

October 2005

Global Risk: how civil society responds

Landmark Yearbook - *Global Civil Society*
2005/6 - launched at LSE, 6 October 2005

What do terrorism, climate change, migration, hurricane Katrina and the tsunami have in common? During 2004/5 myriads of people around the world were touched by them, to varying degrees and in different ways, all of which contributed to the sense of a global imagined community. How people responded depended on their perceptions of risk, which as the Global Civil Society Yearbook reveals, were shaped in part by the many individuals, movements and NGOs, whose ideas, values and campaigns reach beyond state borders and domestic politics.

Global risks share certain characteristics – they ignore nation state boundaries, their impact is uneven and they can spark conflict both within societies and between North and South. Perhaps the dominant feature of global risks is uncertainty – we cannot predict if and when they will wreak havoc, we do not understand their long-term effects. Crucially, we cannot control them. However, risks do increase pressure for greater global cooperation – a process in which global civil society plays a leading role. Professor Mary Kaldor, one of the Yearbook's editors in chief, says: "Global civil society is the arena where public debates, campaigns and arguments shape the way we imagine risks that both ourselves and other people face around the world."

Just as people's perceptions of risks differ, depending on where they live, the information available and their daily experience, so too do their responses, which are unpredictable and uneven. Witness the outpouring of generosity in the wake of the tsunami compared to the very limited response to the situation in Darfur, says Dr Marlies Glasius, Yearbook editor in chief. Responses to terrorism and climate change also vary. "Most of us are probably convinced now that global warming is happening, but we are not yet at the level of doing something about it as individuals. Global public pressure doesn't always manage to reach us and prod us into action," says Glasius.

According to Professor Kaldor, polls shows that Europeans are more concerned about climate change whereas Americans are more worried about terrorism, and this reflects the differential impact of environmental movements. "Of course the attacks of 9/11, 3/11 and 7/7 in New York, Spain and London were global events, which raised awareness of terrorism. Yet not enough people realise that most terrorist incidents take place in the Middle East and not in the West. Moreover, responses to terrorism are very different in the US where the 'war on terror' has dominated the debate and in Europe where peace movements and Islamic groups have had more influence on the public discourse."

About *Global Civil Society 2005/6*

Global Civil Society 2005/6 tackles contentious and pertinent issues shaping the growing global consciousness of the 21st century. The Yearbook takes an unorthodox approach to key global problems, analysing the key issues, actors and forms of organising to better understand globalisation 'from below.' Now in its fifth year of publication, the *Global Civil Society Yearbook* is the standard work on the topic, indispensable for activists, social scientists, students, policy makers and journalists.

Global Civil Society 2005/6 includes:

- **Civil Society and the Politics of Global Warming** *Peter Newell*
- **Labour Migration and Global Civil Society** *Meghnad Desai*
- **Reforming the UN** *Richard Falk*
- **The Future of the World Social Forum** *Bernard Cassen, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Chico Whitaker*
- **Global Connectedness** *Hagai Katz and Helmut Anheier*
- **Gender and Civil Society** *Jude Howell*
- **The Social Forum Phenomenon** *Marlies Glasius and Jill Timms*
- **Electronic Communication and Civil Society Mobilisation** *Manuel Castells, Mireia Fernandez-Ardevol, Jack Linchuan Qiu and Araba Sey*

Praise for *Global Civil Society 2005/6*

This fifth Global Civil Society Yearbook continues the intellectual shaping of an emerging global civil society. As the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, GCAP, makes its voice heard under the whiteband symbol, this analysis of current issues of migration, climate change and UN reform, with a focus on gender and social movements, provides a timely intellectual resource to strengthen shared commitments.

Mary Robinson

Notes:

The launch of *Global Civil Society 2005/6* takes place 6.30-8pm on 6 October in the Old Theatre, LSE, Houghton Street, WC2A 2AE with a panel discussion. Speakers include:

Mary Kaldor, Professor of Global Governance and Director, Centre for the Study of Global Governance, LSE

George Gaskell, Director, The Methodology Institute, LSE

Anthony Giddens, Professor Emeritus and former director of LSE

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Global Civil Society 2005/6 is a collaboration between LSE's Centre for the Study of Global Governance and UCLA's Center for Civil Society. It is published by Sage Publications and is available in good bookshops at £21.99.

For more information: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/researchgcspub.htm>
www.sagepublications.com