Mark Schuller
University of California, Santa Barbara

Seeing Like a "Failed" NGO: Globalization's Impacts on State and Civil Society in Haiti

Anthropologists have critiqued Eurocentric biases and presuppositions behind civil society. A key criticism is that civil society presumes modern capitalist constitutional states typical of western Europe and North America. Anthropologists have also questioned the demise of the nation-state heralded by globalization scholars, while civil society has not received this interrogation. In this article, I argue that binary logics within and assumptions behind the state–society relationship are problematic because they render transnational economic or geopolitical forces invisible, when the latter play an important role in this relationship. Haiti's history and current struggles of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) offer anthropologists a rich site to understand and theorize the state and civil society within "globalization." Apparent "failure" within local NGOs presents a unique opportunity to comprehend forces that structure NGO closures, turning development discourse on its head. [Haiti; civil society; globalization; state–society relationship; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); failure]

While its origins and reach are debated, neoliberal globalization is undeniably restructuring political and economic structures, particularly in the global South (Karim and Leve 2001). Political and legal anthropologists in particular have debated globalization's effects on states (Aretxaga 2003; Chalfin 2006; Gupta and Sharma 2006; Trouillot 2001). However, insufficient attention has been paid to how globalization transforms relations between states and civil societies, usually conceived in binary terms, either in opposition (Clastres 1987; Pelczynski 1988) or in a cyclical dyadic relationship (Howell 1997; Karlstrom 1998). In this article, I argue that transnational forces and institutions are constitutive elements of southern civil society, and that a tripartite lens comprehending three general sets of actors (foreign powers, the state, and "civil society") is required. This lens should also focus on apparent failures of NGOs, revealing systemic structures (see Miyazaki and Riles 2004).

In using the term "failure," I wish to uncover its multiple meanings and interpretations. In mainstream technical discourse, assessing failure involves establishing

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whether or not a given institution (state or NGO) has met preestablished "performance targets." Performance is measured and quantified, a numerical score given, and a threshold established to delimit failure. This technical discourse excludes several sets of actors, most notably intended beneficiaries or "target population," from evaluation processes while it excludes donors' structures and policies from interrogation. The term "failure" (in quotes) refers to this external donor evaluation.

I bracket the term in quotes—or use "apparently failed"—to highlight exclusionary processes at work and narrow meanings of failure that they entail, focusing attention away from questions of whether intended beneficiaries agreed to overall strategies or particular interventions. In cases like the Narmada Dam in India and the lesser-known Peligre Dam in Haiti, projects were considered technical successes by donor agencies and implementing NGOs even though they destroyed local communities and displaced residents. As Scott (1998) argues, these failures result from a combination of bureaucratic power with high-modernist ideology, and blind faith in science and rational planning preventing even well-intentioned authoritarian states from seeing and accessing local knowledge *(metis)*.

While Scott's critique focused on states, his argument has relevance for the international aid system. Drawing from his critique, I argue that seeing the system from a subaltern perspective, from that of apparently failed NGOs, reveals systemic structures at work globally and in Haiti, such as transnational development institutions, social inequalities—along lines of class (or "social levels" in local terminology; Jean 2002), race (or "color"; Trouillot 1994a), gender, language—and global political and economic inequalities. While not making a direct causal claim, I argue that these structural inequalities are reproduced in practice (Bourdieu 1980), which is why apparently failed NGOs can reveal deeper failures of underlying local/global structures of power.

Haiti is often described as "failed" through a discourse of Haitian exceptionalism (Trouillot 1994b:46), particularly by multinational institutions. In 2005, Transparency International ranked Haiti as the world's most corrupt country. Haiti is often called a failed state, on a current list of "fragile states" whereby the country declared unfit to govern itself (USAID 2005). Mainstream discourse holds that Haiti suffers from a failure of development stemming from a nondemocratic, underdeveloped mentality (Heinl et al. 1996; Rotberg 1988:101). Highlighting and explaining two apparent failures of local organizations, this article turns this discourse of failure on its head. Instead of *having* failed, these NGOs *have been* failed by the same neoliberal policies and institutions that are ostensibly working toward their participation and empowerment.

I begin this article with a brief history of "civil society," arguing that contemporary deployments of the term employ only one ideological definition. Following this, I offer a brief history of how an oppositional, zero-sum relationship of state

and society was created in Haiti. The final ethnographic section deals with so-called "failed" NGOs' lived experiences of foreign promotion of civil society.

Civil Society in the Anthropological Imagination

Civil society has been as important a tool in the so-called Western imagination as it has been ambiguous. While current invocations of civil society oppose it to "the state," initial uses of the term—dating to Cicero and revived in the 17th century via Hobbes—essentially opposed "society" to "nature," society being equated with the state (Rangeon 1986:11, 12). The bourgeoisie's rise in 18th-century western Europe heralded a critique of the monarchical state, and hence civil society began its imaginary role as opposition to the state[1] (Habermas 1989; Taylor 1990). While privileging individual bourgeois rights, liberal political theory maintained the state–society opposition. Marxist thinkers such as Gramsci argued that civil society is the sphere where the state's ideological work is done, consequently serving to promote the hegemony of bourgeois interests (Cohen and Arato 1992; Kurtz 1996; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Rangeon 1986). "Jacobin" strains (Taylor 1990) represented a fusion of the Marxist and liberal positions by emphasizing the concept of "participation" within official agenda-setting structures (Rangeon 1986). While other concepts in political theory and popular discourse eclipsed civil society in the early 20th century, it has been revived in recent years, particularly as it became evident that the Soviet bloc was imploding. Civil society became an ideological weapon of neoliberal institutions, used to critique crumbling state socialist systems and to explain the failure of development in so-called Third World states.

This neoliberal conception of civil society has been critiqued by a wide range of theorists including feminists such as Benhabib (1992) and Fraser (1989) who criticize it for privileging exclusionary masculinist assumptions of the public sphere. This article builds upon an "ethnographic" critique of civil society raised by anthropologists and southern postcolonial critical theorists, that civil society theorized in a zero-sum opposition against the state (Clastres 1987; Pelczynski 1988) assumes a particular form of "the State"—Western capitalist representative democracies (Chatterjee 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 1998; Hann and Dunn 1996). Forms of civil society—redefined after ethnographic observation to include state-organized leisure associations (Buchowski 1996), local government councils (Karlstrom 1998), or traditional kinship gift exchange (Flower and Leonard 1996; Yang 1994)—have actually existed outside the "West." The political project of promoting civil society requires a rejection of these other culturally meaningful forms of civil society (Comaroff and Comaroff 1998) such as those addressed in the following section.

Finally, as anthropologists have noted, state and civil society are not always opposed (Flower and Leonard 1996; Karlstrom 1998; Schuller 2006). Especially in a context of globalization, how is the fluctuation in the relationship between Southern states and societies to be theorized, assuming these two political forms

are conceptually distinct? The nation-state was only made universal after post–World War II independence movements in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, facilitated by international organizations (Kelly and Kaplan 2001). It has been argued that forty years later, globalization makes states largely irrelevant (McMichael 1996b). Ferguson and Gupta (2002:989) argue that globalization implies a transfer of state roles to non-state actors, both "below" like NGOs and "above" like multinational development agencies, in a process that Karim and Leve (2001) call the "privatization of the state." However, Trouillot (2001:131) cautions that states have not lost their claim on sovereign control of territory, defining who is "in" and who is "out" (see also Aretxaga 2003; Chalfin 2006; Gupta and Sharma 2006). If the civil society project presupposes states, and a certain form of state, how does globalization transform civil society? This article explores the role of globalization—transnational economic and geopolitical forces—in shaping civil society, particularly the relationship between state and society. I first offer historical followed by ethnographic evidence, both from Haiti, to critique binary frameworks implicit in theories of state and civil society and to suggest a tripartite framework to analyze postcolonial globalizing Southern states and societies.

Haiti's Trajectory toward State against Nation

Haiti has long-standing traditions of civil society or resistance that include African-derived ritual (often lumped together in a single term "voodoo" or Vodou) (Dayan 1995; Laguerre 1989), storytelling and literature (Bell 2001; Price-Mars 1983; Racine 1999), and *chan pwen*, composed-on-the-spot songs critical of those in power (Smith 2001). Rejection of these forms of civil society has come from a variety of sources, including the Catholic Church's "anti-superstition" campaigns (Laguerre 1989; Nicholls 1996:181). Following Haitian scholars Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1990) and Alex Dupuy (1989), I have argued elsewhere (Schuller n.d.) that the opposition of state and society and the oppression of subaltern civil society in Haiti result from a collusion of internal and external forces. Haiti's history is both complex and hotly debated, in part because of the contemporary political context (Trouillot 1995).[2]

Like other postcolonial nations, especially in Latin America, Haitian society is controlled by a small group of elites that monopolized the Haitian state through control of foreign trade and the military. As Nicholls (1996), Trouillot (1994a), and others have argued, racial or color prejudice keep this elite divided: a lighter-skinned urban mercantilist elite maintain control of Haiti's economy by monopolizing foreign trade. This lighter-skinned group maintained an uneasy alliance with black military leaders to subdue the population. These two elite groups, both of whom oppressed and excluded the mass of rural (and later urban) laborers and peasants from power, have traditionally competed for control. This competition generated constant social and political instability; only two Haitian political leaders served out their full term. The first exception to this rule of coups d'état was François Duvalier, a black country doctor who built his parastatal apparatus even

before his election in 1957 (Trouillot 1990:153). The paramilitary *tonton makout* (French: *tontons macoutes*), responsible for as many as 30,000 killings, joined rural police chiefs, or *chèf seksyon* (French: *chéfs de section*), in maintaining order, extending the watchful gaze of the state apparatus in the provinces and exterminating potential threats to the regime.

The two elite groups that fused into the absolutist Duvalierist state owe their existence and prominence to foreign intervention. After the Haitian Revolution in 1804, the two warring parties divided Haiti into a southern mulatto republic and northern black kingdom. Both states were denied political recognition by slaveholding powers. The mulatto state, led by Revolutionary general Pétion and later by counterrevolutionary soldier Boyer, campaigned for recognition by offering France an indemnity, compensating for slave owners' losses. The black state took a militaristic stance, with leaders Dessalines and later Christophe building fortresses and supporting militarized agriculture to feed the military. Following Christophe's capitulation and Haiti's reunification, Boyer negotiated France's recognition of Haitian independence in 1825, with 150 million francs as indemnity, the only instance in world postcolonial history. Bankrupted by the civil war, the Haitian government was forced to accept a loan from a private French bank that would require 80 percent of the state's customs revenue for almost a century to be paid off. Servicing Haiti's debt implied an indirect tax on the peasantry, since the customs revenues were mostly garnered from coffee, a crop grown by smallholding Haitian farmers (Trouillot 1990:62). Haiti's debt service prevented the funding of public education, solidifying divisions between the Kreyòl-speaking majority and French-speaking elites who attended private schools. This linguistic divide still operates powerfully in Haiti. French, the language of 10 percent of Haiti's educated elite and middle classes, is the de facto language of government and business, even though Kreyòl was granted official status in the 1987 Constitution.

Foreign intervention facilitated the transition from authoritarian to totalitarian rule. The U.S. Marines invaded in July 1915, occupying Haiti for 19 years. During the military occupation, the U.S. imposed a new constitution that Franklin D. Roosevelt claimed to have written personally that opened Haiti to foreign ownership of land and codified French as Haiti's official language. In addition, the U.S. installed a modern army whose purpose was to suppress *kako* dissidents. Renda argued that "the occupation eliminated safeguards against entrenched despotism in Haiti. . . . In doing so, U.S. Americans helped to lay the groundwork for two Duvalier dictatorships and a series of post-Duvalier military regimes" (2001:36).

The Development Encounter (Escobar 1995) began in 1948 with a UN Mission (1949) and pilot project (Métraux 1951) that supported strong central administration and outlined 101 priorities for international donors to fund. Aided by foreign powers with a Cold War developmentalist demarche that favored strong states (McMichael 1996a), Duvalier had an unprecedented ability to build the

state apparatus—state systems and state effects (Abrams 1988)—as he saw fit. He exploited Cold War tensions following the 1959 Cuban Revolution when President Kennedy wanted to block Cuba's entry into the Organization of American States (OAS). Duvalier's Haiti cast a decisive vote in the U.S.'s favor and was rewarded millions of dollars in aid. International financial institutions tolerated corruption in this Cold War context, with funds siphoned to the *tonton makout* or Duvalier's personal accounts (Ferguson 1987:70).

In the tumultuous period following the Duvalier dictatorship, the state through a military junta (CNG), foreign powers through the OAS, and a nascent civil society in the form of popular organizations (OPs) competed for the control of Haiti (Smith 1988). The stage was the elections; like elsewhere in Latin America, the U.S. and international agencies needed elections for legitimacy in pushing neoliberal agendas (Dethier et al. 1999:4; Weisbrot 1997). The army violently aborted November 1987 elections and organized sham elections in 1988, the results of which were reversed by the same CNG months later. On December 16, 1990, despite millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars poured into a former World Bank official's candidacy, liberation theology priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected with an overwhelming majority.

Aristide was removed from office on September 30, 1991, eight months into his presidency. Bankrolled by the CIA (Weisbrot 1997:29), the International Republican Institute (IRI) (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001:227), and local elites, the CNG regime of Raoul Cédras and later the CIA-funded and CIA-trained paramilitary organization FRAPH targeted OPs as Haiti's embryonic civil society (Human Rights Watch 1993). The coup regime was arguably more repressive than Duvalier, openly murdering Haitians and targeting government members and highly visible OP leaders (Human Rights Watch 1993). George H. W. Bush openly spoke of his disapproval of Aristide, and the Vatican officially recognized Cédras as Haiti's legitimate president, encouraging the coup regime and FRAPH to continue killing (Clement 1997; Doyle 1994). Faced with violence and intense multinational pressure, Aristide signed the Governor's Island Accord, ceding control to international institutions through privatization and structural adjustment.

Aristide finally returned to power on October 15, 1994, and served out the rest of his term. Haiti's first democratic transfer of power in 1996 followed the election of René Préval, the second president to serve his full term. During this period, unprecedented amounts of international aid were poured into Haiti—1.8 billion from fiscal years 1995 to 1999 (World Bank 2002)—and state, society, and foreign powers seemed united for Haiti's development. For the time being, Haiti's nascent civil society seemed genuinely revitalized via *gwoupman peyizan* (peasants associations) and *gwoupman katye* (neighborhood associations), as well as a flowering of NGOs, preferred targets of this aid (Étienne 1996; Morton 1997:1; Smith 2001:31).

Foreign powers' favoring NGOs eroded the state's saliency and influence, becoming an "apparent state" (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001:214). In 1998, in

exchange for ending a temporary cash flow problem caused by that year's debt service—$54 million—and extreme imbalance of imports to exports,[3] the IMF imposed austerity measures (2001).[4] When Haiti's government failed to deliver, the IMF triggered a freeze of all international funds to Haiti. Meanwhile, donor flows directly to NGOs remained high. Multilateral agencies' policy of circumventing the state and directly funding NGOs fueled a "cold war" between Haiti's cash-starved government and the well-funded NGO sector (Morton 1997:40). USAID-funded NGOs crafted development policies countering priorities set by Haiti's elected government, notably in agriculture, food security, and education. U.S.-funded NGOs promoted export-oriented agriculture (USAID 1997), undermined local production and encouraged dependency by removing import tariffs, and dumping U.S. agricultural surplus (Richardson 1997), and funded private schools at the expense of public schools and adult literacy programs (USAID 1999).

In addition to this indirect undermining of the Haitian state, foreign powers such as USAID and the EU funded NGOs that played leadership roles in Aristide's opposition (Dupuy 2005). The "Civil Society Initiative" (ISC) assembled Haiti's business elites who defined civil society in an explicitly ideological liberal framework (Jean 2002). ISC was founded in 2000 by Hubert DeRonceray, president of USAID's educational partner (FONHEP), and included other rightist bourgeois families like the Boulos (dual recipients of U.S. funding through USAID health partner CDS and the Chamber of Commerce) and pro-business interest groups like CLED. This group defined itself as the authentic representative of "civil society" even though it lacked legitimacy, only representing bourgeois interests (Jean 2002:35). As a corrective, the Group of 184 was founded at a December 2002 IRI conference in a Santo Domingo hotel where exiled putschist Guy Philippe was also residing (Bogdanich and Nordberg 2006). A significant difference between the oppositions is that the Group of 184 included women's organizations, labor unions, peasants' organizations, and human rights groups in their membership.[5] Many of these member organizations that offered legitimacy, such as CATH, CTH, and CARLI, received U.S. funding. In 2003, USAID allocated $2.9 million for "Democracy and Governance," up from $2 million in 2002, while the overall USAID portfolio was halved over the previous four years, from $107 million to $54 million (2003 Budget Justification). USAID claimed success: "To date, USAID's support to civil society has empowered and perhaps emboldened groups to engage with government on national interests" (ibid.). USAID further explained, "In FY 2002 USAID launched new programs to help Haitian civil society resist the growing trend toward authoritarian rule by . . . developing new political leadership" (ibid.).

While proclaiming official neutrality and denying charges that Aristide's departure was a "regime change," the U.S. government and the EU gave financial, technical, and diplomatic support to Aristide's opposition. This support did not waiver, even following the opposition's refusal to negotiate with Aristide. Meanwhile, the U.S. government continued to pressure Aristide to negotiate.

In February 2004, after the Group of 184 lost control of the groundswell of student-led protests, Philippe and convicted former FRAPH leader Louis Jodel Chamblain routed police stations in the north of the country, freeing inmates and forcing police officers to hide. On February 29, 2004, Aristide was flown out of Haiti on a U.S. military plane, commencing the two-year interim period characterized by even greater foreign control (Schuller forthcoming).

A Close-up View: An Ethnography of "Failed" NGOs

The previous section argued that foreign agents have contributed to the formation of a predatory state and later to the destruction of a fledgling civil society that aimed to keep that state in check or dismantle it altogether. While anthropologists have argued that globalization does not entail the entire dismantlement of nation states (Aretxaga 2003; Chalfin 2006; Gupta and Sharma 2006; Trouillot 2001), normative liberal conceptions of civil society still presuppose "Western" notions of states and empower a specific form of bourgeois civil society. As noted above, USAID claims credit for empowering some local groups. But what about other, more subaltern publics? This section highlights the limits of this empowerment. A close understanding of two apparently failed NGOs reveals that the apparent failures are structured by inequalities within the world system.

Ethnographies of NGOs expose and deconstruct the binary frame of state/civil society that erases the role of foreign powers in shaping "local" civil society through creating and supporting NGOs (Kamat 2003). This section discusses a common occurrence often ignored in the NGO literature: failure. Statistics on NGO closures are not usually generated or tracked. For example, UCAONG, Haiti's governmental office in charge of NGO oversight, compiled a list of registered NGOs in 1995. By my first visit to UCAONG in 2002, this list had not been updated. In February 2005 a similar list was published, with over a third of the previous listings missing. Much of the information, including phone numbers, was out of date for two-thirds of the NGOs I attempted to contact. UCAONG is supposed to receive annual reports but depends on the willingness of NGOs for them. International organizations do not track this situation either; an NGO researcher guessed that there were anywhere from 2,000 to 12,000 popular organizations in Haiti (Morton 1997:iii).

In the context of a globalizing world, wherein international development agencies bypass southern states and channel funds directly to NGOs, "briefcase NGOs" (Dicklitch 1998:9) appear everywhere. During my 24 months in Haiti since 2001, I have been hailed by dozens of would-be NGO entrepreneurs, thinking that because I am white, I would be able to help them start an NGO (more often, I was hailed by would-be pastors, asking if I was looking to open a church). NGO closure seems more common than NGO survival, but for a variety of reasons, some of which are methodological, researchers miss this trend. Survey-oriented NGO research discards the portion of the "sample" that was unreachable (e.g., Étienne 1996). Already a minority within NGO research, long-term ethnographic research

presupposes organizational survival. Consequently, our understanding of NGOs (as well as of "globalization" or "civil society") is skewed. Precisely these apparent failures, seen ethnographically, expose the failures of globalization and of its civil society project.

In this light, I discuss two would-be NGOs in Haiti that failed to survive. One is a "community-based organization," or CBO, and the other is an amalgam of a CBO and urban NGO with a women in development (WID) focus—focusing development resources on women and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (USAID 2000; World Bank 2000). I call this latter organization *l'Association des Femmes Organisées*. The former I call *La Jeunesse de Vallée*.

La Jeunesse de Vallée (JdV) was founded in 1996 by a community meeting of 300 people, 15 percent of residents of Vallée—a small, out-of-the way communal section in the mountains of the South province. La Jeunesse de Vallée had a vision of what could help its community: a free school for children, a literacy program for adults, a mill, a granary, and a bridge over the stream across which lies the main (dirt) road to Okay[6] to take crops to market. Earlier collective work groups (*kovè, konbit,* and *atribisyon*) survived in Vallée. A core group of members volunteered their time and labor into realizing these goals. Around this time, several thousand peasant associations, *gwoupman peyizan*, were founded all over Haiti, endowed with foreign assistance and formerly exiled popular movement leaders (Gabaud 2000; Smith 2001). As mentioned above, donor funds to Haiti peaked during this period. Word of available development funding reached the remote village of Vallée, and residents planned preliminary projects, confident that they too would partake in this international aid feast.

The money did not trickle down to Vallée. Unlike organizations that survived and that were also founded during the same period, JdV had neither foreign assistance from private, foundation, bilateral or multilateral sources, nor residents returning from the "tenth province" (Haiti's diaspora).[7] The latter would have been accompanied by remittances heralded by a big house or church. A JdV delegation whose members were part of the *lavalas* movement which had attempted to transform state and society went to Pòtoprens in 1997 to meet their Lavalas elected officials. During these initial meetings, JdV was promised a portion of the following year's development budget. The budget never materialized. Ninety percent of funding to Haiti's government was from external sources (Morton 1997:1), and, as mentioned above, multinational financial institutions froze their assistance to Haiti's government. Consequently, the hungry peasants of Vallée had no money to complete the projects that they had planned.

Frustrated, but determined, JdV authorized one member to negotiate contracts in their name. The group cobbled together income from harvest and sent him to Pòtoprens in search of foreign gold. Sylvain (a pseudonym) found a place in a *bidonvil* (shantytown) near Cité d'Exposition, where USAID, the U.S. embassy, and many of Haiti's banks and international agencies are headquartered. He borrowed

money to purchase two new-looking button-down shirts and nice slacks. At the National Library or Archives, Sylvain found an application form for USAID, from the days when USAID still had a small projects fund (less than $30,000) and an open application process. Sylvain had the project description, organizational history, and budget typed up as required by the application.[8] Not having access to information, never having enough money to imagine a budget, barely literate in French, having to pay a typist, not having a paid job and with little money left, this process took seven months. Meanwhile, USAID shifted their strategic priorities, preferring instead to streamline and subcontract their development assistance into selected priorities and locations in their 1999–2004 strategic plan (USAID 1997). Sylvain was turned away. He was socialized to fear *blan* (Haitian term for both foreigner and white person) and awe the "magic" of international development (Sampson 1996:142). Additionally, no one explained the process, so Sylvain did not ask for contact information for foreign NGOs that were USAID contractors (neither did he see evidence of their work near Vallée). Even if he did, he still would most likely not have managed to secure necessary funding because U.S. NGOs tend to have their priorities set long in advance of receiving funds. They also choose their local partners and, if necessary, create them to implement strategies approved in the USAID strategic plan (Ministè Agrikilti 2000:10). Luckily for Sylvain and JdV, he met and married a seamstress in 1999, allowing him to pursue his funding search full-time.

I met Sylvain during preliminary fieldwork, during the summer of 2002. He had not secured funding for JdV. "I do not want to stay in Pòtoprens. I needed to come here to find funding for the group. When I arrived in Pòtoprens in 1998, I thought that I would only need to stay for eight, maybe nine months."[9] At the time of writing, it has been eight *years*, and Sylvain had still not found funding. At the time, USAID only funded groups that had a track record, according to a staff person, "once they've reached a certain level" (interview with author, August 2002). In other words, groups needed to have received funding in order to get (more) funding (Hodson 1997:186). Plus, USAID only funded 15 NGOs, all but a few of which had participated in formulating their strategic priorities, and all but two of which were headquartered in the U.S. (USAID 1997). Also, the small grants program ended: "It just cost too much money to manage that program. It was not a good return on our investment" (interview with author, August 2002). USAID staff pointed out another U.S. government funding source, the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), designed for grassroots groups.[10] But Congress gutted 65 percent of IAF's budget (personal communication, November 2005). For example, IAF does not even have one full-time Washington staff to oversee the Haiti program because U.S. staff are expensive (Bebbington and Riddell 1997:119). As a result, "Haiti staff" members' personal/professional networks become more central to funding decisions.

Unfortunately for Sylvain and others like him, who cannot speak English and do not have a U.S. visa or job that would enable him to make contacts, he will never

meet the kind of people who can give JdV money. Meeting me provided Sylvain with some small degree of *blan* cultural and material capital. Through a difficult series of conversations, we taught each other how our respective political systems worked (and did not work). In our last meeting, four years after our initial encounter, Sylvain derided me for having failed him; did he not give me his "projects" (meaning, written descriptions that I had typed up)? Why did I not secure his funding? He also asked for a box of folders and pens, which I gave him. I taught him that, as a *ti-blan* ("little" white person), I did not have direct access to the State Department or USAID. He taught me that basic information about international organizations—what programs and projects they fund, which NGOs implement them and at which locations—is out of reach for the average Haitian, even community organization leaders. He also taught me that development is about having contacts. Finally, he taught me that the database I carefully reconstructed—indeed gave back to UCAONG following two incidents of office theft—was next to worthless.

Like many other NGOs, l'Association des Femmes Organisées' (AFO's) history began with a visionary founder and foreign funding (Davis 2003; Kamat 2002). AFO was founded in 1999 by Martha, originally from a small town in Grandans. Martha moved to Pòtoprens to get a college degree in journalism. Working at a state-sponsored radio station, Martha discovered the glass ceiling for Haitian women and the amount of power that resides in Pòtoprens. She resolved to unite women and poor displaced peasants in a common struggle for empowerment. Of course, Martha knew about the NGO explosion around her, and that gave her some concrete ideas. A journalist, she found a list of international organizations working in Haiti that she began to contact. "It was very difficult, because I do not know people. I was a little person from the province." Like Sylvain, Martha did not have the proper contacts: "I called and called around. Many organizations closed their Haiti offices." Emulating public development agencies like the World Bank, who closed their offices after they suspended aid, private foundations like Ford or Kellogg also reduced their budgets to Haiti. Said Martha, "You need to work very hard. I finally found a foundation that helps grassroots groups." After that, AFO opened.

The International Women's Foundation (a pseudonym) is a "Northern NGO" that often serves as an intermediary between official donor groups and "Southern NGOs." Even though they are not official branches of Northern governments, the UN, or Bretton Woods organizations, most Northern NGO funding comes from these "public" funding sources. Because direct supervision is costly for development agencies, many contract management services to Northern NGOs that administer funding and decide which local groups to support.

Since professional women within NGOs and universities argued that development should address women's concerns (e.g., Boserup 1970; Momsen 1991), international groups such as the World Bank have responded with WID, what Bessis (2001) called "institutional feminism." In the 1980s and early 1990s, international

organizations conducted surveys specifically targeting women (e.g., Anglade 1995; United Nations and Anglade 1992). Following this research, new WID offices designed programs, tracked results disaggregated by gender, and provided small funding sources (USAID 2000; World Bank 2000; Zaoudé and Sandler 2001). Especially after the high visibility of women's issues following the Third UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, providing support for Northern women's NGOs like the International Women's Foundation became politically expedient, similar to the earlier "slot" for participation in development orthodoxy (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:988).

Like other Northern NGOs working in Haiti like Oxfam or Grassroots International, the International Women's Foundation funds grassroots organizations. Unlike them, it has an open application procedure. Believing that all women's groups with a good idea and participatory structure deserve a chance to succeed, knowing that needs are greater than available funds, they offer "seed money." AFO thus had funds for a specified period of time. Martha found an office that she shared with another NGO and hired a secretary and part-time coordinators for four programs addressing health, education, environment, and political advocacy. Each program had a committee that met once a month to make recommendations to Martha, as unpaid executive director. According to Martha, "when people put their heads together, if an organization makes room for discussion, you get a lot of ideas, solutions and energy." Participants wrote and performed plays concerning issues such as AIDS, sexual violence, and Haiti's political process. Martha recalled, "All classes of women—street vendors, factory workers, and professionals—were involved. They worked together in solidarity, as sisters."

Immediately after founding AFO, Martha applied for NGO status with the UCAONG office within the Ministry of Planning. Completing this process is essential for groups' survival. First, it allows NGOs to legally own property. Second, both cash and in-kind property donations are tax-exempt. Finally, UN agencies prefer working with Haiti's government, but will also work with officially registered NGOs. As of May 2003, AFO's registration was not reviewed. UCAONG staff told me, "We know there are many good NGOs that need their official papers. One month, 300 groups contacted our office." To put that in perspective, as of February 2005, only 343 groups were officially registered with UCAONG. So why does the Government not hire more staff to oversee the process? "Don't forget that the Haitian government does not have much money" (UCAONG staff, personal communication, September 2002). At that time, UCAONG staff had not been paid for seven months. So why not streamline the process? "Our work is very important. The Haitian government alone has the authority to plan for Haitian development. NGOs are good, but they do not have a mandate, only the government has a mandate" (ibid.). This answer suggests an inability or unwillingness to think outside bureaucracy and at least a circumspect relationship with NGOs. Given Aristide's conflict with

Washington, not to mention Haiti's longer history of imperialism and dependence discussed in the previous section, this nationalist,[11] protectionist attitude is at least understandable.

Whether passive resistance—like the work-to-rule strikes Scott discussed (1998:256)—or open nationalist hostility, the Haitian state's institutional response has serious effects upon the work of NGOs. In part because of the UCAONG logjam, Martha and AFO could not apply for larger, stable funding from foreign institutions, even though several of AFO's programs, such as reforestation, microcredit, and AIDS prevention, match current international donor priorities. The International Women's Foundation's seed grant also ended. AFO's story shows that even an NGO that has initial funding and a director with the requisite cultural, technological, and technical capital has a precarious future. In early 2003, AFO lost their lease and laid off their five paid staff. However, according to Martha, "AFO will never close. We have members, volunteers, good staff, good ideas, and a good structure." In the meantime, Martha went to school in the U.S. Possibly, she will begin her list of foreign contacts, but for now, AFO's doors are closed.

Concluding Remarks

The "failure" stories of the two would-be NGOs, l'Association des Femmes Organisées and la Jeunesse de Vallée, highlight the failures structured into the projectization and NGOization of civil society (Elyachar 2005). JdV never even got off the ground, waiting for funding from the government, foreign donors, and then foreign NGOs. AFO had four projects that lasted as long as the funding. Both were founded explicitly to become foreign-funded NGOs with staff, office, and budgets. This is not to say that their ideas were not good, or not arising from democratic, "grassroots" processes. However, an ethnographic understanding of the stories suggests three areas to interrogate the notion of failure. First, if AFO and JdV failed, they failed because of the "cold war" between the state and mainstream "civil society" caused (or fueled) by the global shifts in donor flows to NGOs. Next, if AFO and JdV failed, they failed because of the vast inequalities structured and rendered invisible by the "anti-politics machine" (Ferguson 1990). Finally, if AFO and JdV failed, it is worth interrogating the model of the "project" and NGOs.

JdV and AFO were caught in the crossfire in the "cold war" between Haiti's government and international institutions. JdV was scheduled to receive funds from the state that never materialized because the funds were funneled instead into large foreign NGOs. AFO could have received foreign funding and survived had they acquired official NGO status. They did not, however, because of lack of funds to administer the registry and the hostile political climate stoked if not created by foreign powers and by the defensive protectionist nationalism that characterizes "penetrated states" (Schiller and Fouron 2001) such as Haiti. Like elsewhere, competition over scarce funding fuels distrust between state and society (see Dicklitch 1998:3; Fisher 1997:451–452; Kamat 2003:89). Also, like

elsewhere, Haiti's government responded by increasing control and monitoring, making it difficult for some NGOs, such as APO, to survive (Dicklitch 1998:23; Fowler 2000:4; Ndegwa 1994). One consequence of this funding shift is that only large foreign NGOs, which are in many respects state-like in their bureaucracy and their near-sovereign control within their geographic domain (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994), are able to survive conflicts within international development funding.

More basically, AFO and JdV's stories highlight inequalities structured into the system. Development decisions are made in foreign capitals and inside supra-state bureaucracies that subcontract their decision making to Northern NGOs. Occasionally, as with the International Women's Foundation, Southern NGOs get the chance to apply for funding. Usually, funding decisions—priorities and projects—are made well in advance and far from the local community, as donors give NGOs "turf" (Étienne 1996:64; Thomas-Slayter 1992:142), during what one Haitian NGO employee called "cut the cake" meetings (personal communication, January 2005). As Sylvain's story highlights, these decisions are not communicated to the community. And finally, even starting an NGO requires access to elite language, technology, foreign contacts, and, most importantly, money. Faced with such prerequisites, Sylvain was outclassed, and even Martha had a difficult experience.

Finally, AFO and JdV's stories suggest more fundamental failures with bureaucratization and project dependency. Sylvain's fetishization of development's trappings, the office and folders, shows his belief in the "magic" of NGOs (Sampson 1996), as does his disbelief that simply dictating a project description to a *blan* does not generate funding. Might this have resulted from the way NGOs generate a simulacrum of corporate Taylorist bureaucratic paradigm and hierarchy (Abramson 1999)? Other forms of civil society building are possible. In Pòtoprens, despite the episodic and structural violence (Farmer 2004) of the contemporary crisis period (2003–6), and despite the city's size, anonymity, and NGOs' and foreign organizations' commonly held belief that nothing works, neighborhood groups have completed minor infrastructure projects. They fixed potholes and built sewer systems, asking passersby to contribute until enough funds for materials and a common meal were collected. To see "authentic" civil society one need not look for projects; there is also a tradition of "sòl"—organically organized, zero-interest solidarity lending whereby six to twelve people pool their resources so that every sixth to twelfth month each has money to pay their annual rent or school fees. Further, civil society need not involve money at all, as the examples discussed earlier such as storytelling or *chan pwen* highlight.

According to USAID–Washington staff (personal communication, October 2005), development policies are made through procedures called "best practices." This article suggests that, like Japanese financial traders, insider and outsider anthropological knowledge should rather focus on "failure" (Miyazaki and Riles 2004). Seeing like a "failed" NGO highlights the multiple failures built into the current

world system. It allows us to clearly see the real cause for the apparent episodic failures: the bureaucratic distance that authoritarian development institutions place in between decision makers and local communities, the cutting off of access to local knowledge, the building of a project-dependent and ideologically-laden "civil society," and the stoking of institutional conflict. Hopefully, too, seeing like a "failed" NGO can tap into local creativity, lending an eye—if not a hand—to the still vibrant, if embattled, civil society that has been there all along.

Notes

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1. Adam Smith does not use the term "civil society" to create a distinction between "nation" or "society" and "state" (Rangeon 1986:17).
2. See Schuller n.d. for a fuller discussion
3. Imports were $1,022 million; exports, $479 million. Source: World Bank 2002.
4. These included imposition of user fees for education and health care, and cutting social expenditures from 3 to 2 percent of Haiti's GDP.
5. The leadership of the Group of 184, as represented by themselves in negotiation with the OAS and CARICOM, did not include such groups.
6. In French, Les Cayes. Town names are spelled in Kreyòl, the only language of 90 percent of Haiti's population. For example, Port-au-Prince is Pòtoprens.
7. Haiti's interim government declared that 30 percent of Haitian families have a relative living abroad (Interim Government of Haiti 2004:5).
8. The form Sylvain found was likely out-of-date when he received it.
9. Conversations with NGO representatives that took place in May 2003 have been translated from the original Kreyòl.
10. In September 2005, the World Bank began a small grants program in the north.
11. "Nationalism" refers here to an anti-imperialist stance—see Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001

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