. This means NGOs must work harder for their donations and can lead to short-sightedness in transition countries as donors push for quick returns on investments and measurable impact – something not always possible in countries of great social change. Strategies are needed. “How do you do a strategic plan in a fast changing society?!” exclaimed one exasperated Fellow. Indeed, who knows what the post-Arab Spring Middle East will look like in 20 years?

“Strategy is about knowing how to manage what you can’t control,” came the reply.

Once the body, limb, needle, method and acupuncturist have all been identified, it still leaves the question: what is trying to be achieved? What chi is to be rebalanced?

Periods of crisis and transition are inherently political, and philanthropists need to think politically – after all, the new regime might not be the same enemy as before – but this doesn’t mean they should necessarily act politically. Philanthropy should support civil society, but it shouldn’t have to replace the government, with one Fellow warning against getting into the “neo-liberal position of funding what government should provide” (in this case, garbage collection).

Just as new governments might not turn out to want as much change as the revolution hoped, not everyone in philanthropy wants social change and justice – some donors want stability and continuity. After all, philanthropy writ large has no overarching guiding philosophy. It is a tool to catalyze change, not the catalyst itself.

But at the same time, all donors – large and small, international and local – need to realize that by being in the field and acting in field means they are ultimately effecting the actions of the field.

You, the donor, the acupuncturist, with your needles of funding poking into various different areas and depths of a country, over various lengths of time, are changing the balance of the country’s chi, and affecting its transition, whether for better or worse.





Fellows of session 508 'Getting Transition Right: A Rights-Based Approach to Diversity and Inclusivity' pose for the traditional Salzburg Global Seminar group photo, in front of the Leopoldskron lake and Untersberg mountain.

*The staff of Salzburg Global Seminar wish you all a safe journey home!*

## Interview: Kawa Hassan

### “It should lead to something tangible”

Oscar Tollast

**A knowledge officer at the Dutch non-governmental organization Hivos is hoping for an action plan to come out of Salzburg Global's latest session.**

Kawa Hassan is one of several participants attending the session, 'Getting Transition Right: A Rights-based Approach towards Diversity & Inclusivity'.

He said he was interested in a mix of conceptual discussions and practical ideas.

“It's a lovely gathering. We have interesting academic and activist discussions, but when we all leave here, it should lead to something tangible.”

In his role, he coordinates Hivos' Middle East Knowledge Program Civil Society in West Asia.

Prior to this, he worked as senior program officer for South Asia/South East Asia at the Dutch INGO Simavi, and was program manager and field coordinator for the United Nations Development Program in Sri Lanka and the Swedish/Norwegian INGO FORUT in Sri Lanka.

“I deal with researchers, academics and activists. I'm interested in those

perspectives, so I would like to have new thought provoking discussions and that should lead to some practical ideas and projects.”

Mr Hassan writes about dignity revolutions, democratization, democracy assistance in the Middle East, and Kurdish affairs.

He said he received his invitation to Salzburg Global at very short notice, but he added he was happy to prioritize his work in order to attend.

“It was on a very short notice – very chaotic – but I find it so interesting: the discussions, the groups, and the themes.

“I had to cancel a couple of important appointments in Holland to come here.”

Discussions have centered on the international and regional legal frameworks, the role of policy, shifting public perceptions and values, and salient issues around diversity and inclusion.

Mr Hassan said the discussions have been aided by having a number of people from diverse backgrounds.

“That creates an interesting dynamic in terms of views, in terms of discussions, critical thinking and being out of your usual comfort zone.

“It allows for a good comparative

analysis – analyzing transitions from the viewpoint of inclusivity and diversity. I'm always interested in comparative perspectives.”

Participants have been separated into working groups by country, further analyzing the issues surrounding diversity and inclusivity in specific countries.

It is a positive sign of how hard the participants are working when many of the sessions have overrun.

Mr Hassan said time was needed to take in the discussions and digest them properly.

“It's only a good sign that the participants are interested in the debates and the discussions. There are so many different perspectives on these two themes.

“On the one hand it shows the interest of the participants. On the other hand you need to keep a kind of central command, so you get into the end product, which is your aim, which is getting to practical ideas.”

Mr Hassan revealed one of the biggest challenges to diversity and inclusivity in the region was intolerance at a social and state level.

“For me that is the main challenge of these discussions: marginalization, manipulation, dehumanization and demonization of the other, which captures the core of the discussions around these two terms.”