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Protest, Voting and Political Change:  
The Effects of NGOs on Politics in Developing Democracies

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Carew Elizabeth Boulding

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Professor Paul W. Drake, Chair  
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2007

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2007

## DEDICATION

To my daughter, Sevilla, for helping me find balance, and focus, and more joy than I knew was possible.

And to Aaron, my husband, for everything.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| AIPE     | Asociación de Instituciones de Promoción y Educación (Association of Institutions for Development and Education), an NGO based in La Paz.  |
| ADN      | Acción Democrática Nacional (National Democratic Action), the center-right political party formerly led by General Hugo Suárez Banzer.   |
| APCOB    | Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (Support for Peasant-Indigenous People of Eastern Bolivia), a small NGO based in Santa Cruz.  |
| APG      | Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní (Association of Guaraní People).   |
| CEADES   | Colectivo de Estudios Aplicados y Desarrollo Social (Collective for Applied Studies and Social Development), an NGO based in Santa Cruz.   |
| CEASE    | Centro de Estudios Para La Accion Socio Economica (Center for Studies of Socio-Economic Action), an NGO based in Santa Cruz.   |
| CEDETI   | Centro de Tecnologías Intermedias (Center for Intermediate Technologies), a Bolivian NGO.  |
| CESACRUZ | Centro de Salud Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz Health Center), a health care NGO.  |
| CIDAC    | Centro de Investigación Diseño y Comercialización de la Artesanía Cruceño (Center of Research, Design, and marketing of the Santa Cruz Artisanry), an NGO based in Santa Cruz working on handicraft marketing. |
| CIDESA   | Centro Integral de Desarrollo Social Agropecuario (Integrated Center for Social and Agricultural Development).   |
| CIDOB    | Confederación Indígena del Oriente de Bolivia (Indigenous Federation of Eastern Bolivia), the Santa Cruz based national federation for indigenous people.  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| CIPCA    | Centro de Investigacion y Promocion del Campesinado (Center for Investigation and Promotion of Campesinos), a large Bolivian NGO that focuses on indigenous issues. |
| CNE      | Corte Nacional Electoral (National Electoral Court), the Bolivian government agency that governs elections.   |
| CNTCB    | Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (National Federation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia), a pre-cursor organization to the CSUTCB.          |
| COB      | Central Obrero Boliviano (Bolivian Labor Center), the oldest and most important labor organization in Bolivia.  |
| COOPI    | Cooperazione Internazionale (International Cooperation), an Italian-based international NGO.  |
| CRS      | Catholic Relief Services, a U.S. based international NGO.   |
| CSUTCB   | Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (United Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia), an indigenous social movement.             |
| FCI      | Family Care International, a U.S. based maternal health NGO.  |
| FODEI    | Fomento al Desarrollo Infantil (Infant Development Promotion), a Bolivian health care NGO.  |
| FONDECO  | Fondo de Desarrollo Comunal (Fund for Common Development), a Bolivian development NGO.  |
| FSE      | Fondo Social de Emergencia (Social Emergency Fund), established to counter the poverty caused by structural adjustment.   |
| FUNBODEM | Fundación Boliviana para el Desarrollo de la Mujer (Bolivian Development Foundation for Women).   |
| FUAMU    | Fundación Amigos del Museo de Historia Natural Noel Kempff Mercado (Foundation of Friends of the Natural History Museum Noel Kempff Mercado), a Bolivian NGO.       |
| INASET   | Instituto de Asistencia Social Economica y Tecnologica (Instiute for Social, Economic and Technical Assistance), a  |



|          |  |
|----------|--|
|          | Bolivian NGO.  |
| INE      | Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (National Statistics Institute), a Bolivian government agency.  |
| KNH      | Kindernothilfe, a German-based international NGO.  |
| MAS      | Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Toward Socialism), a Leftist Bolivian political party, headed by Evo Morales.   |
| MBL      | Movimiento Bolivia Libre (Free Bolivia Movement), a leftist Bolivian political party.  |
| MIR      | Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionario (Leftist Revolutionary Movement), leftist political party in Bolivia.  |
| MME      | Medicus Mundi España, Delegacion Bolivia (World Doctors Spain, Bolivian Delegation), a Spanish international NGO.  |
| MNR      | Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement), the largest and oldest political party in Bolivia and the party that led the 1952 revolution. |
| NFR      | Nueva Fuerza Democratica (New Republican Force), center-right Bolivian political party.  |
| NGO      | Non-governmental Organization.   |
| OFPROBOL | Oficina de Proyectos Para Bolivia (Office of Projects for Bolivia).  |
| OTB      | Organizaciones Territoriales de Base (territorial grassroots organizations), grassroots organizations defined by the LPP.  |
| LPP      | Ley de Participacion Popular (Law of Popular Participation).   |
| PCI      | Project Concern International, a U.S.-based international NGO.   |
| PNUD     | Programa de la Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (United Nations Development Program)   |
| PROCESO  | Proceso Servicios Educativos (Process Educational Services), a Bolivian NGO.   |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| UCS   | Unidad Civica Solidaridad (Civic Solidarity Union), a neoliberal political party in Bolivia.  |
| VIPFE | Viceministerio de Inversión Pública y Financiamiento Externo (Viceministry of Public Finance and Foreign Investment), a Bolivian government agency. |
| VMIB  | Vision Mundial International Bolivia (World Vision International Bolivia), the Bolivian branch of the large international NGO World Vision.         |

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All errors and omissions are of course my own.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Protest, Voting and Political Change:  
The Effects of NGOs on Politics in Developing Democracies

by

Carew Elizabeth Boulding

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, San Diego, 2007

Professor Paul W. Drake, Chair

This dissertation examines the political effects of NGOs in developing democracies. There is a large and contradictory literature on whether, how, and why NGOs affect politics. Some argue that NGOs are an essential component of a strong civil society necessary for democratic consolidation. Others argue that NGOs are co-opted by the existing hierarchy of political elites, and politicians claim credit for the services they provide, damaging democratic accountability.

I argue that NGOs have systematic effects on politics in two realms: participation and voting behavior. First, I agree with the conventional wisdom that NGOs tend to boost participation of all kinds. However, I argue that – particularly in weakly democratic settings – NGOs are likely to encourage unconventional means of participation such as demonstrations and protest in addition to more conventional forms such as voting. This is a strong challenge to the common assumption in the literature that NGOs are the bulwark of moderate civil society.

Second, I argue that the effects of NGOs on voting behavior are conditional on the size of the jurisdiction in question. Existing work predicts starkly contradictory political effects: Some claim NGOs should help incumbents by providing services for which politicians can claim credit, while others claim they should hurt incumbents by facilitating opposition. I argue that both these effects are possible, but in different contexts. In areas with very small populations, the associational effects of NGOs (their ability to bring people together, air common grievances, and build trust to help solve collective action problems) are much stronger, making it more likely that NGO activity will strengthen opposition politics. In larger population areas, however, the effects of increases in association are relatively much smaller. And, in the more impersonal setting of larger cities, credit-claiming for NGO services is easier. Thus, NGOs in larger cities are likely to help incumbents, rather than help the opposition.

I test my argument and competing hypotheses from the literature using a new approach: an analysis of an original sub-national dataset comparing municipalities in

Bolivia. The dataset includes measures of NGO activity, election returns, and protest, as well as a number of controls, for two time periods, 1999 and 2004.

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

In October of 2003, columns of colorfully dressed protesters marched down the winding road into the capital city of Bolivia. Indigenous groups, labor groups, miners, retired workers, and neighborhood associations converged on the central government plaza to demand the resignation of President Sanchez de Lozada. These marches, which came on the heels of weeks of growing tensions between the state and popular sectors, became increasingly violent. In a series of confrontations over several weeks, nearly a 100 people were killed in clashes between protesters and the armed forces, and finally the president was forced to flee the country (APDHB et al. 2004 and Álvaro et al. 2004).

The vice president, Carlos Mesa Gilbert, took over the presidency with a promise that he would not continue to use force against the protesters. However, after several months of continuing protests and roadblocks, he declared the country “ungovernable” and tried unsuccessfully to resign. In June of 2005, with the country paralyzed by continuing strikes and roadblocks, Congress accepted Mesa’s resignation, sparking a constitutional crisis over succession, which ended with hurried new presidential elections. In December of 2005, Evo Morales, the charismatic former head of the coca-growers union and an important leader in the popular uprisings, was elected as the first indigenous president in Bolivia’s history.

By all accounts, NGOs (non-governmental organizations) played a key role in mobilizing people for these protests, both directly and indirectly. Most of the key social groups involved in the demonstrations – indigenous groups, labor unions, miners, student groups, and retired workers – have a history of strong links to NGOs, who for several decades have brought significant new resources to underprivileged communities and groups in Bolivia. More directly, a radio station run by a prominent women's NGO in the adjoining city of El Alto was instrumental in organizing the protests by broadcasting plans to coordinate the days marches and demonstrations. The NGOs and social movements involved also have strong ties to the new political party of Evo Morales, the MAS.

For the proponents of NGOs, this was seen as a major victory for democracy and representation of traditionally excluded groups in Bolivia. Following unprecedented levels of NGO activity in Bolivia, and growing links between NGOs and social movements, the indigenous majority in Bolivia finally took the presidency and a majority in Congress. However, NGO critics see the same series of events as evidence of the potentially de-stabilizing effects of NGOs and civil society mobilization. The protests and demonstrations effectively brought the country to the brink of crisis, brought down several presidencies, and pushed a new brand of populist leader to the head of state.

These events and debates in Bolivia are representative of larger issues across the developing world. As the number of democratic countries in the developing world has grown, so to have uncertainties about how democracy works in countries with

weak governments, weak economies, and a history of conflict between state and society. These questions of accountability and governance have become increasingly central for developing countries, foreign aid donors and academics. NGOs increasingly find themselves at the center of these debates. NGOs first gained attention as important new actors involved in the global push for democracy and development in the 1980s. Not only were NGOs local, responsive groups tackling the big issues facing their countries, they were seen as less corrupt, and more efficient than their governmental counterparts. However the current literature is much more divided between those who see NGOs as essentially good for democracy, and those who are more skeptical.

Those who see NGOs as essentially good for democracy draw their arguments from the classic work on social capital and civil society, following work by Almond and Verba (1965) and later Putnam (1993). In this view, NGOs are credited with increasing participation by mobilizing and empowering people to engage in politics. They are also credited with increasing accountability by making people more aware of their role as citizens in a democracy, and empowering them to work for political change. And they are said to improve representation by bringing previously underrepresented groups into the political process. At the most extreme, arguments have been made that NGOs, and by extension a strong civil society, are an essential pre-condition for democracy to survive and flourish in poor countries.

However, some scholars are increasingly skeptical of the role of these organizations for several reasons. First, Some argue that NGOs can be easily co-opted

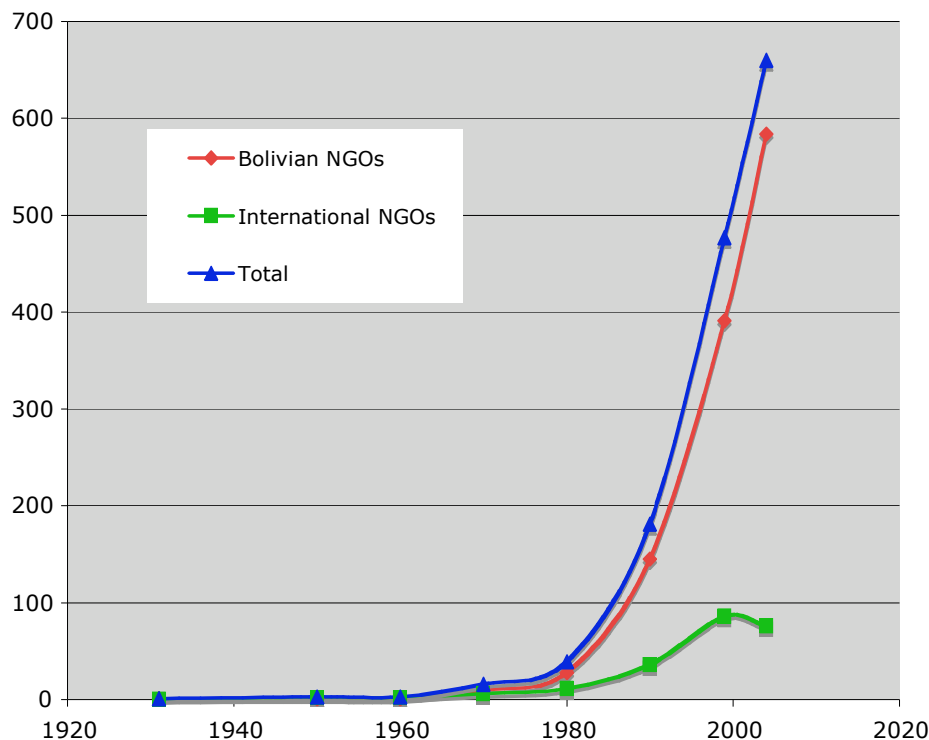
by elites and by international donors. These concerns were first raised by scholars looking at NGOs and civil society in Africa, where the relationship between NGOs and foreign donors is very strong. A famous study of NGOs in Kenya, for example, finds that many people leading NGOs are elites who formerly worked in government, not new voices at all (Ndegwa 1996). Second, some scholars question whether having non-governmental organizations providing essential services and public goods is actually good for the democratic contract – maybe these organizations were severing an important link between state and society and covering up government failures. And finally, some are fearful that the new mobilization of previously underrepresented groups can be a challenge to the stability of new regimes.

All agree there are more of these organizations today than ever before. The growth of NGOs over the last generation has been exponential. While no definitive count is possible, a very safe estimate places the number worldwide in the hundreds of thousands (Salamon and Anheier 1997). New streams of revenue explain a great deal of this dramatic increase.<sup>1</sup> Bilateral and multilateral donors believe that NGOs can deliver different services than governments and donors, deliver them more efficiently, and/or deliver them to segments of the populations that the state cannot reach easily. Using NGOs is also thought to reduce the corruption that can be found in official state agencies. The “New Policy Agenda” of the 1990s was exemplary of this approach, and billions of dollars have flowed from the industrialized democracies to NGOs in

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<sup>1</sup> (Ungpakorn 2004) offers 5 reasons for the rapid increase of NGOs: expansion of NGOs from the west, either directly or financing local NGOs; increasing use of NGOs by developing country governments in response to neo-liberal attacks on state provision of services; these governments recognized the beneficial effects of using NGOs for service provision; fragmentation of left wing movements; failure of trade unions and parties to articulate social problems (p. 1)

developing countries: the World Bank provided \$1.3 billion dollars to NGOs and community-based organizations from 1985-1997 (Gibbs, Fumo, and Kuby 1999); the Economist estimates that two-thirds of European Union relief aid already flowed through NGOs by 1994 (Brown, Desposato, and Brown forthcoming).



**Figure 1.1 Growth in NGOs in Bolivia 1931-2004 (Source: VIPFE 2006)**

Figure 1.1 shows the numbers of NGOs working in Bolivia have increased exponentially since the 1930s when only a handful of organizations were working. Today there are over 600. Also, it is clear that NGOs are growing in numbers in recent years – this trend is continuing. These figures are from Bolivia, but a similar pattern is evident in most of the developing world.



This dissertation examines the political effects of NGOs in developing democracies, focusing on evidence from Bolivia. I explore the systematic effects of NGOs on politics in two realms: participation and voting behavior. Despite the high stakes for the developing world, and the heated debate over the role of NGOs in democracy and development, there is little systematic work evaluating the political impact of NGOs in developing democracies. Using new local level data from Bolivia, I test a number of arguments about the role that NGOs have in influencing political participation and promoting political change.

First, I agree with the conventional wisdom that NGOs in the developing world tend to boost participation of all kinds. Most NGOs are engaged in activities that build social capital, particularly for underserved or previously excluded groups of citizens.<sup>2</sup> However, I argue that – particularly in weakly democratic settings – NGOs are likely to encourage unconventional means of participation such as demonstrations and protest in addition to more conventional forms such as voting. This is a strong challenge to the common assumption in the literature that NGOs are the bulwark of moderate civil society.

Second, I argue that the effects of NGOs on voting behavior are conditional on the size of the jurisdiction in question; scale matters. Existing work predicts starkly contradictory political effects, and to date these divergent claims have not been reconciled. Some claim NGOs should help incumbents by providing services for

---

<sup>2</sup> There are obvious exceptions to this generalization. Notably, some NGOs are merely “paper organizations” that seek international funding, but accomplish very little. My research in Bolivia indicates that this is a small minority of the organizations working in Bolivia. The vast majority are engaged in activities that could conceivably build social capital, including conducting workshops, literacy programs, health care programs, and other participatory development projects, although certainly some are more effective than others.

which politicians can claim credit, while others claim they should hurt incumbents by facilitating opposition. I argue that both these effects are possible, but in different contexts. In areas with very small populations, the associational effects of NGOs (their ability to bring people together, air common grievances, and build trust to help solve collective action problems) are much stronger, making it much more likely that NGO activity in small jurisdictions will strengthen opposition politics. In larger population areas, however, the effects of increases in association are relatively much smaller. And, in the more impersonal setting of larger cities, credit-claiming for NGO services is easier. Thus, NGOs in larger cities are likely to help incumbents, rather than help the opposition.

I test my arguments and competing hypotheses from the literature using a new approach: an analysis of an original sub-national dataset comparing municipalities in Bolivia. I compiled the data from a variety of sources, including a government registry of NGOs working in Bolivia, the website for the Bolivian Electoral Court (CNE 2006 and 1999), the National Statistics Institute of Bolivia, a household census (INE 2006), and wire news reports of protests and demonstrations. To code the protest data, I read through all wire stories including the key term Bolivia for two years, and coded reports of protest by size, type, duration, location and number of participants. Aggregating the data to the municipal level involved quite a lot of detective work, as the names for each municipality vary considerably from one source to another. The final dataset includes measures of NGO activity, election returns, and protest, as well as a number of controls, for two time periods, 1999 and 2004.

The new local level data for this project is an exciting advance. This project combines the advantages of large-n statistical analysis with the advantage of in depth analysis of a single country's experience with NGOs. Using sub-national data also allows for a great deal more variation on the issues that are central to this analysis than cross-national data would allow, and holds constant many important country-level factors. Additionally, most of the causal mechanisms hypothesized between NGOs and political outcomes occur at very local levels, so it is ideal to be able to test them at that level of analysis.

This project was also shaped by my time in Bolivia. I draw on contacts, impressions, and experiences from half a year of living and working in La Paz and traveling in Bolivia in 2001. Once this project was underway, I spent a month during the summer of 2004 in Bolivia, conducting interviews with NGO leaders, academics, and foreign aid workers, and tracking down election data and data on NGOs. In January of 2007 I returned to conduct interviews in La Paz and Santa Cruz.

### **A Word on Definitions**

The definitional issues at stake in the study of non-governmental organizations are far from trivial. It might seem trite to point out that even the name “non-governmental organization” refers only to what these organizations are not. However, clarifying the flip side – what exactly NGOs are – is no easy task. First of all, the range and variety of organizations that fall under the category of NGOs is enormous. In one of the first substantial books to theoretically analyze the role of NGOs and

foreign aid in development, Terje Tvedt wrote that analytical efforts have been “hampered by the fact that there is no generally accepted transnational or tranhistorical definition of what is an ‘NGO’, ‘non-profit’ or ‘voluntary organization’ (1998, 11). As Tvedt points out, this problem is compounded by the wide range of organizations that fall into the category of NGOs and the ever-changing nature of relations between these organizations, states and markets. Tvedt captures this confusion well:

Some organizations are, or have become, state-directed, while others have been directly established by governments to serve state interests. In some countries there is growing competition not only among the NGOs themselves but also between ‘for-profit’ firms and traditional ‘non-profit’ NGOs for development or emergency contracts with governments. NGOs develop into for-profit firms and for-profit firms establish a ‘voluntary’ arm in order to acquire profitable contracts (1998, 11).

To add to this definitional quagmire, there are also complicated and overlapping taxonomies of types of NGOs, starting with the division between “northern” NGOs (those based in a single developed country, but working in the developing world), “southern” NGOs (also called “indigenous NGOs” or “third-world NGOs,” and usually characterized as NGOs that are based exclusively in one developing country, though this distinction can be blurred by large amounts of “northern” money and influence). Among southern NGOs, the distinctions become even more complex, trying to capture differences between grassroots organizations (GROs), grassroots support organizations (GRSOs), GRO networks and GRSO networks (Fisher 1998, 4). The terms voluntary organization, associational

organization, community-based organization, civil-society organization and charitable organization are also all in use to refer to largely the same actors (Tvedt 1998, 12).

This dissertation will focus primarily on development NGOs – organizations which are “nominally private, nonprofit agencies that act as intermediaries between international financial donors and local residents and whose function is to implement projects favoring the so-called popular sectors...or to provide services to grassroots constituencies” (Gill 2002, 10; Landon 1987). These are the types of organizations that receive the majority of foreign aid funding targeted toward NGOs and civil society, and they make up the vast majority of NGOs in Bolivia.

Operationally, this project relies on the definition from the Bolivia government NGO registry. Most of the empirical work in this project uses data collected from this registry and, by default, the operational definition of what counts as an “NGO” here is largely limited by the types of organizations that register with the government. NGOs of all types are required by law to register with the Bolivian government and provide information on the geographic area in which they work, the target population they benefit, the projects they implement, and their sources of funding (VIPFE 2006).

## Chapter Outline

The dissertation provides theoretically grounded empirical tests of the political effects of NGOs in two realms: political participation and voting behavior. For each part, I use both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Chapter 2 lays out a framework for analyzing the political effects of NGOs, and makes the case for using Bolivia as the primary testing ground for exploring these relationships. First, I review the literature on NGOs and civil society, focusing on the expectations for how NGOs might affect democracy. Second, I detail a framework for understanding the impact of NGOs, focusing on variables at three levels: 1) characteristics of the community targeted NGOs, 2) features of the NGOs themselves, and 3) the broader political context of the state. And third, since the following analysis is grounded in the Bolivian experience, I give an overview of the history of NGO involvement in Bolivia.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore the link between NGO activity and political participation in Bolivia, first with quantitative tools, and then with qualitative analysis, respectively. Chapter 3 presents the findings from a large-n sub-national statistical analysis of all the municipalities in Bolivia. I compare changes in the number of NGOs with changes in both levels of voter turnout and incidences of protest, finding a strong relationship between increases in NGOs and increases in protest, but only a weak link between NGOs and voter turnout.

Chapter 4 examines the link between NGOs and protest movements more closely, by comparing the role of NGOs in the development of three very different

social movements in Bolivia: the highland indigenous movement, the lowland indigenous movement, and the labor movement. This chapter fleshes out the causal mechanisms driving the link between NGOs and protest, and makes the case that NGOs are most likely to facilitate protest under two conditions: 1) when the NGO projects include a focus on community development, capacity building, or participatory governance programs, and 2) when they provide a significant influx of previously unavailable resources.

In the case of the lowland indigenous movement, NGOs brought new resources to communities that were previously very isolated. The NGOs that worked most closely with these indigenous communities also tended to focus on encouraging participation and building community capacity, with the goal of engaging indigenous communities into politics. In this case, NGOs played a clear causal role in facilitating mobilization. The highland indigenous groups had slightly higher organizational resources before NGO involvement, and the types of NGOs that targeted highland altiplano communities were more mixed between the more “political” capacity building NGOs and ones that focused on service provision, but NGOs played a role in facilitating mobilization and participation. In the third case, the relationship between NGOs and mobilization of the labor movement is less direct. Many NGOs have strong connections to labor in Bolivia, but the movement was well organized and had access to resources before the influx of NGOs. Also, many NGOs working with labor focused more on issues such as small business development than on promoting political

engagement. In this case, NGOs play a support role, but their importance as a central causal factor in the mobilization of new forms of political participation is weaker.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to the question of political change, focusing on whether NGOs tend to help electoral challengers or tend to support the status quo in local elections. Chapter 5 uses quantitative data from the municipal level to test the relationship between changes in the number of NGOs in an area and changes in vote share for the incumbent. This chapter presents evidence that NGOs can have markedly different effects contingent on the size of the community in which they work. Specifically, in very small communities (with populations of less than 10,000 people) there is a strong connection between increases in NGOs and electoral losses for the incumbent political party. However, in larger communities, the relationship is opposite and weaker: increases in NGOs tend to help incumbent political parties, but not by a large margin.

Chapter 6 presents case studies of NGOs in four differently sized municipalities to further explore the hypothesis that scale is a key factor in determining the political effects of NGOs. Although the types of NGOs working in both the large and small municipalities are very similar, the effects that they have on mobilizing people for electoral change appear to be very different. This chapter also gives important context for understanding the day to day activities of NGOs in different communities in Bolivia, giving a detailed profile of the NGO scene in each of four municipalities.



Taken together, these chapters present a picture of NGOs as highly political entities. Despite being “non-governmental” they have systematic and substantial effects on the local political systems in which they operate. More interestingly, the effects that they have – whether they tend to encourage participation through voting or street protests, whether they tend to be a force for change, or a force for the status quo – depend critically on the context in which they are working, the activities they are involved in, and the nature of the communities they are targeting.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Political Effects of NGOs in Developing Democracies**

How do non-governmental organizations (NGOs) influence politics? Do they help strengthen democracy by facilitating the development of strong civil society? How do NGOs change the ways in which people engage with politics, and more importantly, how do they affect the ways in which tensions between state and society are expressed? This chapter develops a theoretical framework for beginning to tackle these questions.

I argue that there are two types of political effects that are most essential to understanding the larger issue of whether NGOs tend to help democracy or hinder it in weakly or developing democratic settings. The first is political participation. The second is electoral support for political change. Although the universe of ways in which NGOs might affect politics certainly extend beyond these two arenas, they lie at the core of the debate over the benefits of NGOs for democracy.

The classic arguments that NGOs help strengthen democracy rest on the idea that they change how people participate in politics, and that this change opens up possibilities for greater accountability and political change. By engaging new, often previously excluded, voices into the political process, NGOs boost participation and force the state to focus attention on the poor and excluded. These newly empowered and mobilized citizens also learn the rules of electoral accountability, and use their new political clout to vote unresponsive politicians and parties out of office.

Underlying this logic is the assumption that NGOs have a net effect of increasing political participation and that this will have a positive effect on democracy.

A number of interesting theoretical and empirical questions underpin this debate. Do NGOs increase participation? What kind of participation? Do they boost voting turnout or more contentious participation such as protests, demonstrations or strikes? And do NGOs affect electoral support for the status quo? Do political challengers or political incumbents tend to benefit from NGO activity? Most importantly, under what conditions do NGOs affect patterns of participation and/or election outcomes.

I argue that variables at three different levels determine how an NGO is likely to affect politics: It is important to understand 1) the nature of the community being targeted by NGOs, 2) the nature of the NGOs themselves, 3) and the larger political backdrop of the state. There is considerable variation across the developing world (and within Bolivia) on all three counts. In order to claim any generalities about how NGOs affect politics, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the community they are working in, the type of organization and its activities, and the larger political context.

### **Roadmap**

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I look at the rapidly growing literature on the political effects of NGOs in order to clarify existing claims and expectations about how NGOs influence politics in developing democracies. This literature, while rich and fascinating, is characterized by multiple competing claims

and very little systematic hypothesis testing. Second, I propose a framework for understanding the political effects of NGOs. Third, I discuss the selection of Bolivia as the primary testing ground for this project and give a brief overview of the NGO “scene” in Bolivia to set the stage for the empirical chapters that follow.

### **Are NGOs Good for Democracy?**

Early scholarship addressing the increasingly important role of NGOs tended to be descriptive. Observers generally sought to explore NGO structures, goals, and outputs, mostly with an eye towards explaining intended or unintended policy outcomes (e.g. Abers 1996; Fox 1994; Lehman 1990); for a review see (Brown, Brown and Desposato 2002). Analysts producing this work often had worked for NGOs, or were academics with connections to NGOs or their funding agencies (Brown, Brown and Desposato 2002; Carroll 1992; Clarke 1998; Hulme and Edwards 1997). This work established the baselines for what NGOs sought to accomplish and explored the reasons for their success or failures. And while such studies at least implicitly addressed the political aspects of NGOs, they did not systematically investigate such issues (Brown, Brown and Desposato 2002; Devine 2006; Keck 1998).

NGOs, by building direct relationships among citizens that are not mediated by the state, strengthen civil society. Civil society refers to the many associative organizations that create ties among members of a community. It is “an intermediate realm between state and family populated by organizations which are separate from

the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of the society to protect or extend their interests or values” (White 1994, 379). NGOs are one variety of organization in a larger system of associative relations among citizens. While advocacy groups certainly fall into the category of civil society, so too do recreational associations, sports leagues and community centers to name a few. The idea is that the more people interact in positive, reciprocal ways, the stronger the sense of community becomes and the easier it is to solve collective action problems and be involved in the political life of the country.

The argument that civil society is a necessary precondition for consolidated democracy was initially made by Robert Putnam (1993, 2000), following in the tradition of work by Almond and Verba (1965) who took political and civic culture as a serious variable in determining the success and stability of democracies. Putnam’s work on what he calls “social capital” makes the case that the strength of a civic community, defined by the types of associative relations among citizens, either facilitates or hinders coordinated action. Where high levels of social capital exist, coordination is made easier by trust and norms of reciprocity, greatly improving the performance and efficiency of representative institutions.

Scholars working on the problems of democratic consolidation have also emphasized the importance of civil society, both as an essential component of a mobilized opposition to authoritarian rule, and as a player in the construction of new democracies (for example: O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, Linz and Stepan 1996, and Diamond 1999). Civil society in this context plays a crucial role in keeping

government abuses in check by acting as vocal and organized critics and watchdogs over government action.

Donors and NGO advocates claim that NGOs promote civil society through a variety of ways. First, just by virtue of the vast proliferation of NGOs in the last two decades, some organizational pluralism has been gained. That is, the “strength of civil society is roughly related to the sheer number of functioning intermediary organizations between the citizen and the state” (Fischer 1998,13). Since the number of such organizations has skyrocketed, some take this as evidence of strengthening civil society, although this is an admittedly simplistic measurement of the strength of civil society.

Second, through development of micro-enterprise projects, NGOs that do this kind of work are encouraging the creation of vested interests among the poor. By giving the poor a stake in economic advancement, some argue that they will come to rely on and trust in local government as a tool for positive change. NGOs of this type can also play a role in strengthening ties between various other groups in society, including small business (through microenterprise programs), and other outreach projects (Fischer 1998,16).

Third, some NGOs perform a critical role in lobbying for political rights and civil liberties, often bringing such issues to the national debate. In this role, NGOs serve as a source of critical information for people to understand and seek to effect their government. This function frequently overlaps with political organizing, including campaigns to encourage political participation. Basically, “NGOs strengthen

civil society...by focusing on bottom-up democratization” (Fischer 1998:15). That is, by seeking to educate people politically and encourage involvement in the political system.

### **NGOs and Political Change**

More recent scholarship has begun to focus directly on the links between politics and NGOs, producing a fertile array of theories designed to explain how such organizations fit into the political arena (Brown, Desposato, and Brown 2005, forthcoming; Brown, Brown, and Desposato 2002, forthcoming; Mercer 2002). I focus on two arguments that I believe define much of the debate: the “challenge” argument, in which NGOs challenge, or are supposed to challenge, the prevailing political order and the “status quo” argument, in which NGOs knowingly or unknowingly support the extant political order. I review the theories that support these two arguments below.

Depicting NGOs as challengers to entrenched authority dates back to the 1970s as non-state groups in Latin America, inspired by liberation theology, worked to mobilize the poor and disenfranchised (Nylen 1997). But the theoretical underpinnings used by scholars for this view reach back much further. Most of these studies have linked NGOs’ political consequences to associational activity (here I follow the useful review of Brown, Desposato, and Brown (forthcoming)). From de Tocqueville to Putnam, analysts have argued that associations provide horizontal linkages and produce social capital that, in turn, may foster alternative political ideas and groups to keep incumbent governments in check (Putnam 1993; Putnam 2000;

Robinson 1993). Many scholars who identify the benefits of NGOs have directly borrowed the language of associations in their discussion of NGOs (Devine 2006; Mercer 2002). NGOs promote community organization and mobilization (Bebbington et al. 1993; Fisher 1997; Korten 1990); they legitimize and strengthen civil society (Bratton 1989; Clarke 1998; Garrison 2000; Lambrou 1997; World Bank 2000); they generate more pluralism and political participation (Fisher 1997; Fowler 1991; Silliman and Noble 1998); they offer a base for civil resistance to oppressive political systems (Fisher 1997; Loveman 1991); and they can even bring down authoritarian regimes (Clarke 1998)<sup>3</sup>. NGOs contribute to democracy by helping to create a “vibrant and autonomous civil society” that can challenge despotic government (Mercer 2002, 7) see also (Clark 1991; Diamond 1994).

There is another equally extensive literature that doubts NGOs’ ability to challenge political authority. Scholars using what I call “status quo” arguments have offered many mechanisms through which NGOs either support or at least do not confront political issues. NGOs can be captured by the state or state-supporting entrenched interests, which can undermine a previous commitment to their agenda of political change (Ndegwa 1996; Putnam 2000; Uvin 1998). Funds received from the state or international sources could chip away the more confrontational issues previously championed by an NGO, so as not to endanger their funding source (Brown et al. 2002; Smillie 1996). Those that deal with international partners, in particular, could become “neo-liberal” and thus non-confrontational (Devine 2006; Pearce 2000;

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that this study addresses the political effects of NGOs in democratic settings, not authoritarian ones.



Townsend & Gordon 2002). Or worse, increasing numbers of NGOs competing for international funds may increase uncertainty and insecurity for the organizations, leading to increasingly poor outcomes (Cooley & Ron 2002). When contracted by the state to deliver services, NGOs could be unwittingly following the strategic interests of the government (Gideon 1998; Mercer 2002). Rather than increasing pressures on governments for policy change, the growth in NGO numbers could lead to fractionalization of opposition (Hammami 1995).

### **Critiques of NGOs: Existing Literature**

Although much of the work on NGOs has been characterized by its optimism, a few serious criticisms have emerged in the wake of the explosion in numbers of NGOs and in funding available for them in the 1980s and 1990s. These can be roughly divided into two groups. The first has to do with the displacement of local agendas by international ones. This change arguably destroys one of the key advantages of NGOs, namely that they are closer to the needs of local citizens than donors. The second group of criticisms focuses on the sources of funding, arguing that competition over foreign funding can create a dependent, competitive environment that is damaging to civil society by eroding trust between NGOs at the local level. In both these scenarios, NGOs would not be expected to increase political participation or accountability because they are seen essentially as agents of the elite, or as dysfunctional organizations competing for funding.

The first set of criticisms to emerge in the literature on NGOs and foreign aid

was aimed at raising concern over the impact that foreign donors had on vibrant local communities and community organizations. With huge inflows of foreign aid money, some local groups felt that they lost control over key decisions in the development process, increasingly having to pander to the evaluation and demands of foreign donors in order not to lose funding. These arguments focus on the displacement of local agendas by international ones, both through funding dependence and, increasingly, through international NGOs operating in the same arenas as local ones.

Dependency on external funds can be framed as a huge threat to the organizational sustainability of NGOs. Instead of working as a force for pluralization of civil society, aid to NGOs can have serious unanticipated negative consequences. In the case where an NGO is dependent for its very survival on foreign project aid, the question of ownership and autonomy becomes troubling. And more importantly, “this extreme dependency seriously undermines NGOs’ ability to advance political issues in the long term” as the goals and objectives of the local group “become blurred by that of its donors” (Ndegwa 1996, 24).

The second group of criticisms focuses on how competition over foreign funding has changed previously cooperative relationships between different NGOs, in some cases damaging the little “civil society” building that might have been occurring. This second set of critiques comes the closest to seriously tackling the impact on democracy of funding NGOs with foreign aid dollars. For example, a compelling case has been made in the African context that the relationship between civil society and democracy has been dangerously oversimplified (Ndegwa 1996). Specifically, this

relationship has been oversimplified in two areas: 1) the notion that “generic civil society is uniformly progressive in challenging the African state and promoting democracy” and, 2) the over-emphasis on interactions between civil society and the state to the exclusion of “grassroots empowerment” (1996, 3).

Foreign aid to NGOs may be responsible for undercutting strong civil society by injecting competition over funds into previously cooperative relationships among NGOs working in related areas. The procedure of competitive grant-giving has been applauded for the standard market reasons, including increasing efficiency, reducing reliance on personal ties for directing funding and providing positive incentives for local NGOs to improve their performance. However, outside funding can, at times, seriously undermine cooperative relationships between local organizations as competition increases (Fischer 1998, 181), and this is particularly damaging when the increased funding is intended to have the opposite effect. Additionally, by choosing which community organizations to support, larger NGOs disbursing money to smaller organizations can effectively create their own clientelist networks at the expense of local cooperation further down the chain. This issue is a problem at both levels because it creates winners and losers in the process, and not necessarily based on efficiency or quality of the organizations.

Cooley and Ron (2002) use a political economy approach to clarify the incentives involved in the growing numbers of international NGOs and their increasingly competitive, market-like behavior. They argue that growth in the NGO sector worldwide and the marketization of their activities (including practices such as

competitive contracting) has increased organizational insecurity for all organizations involved, creating negative incentives and dysfunctional outcomes. Because international NGOs compete with each other to raise money and secure contracts from donors and are often engaged for short-term projects, adverse incentives are numerous. Specifically, principal-agent problems and problems of oversight can lead to negative outcomes. This runs directly counter to the claim put forth by Fischer (1998) that increasing numbers of NGOs suggests a positive “strengthening” of civil society.

In a recent book on the *Ills of Aid*, Reusse points to a similar problem, lambasting the blindness of foreign aid donors to the impact their funding can have on an otherwise vibrant NGO community. He credits foreign funding with sparking the creation of thousands of NGOs worldwide and argues that these groups should be considered products of the aid business, not local community organizations with all the positive attributes of such. He cites the example of Panama, claiming that “more than 200 southern NGOs were born in Panama practically overnight after the creation of a World Bank – supported national Social Fund” (Reusse 2002, 85). This startling example suggests that the incentives of NGOs have been dramatically affected by donor’s shift toward giving to NGOs in place of governments – perhaps to the point of damaging the qualities of NGOs that proponents advocate.

In these scenarios, the expectation that NGOs should help strengthen democracy by building a strong civil society, increasing democratic participation, and improving accountability is unrealistic. Instead, the opposite predictions might hold: NGOs might weaken civil society through bitter battles over funding and, captured by

elites, might do more damage than good in the realm of accountability and promoting political change.

### **Existing Empirical Work**

There are few studies that attempt to mediate between these starkly contrasting visions of the political effects of NGOs. One large exception is recent work by Brown, Brown and Desposato (2002, 2005, and two forthcoming). They examine how external funds funneled through NGOs affect politics in Brazil. More specifically, they test the correlation between the funding of local NGOs by a World Bank supported project in the Brazilian state of Rondonia (Planafloro) and vote change in the presidential and gubernatorial elections (1994 and 1998) using municipal level data. Given that Rondonia is considered a conservative-center stronghold, they use change of vote shares for candidate on the left as a measure of political change. They find that increases of World Bank funding for NGOs through Planafloro decreased the left candidates' vote shares at the gubernatorial level, but increased the left's vote for the president. In other words, they find support that NGOs tend to help challengers in presidential voting and support that NGOs tend to help the status quo in gubernatorial voting.

In a later paper, Brown, Brown, and Desposato go one step further. Using the same research design, they test if the type of NGO matters to these contests. They code NGOs for their ideology, political mobilization, and populations served, and then include these new variables in their presidential vote share model (forthcoming). They find that the share of external World Bank funds given to NGOs whose target

populations were rubber tappers and indigenous peoples had a significant positive effect on the vote share of the leftist presidential candidate.

In contrast to the bulk of the literature on NGOs, which focuses on normative claims of the best role for NGOs in fostering development and democracy, tales of “best practices” and rich description of local level projects, this project takes a different approach. The Brown, Brown and Desposato studies break new ground in the study of NGOs because they use a precisely defined variable for political change, a large sample, and a clear measure of NGO activity (World Bank financing). I seek to add to this style of work but I focus on measuring and testing the effects of NGOs on both patterns of participation, and patterns of voting, which I address using a countrywide dataset from Bolivia.

### **A New Approach**

Instead of trying to directly answer the question of whether NGOs are good or bad for democracy, I focus on two outcomes that rest at the core of the political impact of NGOs in democracies, especially weakly democratic ones: 1) changes in patterns of political participation, and 2) changes in electoral support for the status quo.

With these two outcomes in mind, I propose a set of characteristics or variables that are most critical in determining the type of impact that NGOs will have in different settings. I argue that the political impact of NGOs is best explained by looking at three main groups of variables: 1) characteristics of the target population, 2) characteristics of the NGOs themselves, and 3) characteristics of the state. Variables at

all three of these levels help define the interactions between NGOs, their target populations, and the state.

Attention to these variables leads to several very interesting propositions about how NGOs affect politics in developing democracies. First, in terms of political participation, I argue that some NGOs do provide opportunities and resources for new organizing and mobilizing, which can boost political participation along the lines of the classic civil society arguments. This effect is strongest in very small communities and in communities that were extremely isolated and resource-poor before the introduction of NGO activities. Additionally, certain types of NGOs – particularly those that focus on “capacity building” and participatory development – are more likely to boost participation than others.

However, an increase in participation in a setting of weak government and extreme dissatisfaction with government performance can lead to unexpected forms of participation, including protests, demonstrations and strikes, not just an increase in participation through standard institutional mechanisms such as voting.

The context of the local community is also important for determining the effect that NGOs tend to have on electoral support for political change. Specifically, the scale of the target community in question is a crucial factor for determining whether NGOs tend to support political change, or tend to help maintain the status quo. In very small communities, the magnitude of the impact of new resources and opportunities for organizing is large. The chance that NGOs facilitate collective action in a way that would make a difference is greater, making it more likely that NGOs in these areas

will be a force for political change.

Essentially, understanding any generalities about how NGOs affect politics rests on a clear understanding of the community they are working in, the type of organization and its activities, and the larger political context. In the next section, I briefly detail the range in variation in these three arenas and their importance in determining the political effects of NGOs.

### Identifying Key Variables

**Table 2.1 Key Variables in the Analysis of the Political Effects of NGOs**

| Target Communities     | NGOs   | The State  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Size                   | Level of Resources                                     | Policy Environment (degree of hostility to NGOs) |
| Level of Resources     | Type of Activities (“political” vs. service provision) | Regime Type                                      |
| Existing Civil Society | Origin (national or international)                     | Responsiveness of Government<br>State Capacity   |

#### *Characteristics of the Target Population*

NGOs work in a variety of different kinds of communities. Some work in large urban areas, some focus on rural development issues in the most remote communities, and some, trying to balance serving the largest number of people with serving the neediest people, focus on mid-size towns with high concentrations of poverty. In thinking about how NGOs would likely influence politics in these different types of



communities, several characteristics stand out: 1) the size of the community, 2) the level of resources available, and 3) the degree of civil society organization prior to NGO involvement.

First, the *size of the jurisdiction* matters. Because the associational benefits of NGOs in building social capital and solving collective action problems work best in small groups, the magnitude of the impact that NGOs have will be stronger in smaller communities. It is easier for smaller groups of people to build trust and social capital than it is for larger groups of people to do the same. Thus, the opportunities for sharing ideas, understanding shared grievances, and overcoming collective action problems are greater the smaller the community in question. NGOs coming into very small communities have a much higher likelihood of success in organizing and empowering people. Also, once social capital has been built, it is easier for newly empowered groups of citizens to have a direct impact on politics in smaller communities than larger ones. As the political jurisdiction gets larger, the organizational structures engaged in politics become more numerous, more complex and more overlapping, making it less clear that even a highly active small group could effect the changes they had in mind.

The *level of resources* available to a community prior to NGO involvement is also important. In more resource-deprived areas, an NGO is likely to have a bigger impact than in communities where the goods and services an NGO offers are already available. Most NGOs target the poor, but communities still vary widely in terms of

the actual poverty, their isolation, and the number of other NGOs or other development programs working there.

**Table 2.2 Number of NGO Projects in Bolivia by Target Group**

| Target Population                      | Number of Projects | %    |
|--|--------------------|------|
| Campesinos                             | 173                | 18.5 |
| Elderly and Young                      | 140                | 14.9 |
| Campesino Organizations                | 112                | 12.0 |
| Urban populations                      | 95                 | 10.1 |
| Agricultural producers                 | 76                 | 8.1  |
| Economic Organizations (Labor groups)  | 64                 | 6.8  |
| Indigenous Organizations               | 59                 | 6.3  |
| Students                               | 47                 | 5.0  |
| Handicraft producers/ small businesses | 45                 | 4.8  |
| Neighborhood Organizations             | 31                 | 3.3  |
| Teachers                               | 29                 | 3.1  |
| Women's Groups                         | 26                 | 2.8  |
| Workers                                | 16                 | 1.7  |
| Labor Groups                           | 13                 | 1.4  |
| Merchants                              | 11                 | 1.2  |

(Source: VIPFE 2006)

It is also essential to take into account the *nature of civil society* organization before NGO involvement. How organized in the community before NGO involvement? What is participation like? What is civil society like? Was the community involved in national level politics before NGOs arrived, or were they excluded and isolated? Since NGOs are expected to boost participation by increasing opportunities for association and facilitating collective action, it makes sense to determine if these barriers existed in the first place.

### *Characteristics of the NGOs*

Clearly, the context of the community in which an NGO works help determine the kind of effects the NGO will have, but there is also tremendous variation between the actual organizations that fall under the umbrella of “NGO.” Some are enormous, transnational organizations with thousands of employees, budgets larger than some small countries, and projects covering issue areas from health care to agriculture to building bridges on several continents. Some have only a handful of volunteer employees, borrowed office space, and a single project.

Analytically, there are two dimensions that are most useful for categorizing NGOs and getting a handle on the types of political impact they are most likely to have. The first has to do with the *type of activities* they are engaged in, and the second has to do with the *level of resources* that they command.

In Bolivia for example, NGOs are involved in a wide range of sectors and projects, including health care, education, micro-finance, sanitation projects, community building, and institution strengthening (see Appendix A for a full listing). But the key difference is between organizations that define themselves with a political role, and those that are focused on service provision without a ‘capacity building’ dimension. For example, some NGO projects are very narrow in focus, like conducting a study on the marketability of a certain product, digging a well, or vaccinating children. Others define their goals more broadly to include *capacitación* (“capacity building”). Capacity building activities include projects aimed at strengthening civil society within a community, and training excluded groups to take

responsibility for their community development and participation. Capacity-building NGOs work with the goal of engaging people into politics and improving their access to the state. If at all successful, it follows that these organization are more likely to have a political impact than NGOs concerned strictly with service provision.

The *level of resources* an NGO has at its command is also an important factor. That is, the gap between the resources available in a community before NGOs arrived, and the resources available after. Some very wealthy NGOs work only in large cities and do little to make resources available to the very poor. These organizations are not likely to have as large a political impact as ones that target very isolated, poor communities where the change in resources is substantial.

Another way of thinking about the importance of resources is to think of the “resource differential.” Resources in a community prior to NGO involvement makes up one half of the equation, but the level of resources NGOs bring into a community makes the other half. The more the new resources an NGO delivers to a community represent a huge change, the more important the NGO will be. Resources can be financial, organizational, or human resource based.

There is also a key difference between international and domestic NGOs, although this divide is not as simple as it seems at first. In the primary operationalization of NGOs used throughout this project (the NGO registry published by VIPFE 2004 and 2006), international and domestic NGOs are distinguished from one another based on their “country of origin.” Thus NGOs like CARE, Save the Children, Catholic Relief Services, and Oxfam, which have their main offices in either

the United States or Europe are clearly international. NGOs that are based in Bolivia and have their main office in Bolivia, are categorized as Bolivian. Although this is a reasonable enough distinction, problems arise when the sources of funding are considered. With very few exceptions, all of the NGOs in the registry, and the vast majority of NGOs in Bolivia and most developing countries receive funding from international sources. If international funding is one of the issues that distinguish truly “Bolivian” NGOs from international ones, the categories are much muddier. However, the origin of an NGO is still seen as a critical part of its identity, to donors, developing country governments, and scholars alike.

**Table 2.3 Number of NGOs in Bolivia by Sector and Origin**

| Sector                      | Bolivian<br>NGOs | %    | International<br>NGOs | %    |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| Agriculture                 | 154              | 20.6 | 35                    | 14.8 |
| Education and Culture       | 130              | 17.4 | 36                    | 15.2 |
| Health                      | 90               | 12.0 | 37                    | 15.6 |
| Institutional Strengthening | 89               | 11.9 | 32                    | 13.5 |
| Environment                 | 77               | 10.3 | 18                    | 7.6  |
| Small Industry/ Handicrafts | 75               | 10.0 | 18                    | 7.6  |
| Sanitation                  | 57               | 7.6  | 20                    | 8.4  |
| Communication               | 26               | 3.5  | 15                    | 6.3  |
| Housing                     | 16               | 2.1  | 12                    | 5.1  |
| Energy                      | 14               | 1.9  | 5                     | 2.1  |
| Mining                      | 8                | 1.1  | 6                     | 2.5  |
| Other                       | 5                | 0.7  | 2                     | 0.8  |
| Legal Assistance            | 4                | 0.5  | 2                     | 0.8  |
| Credit                      | 4                | 0.5  | 0                     | 0.0  |

(Source: VIPFE 2006)

In sum, there are many ways of categorizing NGOs, including types of activities, size, origin, closeness to the “grassroots,” etc. For the purposes of

understanding the political impact that NGOs have, the three most important variables are type (specifically whether the organization is politically involved, or engaged in capacity building), resources (and the resource differential) and origin (whether the NGO is international or domestic).

### *Characteristics of the State*

The third factor in the interplay between NGOs, state and society is the state. The state is important because it determines government policy toward NGOs, which can range from hostile to indifferent to supportive. Additionally, characteristics of the state itself matter, including the quality of democracy and participatory institutions, the capacity of the state to provide public goods or respond to new demands, and the responsiveness of the state to civil society.

Government policy toward NGOs varies tremendously across the globe, both in its tenor and its intensity. At the most extreme, some states are openly hostile and suspicious of NGO activity. NGOs in Russia have faced severe regulation, and many international NGOs have been forced to leave the country. In much of the Middle East, NGOs are seen as potential threats and subject to political surveillance (Fisher 1998, 40). In Kenya in the mid 1990s, the government shut down NGOs seen as part of the opposition and sponsored new organizations with ties to the official party (Hulme and Edwards 1997).

Other policy environments are less directly hostile, but can still make life very difficult for NGOs. For example, in the 1980s in Bangladesh development projects

required up to forty signatures, and registering a new NGO to work in the country could take more than six months (Fisher 1998: 40). Essentially, the state can regulate NGO activity and grant or deny permission for NGOs to work in a given area. Since NGOs are private organizations without official functions, they have to maintain enough of a positive relationship with the state to continue working.

Less extreme than direct repression or regulation perhaps, but equally important, is the overall political context of the state. In her overview of relations between NGOs and the state, Fisher argues that four factors are central in determining the relationship: regime type, political culture, degree of state capacity, and degree of political stability (1998). I focus on 1) regime type, 2) the quality and responsiveness of government, 3) and state capacity.

This project focuses on the role of NGOs in weak democracies, but let me first consider *regime type* more broadly. Under autocracies, NGOs have a rich and storied history at the forefront of opposition movements. In Latin America, this role, which was critical to the democratic transitions in countries like Chile helped solidify the image of NGOs as pro-change, pro-poor advocates for democracy. In advanced democracies, on the other hand, there is a long intellectual tradition of interest in NGOs, the “third sector” (Gidron 1992), and the “non-profit sector” (Salamon 1997). In fact, many of our ideas about how civil society development should play out in the developing world are heavily influenced by notions of the role of civil society in Europe and North America (for example, Putnam 1993). In weakly democratic

countries<sup>4</sup>, however, it is not yet clear what roles for NGOs and civil society will dominate.

In weakly democratic countries, most of which are in the developing world, there is a great deal of variation in the consistency and quality of democratic institutions, and in state capacity. In some countries, governments are plagued by corruption, lack of resources, inefficiency and institutions that do a very poor job of representing the interests of the underserved. Basic government capacity to provide goods and services and respond to crises is severely lacking. The effect of mobilizing new voices into the political process can only be understood within the context of the quality of the existing government. Where government is generally thought to be corrupt, inefficient and unresponsive, new participation is rarely going to help the status quo. And, critically, at some level of poor quality government, new participation raises the issue of regime stability. State capacity is also important as many states in the developing world do face real limitations on their ability to respond to new popular demands.

This discussion of key variables is intended to give an overview of the factors that are important to understanding the political effects of NGOs in developing democracies, and also to convey a sense of the variation involved. More specific hypotheses regarding how NGOs tend to affect participation and political change are detailed in subsequent chapters. In the next section, I discuss the selection of Bolivia as a setting for exploring these relationships and give a brief history of NGO

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<sup>4</sup> I define “weakly democratic” to include countries that are nominally democratic but with a history of serious problems of corruption, exclusion, or institutional failure.



involvement in the country.

### **Why Bolivia?**

Bolivia is a particularly good testing ground for these issues because it is democratic, very poor and has a very active NGO community. More importantly, major decentralization reforms in the mid 1990s dramatically reshaped state-society relations, and opened up powerful new roles for NGOs.

Currently, Bolivia is a mid-level developing country with a GDP per capita of \$1061<sup>5</sup>. Foreign aid makes up nearly 41 percent of total government expenditure (WDI 2007). The number of NGOs registered with the government has dramatically increased over the last two decades. In the period between 1942 and 1980, 17 new NGOs registered and began working in Bolivia. Between 1981 and 1990 that number jumped to 106. And in the 1990s (1991-1999), 338 new NGOs were registered (VIPFE 2004). Today there are nearly 700, working on thousands of projects (VIPFE 2006).

Bolivia is also highly decentralized in terms of government administration, meaning that many important political decisions about the allocation of resources have been delegated to the local governments. This change began with the 1994 Law of Popular Participation (LPP), which transferred 20 percent of the national budget to the countries 314 municipalities and mandated grassroots participation in planning and budget oversight. In part because of this law, NGOs have been extremely active in Bolivia and have attracted a great deal of outside funding.

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<sup>5</sup> In constant 2000 U.S. dollars. Figure is for 2005, the most recent year available in the WDI 2007

Additionally, the issue of state-society relations in the Andes has gained critical importance recently due to dramatic indigenous uprisings and the forced resignation of the Bolivian president in October 2003. In fact, politics throughout the Andean region have been characterized as experiencing a prolonged crisis since the 1980s, primarily driven by concerns of governability, and the “tensions between state and societies” that have “grown alongside enduring and accentuated patterns of social and economic exclusion” (Drake and Hershberg 2006,2). NGOs, as frequent meddlers and mediators between the principal actors in state and society, find themselves at the center of this debate.

Since the nature of the relationships I am interested in are inherently local – that is, between citizens and the local government – broader cross-national studies would not capture the effect I am concerned with. Furthermore, so many factors contribute to the quality of democracy in a given country, looking at local accountability and local participation is a useful way of disaggregating the concept of “democracy” into more meaningful and measurable components. I do not believe that Bolivia is the only case where a meaningful exploration of these hypotheses could be made, but it is a very good starting point.

### **A Brief History of NGOs in Bolivia**

NGOs have been working in Bolivia since the 1950s when funding became available from the United States through the Alliance for Progress, which focused on non-state development groups as part of its program to promote democracy and

economic development in Latin America. The Catholic church also promoted NGOs and provided funding in the 1950s and 1960s as part of a new focus on helping the poor.

In the 1970s, a second group of NGOs were formed in opposition to the military dictatorship. These more radical organizations formed ties with campesino and labor groups, radical miners, and leftist sectors of the church. During this period ties were also formed between NGOs and some political parties, most notably the *Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionario* (MIR), the Revolutionary Movement of the Left.

The number of NGOs working in Bolivia rapidly expanded beginning in the early 1980s. In 1982, after decades of authoritarian rule, Bolivia became a democracy. This political opening coincided with a new worldwide focus on the possibilities offered by non-governmental organizations. The United Nations called the 1980s the “NGO decade” and development thinkers lauded NGOs as a new hope for development. Following these trends, bilateral and multilateral donors increasingly directed foreign aid funds to non-governmental projects. In Bolivia, neoliberal restructuring of the government and the economy, including cutting back on state social services and privatizing many state-held industries, created a huge new demand for NGO services. Growth in the number of international NGOs also took off during this time.

The state, with the support of international donors, instituted an emergency relief effort to mitigate some of the worst hardships associated with the new policies.

The Social Emergency Fund, or *Fondo Social de Emergencia* (FSE), gave NGOs an important new role. The government of Paz Estensorro, realizing that NGOs could help administer the funds that flowed in from international donors (and that the existing state bureaucracy was inadequate) worked directly with NGOs for the first time (Postero 2007).

**Table 2.4 Number of NGOs in Bolivia by Decade and Origin**

| Year      | Bolivian NGOs | International NGOs | Total |
|-----------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1931      | 1             | 0                  | 1     |
| 1941-1950 | 1             | 2                  | 3     |
| 1951-1960 | 1             | 2                  | 3     |
| 1961-1970 | 10            | 6                  | 16    |
| 1971-1980 | 28            | 11                 | 39    |
| 1981-1989 | 145           | 36                 | 181   |
| 1990-2001 | 589           | 50                 | 639   |
| 2002-2005 | 592           | 75                 | 667   |

(Source: VIPFE 2006)

The FSE had two noticeable effects on the relationship between NGOs and the state. First, it represented the first time that NGOs were working in direct partnership with the state, rather than working independently or as organized opposition. Second, it sparked a new kind of professionalization among NGOs. Along with the task of administering larger sums of money came opportunities for training, and the necessity of learning the language of the foreign aid bureaucracy, including accountability progress reports and glossy brochures.

The next major change in the role of NGOs in Bolivia came in the mid 1990s with the Law of Popular Participation (LPP), which dramatically re-shaped relationships between state and society in Bolivia. The LPP was passed in 1994 as part

of sweeping reforms implemented under president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada.<sup>6</sup> The reforms restructured local government by offering transfers from the federal budget and mandating participation of civil society groups, which opened up huge opportunities for NGOs, who rushed in as advisors. Sanchez de Lozada (popularly referred to as “Goni”) hoped these reforms would streamline and modernize the Bolivian government and economy by following the neo-liberal prescriptions of privatizing state-run industries, decentralizing governance for more efficiency at the local level, and liberalizing internal markets.

Municipalities, which previously existed under Bolivian law, but without much uniformity across the country, became the focus for the newly decentralized political structure. The idea was that if administrative units were more local, they would better incorporate the highly dispersed population living in very rural areas. Municipal lines were re-drawn to include both urban and rural areas and to cover the whole country, effectively making municipalities the smallest administrative unit of government. New responsibilities for health care administration, education, sanitation, and infrastructure were placed at the municipal level.

Resources under the LPP are distributed according to a population-based formula, with 20% of the national revenues redistributed to the municipalities. This was also a big change. Before the LPP, 75 percent of revenues went to the central government, 10 percent to municipalities, 10 percent to departmental development corporations, and 5 percent to the universities. Under the LPP, in part to mitigate the

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<sup>6</sup> Sanchez de Lozada is the same president who, in his second term, was forced to resign following the violence and popular protests of October 2003.

effects of shifting resources away from the three big cities (who had long received a lion's share of revenue), the 10 percent from the department development corporations was re-allocated to the municipalities (Van Cott 2000, 156). Municipalities also received the authority to collect local taxes on property, transactions, vehicles, and alcohol.

The law also sought to build more formal ties between local governance and the existing civil society, which already formed a dense network of community ties. The law specifically addresses traditionally underrepresented groups in Bolivia, naming specific rights of bilingual and bicultural education and establishing a new program for recognizing property rights for traditional lands. More importantly, the law includes provisions for incorporating civil society, including indigenous groups, into the decision making process at the municipal level. In largely indigenous municipalities, municipal governments can designate indigenous sub-mayors, who ensure representation of their communities on the oversight committees and allow for more autonomy within the indigenous communities.

During the negotiation and drafting of the new law, there was an intense debate between those who thought civil society representation should be based on territory and those who thought it should be based along functional or corporatist lines (Van Cott 2000, 155). In the end, territorial representation won out, in the form of territorially based social groups give the generic name *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTBs), or Territorial Grassroots Organizations, made up of representatives of different groups within each municipality were organized. These groups were

indigenous groups, neighborhood committees and campesino organizations. In practice, the OTBs are made up of approximately 12,145 indigenous and campesino communities and between 4,000 and 8,000 neighborhood committees (Molina 1997, 213).

The function of the OTBs under the law is to provide checks and balances to municipal governments. The OTBs select members of an oversight committee (*comité de vigilancia*) according to local or traditional custom. The oversight committee then has formal authority to work with the municipal councils on budget and policy decisions. This was a major change as it incorporated traditionally excluded groups into the formal political process in a direct way, and allowed for recognition of indigenous social organization and leadership within the democratic process. Oversight committees also have the responsibility of communicating the priorities of community organizations to the municipal government. This process, called Participatory Municipal Planning (PPM), was established with the help of NGOs.

The Law of Popular Participation marked a change in relationship between non-governmental organizations and the state, but it has by no means been an unmitigated success. Some have been very critical of the implementation of these reforms, how the new requirements have forced indigenous communities to change their leadership structures and identities, and the role of NGOs as ubiquitous advisers – and very powerful actors – in the new system.

There is little doubt that the reforms of the Law of Popular Participation opened up powerful new channels of access to the state for NGOs, particularly in the

realm of local government. Nancy Postero, an anthropologist who studies indigenous politics in Bolivia, writes:

Although the LPP opened up spaces for indigenous people to make these demands on the state, in practice it made participation in those new spaces dependent on a certain kind of rational behavior: “responsible” participation. Indigenous groups had to organize their own villages to make diagnoses of their needs, to attend meetings where budgets were discussed, to make arguments backed by rational arguments, and to speak a particular kind of bureaucratic jargon defined by the new law. Because these skills were not held by a majority of the supposed beneficiaries of the law, the state and municipalities relied heavily on NGOs, often funded by international organizations, to carry out the widespread training necessary to “educate” citizens about how to access their new rights. (2007, 167-168)

Others agree that the new role for NGOs following the LPP has opened a Pandora’s box of new political problems. One prominent study argues that the reforms, although ostensibly designed to bring new representation and political access to local groups, were distorted by political parties and the existing elites, despite the efforts of NGOs. New participation had to be channeled through the Territorial Base Organizations. Creating an OTB, and having it formally recognized by the municipality is a necessary condition for social groups to be recognized as actors in the municipality and to receive benefits. Despite the efforts of NGOs, the report claims, the OTBs frequently became agents of the dominant political parties in the municipality (CEADES 2003, 10).

More damningly, one prominent NGO-led study claims that they failed to facilitate the representation of indigenous groups into the municipal political process for two reasons (CEADES 2003). First, “the overestimation of the capacities, the



practices, and the democratic values of the civil society, in this case the indigenous communities, ” and second “the underestimation of the parasitic role of political parties,” who interrupted reform process by by-passing reforms with corruption (14). The reforms started with the Law of Popular Participation opened up opportunities for NGOs to play a key role in the local politics, making Bolivia a fascinating case for this study.

### **Conclusions**

This chapter has attempted to lay the groundwork for the rest of the project by locating the question of how NGOs affect politics in developing countries within the larger debate over civil society and the role of NGOs as tools to promote democracy. This chapter also offers a framework for the analysis of the political effects of NGOs, focusing on variables at three levels: 1) the community targeted by the NGOs, 2) the NGOs themselves, and 3) the larger political context of the state. And finally, this chapter makes the case for using Bolivia as an empirical study to explore these relationships. In the chapters that follow, some of the variation in these three factors is explored, using both quantitative and qualitative data from Bolivia.

## Chapter 3

### **NGOs, Voter Turnout, and Political Protest: Sub-national Evidence from Bolivia**

The October of 2003 violent anti-government demonstrations described in Chapter One offer an entry point into the discussion of how NGOs affect political participation. These protests, which rocked the small Andean country, forcing the resignation the president, and locking state and society into a prolonged struggle that has yet to be resolved, were the culmination of a series of anti-government street demonstrations and riots that have gained momentum over several years. The protesters, comprised of groups of labor unionists, indigenous groups and working class citizens, were called to action in part by a radio station called “Radio Pachamama,” a station run and staffed by a prominent women’s non-governmental organization (NGO) in the impoverished adjoining city of El Alto. Announcements made on the radio station helped coordinate large numbers of protesters marching down the steep winding road from El Alto to La Paz, where they converged on Plaza Murillo. This NGO is one of many in Bolivia that have received considerable amounts of foreign funding from the United States and Europe since the 1980s as part of an effort to promote civil society and strengthen democracy.<sup>7</sup>

This anecdote suggests an interesting puzzle about the role NGOs have played in recent political events in Bolivia. Contemporary democratization literature portrays

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<sup>7</sup> The role of “Radio Pachamama” in organizing protesters is a story I heard from several sources while I was doing preliminary field work in Bolivia during the summer of 2004.

NGOs as a bulwark of civil society. Yet, as the anecdote above suggests, NGOs can also play a more controversial role by mobilizing protest activities. Why would this be so? This chapter answers two inter-related questions to get at this puzzle. How does NGO activity influence participation at the local level in weakly democratic settings? Do international NGOs and local NGOs have the same impact?

The bulk of work on NGOs in the developing world is based on case study analyses of the NGO scene in single countries. While rich in detail and context, existing case studies do not systematically evaluate the effects of NGOs. Because of serious obstacles to data collection at the local level, there has been very little systematic statistical work on these questions. This chapter provides an empirical test of these questions using new municipal-level data from Bolivia. The data collection for this project was an involved project in itself. I compiled data on NGOs in each municipality from a Bolivian government registry of NGOs published in 2004 (VIPFE). Data on protests were coded from newspaper wire stories according to the coding conventions of the Latin American Protest Project (Garrison 2001). Various control variables were found in the 2001 census provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (INE 2006).

I agree with the conventional wisdom from the literature on civil society that NGOs play a role in encouraging participation. However, new participation is not occurring exclusively along institutionalized paths. In fact, this chapter presents surprising evidence that increases in number of NGOs are associated with increases in protest activity, while only weak evidence is found for a relationship between NGOs

and voter turnout. These results suggest that NGOs can have unintended consequences for politics in weakly democratic settings.

More importantly, this chapter speaks to a long debate over the role of civil society in consolidating democracy. Samuel Huntington, an early naysayer to modernization theory, argued in his classic 1968 book that rapid social change and mobilization of new groups into politics in the absence of strong institutions breeds instability. Strong civil society, in this conception, should mitigate the destabilizing aspects of social change by channeling participation through peaceful and established means (Huntington 1968). The absence of strong civil society is a recipe for violence and instability. Alternatively, thinkers such as Almond and Verba (1963) and Lipset (1959) argued that modernization itself would bring about the development of strong civil society, which would aid in the consolidation of democracy. In this view, civil society is an outcome of modernization, not an essential pre-condition. This now classic debate has continued in more recent work on the role of civil society – and NGOs in particular – in democratization.

In this chapter, I argue that strong civil society (here measured by proxy as the number of NGOs) can be strongly associated with protest politics, not just established, peaceful means of participation. This finding is a powerful challenge to simplistic notions that civil society always works as a mitigating force against destabilizing new demands in a changing society. Likewise, it challenges the conception of civil society as a sedate, neighborly, compromise-oriented group of organizations and affiliations that form out of the process of modernization. Instead, civil society in less democratic

settings appears to be contentious, creative and, in some cases, openly hostile to the government.

### **Roadmap**

This chapter is organized in six parts. First, I discuss the competing views on the role of NGOs in influencing participation in dynamic weakly democratic settings. Second, I present my argument that some NGOs and protest movements are mutually reinforcing and lay out the hypotheses to be tested. Third, I detail the data and research design of the sub-national statistical analysis. Then, in the fourth and fifth sections I discuss the results of the tests on turnout and protest, respectively, followed by conclusions.

### **NGOs, Civil Society, and Participation: Old and New Debates**

Despite considerable debate over the role that NGOs are playing in the developing world, and a bias in the literature in favor of descriptions of what NGOs *should* be doing over what they actually are doing, there is now general agreement that NGOs have political effects (Brown, Brown, and Desposato 2002, forthcoming). They are no longer seen as neutral service providers, but as part of the political landscape, affecting change through both intentional and unintentional mechanisms.

The conventional wisdom on NGOs and participation in weakly democratic settings is that NGOs are good for democracy because they strengthen civil society by widening participation, bringing previously underrepresented interests into the

political process. As NGOs encourage people to express their opinions and participate in decision-making, they act as training grounds for democratic citizenship. As Charles Reilly argues, NGOs are “real-world academies for democracy,” permitting people to “taste the full menu of rights and responsibilities” of democratic citizenship, “including...voting” (Reilly 1995). This logic has also found support in the foreign aid community as donors seeking to strengthen democracy support NGOs in developing countries.

In this view, as people become more involved in voluntary organizations, their willingness to take a stance and become involved in political issues increases. In this way growth of NGO activity has a “spillover effect” into other areas of political activism (Fisher 1997, 16). As associational activity increases, people trust each other more, understand each other more, and see their common problems, all of which helps solve the complicated collective action dilemmas that can hinder mobilization.

The specific debates over the political effects of NGOs have grown out of a long intellectual history of the role of civil society in changing societies. The main divide in literature on civil society is between those who see strong civil society as a necessary precondition for effective democracy, and those who argue that the development of civil society is part and parcel of the process of modernization and democratization, not necessarily a precondition. This venerable debate has never fully been resolved, and in many ways the more contemporary debates over the political effects of NGOs in developing democracies are just new casing for the same issue.

In the first view, strength of civil society should portend higher levels of democratic participation as engaged, connected citizens utilize democratic procedures to engage with the state. Where civil society is too weak to act as a meaningful balance to the state, as Huntington argues, we should expect violence and instability (1968). In the second view, strong civil society should develop out of successful modernization and democratization. As democratic openings allow for more participation, civil society should grow to fill the space offered.

Both of these classic conceptions share an understanding of civil society as a moderating force within the context of more extreme pressures. And, for all the variety in claims made about the effects of NGOs, the literature on NGOs has by and large shared this conception; NGOs and civil society are seen as forces of moderation, compromise, and civilized collective action. This chapter seeks to show that, at least in some cases, civil society and NGOs can be much more extreme actors in politics, including fomenting protest and acting as a destabilizing force in the interactions between the state and civil society.

### **NGOs and Protest: Insight from the Social Movements Literature**

Why would one expect that NGOs might actually increase contentious forms of political participation, rather than the peaceful, pro-democracy, trust-and-accountability-building type of participation expected by NGO advocates and donors? This section will briefly critique the existing literature on protest and contentious politics to lay the groundwork for my argument. Most of the work on explaining

contentious politics and protest movements focuses on protests as episodic events outside the realm of “normal” politics, rather than one of several possible strategies for participation in politics. Work on protest and rebellion has moved through many phases of thought over the last 30 or so years.

One long-dominant explanation for political protest action and group mobilization is simply that people rise up when oppression becomes intolerable (Smelser 1963, Gurr 1970, Turner and Killian 1972). This approach is intuitively satisfying because it seems somehow fair; we would like to think that oppression sparks resistance and that the downtrodden will struggle for freedom. However, the main problem with the shared grievances approach is that there are many cases where severe oppression has failed to result in mobilization and resistance. The level of inequity and oppression alone does not seem to provide a complete explanation for why in some cases people organize and protest and in others they suffer quietly. Worse, this kind of argument can lead by extension to the morally questionable position that if people are not rising up in protest they must be somehow satisfied – or at least not terribly dissatisfied – with their position of inequality and oppression.

Two main approaches offer a response to the shared grievances perspective. The first, called the resource mobilization approach, “deemphasizes grievances and focuses upon societal supports and constraints of movements, tactical dilemmas, social control, media usage, and the interplay of external supports and elites” (Zald and McCarthy, 1979). This approach moves away from more psychological explanations to focus on political, sociological and economic models of behavior. A central focus of



this approach is the “free-rider problem” raised by Mancur Olsen (1965). The argument is that “since social movements deliver collective goods, few individuals will ‘on their own’ bear the costs of working to obtain them” (Zald and McCarthy, 1987). As a result, in order to understand social movements, attention must be paid to the incentives for leaders to bear these costs and the resources available to aid in collective action.

The second approach, referred to as political opportunity structure, also moves away from psychological explanations of mass movements to focus on incentives and opportunities. Instead of focusing on the type and availability of resources, this approach emphasizes the “consistent – but not necessarily formal – dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action” (Tarrow, 1994). More specifically, political opportunity for social protest mobilization can be thought of as the conditions under which a group sees its chances for achieving benefits from protest change. This concept of “opportunity” can be broken down into 1) increasing access to government; 2) shifting alignments among government actors; and 3) the availability of influential allies (Tarrow, 1994, 87-88).<sup>8</sup>

It is helpful to think of these three approaches along a continuum of necessary conditions for mobilization. More recent work has moved in this direction, paying attention to each of these variables and arguing that the much-debated differences between these schools of thought are more differences of emphasis than differences of

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<sup>8</sup> Tarrow also includes a fourth dimension of political opportunity: divisions among elites. However, this category is captured by a broader understanding of shifting alignments in government. Divisions among elites can be understood as one way in which alignments in government can shift.

kind (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

Charles Anderson's work on Latin American politics is a notable exception to the common characterization of protest as a deviation from "normal" politics (1992). He argues that features of contentious politics, which are often labeled as "unstable" and "unpredictable," may be part of a consistent system of politics in Latin America. Although quite different from constitutional alternation of power, alternation of power by protest and revolution has a consistent history in Latin America. He adds that "generally respected rights of exile and asylum for losers in power struggles may indicate that there are rules of political activity generally understood by the participants, which are effective in regulating political conduct even where formal, constitutional commitments do not apply" (240). Anderson's work is very helpful for understanding protest as a part of "normal" politics rather than the exception to it, which supports the notion that protest is just one of many strategies of participation available to leaders of civil society.

There is a limited body of work that directly addresses the connection between NGOs, social movements, and protest. Some of the early work on NGOs pointed to a possible connection between NGOs as activists and NGOs as social movement organizations, focusing on the way that international NGOs influenced local NGOs to become more outspoken and radical (Clark 1991). More directly, some work implies that NGOs organize protests on behalf of the poor (Covey 1995, Korten 1990) and can use mass advocacy as one of many strategies to influence the state (Fisher 1997, 114-117). A few case studies link NGOs and protest in developing countries, for example:

Thailand (Dechalert 1999), the Philippines (Clarke 1998) and Kazakhstan (Luong 1999).

However, there are no studies to my knowledge that test the relationship between NGOs and protest events using sub-national statistical analyses. And, despite these few studies that connect protest and NGOs, the dominant view of NGOs as pillars of peaceful, democratic civil society remains strong.

### **A Theory of NGOs and Participation and Some Hypotheses**

My argument is that NGOs affect participation in ways that are more complicated than much of the thinking on civil society would expect. Although I agree with the conventional wisdom that increases in NGO activity should in general be associated with increases in all types of participation, I disagree that increases in participation will necessarily be through institutionalized democratic means. I argue that NGOs affect participation through at least two distinct mechanisms: 1) associational effects, and 2) direct advocacy and organizing. In either case, an increase in total numbers of NGOs facilitates both conventional and unconventional forms of participation.

Associational effects can be partially or entirely unintentional. As people gather together – regardless of their purpose – some degree of social capital is gained simply through organized, repeated interaction. This idea has deep roots in the literature on social capital (Clarke 1998, Putnam 1993, Almond and Verba 1963). NGOs, whether they are providing small business training, lobbying for women's or

indigenous rights, providing health care, or building houses, all involve local interaction between NGO workers, neighbors, and others in the community. By spending time together, talking, and working toward a common project, people build trust in each other. Communicating shared grievances in this kind of setting paves the way for political action as increased trust helps address the collective action problems inherent in mobilization.

This kind of interaction closely follows the classic understanding of civil society. The density of civil society is frequently measured by the number of non-governmental organizations of all types. As people become more connected with one another, and empowered through positive interactions with their neighbors, they are more likely to tackle difficult problems facing their community. In other words, as more organizations bring more people together, participation in politics is likely to increase. These effects can be intentional – in fact, many NGOs in developing countries see this type of work as central to their mission of education, empowerment and outreach. NGOs can serve as training grounds for democratic behavior, encouraging people to participate in decision-making, compromise and democratic practices such as voting. However, it can also be an unintentional side-affect. Even NGOs that actively seek to remain apolitical still promote and facilitate interactions among the people they serve.

The second mechanism through which NGOs affect participation is more controversial. Some NGOs, though certainly not all, are involved in direct advocacy and organizing. This role is a much more direct way that some NGOs are involved in

boosting political participation. In the developed world, we are familiar with NGOs in this role; organizations like [moveon.org](http://moveon.org), voter education organizations, even large-scale associational organizations like the AARP have powerful lobbying and direct action divisions. In the developing world, NGOs are increasingly taking on these kinds of roles.

Political strategies for NGOs involved in direct advocacy vary widely. Some organizations are involved in voter turnout campaigns, others in supporting particular policies or candidates. Some turn to more extreme tactics, including demonstrations, street protests, hunger strikes, and other forms of civil disobedience. In settings where the institutional mechanisms for democratic participation are seen as flawed, tainted by corruption, or plagued by inefficiencies, I argue that political NGOs are more likely to turn to unconventional tactics to gain attention and press for political change. In particular, increases in NGOs in weakly democratic settings are likely to coincide with increases in organizations involved in direct advocacy, including mobilizing for protest.

Protest, like the more conventional forms of participation just discussed, can be facilitated through intentional or unintended consequences of NGO activity. First, increases in protest might reflect a conscious strategy choice on the part of NGO leaders who decide that more institutional routes of pressuring the government are ineffective. Alternatively, increases in protest might be an unintended consequence of increased associative activity. As NGOs bring new people into participation in

politics, and their demands are not easily or swiftly met by the state, the people themselves might seek other forms of action.

Protest, then, is easier in an environment of dense NGO activity because coordination is easier among people with shared membership in associations, but not as a direct result these organizations' efforts to mobilize them. Although these different mechanisms are difficult to parse out with the data available, I argue that both possibilities occur simultaneously in Bolivia – some organizations do turn to actively organizing protest (as seen in the anecdote about Radio Pachamama that opens this chapter), but it is also possible that protest is an unintended consequence of NGO activity for other organizations.

### **International NGOs**

International NGOs are quite different from their local counterparts, despite the fact that most local NGOs receive international funding. International NGOs are generally large, highly visible, and well funded. They also tend to be concentrated in larger cities, be staffed by educated elites and expatriates, and be focused primarily on service provision at the local level, not on generating political participation. It is still possible that international NGOs have associational side-effects; they do work in local service provision, and thus engage neighbors in some activities. However, the scale and visibility of most INGO projects make it less likely that they would become forums for local organizing and trust building.

Additionally, international NGOs are frequently big players in a development scene, and maintain close ties with the government in Bolivia. Thus, I do not expect that increases in international NGOs will have the same effect as increases in local NGOs. In general, I expect the effect of the large INGOs to have only a weak effect on either type of participation, conventional (voting) or unconventional (protest).

### **Hypotheses**

The first testable hypothesis to emerge from the argument that NGOs are good for democratic participation is that increases in NGO density should raise voter turnout. If NGOs are contributing to civil society in the expected way (by mobilizing underrepresented citizens to participate in politics), increases in voter turnout should occur where more NGOs are active. Looking at changes in numbers of NGOs is not a perfect measure since there is such variation in the size and scope of different organizations' activities, but due to the challenges of collecting these data, it is an important first cut.

*Hypothesis 1 (Conventional Wisdom): Increases in numbers of NGOs will be positively associated with increases in voter turnout.*

*Hypothesis 1a: Decreases in numbers of NGOs will be negatively associated with voter turnout.*

However, in weakly democratic settings where institutional mechanisms for participation are rightly viewed with some suspicion, mobilization for voting might not be seen as most beneficial. My argument is that NGO activities, in situations of

unresponsive government, can be channeled through non-institutional forms of participation, specifically in the form of protest. I hypothesize that as the total number of NGOs in a municipality goes up, protest will also go up.

*Hypothesis 2: Increases in numbers of NGOs will be positively associated with increases in protest.*

*Hypothesis 2a: Decreases in numbers of NGOs will be negatively associated with protest.*

International NGOs, because of their rarity, visibility, and connections with national government, are unlikely to be a powerful force for increasing participation at the local level. Given their reliance on the status quo for permission to work in developing countries, increases in INGOs are even less likely to be associated with protest than with other types of participation.

*Hypothesis 3: Increases in international NGOs will not be associated with increases in protest.*

### ***Data and Research Design***

#### *Sub-national Analysis: Comparing Municipalities*

To test these hypotheses, I constructed an original dataset on NGOs, election results, and political protest at the municipal level from Bolivia. These data are the product of more than a year of extensive data entry, pestering of government officials, coding of newspaper articles, and sorting through the quagmire of Bolivian political geography to construct a definitive list of municipalities. I estimate two different sets of regressions to test the effect of changes in numbers of NGOs on changes in voter



turnout and protest over a five year period from 1999-2004. The first uses voter turnout as the dependent variable and the second uses protest as the dependent variable.

There are several advantages to doing this analysis as the municipal level. First, most NGOs target their work at the local level. Although some NGOs have national networks, the vast majority still see their primary work as occurring at the local level. Thus, it follows that the best place to look for the effects of NGOs would also be at the local level. Previously, data availability has made this kind of analysis very difficult. This project offers an exciting systematic look into the local political effects of NGOs.

Second, there is a great deal more variation at the local level in the numbers and types of NGOs than there is when this information is aggregated to the national level, making this analysis more reliable. At the same time, looking at local level data controls for many of the intervening variables that would make national level analysis difficult, including national government policies toward NGOs and the national political environment.

Bolivia has had a decentralized government since the Law of Popular Participation was passed in 1994, with a large amount of authority and funding devolved to the municipal level. The country is divided into nine departments, one hundred and eleven provinces and three hundred and fourteen municipalities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> These figures are according to the definitive work on Bolivian political geography, *Geografía Electoral de Bolivia* by Salvador Romero Ballivian (2003). However, there are important discrepancies between sources. Although Ballivian writes that there are 314 municipalities (pg. 10), his appendix

Municipalities are also referred to as sections (in Spanish, *secciones* or *alcaldias*).

There is also a smaller administrative unit, called the canton, but the borders of the cantons are imprecise and there are few reliable sources of data at that level.

Municipalities (as well as provinces and departments) are of unequal size and shape.

The population of municipalities ranges from a few hundred to several hundred thousand.

#### *NGO data*

The NGO data were coded from a Bolivian government registry of NGOs published by the Vice-Ministry of Public Investment and Foreign Financing (VIPFE in Spanish acronyms). The registry has been published and updated five times since 1996. Most of the data for this project were coded out of the 2003-2004 registry, but I cross-referenced it with the 1996 registry. The data in the registry are entered by NGO and include the official acronym, the full name of the organization, the country of origin, the department where the organization registered (Bolivia is divided into 9 administrative departments), the date the NGO began activities, the date the registration was renewed, contact information, the sectors the organization is involved in, and the location of their work. This registry is available as a published book or as a PDF file on VIPFE's website (VIPFE 2004).

To make these data useful for comparing across municipalities, I summed the total number of NGOs in each municipality to get a total number for 2004. In order to get a total number of NGOs for 1999, I used the date the NGO began activities and

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listing the municipalities only contains 311. The 2001 census reports statistics for 314 municipalities. The 2004 election results published by the Corte Nacional Electoral contain data for 327 municipalities.

summed only those organizations that were in existence before 1999. I cross-referenced this number with the 1996 registry to make certain that organizations that ceased operations were included correctly. Data on the numbers of international NGOs and NGOs working in each sector were compiled in the same fashion for 1999 and 2004.

The registry also indicates whether the organization is of Bolivian or international origin. Like the other data from the registry, this information is self-reported. For international NGOs, the country of origin is listed. Using the same process described above, I summed the international NGOs by municipality for both 1999 and 2004.<sup>10</sup>

Since I am primarily interested in the effect of changes in numbers of NGOs, I used the raw counts from 1999 and 2004 to create a variable indicating the change in numbers of NGOs over the five-year period. In almost every municipality, the number of registered NGOs increased between 1999 and 2004, despite considerable differences in size and population between municipalities. The maximum increase occurred in the capital city of La Paz, with an increase of 139 organizations, bringing the total from 55 in 1999 to 194 in 2004. Since some municipalities show no

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<sup>10</sup>One challenge in sorting the data was matching the locations listed by the NGO in their registration with known municipalities. The vast majority of the locations listed were municipalities, but there are a few that I have been unable to identify (out of 2076 NGOs and branches, 114 have locations listed that I have not yet been able to match with municipalities). This has been a painstaking and time-consuming process as the names for the municipalities vary from source to source. For example, the Eastern city of Santa Cruz has alternately been listed as “Santa Cruz de la Sierra,” “Sta. Cruz,” “Sta. Cruz de la Sierra,” “Sta. Cruz de la S.,” etc., making electronic merging very difficult. Some municipalities also have more than one name, further complicating matters. For example, Villa Abecia is also known as Camataqui and Parquipujio is also called Tito Yupanqui. To get a complete list of all the municipalities in Bolivia, I referenced Salvador Romero Ballivian’s authoritative *Geographia Electoral de Bolivia* (2003) and the list of municipalities from the 2001 census (INE 2004). A complete list of all the alternate spellings and names of municipalities that I have used is available upon request.

registered NGOs, the minimum is zero. 130 of the municipalities have no recorded NGOs in either year.

#### *Voter Turnout Data*

To obtain municipal level data on voter turnout, I turned to the Bolivian national election court (*Corte Nacional Electoral de Bolivia*), which publishes election results down to the individual table where the votes were cast (CNE 2006). Bolivia held nationwide municipal elections in 1999 and 2004. I calculated voter turnout as the percentage of registered voters that submitted ballots. I used the total number of ballots submitted instead of the number of valid ballots because casting blank or invalid ballots is often an intentional way of expressing discontent with the choices presented.

#### *Protest Data*

I coded the data on protest following the guidelines of the Latin American Political Protest Project (LAPP) by Steve Garrison. The data will be made available as part of that larger project. For more details on the coding conventions, see Garrison (2001). Using Lexis-Nexis, I searched for all international wire stories containing the word Bolivia for 1999 and 2004. Each month returned between approximately 250 and 500 news stories, which I read through to find protest events. Although the original coding includes information on the numbers of protesters involved, the dates of the protests, the numbers injured or killed, the state response, and various other information, for the purposes of this project, I aggregated the data into simple event

counts by municipality, by year. Protests that lasted multiple days are counted once for each day.

Protests, even in the volatile political climate of Bolivia in recent years, are still relatively rare events. In 1999, the average municipality experienced did not experience a protest incident (the mean number of protests in 1999 is .09) In 2004, most municipalities still did not experience protest, but the mean is higher at .35. In 1999 the town with the most protests experienced 8, which rose to 44 in 2004.

One potential problem with this data is that the very smallest municipalities show no recorded protest. In fact, of the 157 towns below the median population of 9957, there are no protests recorded. It is possible that protest is not an attractive strategy in such small towns, but it is equally possible that protests in these remote areas do not make national news, and would not be recorded in the data. This issue will be discussed further in the results section.

Again, I am interested in change over this period; the variable used in the regressions is the change in number of protests between 1999 and 2004. Summary statistics are available in Appendix B.

### *Controls*

The 2001 national census (INE 2004) proved an invaluable source for collecting municipal level control variables, without which the correlations between NGO density and voter turnout or protest would be very hard to interpret.

The main controls in the regression equation include level of development, level of education, unemployment rates, population, and percent of indigenous population. Level of development is measured as the percent of houses in a municipality with access to electricity in 2001, the most recent census year. Level of education is measured in two ways, both as the percent of municipal population with primary school education and as percent of municipal population with a college degree. Unemployment is the percent that responded negatively to the question: “In the last week, did you work?” The percent of indigenous population is measured as the percent that responded that Aymara or Quechua was the first language they learned.

I also control for the vote share from each municipality that went to Evo Morales in the 2005 presidential election. This is important because the visible presence of Evo Morales as a national political figure is undoubtedly the biggest difference between the two elections. Controlling for the share of votes that went to Morales helps control for the coattails effect that Morales’ success and visibility might have had. This is especially important for the model of voter turnout.

### **Voter Turnout Results**

There is some evidence that NGOs are associated with increases in turnout, but in general, support for the hypothesis that increases in NGOs help increase voter turnout is weak. Model 1 includes all 314 municipalities in Bolivia, and model 2 excludes the largest four cities, which have considerably higher numbers of NGOs,

higher levels of change in NGOs, and larger populations than the rest of the cities in Bolivia.

**Table 3.1 OLS: The Effects of Changes in NGOs on Change in Voter Turnout**

|   | Model 1<br><i>All observations</i> | Model 2<br><i>Excluding largest four cities</i> |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Change in # of NGOs between 2000 and 2004               | -.0004<br>(.0005)                  | .002<br>(.001)                                  |
| Base # of NGOs in 2000                                  | .002*<br>(.001)                    | .003*<br>(.002)                                 |
| Level of Development                                    | -.034<br>(.033)                    | -.037<br>(.033)                                 |
| Population (logged)                                     | .004<br>(.008)                     | .002<br>(.009)                                  |
| Votes for Evo Morales in the 2005 presidential election | .001***<br>(.000)                  | .001***<br>(.000)                               |
| Constant  | .0004<br>(.073)                    | .018<br>(.076)                                  |
| N   | 311                                | 307   |
| R-squared   | 0.0204                             | 0.0319  |

\*\*\* $p \leq .001$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \* $p \leq .05$ , one-tailed test

Note: Robust Standard Errors provided in Parentheses

A change in NGOs, the variable that best captures the causal impact of NGOs, is not a statistically significant predictor of change in voter turnout in either model. However, the baseline number of NGOs is positively associated with increases in voter turnout. This result suggests that municipalities that had more NGOs to begin

with were more likely to witness an increase in voter turnout than municipalities where few NGOs were working.

The average turnout in the 1999 municipal elections was 59 percent. In 2004, that number went up to 62. Change in turnout between the two elections spanned a large range, from a loss of 51 percent, to a gain of 57 percent. The distribution of the variable is close to normal.

In some ways the lack of support for the conventional wisdom that increases in NGOs should positively affect turnout is not surprising. First, there are many additional factors that affect turnout that are hard to control for in the model, including efforts by political parties to increase turnout, local political issues, and convenience of polling stations (in rural areas, for example), to name a few. Second, even if several NGOs were very active in encouraging people to turn out at the polls, they might succeed in motivating several hundred, or even several thousand, people to vote. In many municipalities, this still makes up a very small percentage of the population. That is to say, the magnitude of the expected effect – even if the civil society arguments hold – is fairly small.

The other independent variables in the model give an interesting picture of electoral politics in Bolivia. First, level of development is positive and significant in both models, showing an association between higher levels of development and increases in voter turnout. This is expected based on ease of getting to the polls in more developed settings.



Second, the variable that captures support for Evo Morales' MAS party is a very strong predictor of change in turnout when all observations are included. It appears that where the MAS gained new support, turnout increases. This fits nicely with the description of the MAS landslide in 2004 and 2005 as a victory of mobilization; the MAS did a tremendous job at getting new voters to the polls.

Overall, there is little evidence to suggest a strong connection between NGOs and voter turnout. However, as the next section will argue, that does not necessarily show that NGOs are not having an effect on political participation and mobilization.

### **Protest Results**

The results of the model estimating the effect of changes in numbers of NGOs on protest are more startling. The variable for changes in NGOs is positive and significant, using robust standard errors, regardless of the control measures used for social indicators. On average, an increase of one NGO in a municipality is associated with an increase in .15 protests. Or, more intuitively, an increase of 20 NGOs would predict an average increase of around 3 protests in a year.

Of the control variables, the base number of NGOs is positive and significant, which lends further support to the idea that NGOs are related to protest activities. Municipalities with high total numbers of NGOs to start with are more likely to experience protest.

Three different measures of social indicators and level of development yield remarkably similar results. Whether measured as percent of houses with electricity

(Level of Development), level of education, or percent unemployment, the main results of the model hold. (see models 3-5 in table one for a comparison). It is somewhat surprising that level of development has a negative coefficient, suggesting that less developed municipalities are less likely to experience protest. However, this is most likely a function of the fact that protest in very small municipalities might be missing from the dataset (because it does not make national news), or because the decision to take to the streets in protest might be a very different one in the smallest, least developed cities. This possibility is supported by the large and significant negative coefficient for population size; the very smallest cities do not have recorded experiences of protest.

**Table 3.2 OLS: The Effect of Changes in NGOs on Incidences of Protest**

|                             | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Change in # of NGOs (total) | .148*   | .148*   | .163**  |
|                             | (.063)  | (.063)  | (.061)  |
| Base # of NGOs (1999)       | .136*   | .136*   | .153**  |
|                             | (.058)  | (.058)  | (.055)  |
| Level of Development        | -.116   |         |         |
|                             | (.327)  |         |         |
| Unemployment                |         | .136    |         |
|                             |         | (.612)  |         |
| Education (College)         |         |         | -19.74  |
|                             |         |         | (13.15) |
| Population (logged)         | -.302** | -.309** | -.272** |
|                             | (.100)  | (.116)  | (.091)  |
| Indigenous Population       | -.367*  | -.404*  | -.615** |
|                             | (.180)  | (.217)  | (.243)  |
| Constant                    | 2.34    | 2.33    | 2.28    |
|                             | (.852)  | (.938)  | (.835)  |
| N                           | 314     | 314     | 314     |
| R-squared                   | 0.6834  | 0.6836  | 0.6953  |

\*\*\* $p \leq .001$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \* $p \leq .05$ , two-tailed test

Note: Robust Standard Errors provided in Parentheses

Surprisingly, municipalities with higher shares of indigenous residents are less likely to experience protest. This is interesting given the presumption that much of the protest in Bolivia in recent years has been the result of newly politicized ethnic identities. One possible explanation for this surprising correlation is that most protest occur in larger cities, which tend to have a mix of indigenous and white populations. Another possibility is that many of the smallest municipalities have high levels of indigenous population. As discussed earlier, incidences of protest may be missing for these observations.

Overall, there is strong evidence of a connection between increases in NGOs and increases in protest, although the issue of causality is somewhat less clear.

#### *Issues of Causality and Endogeneity*

There is an obvious issue of endogeneity in the set-up of this study; it is very hard to rule out the possibility that increases in NGOs and increases in protest are both indicative of a third factor, such as rising political dissatisfaction. Both the actions of forming a new NGO and marching in the streets in protest can be seen as political actions. I have argued that increases in NGOs facilitate all kinds of participation, formal and informal, conventional and unconventional, voting or protest. I have also shown that there is a strong statistical correlation between increases in NGOs and increases in protest. Although it is not possible to firmly state that this evidence shows NGOs cause protest, it is convincing evidence that NGOs and protest movements are tightly connected. In fact, it is quite possible that there is some feedback between

rising protest movements and increases in NGOs or NGO membership. Either way, the finding that the two are clearly linked in some way is interesting in itself.

### **The Effects of International NGOs on Protest**

Much of the literature that criticizes the role of NGOs in developing democracies focuses on issues of ownership. International NGOs (INGOs), whose accountability and funding generally resides in their home countries in the Northern Hemisphere are frequent targets, accused of being out of touch with local realities or, worse, displacing local agendas with their own. Conversely, international NGOs are also credited with many of the same benefits as local ones, including empowering local communities and increasing participation.

International NGOs tend to be much larger organizations than local community NGOs. Many of the organizations operating in Bolivia are familiar names: World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Christian Children's Fund, the Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, Doctors without Borders, Oxfam, CARE, and Save the Children. Given their greater access to resources, they tend to work in many more locations than domestic organizations. For example, according to the NGO registry, Catholic Relief Services works in 85 municipalities, CARE has operations in 41 municipalities, and Save the Children works in 25 municipalities.

Interestingly, changes in international NGOs have the opposite effect of local NGOs, but the results are not significant. This fits with my expectation that the effects of international NGOs are unlikely to be as strong or as direct as their local

counterparts. As shown in Model 5 (Table 3.3), increases in numbers of international NGOs are actually associated with fewer incidences of protest. There are several plausible explanations. The first is a selection effect. International NGOs are staffed in part by foreign expatriates, and very explicitly consider the risk involved to their workers in different areas. INGOs thus are less likely than their local counterparts to work in areas where violence and demonstrations have become commonplace, if it is considered a security risk to employees.

**Table 3.3 OLS: The Effect of Change in International NGOs on Incidences of Protest**

|                                   | Model 5           |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Change in # of International NGOs | -.242<br>(.259)   |
| Change in # of NGOs (total)       | .158**<br>(.063)  |
| Base # of NGOs (1999)             | .185**<br>(.069)  |
| Level of Development              | -.107<br>(.330)   |
| Population (Logged)               | -.285**<br>(.094) |
| Indigenous Population             | -.291<br>(.225)   |
| Constant                          | 2.13<br>(.765)    |
| N                                 | 314               |
| R-squared                         | 0.6915            |

\*\*\* $p \leq .001$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \* $p \leq .05$ , two-tailed test

Note: Robust Standard Errors provided in Parentheses

Second, because of their larger scale, INGOS have a much higher profile in the local press and the international press. They are also held accountable in some ways to

their donors in developed countries. This higher visibility can constrain their behavior – no high profile INGO would want to be accused of subverting democracy. Thus they might be less likely to pursue non-traditional tactics for encouraging participation.

Both change in total numbers of NGOs and the baseline numbers of NGOs remain positive and significant with the addition of change in international NGOs to the model. That is, regardless of international NGO activity, the effects of local NGOs seem to remain robust.

### **Conclusions**

These results are important for several reasons. First, together with the finding that NGOs are only weakly associated with institutional participation in the form of voter turnout, the finding that NGOs and protest are linked challenges some of the fundamental assumptions about how NGOs affect participation in developing democracies. Instead of acting as training grounds for the type of citizenship we associate with developed democracies, NGOs may also be invoking much less stable and predictable forms of participation. This finding contributes to our understanding of how civil society works in less democratic settings.

Second, these results draw into question efforts to support democracy by funding NGOs. While it is unclear whether the Bolivian protests are a positive force for democracy or not, they are certainly not what international donors had in mind when they decided to “strengthen” Bolivian civil society by making funding available to NGOs.

However, it is important to note that there are key differences between NGOs that are not captured in the NGO registry, and that these findings refer to aggregate counts of NGOs, not individual NGO activity. Most importantly, systematic information is not currently available on the types of activities the organizations are involved in, beyond a basic listing of sectors (for example: agriculture, education, sanitation, etc). Information on daily activities that would affect citizen participation is much harder to come by. The strong results linking increases in numbers of NGOs with increases in protest suggest that there is a pattern of NGO involvement in mobilization for non-traditional participation. However, that is not to say that all NGOs embrace these tactics.

## Chapter 4

### **The Role of NGOs in Shaping Protest Movements: Comparative Evidence from the Labor and Indigenous Movements in Bolivia**

The previous chapter demonstrates that, on average, an increase in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the municipal level is strongly associated with increases in protest and demonstrations, suggesting that NGOs play an important role in this kind of mobilization. This is an interesting and important finding, however several questions about the causal relationship remain. Do NGOs play a key causal role in mobilizing participation or facilitating protest? Or are protest and the formation of NGOs both indicators of underlying discontent with the status quo?

This chapter compares the development of three very different social movements in Bolivia -- the highland indigenous movement, the lowland indigenous movement, and the labor movement -- to gain insight into how and when NGO activity influences political participation. Each of these social movements played a role in mobilizing the recent popular protests across the country, and each has connections with NGOs. However, they differ in terms of the timing of their entry onto the national political scene, and the magnitude of the mobilization that can be attributed to NGO activity.

The central goal of this chapter is to take a closer look at the causal mechanisms driving the observed relationship between increases in NGO activity and increases in contentious political participation. In particular, I address two interrelated questions about how NGOs affect political participation in Bolivia. First, *how* do



NGOs increase political participation? And second, why does this participation tend to take the form of protests and demonstrations? I argue that the political effects of NGOs depend both on the type of activities they engage in and on characteristics of the target population they work with. NGOs working on community development or “capacity building” with resource-poor, previously excluded groups are likely to have the largest and most direct impact. However, even ostensibly “apolitical” NGOs also facilitate mobilization by providing new resources and spaces for organizing. NGOs boost participation by providing new financial, organizational, and human resources, which facilitate collective action. In the larger political context of poorly functioning formal institutions, this newly mobilized political participation is likely to result in protest.

Comparing contemporary social movements in Bolivia is a good way to delve into these relationships because they represent highly visible examples of the link between NGOs and citizen mobilization and participation. Both the activities of the NGOs and the activities of the social movement actors are easily observable, something that is not always the case in more casual, less organized instances of changes in citizen participation. Also, the mobilization of new groups into Bolivian politics has been a well-documented and much-researched phenomena, making careful comparisons of the role NGOs played possible.

This chapter is designed to complement the large-n analysis in chapter three by probing deeper into the variation in NGO activity that are necessarily glossed over by

the measurement tools available in the quantitative analysis<sup>11</sup>. Here, I set aside the assumption that NGOs can be counted as largely similar entities, and I explore a number of more nuanced hypotheses about how differences in NGOs alter their impact and the causal mechanisms involved.

First, I explore the types of activities in which the NGOs are involved. Second, I consider the relative impact of the NGOs' resources on the mobilizing capacity of target groups. I argue that NGOs are most likely to result in an increase in protest and demonstrations under two conditions: 1) when their projects include a focus on community development, capacity building, or participatory governance programs, and 2) when they provide a significant influx of previously unavailable resources. This argument is developed with the national context of Bolivia in mind, where the capacity of government is fairly weak and there is a long history of political exclusion of many of the poorest citizens. Under conditions of poorly functioning formal institutions for participation, newly mobilized political participation is more likely to be channeled through unconventional means, such as protest and demonstrations.

In the case of the lowland indigenous movement, NGOs brought new resources to communities that were previously very isolated and excluded from national level

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<sup>11</sup> Although the overall patterns are clear from the large-n statistical analysis in the previous chapter – that increases in NGOs are associated with increases in protest and demonstrations – the analysis is somewhat limited by the bluntness of the measures available. In the quantitative analysis, changes in NGO activity is measured by changes in the number of NGOs in each municipality, leaving important differences in the size, type of projects, political orientation, budget size, and target populations obscured. Obviously, in using these data I am not trying to make the argument that any NGO registered with the state is the functional equivalent of any other. However, I am asserting that the broad-stroke numbers of NGOs tend to capture the average trends in a municipality. Thus, on average, I expect an increase in the numbers of NGOs to be a reasonable proxy for increases in NGO activity, although certainly it is possible that there are exceptions (for example, if one very large and active NGO is replaced by three very small and poorly-funded NGOs, the aggregate numbers would not accurately reflect the level of NGO activity.)

democratic politics. The NGOs that worked most closely with these indigenous communities also tended to focus on encouraging participation, building community capacity and consciousness-raising, all designed to engage indigenous communities into politics. In this case, NGOs played a clear causal role in facilitating mobilization, which has changed the shape of Bolivian politics dramatically. The highland indigenous groups had slightly higher organizational resources before NGO involvement, and the types of NGOs that targeted altiplano communities were more mixed between the more “political” capacity building NGOs and ones that focused on service provision, but NGOs played a role in facilitating mobilization and participation.

On the other hand, the relationship between NGOs and the labor movement is less direct. Many NGOs have strong connections to labor in Bolivia, but the labor movement was well organized and had access to resources before the influx of NGOs. Also, many NGOs working with labor focused more on issues such as small business development than on promoting political engagement. In this case, NGOs play a support role, but their importance as a central causal factor in the mobilization of new forms of political participation is weaker.

### **Roadmap**

This chapter is organized in several sections. First, I will discuss the research design and selection of the labor and indigenous movements as case studies for this analysis. Second, I present my theoretical expectations and argument. Third, I consider

the link between political participation in general and protest in particular in the Bolivian setting and briefly discuss the context of the social protest movements since 2000. Fourth and fifth, I analyze the role of NGOs in the development of the indigenous and labor movements, respectively. And sixth, I offer some conclusions.

### **Case Selection and Research Design: Comparing Social Movements**

Why compare social movements as a way to understand the mechanisms of how NGOs affect citizen participation – and, more specifically, protest?

There are several reasons why focusing on the more organized arena of political participation represented by social movements offers a good way to analyze the effect of NGOs on changes in participation. First, there is a substantial literature suggesting a strong relationship between NGOs and social movements, and any general discussion of the role NGOs play in influencing participation would be incomplete without attention to the dynamic of social movements. This is especially true in Bolivia, where the growth in numbers of NGOs over the last several decades has coincided with a tremendous surge in the importance and visibility of several new social movements. Together, these phenomena have dramatically changed the face of democratic politics in Bolivia.

Second, the high profile of social movements makes the relationship between NGOs and the movements more observable as a case study than more casual links between NGOs and citizens. The social movements in this study are well documented and well researched, offering plenty of material for further analysis. More importantly,

the social movements in question represent some of the most dramatic and powerful mechanisms for citizen participation in recent Bolivian politics, making them a most-likely case to observe the impact of NGOs on participation.

However, this point raises some issues of validity. Are the ways in which NGOs facilitate collective action in connection with social movement similar or different from how they might affect citizen participation in a setting lacking in organized movements? It is a possibility that the relationships explored here are not representative of all NGO activity, but nonetheless looking at social movements offers an important testing ground for these hypotheses. If NGOs are, in fact, facilitating collective action in a way that boosts contentious political participation, we are most likely to observe these activities where the stakes are high. In other words, if there is little evidence of NGO activity having an important impact in these situations, where their hypothesized effects should be strongest, it would be strong evidence against my argument that NGOs play an important role in mobilizing new groups into contentious political participation.

Third, the variation between the different social movements offers a great opportunity for testing some of the more nuanced hypotheses that the large-n analysis leaves unanswered. Specifically, I argue that NGOs are most likely to play a pivotal role in boosting participation in settings where the resources they bring represent a substantial change in the opportunities for organizing. Where this resource differential is largest, I expect the causal importance of NGOs in changing patterns of

participation to be strongest. Thus, I selected the cases based on variation on a key independent variable: base level of resources before NGO involvement.

In the following analysis, I trace the role of NGOs in the development of three distinct social movements in Bolivia. I compare the main labor movement, the movement of highland campesinos (Aymara and Quechua speaking indigenous people), and the more recent movement of indigenous people based in the eastern lowlands (primarily Guarani and Amazonian people). The main organization of labor in Bolivia is the COB, the *Central Obrera Boliviana*. The highland indigenous movement is organized through the CSUTCB, the *Confederacion Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (The Federation of Syndicated Campesino Workers of Bolivia). And the lowland indigenous groups are organized through CIDOB, the *Confederacion de Pueblos Indigenas del Oriente Boliviano* (The Indigenous Federation of Eastern Bolivia).

In the case of the lowland indigenous movement, represented by CIDOB, resources were extremely scarce before NGOs began working with indigenous communities in the late 1980s. The highland campesino groups, although still quite impoverished, had a longer history of interaction with the state, and more organizational resources. The CSUTCB was formally organized in the late 1970s, but its precursors date to the early 70s. And, finally, in the case of labor, resources for mobilization and political action were relatively substantial. The COB is the oldest and largest of the social movements in Bolivia today. Labor in various sectors of mining

and urban industry has been organized for over a century, and the COB in its current form was created shortly after the 1952 revolution.

**Table 4.1 Initial Resource Availability and Dominant NGO Type**

|                     | Very low resources                | Moderate resources                  | Relatively high resources |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| “Political”         | Lowland Indigenous Groups (CIDOB) |                                     |                           |
| Mixed               |                                   | Highland Indigenous Groups (CSUTCB) |                           |
| “Service Provision” |                                   |                                     | Labor (COB)               |

Today these social movements are formal organizations that represent the interests of their members in national politics, and mobilize them for demonstrations, roadblocks, and protests, as well as more formal meetings over issues and strategies. These organizations are formidable actors in Bolivian politics. They are not political parties, but they can and occasionally do have strong ties to political parties.

Their relationship with the state has changed as the movements themselves have changed. They are frequently characterized as oppositional, anti-government forces, but historically both the labor and indigenous movements experienced moments of collaboration with the state, and moments of extreme opposition, depending on the shifting context (Postero 2007). At the extreme, the COB enjoyed a brief period of “co-governance” following the 1952 revolution. More recently, however, all three organizations have been a powerful force in opposition to the state.

The idea that NGOs have some relationship with the new social movements that developed in the later part of the twentieth century in Latin America is not a new one. Keck and Sikkink, for example, identified NGOs as key actors in linking local social movements with international organizations, media, other civil society organizations, and even governments to achieve large-scale advocacy networks (1998). And many scholars of the “new social movements” in Latin America have also pointed to NGOs as playing some kind of support role. Almost all of the work describing the development of social movements in Bolivia briefly nods to the role of NGOs as support organizations, facilitators, or advocates of the movements, but there are few studies that directly focus on how NGOs affected the movements.

In the next section I present some theoretical expectations about the role of NGOs in the mobilization of each of these social movements, based on a theory of the political effects of NGOs that takes into account both NGO type and characteristics of the target population. I then discuss the development of each of these three social movements with attention to the role of NGOs in their mobilization, the timing of their entry into national-level politics, and the magnitude of the change in the participation of their community members.

### **Theoretical Expectations**

I return to the two questions motivating this chapter: First, *how* do NGOs increase participation? And second, why does new participation in Bolivia tend to take the form of protest? I argue that the link between NGO activity and increases in



contentious political participation is conditional on two variables: the relative importance of the resources introduced by the NGOs (the resource differential before and after NGO involvements), and the type of NGO (or the activities with which they are involved). In the context of Bolivia, where the state is very weak, performs poorly, and there is a strong history of conflict between state and society, the newly mobilized political engagement finds an outlet in protest and demonstrations.

### *Resources*

The size of the impact NGOs have is related to the relative importance of the resources they bring to a target population. Specifically, NGOs are most likely to mobilize new participation where the resources they offer represent a substantial change in the possibilities for organizing. The resources that NGOs offer (and the corresponding resource differential – that is, how big a relative impact the new resources represent) can be of several different kinds: 1) financial, 2) organizational, 3) technical, educational or knowledge based, etc. NGOs are most likely to noticeably influence how people participate in politics where the resource differential they represent is large. More bluntly, when new NGO activity targets extremely resource poor communities, they are likely to noticeably, and sometimes dramatically alter patterns of political participation. However, in even slightly more affluent settings, their role is less likely to be pivotal.

If, as I argue, NGOs are responsible for facilitating and increasing protest activity by offering new resources that enable mobilization of previously excluded

groups, the effect should be strongest in settings where the resources provided by NGOs represent a substantial change in the organizing capacity of a group. As the resource differential between the target population and the NGO provided resources increases, the magnitude of the boost to participation and mobilization also increases.

In other words, in cases where NGOs work with extremely poor and marginalized citizens, who otherwise might not have sufficient resources to mobilize in costly ways, the chance that NGO activity will be followed by big changes in participation patterns is high. The groups that are most impoverished in developing countries are also frequently the same groups that are most excluded from political participation. So new resources targeted at these groups are likely to have a big impact.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, in comparing the different social movements as case studies, we should see the following observable implications: In the case with the highest resource differential (the lowland indigenous groups) the magnitude of the change in participation should be large. Additionally, we should be able to observe differences in the timing of engagement of NGOs and increases in mobilization. The NGOs working with more resource-deprived groups should precede their political mobilization; we should see the bulk of new mobilization occurring only *after* the involvement of NGOs. In the cases where the resource differential is smaller (the highland indigenous groups and the labor groups), the effect of NGO involvement should be weaker, and

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<sup>12</sup> In Chapters 5 and 6, I further explore the effect of changes in NGO activity on the status quo, by looking at how changes in NGO activity influence the fortunes of incumbent political parties in local elections. In line with the argument presented here, I find that increases in NGOs in the very smallest municipalities in Bolivia (towns less than 10,000 people and rural areas) tend to be quite damaging to incumbents. Getting these previously excluded groups to engage in politics rarely seems to be a good thing for those in office.

the timing of new mobilization may not show a clear cause-effect relationship. In other cases, we might see mobilization before large-scale NGO involvement.

### *NGO Type*

The type of NGO also matters. NGOs that are more involved in activities such as community organizing, capacity building, and training related to participatory development are likely to have a stronger positive effect on boosting participation and facilitating protest than NGOs that focus more on basic service provision.

As I argue in Chapter 3, NGOs can boost participation through direct or indirect processes, depending on the types of activities the organization is involved with. Indirectly, NGOs facilitate collective action by engaging people in activities with a shared purpose. Even if they are primarily focused on service delivery (such as health care, vaccinations, clean water, micro-lending, etc.), NGOs tend to be problem-solving organizations directed toward community solutions. Thus even ostensibly “apolitical” organizations can have associational “spillover” effects, and can change the way that neighbors interact, see their shared problems, and engage in their political system.

More directly, NGOs can act as organizers and facilitators intentionally working to engage new voices in the political system and targeting previously underrepresented groups for training, capacity building, and organizing. Although these organizations also have the associational or spillover effects described above, they are involved changing patterns of participation much more directly.

Whether a specific NGO has primarily direct or indirect effects is determined by the type of activity they are engaged in: basic service provision vs. community organizing. So, while political side-effects are likely regardless of the specific activities of an NGO, those organizations that explicitly attempt to organize, educate and encourage participation are likely to prompt the most direct changes in political participation. NGOs involved in participatory community development, capacity building, empowerment, and other activities that explicitly engage citizens to think critically and act as their own political advocates are more likely to result in political mobilization than NGOs that focus solely on service provision.

### **Why Protest?**

Why does political participation in Bolivia appear to be increasingly linked to contentious activities such as protest, demonstrations and roadblocks? Protest has come to characterize the new normal in Bolivian politics. Hardly a week goes by without visible marches, demonstrations or, more recently, hunger strikes in the major cities. I argue that the strategies of protest have become normalized in Bolivian politics as an outlet for the tremendous new mobilization of popular participation following the constitutional reforms of 1993. The new resources made available by NGOs made the task of organizing mass protests more feasible.

First, expectations following the passing of the Law of Popular Participation (the LPP) in 1994 were tremendously high, and new resources from both the national government and international donors (many of them distributed through NGOs at the

local level) were made available to engage people into participatory politics. The law reorganized municipal governance with the intention of increasing the representation and participation of previously excluded sectors of society and opening the way for economic development of the very poor and rural parts of Bolivia where much of the population lives. Despite tremendous efforts at organization, both on the parts of traditional communities and NGOs, the practical outcomes of the change fell far short of expectations. This context of newly high expectations, new resources for mobilizing, and disappointing outcomes created an environment of extreme discontent with the status quo.

Second, because of the extreme inequalities of the Bolivian society and economy, and because of the unusual geography of the country, protests in Bolivia are a remarkably effective method for the poor to get the attention of the wealthy and powerful. The handful of major cities in Bolivia (La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Oruro, and Sucre) are linked by a very thin network of roads, usually just one main thoroughfare connecting each city to the next. The roads are in generally poor shape, and blocking them has tremendous economic consequences since it effectively halts the flow of essential goods between markets. This is especially true in La Paz, where only a handful of roads connect the high altiplano city to its supplies of fresh food grown at nearby lower altitudes.

In many ways, protests, demonstrations, roadblocks and hunger strikes have become the new language of participation in Bolivia – as much a part of the changing political process as the elections that brought the new socialist party, the MAS, to a

majority in the legislature in 2002, and handed the presidency to Evo Morales in 2005, the first indigenous president in Latin America. In this setting, the relationship between any political participation and protest, especially for the popular masses, is much closer than it is in other contexts.

### **The New Power of Social Movements and Popular Protest 2000-2005**

Popular protest has long been a strategy for engagement with the state in Bolivia, but the influence of social movements as a force to be reckoned with launched to new levels beginning in 2000. The new century opened in Bolivia with a conflict in Cochabamba called *la Guerra del Agua* (the water war). In late 1999, a law was passed to privatize the distribution of water in the rapidly growing city and agricultural valleys of Cochabamba, in central Bolivia. The contract was given to a subsidiary of Bechtel Corporation and prices were immediately raised.

In April 2000 tensions over the privatization of water and the new higher prices exploded into massive popular demonstrations led by a new organization called the *Coordinadora en Defensa de Agua y Vida* (Coalition in Defense of Water and Life). The coalition was formed out of alliances between many of the traditional actors in civil society, including NGOs, urban workers, rural peasants, students and other citizens. The resulting demonstrations were met with police in riot gear, and violent clashes ensued. After several days, dozens were wounded and one protester was dead. In an effort to restore order, the government cancelled the privatization plan. The water war was seen as a major victory of the poor against corporate globalization in

Latin America (Postero 2007) and a response against the government that many people felt had failed them by exploiting natural resources, slashing social spending, and failing to bring economic equalities (Olivera 2004).

At the same time, similar conflicts were heating up all across the country as strikes, marches and roadblocks became increasingly common events. Students, teachers, transport workers, peasant farmers, and coca growers launched a dizzying array of protests as popular unrest increased. The municipal police in La Paz even briefly went on strike. However, two main issues of contention took center stage as the year progressed. First, in the highlands around Lake Titicaca, an Aymara nationalist movement rooted in the campesino movement the CSUTCB and led by Felipe Quispe (El Mallku) launched massive demonstrations. Roads were blocked and the army was called out and the conflict turned quite violent and several people were killed.

These strikes and roadblocks were in solidarity with the other main center of protest, the coca-growing region of the Chapare. Many coca growers are Aymara and Quechua miners who lost their mining jobs and relocated following the privatization and closure of tin mines in the 1980s. The United States has long headed coca eradication projects and used its considerable foreign aid clout to pressure Bolivia to reduce coca production. In 2000, the cocaleros (coca-growers), led by the rising politician Evo Morales, launched roadblocks and protests over government intervention.

As the campesinos and cocaleros were striking, the Chiquitano Indians in eastern Santa Cruz launched a protest against a pipeline project sponsored by Enron

and Shell. The Chiquitanos, working with international NGOs and CIDOB, filed lawsuits and blocked roads. Although their protest was unsuccessful, by the end of 2000, it was becoming clear that the major social movements in Bolivia were ramping up on many different issues across the country. The 2002 elections became a focal point for the social movements, and were accompanied by more protests.

In 2003 tensions between the popular sectors and the government reached a new level. Following pressure from the IMF, President Sanchez de Lozada announced a new income tax in February. Mass protests and rioting followed, and government buildings were burnt and looted. Shocking the nation, the clashes escalated to unexpectedly violent levels, as government sharpshooters fired at the crowds in Plaza Murillo. The next day, the COB organized further marches, which also ended violently. In these two days, at least 31 people were killed and nearly 200 were wounded (Postero 2007,206). In La Paz, both the COB and CSUTCB were central in mobilizing people for marches and demonstrations.

The crisis gathered momentum throughout the year, and in October the president's proposal to allow multinational corporations to build a pipeline to export gas through Chile to the United States and Mexico became the focal point for massive opposition, bringing together protests movements from several sectors. The CSUTCB, led by Felipe Quispe, organized roadblocks across the altiplano. The COB called for an ongoing general strike against the government's economic policies. Urban neighborhood organizations launched protests in El Alto and La Paz.



The protests against the government gained new supporters after a military intervention in Sorata to “rescue” tourists trapped by roadblocks left several dead. University students, neighborhood associations, retired miners, labor unions and even middle class paceños joined in the demonstrations. Finally, on October 17, with nearly 80 people dead and hundreds wounded in the clashes, the president fled to Miami and resigned. His vice president Carlos Mesa Gisbert, was sworn in.

These events clearly showed that the social movements had the power to seriously disrupt “politics as usual” in Bolivia, and that the demands of the popular sectors could no longer be ignored. The following section will look at how three of the main social movements behind these dramatic events (the COB, the CSUTCB, and CIDOB) developed, and the role that NGOs played in facilitating their rising organizational capacity and influence on the national political stage.

### **NGOs and Indigenous Mobilization**

In many ways, Bolivia is a country defined by its indigenous people. It has one of the highest percentages of indigenous populations in the hemisphere, and the rich history, culture and variety of indigenous groups is immediately striking to any visitor to Bolivia. However, Bolivia also has a long history of outright oppression of indigenous groups and also of channeling conflict into class terms, explicitly denying ethnic differences. The roots of this approach can be found in the 1952 revolution, when traditional indigenous groups were reorganized under syndicates to emphasize class differences in place of ethnic ones. In fact, the legacy of this focus on “workers”

and “peasants” (campesinos) instead of on “Indians” can still be found in the language of the social movements. Even the main social movement of the highland indigenous groups, the CSUTCB, does not include the words “indigenous” or “Indian” in their name, but rather to “peasant workers,” nearly all of whom are indigenous.

Slightly over half of Bolivians consider themselves to be indigenous or of native origin. According to the 2001 Census, 21 percent grow up speaking Quechua, 14 percent speak Aymara, and close to 1 percent speak Guarani. The other languages of ethnic groups in the Amazon make up less than 1 percent combined. The Quechua speaking people traditionally populated the valleys of the center and east of Bolivia. And the Aymaras centered in the alitplano around the shores of Lake Titicaca. During the colonial era, Aymara and Quechua people were grouped together as “Indians” and were forced to work in silver mines or pay taxes to the crown from their smallholdings. The Guarani people of the Chaco desert and mountain areas in south-east Bolivia, and smaller groups of Amazonian tribes make up the rest of Bolivia’s indigenous population.

There are major differences in the development of the social movements based in the highlands (primarily Aymara and Quechua) and the lowlands (primarily Guarani and Amazonian). Although in recent years, both groups have made overtures to a more national indigenous movement, the two most powerful indigenous organizations have clear ties to their geographic roots. More importantly, the two groups vary considerably on the variables of interest in this analysis: the relative impact of NGO resources, and the type of NGOs that targeted them.

### **Mobilization in the Eastern Lowlands: CIDOB**

The Indigenous Federation of Eastern Bolivia or Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano (CIDOB) is the contemporary social movement in which NGOs most clearly played a central, causal role. The indigenous people of eastern Bolivia, compared to their more organized highland counterparts, live in isolated communities, sometimes with very little contact with the rest of the country, and very weak penetration of the national government. Overall, the eastern indigenous groups had extremely few resources to direct toward political organizing or mobilization before the arrival of NGOs. Additionally, due in part to the opportunities presented by the Law of Popular Participation, and the move to fund organizations focusing on *ethnodesarrollo*,<sup>13</sup> NGOs in the Lowlands gravitated towards projects of community building or *capacitación* (capacity building), which directly seek to promote political participation.

Beginning in the late 1970s, a new international focus on the rights of indigenous peoples was gaining momentum. The United Nations held a conference in 1977 on discrimination against indigenous peoples in the Americas. International NGOs helped facilitate transnational indigenous federations across the globe, and alliances were created across international borders to put pressure on governments for more equitable policies and recognition of indigenous rights (Keck and Sikkink 1998). In Eastern Bolivia, this new international context coincided with dramatically

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<sup>13</sup> Ethno-Development, or development projects focused on maintaining ethnic indigenous identities.

changing demographic pressures as new immigrants from the rest of Bolivia began to flood to the Eastern lowlands, threatening traditional lands.

In the late 1970s, an NGO called *Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indigena del Oriente Boliviano* (APCOB, Support for the Peasants-Indigenous People of Eastern Bolivia) began organizing meetings between several lowland indigenous groups of the Chiquitano and Ayoreo Indians (Postero 2007, 49). Over several years, these meetings grew to include the Guarani, Guarayo and Mataco Indian groups as well. Another NGO, a Jesuit organization called the *Centro de Investigacion y Promocion del Campesinado* (CIPCA, or the Center for Research and Advancement for Campesinos), began working to support various efforts at regional federations of indigenous people focusing on development issues and cultural projects (Postero 2007). In 1979, the precursor to CIDOB, a Guarani Federation called *Asamblea del Pueblo Guarani* (APG, Assembly of Guarani People), was founded with the institutional support of CIPCA.

And, in 1982, CIDOB was officially organized to represent the indigenous movement of the eastern lowlands on the national political scene. Since the earliest organization of CIDOB the main objectives have remained constant: 1) Legal recognition of indigenous territories, 2) legal recognition of indigenous organizations and traditional authorities, 3) improvement of economic conditions, health, and education, and 4) respect and protection for indigenous cultures (<http://www.cidob-bo.org/>).

The timing of the mobilization of CIDOB into national politics, following only a few years after engagement by NGOs who brought significant new resources to the cause suggest that the NGOs in this case played more than a sideline support role. Rather, it is difficult to imagine how these particular groups of indigenous people could have mobilized as an organized force in national politics without the resources and facilitation of NGOs. It is also important that the type of NGO that targeted indigenous groups in the eastern lowlands tended to be focused on the activities that are most likely to boost participation, make connections between communities, and facilitate mobilization.

An example to illustrate this point is the involvement of an NGO called *Centro de Promocion Agropecuaria Campesina* (CEPAC, or Center for the Promotion of Peasant Agriculture) with the indigenous communities around Santa Cruz de la Sierra<sup>14</sup>. CEPAC is a Bolivian NGO that began working in several indigenous communities in 1990, offering literacy training programs and programs targeting hunger and poverty alleviation. In 1992, CEPAC shifted its focus from standard development programs toward *capacitacion* or capacity building, a type of community organizing that was seen as very desirable by international donors. According to one of the founding directors, this shift in strategy was driven in part by the availability of international funding for such projects (author interview Jan. 2007).

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<sup>14</sup> For a colorful (not academic) description of the role that NGOs played in the “capacity building” of the eastern lowland indigenous movement, see the 2005 memoir of NGO worker William Powers, titled *Whispering in the Giant’s Ear: A Frontline Chronicle From Bolivia’s War on Globalization*. Power details his role working for an NGO called FAN (*Fundacion Amigos de la Naturaleza* or the Foundation for Friends of Nature) that was central in the organizing of the Amazonian tribes.

In 1993, CEPAC applied for and received a grant for “institutional strengthening” from the international NGO International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) providing \$13,000 to fund five general assemblies, paying for all transportation, food and lodging for delegates (crucial since most delegates could not afford to travel on their own). Over the next few years, the group met frequently to discuss problems, goals, and strategies, and make connections. The grant also funded an investigation of Guarani conditions conducted by four young Guaranis doing surveys (Postero 2007, 71).

Even though there were some disputes over whether CEPAC shared its funding for indigenous groups as well as it could have, the groups realized that outside funding was available and, with training from NGOs, learned how to frame their needs in terms that were interesting and appealing to international donors. For better or worse, with the development of new sources of funding came a whole new set of rules for procuring it. The new organizations trying to obtain funding for tackling problems in the indigenous communities became mired in flow charts, project proposals and all the bureaucratic paperwork that is designed to improve accountability in aid relationships. But the new resources that followed represented a dramatic change in the organizing capacity of the indigenous groups.

### **The Highland Indigenous Movement: CSUTCB**

In contrast to the lowland indigenous movement, the Aymara and Quechua Indians of the Bolivian highlands had access to more organizational resources prior to

NGO engagement. The types of NGOs that targeted the highland indigenous communities were also more mixed in their orientation, including some NGOs focusing solely on service provision and others with a strong emphasis on community development and capacity building. The highland indigenous movement did experience a spike in both influence and participatory activity following the big influx of new NGO activity in the 1980s, and both NGO involvement with the indigenous communities of the altiplano and the intensity of the mobilization as a social movement have continued to rise in recent years.

The most powerful organization in the contemporary indigenous social movement is the *Confederacion Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB). The CSUTCB as a formal organization has its roots in the 1970s. The precursor of the CSUTCB, a para-statal organization called the *Confederacion nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CNTCB) was an important actor in the pact between the military and campesinos. By 1979, the CSUTCB had come into its own as an organization to express the rights and needs of indigenous and campesinos. The first conference for campesino unity was held in June of 1979, sponsored by the labor union organization the COB and including representatives of the Kataristas (an early indigenous rights group) and other labor groups, and the CSUTCB was formed. Although the name of the organization invokes images of class consciousness more than indigenous identity, the CSUTCB was clearly an Indian organization, with the image of an Aymara leader as their symbol (García Linera 2004).

As this timeline and the name of the organization suggest, the line between the labor and indigenous movements is not always clear. Postero calls the CSUTB the “strongest segment of the labor movement” and does not characterize the organization as primarily indigenous (2007,137). However, Garcia Linera, who wrote a definitive work on the contemporary Bolivian social movements in 2004, clearly argues that the CSUTCB is an indigenous movement primarily, but with ties to organized labor. He cites that even though the CSUTCB was organized out of the COB, from its inception it laid claim to the historic traditions and identity of indigenous people in a way that the COB and other labor organizations avoided. In more recent years, as the radical Aymara nationalist and former Katartista guerilla fighter Felipe Quispe took over leadership, the indigenous nature of the organization was unquestionable.

However, the legacy of connection with organized labor, and more importantly, the organization of many highland indigenous communities into hierarchical syndicate structures, already linked to national movements, meant that the highland groups had both organizational experience and capacity prior to the involvement of NGOs that the lowland groups lacked. Thus, although there is strong evidence that NGOs played a role in facilitating some of the new mobilization, it is less clear that these groups would not have mobilized without NGO assistance. However, the highland indigenous movement, like their lowland counterparts, benefited from the new international focus on indigenous issues from organizations like the United Nations and international NGOs, and the subsequent flow of NGO resources to highland campesino communities.



This history and organizational capacity allows for very effective mobilizing. For example, Garcia Linera describes the internal sanctioning within the CSUTCB as being very strong. There is a moral obligation for all members of the community to participate combined with punishments for the families of those who shirk. Sanctions can range from fines to public punishment, according to community traditions (2004, 167).

The types of NGOs that worked with indigenous communities on the altiplano were more mixed than those that worked with the lowland Indians. Following the neoliberal reforms that cut government services during the 1980s, many NGOs stepped up to help administer the funds of a new Social Emergency Fund (FSE), providing basic services such as food and health care to mitigate the worst of the effects of the neoliberal reforms. These NGOs did not have the same political goals of boosting participation and community involvement as others did, however capacity building NGOs also existed. In particular, several prominent NGOs work with women to encourage economic independence and political involvement.

The different branches of the indigenous rights movement in Bolivia coalesced in dramatic fashion in 1990, when lowland Indians staged a dramatic and highly visible march from the lowlands to La Paz. This march, called the *Marcha por Territorio y Dignidad* (March for Territory and Dignity), was joined by Andean groups and represented the first coordinated, national protest of indigenous groups as a unified actor.

In fact, the website for CIDOB today claims that it is an national organization, with no mention of the “oriente” in its acronym. However the organizations CIDOB and CSUTCB remain separate entities, although they do coordinate, and they are increasingly a force to be reckoned with – as the dramatic events of the “water war” of 2000, and the “gas war” of 2003 made clear.

### **NGOs and Labor**

Unlike the movement for indigenous rights, which had precursors in the 1970s but largely took off in the 1990s following large-scale involvement by NGOs, organized labor in Bolivia was a force to be reckoned with throughout much of the twentieth century. The earliest urban labor organizations in La Paz date back to the 1880s (Garcia Linera 2004, 30). But the core strength of organized labor in Bolivia has always been in the mining communities of the altiplano. Bolivian tin miners in particular have been the focal point for one of the most militant working classes in Latin America. They played a pivotal role in the 1952 revolution that resulted in nationalization of mines and improvements in health, education and welfare benefits for workers. They also were key actors in bringing down the military dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer (1971-1978).

A series of events in the 1980s gutted the labor movement in crippling ways. The return to democracy in 1982 was followed by sustained economic crisis that hit the mining industry particularly hard. The newly democratic government followed a hard-line neoliberal economic plan, seeking to limit government spending and

liberalize the economy. The spending of the military regime also caught up with the new democracy in the form of staggering indebtedness to foreign banks. The government started printing bank notes and by the mid-1980s the country was experiencing hyperinflation.

In 1985 the state cut back on subsidies on meat, bread, sugar, and rice, which had long been available through company stores (Alexander 2005, 160). Wage freezes and skyrocketed prices effectively reduced many miners to near total poverty. Tin prices also collapsed, forcing the shut-down of many of the largest mines and sparking a massive relocation of miners from the highlands to other parts of the country, including the outskirts of La Paz and, increasingly, the agricultural lowlands of the Cochabamba and Santa Cruz departments. This demographic change was profound, and a whole new category of urban poverty was experienced in Bolivia for the first time.

#### *NGO Type*

Most of the NGOs that built strong ties with the labor movements came into their own to administer the Social Emergency Fund. These were NGOs providing services to fill in gaps where the cuts in government services were most severe. Others provided small business development and micro-credit loans, but few NGOs that directly overlapped with labor organizations were of the “capacity-building” type that focused on indigenous groups, making it less likely that they were central in facilitating labor mobilization.

### *The COB*

The best known and most powerful social movement organization in the labor movement is the COB the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (Bolivan Labor Center). The COB was founded shortly after the 1952 revolution as an organization to coordinate existing syndicates and organizations. The initial declarations included demands for nationalization of the mines and railroads and the implementation of agrarian reform. In 1954, the first national congress of the COB was held and the organization's position as the central worker's organization in the country was solidified.

During the period of revolutionary government from 1952 to 1964, the COB played an unusual role in that it "co-governed" with the MNR (the political party of the revolution, the *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* or National Revolutionary Movement). This was the era during which the COB reached the height of its political power and influence, successfully pushing for nationalization of the mines and securing legal protection for unions and workers. The leaders of the labor movement after the 1952 revolution came primarily from mining communities. They tended to be relatively highly educated as access to education in mining communities was a high priority of the revolution.

In 1964, however, a coup led by Barrientos ended the period of co-governance and strong ties between the COB and the state, forcing the COB into an oppositional role that would become very familiar. Starting in the 1970s, the COB took on a new role as leaders in the resistance to military rule.

In many ways the COB has set the precedent for the normalization of protest as part of the repertoire of political participation. Dating back to its time as the leader of organized resistance to military rule, the COB has utilized and perfected the strategies of protest: general strikes, road blocks, and mass protests and demonstrations (Garcia Linera 2004).

This rich history of organization, access to education for workers, engagement with the government, and available capable leadership meant that when NGOs arrived on the scene en masse in the 1980s, they were not seen as central to the mobilization or political awakening of workers. Rather, they were seen as helpful intermediaries and service-providers who might be able to mitigate some of the worst effects of the economic situation crushing many former miners in the wake of shut-downs, relocation, and government withdrawal of services.

In fact, unlike the indigenous movements, the power of organized labor as an effective social movement has been waning. The percentage of the workforce organized into labor syndicates has declined steadily since the 1980s. Although the number of manufacturing workers climbed from 117 thousand in 1986 to 393 thousand in 1997, and the number of miners rose from 41 thousand in 1985 to 63 thousand in 1997, fewer and fewer of these workers are represented by labor syndicates (Garcia Linera 2004, 71). In 2004 an estimated 80 percent of miners worked for “cooperatives” or are technically self-employed, earning a small proportion of the ore they dig up and sell to the mining companies. The other traditional mainstays of COB support were also restructured in ways that limited the

COB's reach. The privatization of the railways, the state hydrocarbons company and the state bank meant that thousands of previously organized workers lost their collective bargaining power. As the COB weakened, new unions were organized by sector, but the national cohesion of the movement was considerably weakened.

The late 1990s and early years of the twenty first century were also characterized by leadership struggles in the COB, in particular between the traditional labor elite and their vision of the COB as an essentially class-based movement with miners as the main pillar of support, and the newly powerful campesino organizations who sought a stronger role for indigenous groups within the organization.

Nonetheless, the COB played an important role in the protests and demonstrations that brought Bolivia international attention beginning in 2000, with the Cochabamba "water wars" and nation-wide roadblocks, and culminating in the violent clashes of "Black October" of 2003. In 2000, as many other sectors of Bolivian society began to organize and protest in the streets of the major cities, and on the roads between, the COB joined in the struggle.

In 2003, the COB continued to play a role organizing and supporting the various groups that mobilized to protest against the government, but again, the COB was not the central organizer, but one of many different groups mobilizing and confronting the state. The year started with coca growers blocked roads in the chapare region, thousands of retired workers marched on La Paz. As tensions mounted, the government offered a small wage increase for public sector workers, but it was promptly rejected as inadequate. By October, however, when the stakes of the

confrontation between the various protesters and the state were becoming clear, the COB became fully involved, using its long history of mobilization and ties with base organizations to rally support for massive protests.

### **Conclusion**

The comparisons of these three social movements, and the role that NGOs played in facilitating their organization and mobilization, helps illustrate several key points. First, some NGOs are involved in more political activities than others, and the more political activities seem to have a larger impact on changing patterns of participation than other activities. Second, the resource differential – that is, the difference between the level of resource pre and post NGO involvement – is a crucial indicator of the degree to which NGOs can be implicated as a driving causal factor in the changes observed. Where the resource differential is the largest, NGO activity has the strongest effect.

## Chapter 5

### NGOs, Elections, and Political Change<sup>15</sup>

Do NGOs tend to be a force for political change or do they tend to support the status quo? The previous chapters have demonstrated a relationship between NGOs and changes in patterns of political participation. In this section, I shift attention to one of the key outcomes of participation: voting behavior. This section of the dissertation focuses on the consequences of NGO activity for local election outcomes, exploring the relationship between NGO activity and changes in support for incumbent political parties in municipal elections.

Despite their differences, most scholars fundamentally agree that NGOs have political consequences since almost all NGO work involves some sort of relationship with existing governments. However, there is surprising disagreement about what these political effects might be. Certain scholars claim that NGOs can challenge and undermine extant political authority by organizing and giving voice to previously marginalized groups, and by producing alternative sources of public services, which may de-legitimize a government. In this view, NGOs are a powerful force for political change. Others argue that NGOs help buttress the political status quo. Studies in this vein argue that politicians easily co-opt and claim credit for an NGO's services. The funds and concomitant constraints that flow from international donors may also dilute

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<sup>15</sup> A previous version of this chapter, titled "Supporters or Challengers? The Effects of NGOs on Local Politics in Bolivia" was co-authored with Clark C. Gibson and presented at the 2006 meeting of the American Political Science Association in Philadelphia, PA.



an NGO's original, more confrontational efforts and thus lead to support for or acquiescence to political incumbents.

The predicted effects of international NGOs (INGOs) are likewise contradictory: on one hand INGOs' prestige and resources can make them formidable challengers to entrenched politicians, while on the other hand INGOs may be reluctant to participate in local politics, making them de facto supporters of incumbents. Since most studies of NGOs depend on single case studies, systematic, empirical tests of these opposing propositions are rare.

I argue that NGOs can both support and challenge political authority, depending on the size of the population in the area in which they work; scale matters to NGO political effects. Unlike others who believe that politicians can easily co-opt NGOs at the local level, I hypothesize that NGOs in smaller jurisdictions should be more successful when they seek to act as training grounds for democratic behavior, as mechanisms for building trust among neighbors, or as venues for airing shared grievances in order to gain strength in numbers and take action. But fomenting such personal interactions and translating those interactions into political action should be far more difficult in larger settings. That is, NGO activity in smaller jurisdictions is more likely to challenge the political status quo, i.e. incumbents, while NGO activity in larger jurisdictions should support them. I also argue that the characteristic feature of INGOs – large, few, visible, staffed by professionals, and located in larger cities – make them unlikely to foment challenges to incumbents.

I test these hypotheses using the dataset of all 314 municipalities in Bolivia described in Chapter 3, with the addition of local electoral data. Specifically, I test for a correlation between changes in numbers of NGOs over a five-year period and changes in the vote share of incumbent mayors over two elections (1999 and 2004). By using a clear measure of political consequences – incumbent vote share – and by using the entire set of municipalities in Bolivia, I am able to test rigorously the divergent claims found in the literature regarding the political effects of NGOs. I find support for the scale hypothesis of NGO effects: NGO activity in smaller jurisdictions reduces the vote share of incumbents (the “challenge” hypothesis), while it has a positive effect for incumbents in large jurisdictions (the “status quo” hypothesis). I also find that INGOs decrease or do not affect vote shares of the incumbents, but that this effect is largely driven by the four largest Bolivian cities. In the bulk of municipalities, INGOs show no consistent effect on incumbent vote share.

I believe this is the first project to test systematically the political impact of NGOs on local level politics. That is, while other important work has explored how international funding for NGOs affects presidential votes at the local level, no other study has used elections for local office to explore NGOs’ political consequences. Since NGOs operate at the local level -- and indeed much of the literature regarding them explicitly theorize about how they influence local level phenomena -- this study uses an especially appropriate research design.

## **Roadmap**

This chapter is presented in six parts. First, I discuss the competing views on the political effects of NGOs. Second, I present the argument that the effect of NGOs is conditional on the size of the jurisdiction and detail the testable hypotheses. Third, I offer a brief discussion of the political context of Bolivia and the choice of Bolivia as a case. Fourth, I explain the data and measurement, and fifth, I discuss the results of statistical tests of the hypotheses, followed by conclusions.

### **The Political Effects of Non-governmental Organizations**

Although scholars have produced numerous mechanisms by which NGOs challenge, embrace, or ignore political authority, they have not generally employed research designs beyond the case study or the analytic review of cases. Case studies generate excellent hypotheses about the relationship between NGOs and politics, but are more limited in their ability to identify widespread patterns. And while NGOs come in great variety, even case-based synthetic reviews of NGOs use generalities that imply more systematic study may be possible. Indeed, the pioneering work of Brown, Brown, and Desposato (Brown, Desposato, and Brown n.d., 2005; Brown, Brown and Desposato n.d., 2002) demonstrates that fundamental arguments about the political nature of NGOs can be tested rigorously. Because I refer to their work, it is useful to examine it more closely.

Brown, Brown and Desposato examine how external funds funneled through NGOs affect politics in Brazil. More specifically, they test the correlation between the

funding of local NGOs by a World Bank supported project in the Brazilian state of Rondonia (Planafloro) and vote change in the presidential and gubernatorial elections (1994 and 1998) using municipal level data. Given that Rondonia is considered a conservative-center stronghold, they use change of vote shares for candidate on the left as a measure of political change. They find that increases of World Bank funding for NGOs through Planafloro decreased the left candidates' vote shares at the gubernatorial level, but increased the left's vote for the president. In other words, they find support for the "challenge" hypothesis in presidential voting and support for the "status quo" hypothesis in gubernatorial voting.

They argue that this finding is driven by the logic of patronage politics. While governors did not control the Planafloro's money directly, they could control when it was released. In their qualitative fieldwork, Brown, Brown and Desposato heard from many sources that governors showed up at events funded by NGOs to claim credit for them. The authors argue that the presidential candidates did not claim credit for these NGOs' for two reasons. First, candidates would have little incentive to visit the "remote, rural, less-populated regions to claim credit for a relatively small program" (Brown, Brown, and Desposato forthcoming, 6). Second, the national government had been largely excluded from the Planafloro program; the World Bank had turned over the management and resources to the state government of Rondonia. This gave the governor -- and not the president -- the incentive to claim credit for the benefits of the program. Some left party leaders also spoke of using Planafloro money at the municipal level to help in organizing for their candidates.

In a later paper, Brown, Brown, and Desposato go one step further. Using the same research design, they test if the type of NGO matters to these contests. They code NGOs for their ideology, political mobilization, and populations served, and then include these new variables in their presidential vote share model (n.d.). They find that the share of external World Bank funds given to NGOs whose target populations were rubber tappers and indigenous peoples had a significant positive effect on the vote share of the leftist presidential candidate.

These studies break new ground in the study of NGOs because they use a precisely defined variable for political change, a large sample, and a clear measure of NGO activity (World Bank financing). I seek to add to this style of work but ask a different and perhaps more fundamental question about the effect of NGOs on political outcomes, which I address using a countrywide dataset from Bolivia.

### **A New Approach and Hypotheses**

Rather than examine only the influence of external finance on party share voting, I explore what I believe is the more fundamental question: How do NGOs affect local politics? The variable of concern used by Brown, Brown and Desposato is external financing for NGOs, which reflects an important part of the literature that seeks to explain why NGOs should not challenge political authority. But this factor does not measure the more general question of whether NGOs – with or without external money – cause change. Essentially, the finely grained data they use force them to proxy NGO activity with the external funds variable. The proxy is reasonable

since, in the case of Rondonia, most of the NGOs were created in response to the World Bank project. Nevertheless, external money may or may not be correlated with the level of NGO activity.

While the level of the Brazilian state is certainly closer to the electorate than the federal level, these politics are still distant from the day-to-day lives of constituents. That is, Brown, Brown and Desposato use the measure of the governor's and president's vote share, measured at the municipal level to explain the effect of NGOs. Governors and presidents may or may not claim credit for a local improvement, but it seems a little unlikely that residents would tie these benefits to such high offices. An alternative measure, such as municipal election outcomes, may be more appropriate to capture the relationship between NGOs and citizens. Given the numerous authors asserting the beneficial effects of associational activity, it could be argued that the importance of horizontal linkages may be made more manifest in a more local political arena. This indicates that the scale of the political effects may be important in studies of NGOs.

Finally, the Planaflo funding data of Brown, Brown and Desposato allows a very precise measure since the World Bank recorded the exact dollar amount they gave to NGOs in each of the 40 municipalities in Rondonia. The limitations of such data, however, are that the effect of NGOs is limited to that specific project, in that particular state. Only those NGOs receiving funding are counted, and nearly all of the NGOs were created only due to the external funds. A measure of NGOs' political

effect with greater external validity would include the entire country of investigation and all NGOs, whether internally or externally funded.

This study attempts to improve on the Brown, Brown and Desposato work by using change in the number of NGOs as the variable of interest rather than change in external financing; using change in mayoral vote share to examine how NGOs affect politics at the local level; and using all NGOs in all the municipalities in Bolivia in the period 1999-2004 to capture internally and externally funded NGOs for an entire country.

I assume a simple model in which incumbent politicians prefer to use NGOs to help them remain in office; NGO activity can challenge or support incumbents. I present two sets of hypotheses: First, I hypothesize the effect of NGO activity is dependent on the size of a political jurisdiction's population. NGO activity in smaller jurisdictions increases challenges to the incumbent. NGO activity in larger jurisdictions helps the incumbent. That is, both sides of the debate on the political effects of NGOs can be correct, depending on the scale of the jurisdiction. Second, the type of NGO matters. Since international NGOs usually locate in larger cities and thus are staffed by professionals who generally seek to avoid confrontation with politics, INGOs' activity will either support or have no effect on incumbent politicians.

### **Scale effects**

Unlike Brown, Brown and Desposato who find that NGOs matter differently at different levels of *electoral contest* (governor and president), I argue that the *size of a*

*jurisdiction's population* matters. While implicit in much of the work that emphasizes the benefits of associational life, no study has tested the idea that NGOs across the same level of political unit can have different effects. Imagine a city of a few thousand inhabitants. If only one or two of the new NGOs encourages people to question the existing hierarchy and organize for change, and even if only a few hundred people are involved, the effect in a small town could be dramatic. This increase in opportunities for associational life means a greater likelihood that discussions take place about political change, such as the idea of voting an incumbent mayor out of office.

In larger cities, however, these associational effects have a more diffuse effect on facilitating collective action, translating into a weaker effect on politics. These effects might still occur at the neighborhood level, but the translation of a few new NGOs into significant opposition is more difficult, and is more easily mitigated by political party activity, labor union activity, or other actors in larger municipalities. Mayors in larger cities are also better positioned to claim credit for the public service type work that some NGOs do. In a small town, it is easy to see that an NGO, and not the mayor, is providing a service. But in a larger city, the neighborhood health care clinics, microfinance loans and small business advice, orphanages for the city's poor and abandoned children, etc. may be more difficult to distinguish from government's efforts in a dense, impersonal urban setting. In the case of a children's home in La Paz, for example, the orphanage was officially run by the state, but had "contracted" with an NGO to provide all the services for the children, including food, teachers,



clothing, and health care. For a casual observer, the home was a government entity, but almost all of the funding and services came from an NGO. In this case, if the NGO is doing good work, the government looks better, and the incumbent stands to gain.

In sum, in smaller towns, I expect the “challenge” hypothesis (that NGOs tend to hurt incumbents) to hold, but in larger towns, I expect the “status quo” hypothesis (that NGOs tend to help incumbents) to hold. The hypotheses for NGO activity and scale are thus:

*Hypothesis 1:* Increases in NGO activity in smaller jurisdictions are associated with decreased support for incumbents (challenge hypothesis).

*Hypothesis 2:* Increases in NGO activity in larger jurisdictions are associated with increased support for incumbents (status quo hypothesis).

I also test the competing hypotheses from the literature with respect to international NGOs (INGOs):

*Hypothesis 3:* Increases in INGO activity are associated with increased support for incumbents (status quo hypothesis).

*Hypothesis 3a:* Increases in INGO activity are associated with decreased support for incumbents (challenge hypothesis).

### **The Case of Bolivia**

Bolivia offers an ideal setting for testing the impact of NGO activity on local politics for several reasons. First, Bolivia has a history of high levels of NGO activity. This density of NGO activity combined with extreme poverty, history of political

exclusion for poor and indigenous citizens, and fairly recent transition to democracy closely approximates the setting where NGOs are frequently theorized to have the most impact. Second, Bolivia is a country where local politics are tremendously important. Bolivia has a decentralized government that places substantial resources and responsibilities in the hands of municipal government. Since most of the theoretical effects of NGO activity are placed at the local level, it makes sense to test for their effects where the stakes of local politics are high.

As described in earlier chapters, NGOs have a rich and varied history of activity in Bolivia. A few religious NGOs were working in Bolivia as early as the 1950s, but a wave of new organizations appeared in the 1970s. These organizations were supported by European and North American donors and were seen as part of the leftist resistance to the dictatorship. A second wave of NGOs arrived in the 1980s, following the worldwide trend of the “NGO decade” in developing countries. These organizations were broadly diversified, including “think tank” centers for intellectuals, rural development organizations, radical grassroots organizing NGOs, health care providers, and environmental activist organizations to name a few.

Currently there are more than 660 NGOs registered with the Bolivian government, working in more than 150 municipalities across the country. NGOs work in sectors including agriculture, education, legal assistance, environmental work, communication, institutional development, health, sanitation, housing, and small industry support. Of the NGOs of Bolivian origin, 46% work in more than one sector.

International NGOs tend to concentrate on agriculture, health, education and institutional development (VIPFE 2006).

I test these hypotheses with a dataset of all 314 municipalities in Bolivia. Specifically, I look for a correlation between changes in numbers of NGOs over a five-year period and changes in the vote share of incumbent mayors over two elections in the same period (1999 and 2004). Using sub-national data is an especially powerful way to test the hypotheses, since we are able to hold constant national level features -- such as economic and political institutions -- unlike the vast majority of cross-national NGO studies.<sup>16</sup> I use OLS regression to estimate the hypothesized effects because all the measures approximate continuous variables and the distribution of the data fits the linear model.

### **Data and measures**

The dataset covers all 314 municipalities in Bolivia over two time periods: 1999 and 2004. The data is described in detail in Chapter 3, and in Appendix D. Here I focus on the variables that are unique to this analysis.

#### *Key Dependent Variable: Change in Incumbent Party Vote Share*

The main dependent variable, change in vote share for the incumbent political party, was created by taking the difference in vote share between 2004 and 1999 for

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<sup>16</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the advantages of sub-national comparative research, see Richard Snyder's 2001 article (Snyder 2001).

the political party that won the 1999 election. A few municipalities were excluded from the analysis because the winning party in 1999 did not run again in 2004.<sup>17</sup>

Bolivian municipal elections are run according to multiparty proportional representation rules. Voters cast their ballots for political parties, and the party receiving the most votes designates the mayor. Municipal electoral results are available from the Corte Nacional Electoral (CNE 2006).

A key advantage of this measure is that the incumbent party varies across municipalities. Thus the test the effect of NGO activity on the incumbent party independent is independent of party affiliation or location on the political spectrum.

#### *Independent Variable: NGO Activity*

This chapter, like the previous statistical analysis in Chapter 3, uses change in counts of NGOs as coded from the Bolivian government NGO registry as the primary independent variable. Although NGO counts is an admittedly blunt measurement tool, I believe that on average it is correlated with NGO activity for several reasons and, in fact, is superior to other available measures. First, unlike in some developing countries, the NGOs captured in the NGO registry in Bolivia are nearly all “real” organizations. It has been suggested, most notably in the context of Africa, that some NGOs are just paper organizations, registered with the sole purpose of gaining access to international funds, but with very few, if any, activities on the ground. This is not the

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<sup>17</sup> Another issue in comparing these two elections is that between 1999 and 2004 there was a substantial change in the rules for political parties. Prior to the 2004 election, only established political parties could run in municipal elections. In 1999, for example, 17 political parties ran in the municipal elections. In 2004, however, 387 political parties ran nationally, although the vast majority competed in only one municipality.

case in Bolivia. In all the interviews I conducted with NGO workers, government officials, and aid workers in Bolivia, I never heard any evidence to support this idea in Bolivia. Some organizations may be more effective than others, but they are all “real” organizations.

In an ideal world, I would like to directly measure the NGO activities that most influence political behavior. However, most NGOs in Bolivia are engaged in many different activities, some of which are more political than others. Unfortunately, given the available information on their activities, it is nearly impossible to separate out which NGOs are primarily “political” and which are not. However, since my argument is that NGOs open up opportunities for organizing, and facilitate collective action both directly and indirectly, capturing the trend in overall NGO activity is most crucial for this analysis. I believe that changes in NGO counts provide a reasonable – if rough – first cut at these relationships.

#### *Interaction Term*

I argue that NGO activity has different effects contingent on the size of the jurisdiction. To capture this in the model, I use a multiplicative interaction term to designate that the effect of change in NGOs is conditional on the size of the city. Because I believe the main divide to be between very small jurisdictions and jurisdictions over a certain size, I use a dummy variable for population size with the cut-off point established at the median city size in the sample, a population of 9957.5.

### *Control variables*

Ideally for this test, the elections of 1999 and 2004 would be very similar in all ways except for changes in NGO activity. Unfortunately for us, the dynamic and tumultuous world of Bolivian politics did not cooperate perfectly. The years between 1999 and 2004 witnessed the meteoric rise of the leftist political leader Evo Morales and his party the MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo* or Movement toward Socialism). To control for the possible coattails effect that might have influenced local election results, I include the percent of the vote from each municipality received by Evo Morales in the 2005 presidential election.

The model also includes controls for level of development, population size, and the baseline number of NGOs in the first period. Level of development is measured as the percent of houses in each municipality with electricity. The data were taken from the 2001 census (CNE 2006). Population is included in the model as a dummy variable equaling one for all municipalities smaller than 9957.5 and two for all towns larger. The baseline number of NGOs from 2000 is also included.

### **Results**

The results of the analysis offer significant support for the argument that NGOs have a systematic political effect in local elections and that the effect is conditional on the size of the jurisdiction. In towns smaller than the median population of 9957.5 people, I find that increases in NGO activity are associated with electoral losses for incumbent political parties. But in towns larger than the median population,

the effect is the opposite. Although incumbent parties tended on average to do very poorly in the second election, increases in NGO activity are associated with increasingly smaller losses for incumbent political parties. In other words, incumbents in municipalities where NGOs were more active, did much better compared to their counterparts in municipalities with little or negative change in NGO activity. Given the many overlapping claims in the literature on NGOs, it is very interesting to find support that these very different effects are happening in the same country in different sized cities.

**Table 5.1 OLS Regression: Change in Incumbent Political Party's Vote Share**

|   | <i>Model 1</i><br><i>All Observations</i> | <i>Model 2</i><br><i>Excluding Largest Four Cities</i> |
|---|---|--|
| Change in NGOs                              | -.023**<br>(.009)                         | -0.23**<br>(.010)                                      |
| Baseline NGOS (1999)                        | -.002<br>(.003)                           | .003<br>(.003)   |
| Population Dummy                            | .078***<br>(.017)                         | .067***<br>(.018)                                      |
| Population* Change in NGOs                  | .013**<br>(.005)                          | .013**<br>(.006)                                       |
| Level of Development                        | .045<br>(.041)                            | .054**<br>(.041)                                       |
| Vote share for MAS in Presidential Election | -.041<br>(.039)                           | -.057<br>(.040)  |
| Constant                                    | -.272<br>(.039)                           | -.265<br>(.040)  |
| N   | 296                                       | 292  |
| R-square                                    | 0.1283                                    | 0.1365   |

NOTE: Robust Standard Errors are provided in parentheses

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .001. \*\*\*p < .000. Two tailed tests.

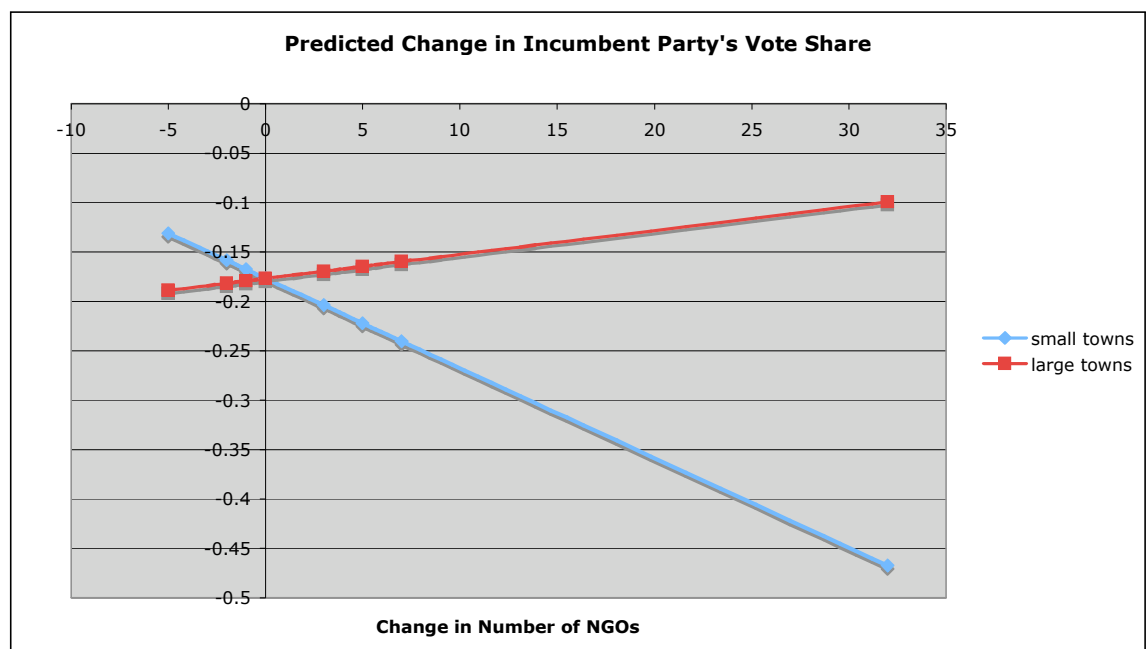
Table 5.1 presents the results for two estimations of the same equation. Model 1 includes all municipalities in which the incumbent party ran in the second election, a total of 296 of the 314 municipalities. Model 2 excludes the largest four cities: La Paz, El Alto, Santa Cruz, and Cochabamba. The distribution of municipalities by population is strongly skewed, with half the towns having fewer than 9957.5 inhabitants. Only these four cities have populations over 500,000. Given that larger cities tend to have more NGOs, it was important to confirm that the results were not driven by these few extreme cases. In fact, the models are remarkably similar. Only level of development changes in significance, becoming significant in the model without the largest cities.

The interaction term multiplying change in NGOs and the dummy for population size is positive and significant in both estimations, and both of its constitutive terms are also significant at the .001 level. Following the admonitions of Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2005) and Braumoeller (2004), both constitutive terms are included in the model and I rely on the predicted values to make meaningful interpretations of the coefficients.

Figure 5.1 shows the predicted change in vote share for the incumbent political party at different changes in the number of NGOs in a municipality. The values for change in number of NGOs were set at the deciles. All other variables in the model are held at their median. The results were generated using Clarify (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2001). The top line shows the predicted values for towns larger than the median, or over roughly 10,000. Although,



on average, incumbent parties in this category still lost votes over the previous election, an increase in NGOs clearly predicts that incumbent parties do better. In a municipality that lost 5 NGOs, for example, the model predicts the incumbent party loses 19% of the votes compared with their vote share previous election. However, in a municipality that gained 32 new NGOs, the incumbent party loses by a little less than 1%. It is important to remember that, because of the tremendous electoral gains made by Evo Morales and the MAS party, incumbents on average did very poorly in the second election. However, an increase in NGOs in the larger towns is strongly associated with much better performance for incumbent parties.



**Figure 5.1 Predicted Change in Incumbent Party's Vote Share**

The bottom line in Figure 5.1 charts the predicted changes in vote share for incumbent parties in very small towns. In these cases, an increase in NGOs has a strong negative effect on the vote share for incumbents. Towns with little change in

NGOs activity averaged a loss of about 15% vote share between the two elections. But a gain of 32 NGOs predicts a 46% change in vote share.

It is true that incumbent parties on average did slightly worse in the smaller towns. The mean change in vote share for small towns is -22%, while the mean vote change in large towns is -.14. However the range is quite similar for the two groups: a minimum loss of -.67 and a maximum gain of .25 for small towns compared with a minimum of -.60 and a maximum of .24 for large towns.

These results are robust with the inclusion of several alternative measures of the control variables, including percent agricultural workers (as a measure of urbanization), level of education, and the change in vote share for MAS in local elections.

### **The Effect of International NGOs**

The evidence on the effects of changes in international NGOs on incumbent political parties is inconclusive. Contrary to what was expected, I find that an estimation of the model using all municipalities where the incumbent party ran in both elections yields a negative and weakly significant coefficient. This suggests that international NGOs might in fact be hurting the electoral prospects for incumbent political parties. However, this result does not hold if the equation is estimated without the largest four cities, which have a high density of international NGOs. Only the variable for population is significant in both estimations.

There are several possible reasons for the lack of support for the hypothesis that international NGOs should be a benefit to incumbents. First, since most large

scale, big city NGOs receive international funding, the distinction between NGOs that are listed as “international” in the registry and those that are listed as “domestic” might be somewhat arbitrary. Better measures would include a measure of the size, strength and activities of the organizations as well as an indication of the sources of their primary funding. Second, the presence of international NGOs is highly concentrated in the four largest cities, where incumbents did quite poorly in the second election in the study. It is possible that the political situation in these cities is not representative of the effect of international NGOs in other large cities.

**Table 5.2 OLS: Change in International NGOs on Raw Votes for Incumbent Party**

|                              | <i>Model 3</i><br><i>All Observations</i> | <i>Model 4</i><br><i>Excluding Largest Four Cities</i> |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Change in International NGOs | -.018*<br>(.010)                          | -.004<br>(.010)  |
| Baseline NGOS (1999)         | .002<br>(.004)                            | -.001<br>(.004)  |
| Population (logged)          | .043***<br>(.011)                         | .044***<br>(.010)                                      |
| Level of Development         | .038<br>(.041)                            | .047<br>(.041)   |
| Vote share for MAS           | .000<br>(.000)                            | .000<br>(.000)   |
| Constant                     | -.571<br>(.090)                           | -.584<br>(.086)  |
| N                            | 296                                       | 292  |
| R-square                     | 0.1241                                    | 0.1414   |

NOTE: Robust Standard Errors are provided in parentheses

\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05. \*\*\*p < .001. Two tailed tests.

## Conclusions

In this chapter I first argued that NGOs affect politics. While many NGOs may not have larger political goals, their numbers and activities appear to generate important political consequences in democracies. Indeed, I find that NGOs have strong, systematic effects on local political outcomes across Bolivia. The answer to the question of *whether* NGOs have political effects is a clear yes.

I also argued that the scale of a jurisdiction's population should modify the political effects of NGOs. In municipalities with smaller populations more NGOs leads to electoral losses for the incumbent. I cannot infer the mechanism for this relationship given the current dataset – whether NGOs build trust, solve collective action problems, bring people together to air shared grievances and whether any of that directly translates into significant electoral changes. Yet the systematic effect is there and important for political outcomes. In larger towns, the NGOs do not reduce votes for the incumbent. The scale hypothesis and empirical tests, then, finds support for the two general and contradictory hypotheses found in the literature: NGOs can challenge *and* support incumbents, depending on the size of the population.

I believe that these empirical tests of the hypotheses found in the literature is an important step forward in establishing the fundamental political relationship between NGOs and the political arena. The next step in exploring this relationship is a focus on the mechanisms behind the effects this project discovered. I hope to begin such a study in the near future.

## **Chapter 6**

### **NGOs and Political Change:**

#### **Comparing Large and Small Municipalities**

This chapter offers an analytic narrative of the role that NGOs play in supporting the status quo or challenging it in four differently sized municipalities in Bolivia. The goal of this chapter is to explore the causal mechanisms of how NGOs affect incumbents in different settings, and to offer some illustrative examples of what communities of these sizes are like in Bolivia, what types of NGOs are working there, and how they affect politics in general, and voting behavior in particular. I look in detail at the NGOs working in each municipality, their involvement in politics, how the incumbent fared in recent municipal elections, and what changes followed the introduction of new NGOs in recent years.

I compare two small municipalities, Urubichá and Gutiérrez, with two larger municipalities, Saavedra and Montero. All four are located in the Eastern department of Santa Cruz; they all have several active NGOs; they are relatively poor economically; they have significant indigenous communities; moreover, the same political party, the MNR, has long dominated local elections in all four areas. In the two smaller towns, the influx of new NGOs in the mid to late 1990s, was followed by the first substantial electoral change in decades. The MIR, a center left party, won the plurality in both smaller municipalities in 1999. In the larger towns, on the other hand,

the MNR has continued to dominate local politics.

What best explains the difference in how the same political party performed in such similar municipalities? The large-n analysis in Chapter 5 suggests that NGO activity tends to hurt the status quo (ie: incumbent political parties) in very small municipalities, but it tends to support the status quo in larger municipalities. The comparison of two small and two larger municipalities in this chapter is designed to shed light on this issue of scale, and offer a fuller description of the causal mechanisms at work.

How does the size of a municipality affect the role that NGOs play in the political life of the community? As we move from smaller towns to larger ones, what changes about how NGOs influence politics? I argue that NGOs have a stronger effect promoting political change in smaller communities because the associational benefits of building social capital and helping ease collective action problems work better in small communities. Additionally, the chance of translating this new political energy into actual political change is easier in smaller settings.

This comparison also gives some traction on one of the key endogeneity issues raised by the large-n analysis. Is it scale that drives the results? Or is it differences in the types of NGOs that locate to smaller towns compared to larger ones? If NGO type were the main factor driving the different outcomes in differently sized communities, we would likely observe substantial differences in the types of NGOs working in the municipalities selected for this analysis. As it turns out, the NGOs are very similar, suggesting that scale has an independent effect.

The information for this chapter was gathered from primary and secondary sources. I started with the lists of NGOs working in each municipality from the 2005-2006 NGO registry published by the Bolivian government (VIPFE 2006). I then researched each organization through their website, publications, and additional non-public project-level data that was made available to me during interviews with staff at the Vice-Ministry office that coordinates the NGO registry in La Paz. This data was also helpful in identifying some of the sources of funding for the local NGOs. I also draw on interviews with NGO leaders in Santa Cruz and La Paz conducted during the summer of 2004 and in January 2007.<sup>18</sup>

### **Road Map**

This chapter is organized in several sections. First, I present a theoretical framework for the analysis, detailing the theoretical foundations for why scale matters, and addressing the main alternative explanations for the relationship between NGOs and incumbent party performance in municipalities of different sizes. In the next two sections, I detail the role of NGOs in small and large municipalities, respectively. Each case study addresses the NGOs working in the community, characteristics of the municipal government, and characteristics of the community itself with an eye toward how each factor affects incumbent party performance. Finally, I offer some

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<sup>18</sup> Two secondary sources were particularly helpful in this analysis. The first is a study conducted by CEADES, on of the NGOs that works in both municipalities. The study evaluates the effects of the reforms of the Law of Popular Participation, and gives helpful background information on the two municipalities and the role that NGOs play there. The second secondary source that has been tremendously helpful is Nancy Postero's 2007 book on Indigenous politics, *Now We Are Citizens*. Postero, a political anthropologist, offers a very rich analysis of the involvement of CEADES in "building capacity" among the Guaraní Indian communities, of which Gutiérrez is one.

conclusions and a discussion of the limitations of the current analysis and plans for future work.

### **Why Size Matters**

As discussed in Chapter 5, I assume a simple model in which incumbent politicians prefer to use NGOs to help them remain in office. NGO activity can challenge or support incumbents. I hypothesize the effect of NGO activity is dependent on the size of a political jurisdiction's population. NGO activity in smaller jurisdictions increases challenges to the incumbent. NGO activity in larger jurisdictions helps the incumbent. That is, both sides of the debate on the political effects of NGOs can be correct, depending on the scale of the jurisdiction.

Why would the size of a jurisdiction's population matter? What changes about how politics work, how citizens interact, and the role that NGOs play as we move from smaller municipalities to larger ones? More importantly, what explains the apparent threshold at municipalities of about 10,000 people in Bolivia? Why do NGOs appear to have the opposite effect on incumbents in towns above and below this threshold?

I argue that the *size of a jurisdiction's population* matters because the associational benefits of NGOs in building social capital and solving collective action problems work best in small groups and small communities. The first part of the explanation is driven by the scale of the interactions facilitated by NGOs: it is easier for smaller groups of people to build trust and social capital than it is for larger groups



of people to do the same. Thus, the opportunities for sharing ideas, understanding shared grievances, and overcoming collective action problems are greater the smaller the community in question. NGOs coming into very small communities have a much higher likelihood of success in organizing and empowering people.

Secondly, once social capital has been built, it is easier for newly empowered groups of citizens to have a direct impact on politics in smaller communities than larger ones. As the political jurisdiction gets larger, the organizational structures engaged in politics become more numerous, more complex and more overlapping, making it less clear that even a highly active small group could effect the changes they had in mind.

In other words, I argue that NGO activity in differently sized communities has different effects *because* of the differences in scale. In very small communities, the effect of NGO activity emboldens citizens to act for change. But in larger towns, even the same NGO activities have much weaker effects, and sometimes even the opposite effect when incumbents claim credit for the work that NGOs are doing, to their own electoral benefit. In smaller towns, just because of the fewer number of people, information is cheaper and the impact NGOs can have in terms of mobilizing people to participate and work for change is much greater.

### **NGOs, Social Capital, and the Advantage of Small Numbers**

Few discussions of social capital deal explicitly with the idea of scale, but there is good evidence from studies of collective action, and even from recent

experimental work on deliberative democracy, that the types of interactions between people that lie at the core of how we understand NGOs to affect politics might vary considerably in differently sized communities. In the groundbreaking work on the problems of collective action, Olson argues that “unless the number of individuals is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, *rational self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests*” (1965, 2; emphasis in original). But, as he suggests, in small groups other mechanisms are at work that facilitate coordination and can help overcome the free-rider problem. Simple peer pressure may do the trick – but it is easier to achieve in small groups.

Although a focus on the pure numbers of people involved in an interaction has lost popularity as an explanation for collective action because it oversimplifies many situations and fails to explain variation in outcomes on its own (Ostrom 1990), there are still good reasons to believe that scale is an important and that collective action problems are easier to overcome in smaller group settings. Even Ostrom, who refutes simple group size as the key to understanding how the collective action problems associated with common pool resources are overcome, admits, for example, that “the cost of organizing a group of farmers living near to one another and appropriating directly from the same canal is considerably less than the cost of organizing a large group of farmers many of whom never come into direct contact with one another” (1990, 189).

Recent work on deliberative democracy also suggests that scale may be an

important factor in how decisions are made and how groups work together. Experimental evidence shows that the advantages of deliberation in terms of producing better social welfare outcomes are only evident in groups of 3 people or less (McCubbins and Rodriguez 2006). After that, the effect disappears. Although the outcome they are interested in is a different one that we are focusing on here, the logic applies: it is much more difficult to build social capital through the opportunities of association in large communities than it is in small communities.

The number of people involved in an NGO workshop, for example, is not a direct indication of the amount of social capital that will be accrued. (And it is also true that NGOs can and do run workshops targeting small groups with common interests even in the biggest cities.) More importantly, some NGOs may offer higher quality opportunities for building social capital than others; some may have resources that allow them to work with more people, but in very effective ways. Numbers alone do not tell the whole story. However, the point is that in smaller municipalities on average, many of the barriers to facilitating collective action are lower.

Additionally, very small population size tends to go along with geographical isolation, a rural population base, and generally poor infrastructure. In a country like Bolivia where poor infrastructure and isolation are significant issues even in the largest cities,<sup>19</sup> the reality is life in very small municipalities is extremely isolated. NGOs, almost all of which have access to international funding, provide a valuable

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<sup>19</sup> For example, in order to drive from the capital city of La Paz to any of the other large cities, it is necessary to cross a stretch of unpaved road leaving El Alto, the adjoining city. In recent years, as protests and social movements have gained momentum in national politics, the major cities are frequently cut off from food and fuel supplies by road blockades.

new set of resources to traditionally excluded groups. In larger municipalities, on the other hand, the density of political and quasi-political organizations is much greater. Political parties, labor unions, NGOs, and neighborhood associations compete for opportunities to engage people into community activities. The result may be that social capital as a whole is higher in larger municipalities, but it also means that the singular impact of NGOs in building new social capital is frequently lower.

### **Translating Social Capital into Political Change:**

#### **The Second Advantage of Small Numbers**

In addition to making it easier for NGO activities to build social capital, very small political communities have a second advantage: It is easier to translate new political will into political action. Why would this be the case?

First, the empowerment or mobilization of new voices into politics can represent a critical change in voting blocks in very small municipalities, because of the small-scale nature of politics. For example, in the case of Urubichá discussed below, the challenger political party in the 1999 municipal elections won the plurality by only 177 votes.<sup>20</sup> As we will see in the case studies, those numbers are well within the range of the people in the target populations of the NGOs working in municipalities such as Urubichá. In this setting, it takes less than 200 people – people who all may know each other, talk to one another at meetings, and know each other’s families – to produce meaningful electoral change. The very fact that these numbers are so small

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<sup>20</sup> In Urubichá, the MIR party won 432 votes out of 1417 ballots submitted. There were 2044 registered voters, 39 null ballots, and 17 blank ballots for a total of 1361 valid ballots.

also encourages tackling political change by making it seem more feasible.

NGOs provide new resources, new spaces for organizing, and sometimes direct political training in the form of “capacity building” and workshops on citizens’ rights and responsibilities. These activities can help small groups feel empowered to work for political change in any setting, but in very small communities that change can seem more possible. The idea of convincing 200 people to change their vote is much less daunting than trying to convince 2,000 or 20,000. In the context of the Bolivian party system and electoral rules, which are characterized by multiparty elections and weak and fractionalized political parties, the thresholds for winning the plurality can vary widely between elections. So unlike two party systems, where elections are often decided by very small margins even in large districts, there is more uncertainty about the percentages of votes needed to win. This reinforces the idea that mobilizing for change should be easier in smaller voting districts (or smaller municipalities, in this case.)

In larger municipalities, on the other hand, these associational effects (ie: more social capital) have a more diffuse effect on politics. These effects might still occur at the neighborhood level, but the translation of a few new NGOs into significant opposition is more difficult, and is more easily mitigated by political party activity, labor union activity, or other actors in larger municipalities. So even if an NGO with a great “capacity building” program goes into a neighborhood, carefully chooses a small community with a history of political exclusion, and conducts workshops on participation, citizens’ rights and responsibilities, etc., in larger municipalities the

result on politics will be mitigated by many other factors. In a very small town, on the other hand, a similar group might easily turn into a critical voting block.

Second, the strategic interaction between NGOs, political parties and incumbents works differently in very small political communities. Specifically, the low cost of information in very small communities makes it much more difficult for politicians to claim credit for goods and services that NGOs provide. In a small town, it is easy to see that an NGO, and not the mayor, is providing a service. But in a larger city, the neighborhood health care clinics, microfinance loans and small business advice, orphanages for the city's poor and abandoned children, etc. may be more difficult to distinguish from government's efforts in a dense, impersonal urban setting. In the case of a children's home in La Paz, for example, the orphanage was officially run by the state, which had "contracted" with an NGO to provide all the services for the children, including food, teachers, clothing, and health care. For a casual observer, the home was a government entity, but almost all of the funding and services came from an NGO. In this case, if the NGO is doing good work, the government looks better, and the incumbent stands to gain.

### **Major Alternative Explanation: NGO Type**

What if the results showing differences in how NGOs affect incumbents in differently sized municipalities are actually caused by something unrelated to the scale of the political community? Is it possible that the types of NGOs that choose to work in very small municipalities are inherently more likely to promote change? If the

NGOs that locate in very small municipalities are disproportionately radical, political, and intent on mobilizing for change, then we would observe the pattern we do, but not for the reasons claimed in this project. Thus the major alternative explanation is that differences in how NGOs affect incumbent performance are driven by different types of NGOs and activities, not by scale. That is, it is possible that small towns attract more oppositional, more “capacity building” NGOs, which shake things up, while the NGOs that locate in larger municipalities are more likely to be part of the establishment.

This is certainly not an unreasonable suggestion. And there clearly are NGOs engaged in very different activities, which likely do have different effects on how people participate in politics and the decisions that they make. However, if these differences were the primary factor driving the opposite effects NGOs seem to have in differently sized jurisdictions, then we would only observe the differences where the more political “capacity building” and “institution strengthening” NGOs were working. Instead, all four municipalities have largely similar NGO activity (and have several very engaged “capacity building” projects), and still the incumbent political party met with very different fates. This is not direct evidence, and does not rule out the possibility that NGO type is an important factor in determining the political impact that NGOs have, but it does suggest that scale may also have an independent effect. That is, even where the types of NGOs are similar, their impact seems to be more of a challenge to the status quo in very small communities, and more of a support to the

status quo in large ones.<sup>21</sup>

### **Why the Particular Threshold of 10,000?**

I have made the argument that in smaller political communities, NGOs should tend to have a bigger impact in building social capital and in translating that capital into political change. And, in Chapter 5, I have shown statistical evidence that supports this argument with the finding that NGOs have the opposite effect on incumbents in municipalities smaller than 10,000 compared with municipalities over that size. Why does 10,000 appear to be the critical threshold? Why not another number?

First of all, in some sense this threshold is arbitrary. It is certainly not a fixed constant, and there are exceptions on either side. However, it does seem to indicate some important differences between large and small communities – and those differences seem to fall roughly into groups on either side of this divide. It is possible that the threshold – the actual size of the political community that divides effectively “small” communities from “large” ones – might be at a slightly different population level in other developing countries, but I maintain that critical differences in scale between “small and large” should be evident. This threshold in Bolivia is the result of the peculiar configuration of geography, economic realities, and infrastructure across

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<sup>21</sup> I am not making the case here that NGO type is irrelevant. It certainly makes sense that specific activities and projects, as well as political orientation, of NGOs is important for determining the political impact that they have. This hypothesis is one that I intend to examine further with the large-n data. I have recently acquired new raw data on NGOs’ projects in each municipality, which I will be able to use to achieve a much better coding of NGO type and activities that is currently available. However, I am also interested in whether scale has an independent effect. That is, if we hold NGO type constant, do NGOs have different effects in small and large communities? This question is the focus of this chapter.



Bolivia. Because of the distribution of these factors, 10,000 seems to be the critical point that distinguishes the very small, mostly rural, very isolated towns from the larger, more connected ones.

There are several factors that make the threshold of 10,000 in Bolivia plausible and compelling. First, it is near the median of population size for all municipalities in Bolivia. Of the 314 municipalities, about half are larger, and half are smaller.<sup>22</sup> Second, there is variation within the two categories. In the very smallest towns, increases in NGOs hurt incumbents the most. In the largest towns, increases in NGOs help incumbents the most, so the threshold is robust. The smallest municipalities are also almost all extremely physically and geographically isolated from one another and from the larger cities. Municipalities around 10,000 are moving away from the very small. Towns over 10,000 are more likely to be connected by major roads, more likely to have frequent or semi-frequent commercial connections with larger cities, etc.

### **NGOs, Local Government, and Scale in Four Municipalities**

The following section turns from the abstract to the concrete in order to look closely at four municipalities. I chose the municipalities profiled in this chapter based on several characteristics: population size, level of development, NGO density, incumbent partisan identity, and availability of secondary sources to supplement the information I have gathered. In order to parse out the importance of scale, and differences in NGO type and activities, I chose municipalities that were of different sizes, but with similar types of NGOs, similar NGO density, level of development and

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<sup>22</sup> The actual median is 9957.5.

incumbent partisan identity.

For comparison, I chose two very small municipalities, Urubichá and Gutierrez, and two larger municipalities, Saavedra and Montero. All four are located in the department of Santa Cruz, have high percentages of indigenous people, are economically poor, and have very active NGO involvement. In the two smaller municipalities, the surge in NGO activity that followed the popular participation reforms of the mid 1990s coincided with the first real shift in power in municipal elections in decades. In 1999, the Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR, *Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionaria*) won the plurality to defeat the The Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR, *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*), the oldest and biggest Bolivian political party.

In the larger municipalities, on the other hand, similar NGO activities did not result in a major shift in electoral politics. The MNR, which long dominated politics throughout the region, continued to win municipal elections in both 1999 and 2004 in both Saavedra and Montero. Although there is little direct evidence linking the NGOs in these two towns to the electoral fortunes of the incumbent party, these cases, taken together with the statistical patterns shown in Chapter 5, strongly suggest that scale is an important factor in shaping the political impact of NGOs.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, they also suggest that the finding of opposite effects on incumbent performance in large and

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<sup>23</sup> There are several reasons why more direct evidence is hard to come by. First, both NGOs leaders strive to maintain the image of independence. In the interviews that I conducted, all the subjects were very careful in their description of ties between NGOs and the local government. NGO leaders tended to emphasize their independence, but say that they had “good relations” with municipal governments, a suitably vague phrase. Second, municipal leaders are also reluctant to give much credit either way to NGOs, preferring to talk about their own strategies, differences in policies and funding. Municipal leaders also tend to be reluctant to blame their challenges on NGOs, who frequently hold the purse-strings to fairly substantial resources for the municipality.

small municipalities is not driven simply by differences in NGO type. The types of NGOs in all four towns – which I investigated after choosing the cases – are surprisingly similar.

### **NGOs in Small Municipalities**

#### ***Urubichá***

Urubichá is a small municipality in the province of Guarayos, in the department of Santa Cruz. It lies in the Amazon basin, and is surrounded by flat pampas and jungle. The climate is hot and humid year round, with summer rainy seasons that make transportation nearly impossible at times as the unpaved roads turn to deep mud. In 2001, the census recorded about 6,000 people living in the municipality. A little more than half the inhabitants live in the town of Urubichá, and the rest live in the surrounding rural areas. Nearly 90 percent of inhabitants are indigenous Guarayo Indians.

The main economic activities in the area are agriculture, small livestock holdings, hunting and forestry products but, almost the entire population lives below the poverty line (5677 of the 5960 residents) and about half of the population lives in “extreme poverty.” Less than one percent of the population was classified as having their basic needs fully satisfied in the 2001 census. In the whole town of Urubichá, there are two telephone booths, 26 televisions, 16 cars, and no paved roads. (INE/PNUD 2005).

Urubichá is the smallest municipalities profiled here, and the one in which the

links between NGOs and new political opposition are most clear.

### **NGOs in Urubichá**

In the mid 1980s, the indigenous organization CIDOB<sup>24</sup> (the Confederacion Indigena del Oriente Boliviano or Indigenous Conference of Eastern Bolivia) began working with the Guarayo leaders in three municipalities, including Urubichá. This was the first time that citizens of Urubichá were exposed to the growing national indigenous movement and the NGOs that supported it. Several leaders from the Guarayo community traveled to the conferences held by CIDOB, and the orientation of the community turned more outward as the national issues resonated with local issues of land rights, poverty, and lack of resources (Albo 1990: 289).

Soon after, NGOs began working directly in Urubichá (whereas previously they had played a support role through CIDOB). Today there are at least seven NGOs working in Urubichá. Two are international development NGOs based in the United States (Family Care International and World Vision); three are large Bolivian “institution strengthening” and “capacity building” NGOs which have projects in dozens of municipalities across Bolivia (CIPCA, CEASE, and CEADES); and two are small-scale regional NGOs, one that works on promoting indigenous artisan products (CIDAC), and one that is a traditional development NGO working on agricultural and social development (CIDESA).

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<sup>24</sup> I discuss the links between NGOs and CIDOB more completely in Chapter 4.

**Table 6.1 NGOs in Urubichá**

| <b>NGO</b>          | <b>Full Name</b>  | <b>Sectors</b>   | <b>Country of Origin</b> |
|---------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| CIPCA               | <i>Centro de Investigacion y Promocion del Campesinado</i><br>(Center for Investigation and Promotion of Campesinos)  | Institution Strengthening, Environment, Communication, Agriculture | Bolivia                  |
| CEASE               | <i>Centro de Estudios Para La Accion Socio Economica</i><br>(Center for Studies of Socio-Economic Action)   | Institution Strengthening  | Bolivia                  |
| CEADES/<br>Diakonia | <i>Colectivo de Estudios Aplicados y Desarrollo Social</i><br>(Collective for Applied Studies and Social Development)                                       | Indigenous rights; Institutional strengthening; capacity building  | Bolivia/<br>Sweden       |
| CIDESA              | <i>Centro Integral de Desarrollo Social Agropecuario</i><br>(Integrated Center for Social and Agricultural Development)                                     | Communication; Education and Culture                               | Bolivia                  |
| CIDAC               | <i>Centro de Investigación Diseño y Comercialización de la Artesania Cruceño</i><br>(Center of Research, Design, and marketing of the Santa Cruz Artisanry) | Artisan handicrafts  | Bolivia                  |
| FCI                 | Family Care International   | Education workshops promoting maternal health and sex education    | United States            |
| VMIB                | <i>Vision Mundial Internacional Bolivia</i><br>(World Vision)   | Poverty alleviation  | United States            |

Source: VIPFE 2006

One of the most influential NGOs in Urubichá is CIPCA, a large Bolivia-based NGO that focuses on indigenous issues. CIPCA was founded in 1971 by Xavier Albo, an anthropologist who has devoted his life to studying indigenous communities in Bolivia. Started under the dictatorship, CIPCA was originally part of the democratic opposition, but since the transition to democracy in 1982, CIPCA has continued to

grow, and has targeted its efforts toward rural campesino and indigenous groups, focusing mainly on rural development projects. Following the 1994 reforms that gave local groups more power in municipal government, CIPCA shifted its focus to working with municipalities and community groups at the municipal level to encourage democratic participation and local development. Today, CIPCA is working in 23 municipalities, most of which are very poor, rural, and indigenous.

CIPCA is one of the largest domestic NGOs in Bolivia, and it is involved in a wide range of projects. Much of its work focuses on indigenous communities and local development projects. For example, CIPCA in the department of Santa Cruz produces a radio program called “Tierra y Democracia” (Land and Democracy), issues press releases, articles, and radio programs on issues of concern to indigenous communities through a website called *Ondas Libres* (“Free Airwaves”) ([www.ondaslibres.org](http://www.ondaslibres.org)), it supports a department level organization for campesina women, and it consults with both municipal governments and oversight committees on issues of indigenous representation and community issues. CIPCA also works with producers of forestry and agricultural products, and helps promote markets for development. Additionally, CIPCA funds research and publishes articles and leaflets (CIPCA 2007a).

In 1998, CIPCA initiated contact with the Guarayo Indians in Urubichá. After a series of meetings with the Guarayo organizations (representing the Indians from the three neighboring municipalities that make up the Guarayo communities), and the municipal government, CIPCA formed a project to “contribute to the development of the municipality” (CIPCA 2007). In 2001, CIPCA announced a new strategic plan for

2001-2005 that focused on participatory projects to help the indigenous organizations formulate their own proposals for development and to raise the national profile of the issues facing these communities.

In Urubichá CIPCA also runs youth leadership workshops, serves as a consultant and “capacity building” (*capacitacion*) role for the oversight committee, supports and advises the indigenous organizations on writing proposals and negotiating with the national government, supports the development initiatives of artisan groups, works on strengthening citizen participation, advises political parties and indigenous organizations on including women on party lists, and serves as an adviser to the municipal government.

Like most of the larger Bolivian NGOs, CIPCA receives international funding from a staggering variety of sources including Swedish, English, Belgian, Spanish, Dutch, German, and French NGOs, official aid from the development agencies of Belgium, Ireland, Sweden, Holland, and France; and several other international organizations and NGO networks (Source: unpublished data given to author during an interview).

Several other Bolivian NGOs also started working in Urubichá in the late 1990s, including CIDESA, CIDAC and CEASE. CIDESA, formed in 1995, and today works in nine municipalities in the Santa Cruz regions on communication and culture projects (VIPFE 2006). CIDAC is another Bolivian NGO based in Santa Cruz. The mission of CIDAC is to support the artisan communities in the Amazon area. In Urubichá, the organization helps local weavers get fair prices for their goods in the

markets in Santa Cruz, and provides training on accounting, saving, and other basics of the dollar economy. CIDAC primarily targets women for its assistance program, and many of the women have found their involvement with CIDAC to be transformative as they gain more control over their livelihood and resources, and feel empowered to change their own lives (Healy 2001, 297).

Two other NGOs work primarily on *capacitación* (capacity building) or *fortalecimiento insitucional* (institutional strengthening). These NGOs, both of Bolivian origin, are CEASE and CEADES. Most of this type of NGO in Bolivia formed after the reforms of the Law of Popular Participation in the mid-1990s and are directed toward helping previously excluded groups – frequently indigenous communities – navigate the new requirements of representation and participation in local governance, including “capacity building” workshops, writing proposals for local development projects, and going through the paperwork to become legally recognized as community organizations with the accordant rights of representation on the oversight committee. CEASE is a medium-sized regional organization, working in twelve municipalities around Santa Cruz, including Urubichá, similar projects.

CEADES, another of these capacity-building NGOs, is a small Bolivian organization based in Santa Cruz. CEADES was founded in 1991 with the goal of promoting “social, economic, cultural and political development through technical assistance and projects that will benefit the community” (Diakonia 2007). In addition to capacity building projects, CEADES works with the Chiquitano and Guarayo Indians on issues related to environment and the sustainable management of forestry



resources and on issues of indigenous rights. CEADES has been a partner organization with Diakonia, a large Swedish development NGO since 1996, and receives most of its funding through Diakonia. In cooperation with Diakonia, CEADES introduced a capacity building project in Urubichá from 1998-2001, consisting mostly of participation workshops.

Additionally, two major international NGOs work in Urubichá, FCI (Family Care International) and World Vision. FCI, a U.S.-based NGO founded in 1987, began working in the municipality in 2000, working primarily on women's health issues including sex education, education about contraception, abortion, and prenatal care. FCI also seeks to bring issues of maternal health to the forefront of policy discussions. FCI started working in Bolivia in 1996, and more recently formed connections with CIDOB (the organization of lowlands indigenous groups) to reach the indigenous communities surrounding Santa Cruz. In 2001, working with CIDOB, FCI developed a series of teaching materials designed specifically for use with the lowland indigenous communities. These pamphlets, brochures, and presentation materials, together with a curriculum to address the needs of the area, were presented by health educators throughout the indigenous communities (FCI 2007).

World Vision is a large Christian NGO with operations worldwide. It is based in the United States and was founded in the 1950s by an American doctor to help orphans of the Korean War. Today World Vision is one of the largest international Christian NGOs in the world, and works in countries all over the developing world, including Africa, Asia and Latin America, focusing on disaster relief and poverty

alleviation. The Bolivia office that works in Urubichá is funded and directed by the German program office. Regionally, they have many projects in the province of Guarayos, of which Urubichá is one municipality. In Urubichá specifically, they work on health projects, including a campaign to provide medical checkups and fluoride treatments for children; improving access to clean drinking water (improvements to the provision network for water was recently extended to 15 households, reaching 96 people) (World Vision 2007); and education programs, including literacy training and small agriculture management.

### **Gutiérrez**

The municipality of Gutiérrez, like Urubichá, is located in the department of Santa Cruz. Gutiérrez is in the southeast of the department, in the province of Cordillera, at the base of the foothills to the Andes. The geography is mixed, ranging from an altitude of about 450 meters in the planes to about 1700 meters in the hills. The climate is not nearly as tropical as Urubichá, and the area can get short snowstorms in winter and serious droughts in summer.

Gutiérrez is larger than Urubichá, with a population of nearly 12,000, slightly over the threshold for “small” municipality, but is very similar to smaller towns in terms of isolation, poverty, and the impact that NGOs had in terms of bringing in new resources and mobilizing new political voices. The majority of the population are Guaraní Indians. Nearly 80 percent identify themselves as of Guaraní origin, and about 67 percent speak Guaraní as their first language (INE PNUD 2005). As in

Urubichá, poverty is a major concern in Guterriez. Of the nearly 12,000 inhabitants, 10,594 of them live below the poverty line, with 6,267 living in “extreme poverty.” Less than 10 percent of houses have electricity and barely 2 percent have their “basic needs satisfied” according to the census. Gutiérrez, although larger in population, is more rural than Urubichá, with very small communities spread throughout the municipality (INE/PNUD 2005). The economy is primarily based on agriculture, with small farms producing corn, beans, squash, and yucca, but most are grown for subsistence reasons, not for market.

### **NGOs in Gutiérrez**

As of 2006, there are nine NGOs working in Gutiérrez. Seven of the nine are Bolivian NGOs, although they all receive funding from international sources. The NGO scene in Gutierrez is very similar to that of Urubichá, including a mix of international and Bolivian organizations, the majority of which are at least partially involved in capacity building and institutional strengthening. The NGOs of national origin include CIPCA, the indigenous rights organization founded by Xavier Albo in the early 1970s (discussed at length in the section on Urubichá above); CEASE and CEADES, both of which also work in Urubichá; and four NGOs not previously mentioned, CEDETI, FODEI, FONDECO, and PROCESO.

CEDETI is a medium sized Bolivian NGO based in Santa Cruz that works in promoting rural agro-industry, indigenous land issues, and strengthening institutions in over 20 municipalities in the Santa Cruz region. CEDETI was founded in 1988 and is

a partner to the large Swedish development NGO, Diakonia, which supplies most of its funding. Like other NGOs of this type, CEDETI runs workshops, advises the municipality on its strategic plan and budget proposals.

FODEI is the smallest NGO working in Gutiérrez. It runs workshops for women on infant care and health issues, and has similar programs in three neighboring municipalities.

FONDECO is a microfinance NGO. It is a partner organization to the world famous Grameen Foundation, the Bangladeshi NGO whose founder, Muhammad Yunus, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. FONDECO works in 20 municipalities in Bolivia and is only the second Bolivian microfinance organization to be included in the Grameen network (after Pro Mujer Bolivia, a prominent Bolivian NGO that makes small loans to women).

PROCESO is another medium-sized NGO that does institutional strengthening work. It is a member of a nation-wide network of NGOs called AIPE (*Asociación de Instituciones de Promoción y Educación*, the Association of Support and Education Institutions). It works on environmental education, literacy, infant health, strengthening local leadership, education on issues of citizens rights and responsibilities, and organizational strengthening.

The two international NGOs with projects in the area are Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and World Vision, both of which work on poverty alleviation and economic and social development projects. World Vision has been working in Bolivia since 1981 and has multiple ongoing projects in Guttierrez. Recently, they have

developed Area Development Project (ADP) plans for two areas of the municipality, Tekove and Tembipe, both of which encompass several rural communities. The projects include health, education and agro-ecology initiatives, such as providing fluoride, dental and medical checkups for children, literacy programs, and training for soil management for agriculture.

In addition to more standard development service provision, World Vision is also involved in fostering “community development” in Gutiérrez, including workshops on organization, management and community leadership, and financial administration. And, as a Christian organization, World Vision also practices ministry, listing the number of people who have participated in bible study run by the organization.

The other main international NGO, Catholic Relief Services, was also founded in the United States, is a religious organization, and works in developing countries around the globe. In Bolivia, CRS works in nearly a third of all municipalities (around 75 of the 314). CRS is also the oldest international NGO in Bolivia, and has been working continuously in the country since 1955. Today, the organization has five main priorities in Bolivia: 1) youth leadership and education (in collaboration with the Catholic church organization Caritas), 2) improving health, 3) addressing HIV/ AIDS, 4) improving access to clean water and sanitation, and 5) emergency mitigation and response (CRS 2007).

**Table 6.2 NGOs in Gutiérrez**

| <b>NGO</b>          | <b>Full Name</b>  | <b>Sectors</b>   | <b>Country of Origin</b> |
|---------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| CIPCA               | <i>Centro de Investigacion y Promocion del Campesinado</i><br>(Center for Investigation and Promotion of Campesinos)  | Institution Strengthening, Environment, Communication, Agriculture   | Bolivia                  |
| CEASE               | <i>Centro de Estudios Para La Accion Socio Economica</i><br>(Center for Studies of Socio-Economic Action)             | Institution Strengthening  | Bolivia                  |
| CEADES/<br>Diakonia | <i>Colectivo de Estudios Aplicados y Desarrollo Social</i><br>(Collective for Applied Studies and Social Development) | Indigenous rights; Institutional strengthening; capacity building  | Bolivia/<br>Sweden       |
| CEDETI              | <i>Centro de Tecnologias Intermedias</i> (Center for Intermediate Technologies)                                       | Institutional Strengthening; Environment; Education and Culture; Agriculture; Small Industry   | Bolivia                  |
| FODEI               | <i>Fomento al Desarrollo Infantil</i> (Infant Development Promotion)  | Education and Culture  | Bolivia                  |
| FONDECO             | <i>Fondo de Desarrollo Comunal</i> (Fund for Common Development)  | Institutional Strengthening; Small Industry; Agriculture; Education and Culture  | Bolivia                  |
| PROCESO             | <i>Proceso Servicios Educativos</i><br>(Process Educational Services)   | Institutional Strengthening; Education and Culture; Environment  | Bolivia                  |
| VMIB                | <i>Vision Mundial International Bolivia</i> (World Vision)  | Education and Culture; Small Industry; Basic Sanitation; Health; Agriculture   | United States            |
| CRS                 | Catholic Relief Services  | Institutional Strengthening; Small Industry; Communication; Education and Culture; Basic Sanitation; Housing; Environment; Agriculture; Health | United States            |

Source: VIPFE 2006

### Local Elections in Small Municipalities

Historically, the MNR was the dominant party in both these municipalities, winning the municipal elections under the old system in 1993 and 1995, the presidential vote in 1997 and 2002 (Ballivian 2003, 55-64). Directly following the influx of new NGOs into Urubicha and Gutierrez in the late 1990s, the MNR lost its hold on the plurality (and the mayor's seat) for the first time as the MIR won the 1999 municipal elections in both municipalities.

The MNR (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* Nationalist Revolutionary Movement or) was founded in the 1940s following the Chaco War. The MNR was the main political organization behind the 1952 revolution, and governed during the twelve years of revolutionary government between 1952 and 1964. It is unquestionably the oldest and largest political party in Bolivia, although its influence has waned somewhat in recent years (Anaya 1999, 331).

The MIR, the party that managed to win the 1999 elections in both Urubichá and Gutierrez, is also a national party. The MIR (*Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionario* or Leftist Revolutionary Movement) was founded in 1971 by Jaime Paz Zamora, the nephew of Victor Paz Estensorro, the president of Bolivia from 1985 to 1989.<sup>25</sup> The MIR emerged in 1985 as the most solid of the old leftist parties. In 1987, the MIR won 22.8% of the vote in municipal elections nationwide (but did not win in Urubichá or Gutierrez), marking its real entrance as a serious competitor in national party politics (Ballivián 2003). Between 1989 and 1993, the MIR leader

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<sup>25</sup> In a bizarre twist of politics, Jaime Paz Zamora, who governed in coalition with Banzer, the leader of the ADN, had formerly been a political prisoner under Banzer's regime.

Jaime Paz Zamora served as president after coming in third in the presidential election, and forging an unusual alliance with the ADN and MNR. Unfortunately, the Paz Zamora presidency became known as one of the most corrupt since the transition to democracy, with alleged ties to drug traffickers (Morales 2003, 213).

In the 1999 elections in Urubichá, several of the national political parties competed for support. In the final votes, the MIR won the plurality with 30 percent of the vote. The neoliberal Civic Solidarity Union (UCS or *Unidad Civica Solidaridad*) came in second with 17 percent of the vote and the centrist party National Democratic Action (ADN, *Accion Democratica Nacionalista*) came in third with 15 percent. The new center-right party New Republican Force (NFR, *Nueva Fuerza Democratica*) and, the leftist Free Bolivia Movement (MBL, *Movimiento Bolivia Libre*) also each won between five and six percent. In Gutierrez, the MIR also managed to break the long history of local elections going to the MNR. In 1999, the MIR won 13 percent of the vote, followed by the MBL, NFR, UCS, and ADN, all of which won between 5 and 10 percent.

### **Political Involvement of NGOs in Small Municipalities**

The NGOs working in Urubichá and Gutierrez influence politics through two main avenues. First, they build social capital both directly and indirectly. Directly, they hold “capacity building” workshops, which seek specifically to train underrepresented groups (the Guarayo Indians in the case of Urubichá, and the Guaraní in the case of Gutierrez) how to take advantage of the new opportunities for



participation established by the 1994 popular participation reforms. CIPCA, CEASE, and CEADES have all held these types of workshops in Urubichá since the mid to late 1990s.

More indirectly, through the various other programs, including literacy training, health care education, and small business development with artisan groups, NGOs have provided a forum for discussion about the economic and social issues of the concern in the community, and provided opportunities for building trust among citizens.

Second, NGOs also work closely with the municipal government itself. I have focused primarily on how NGOs work with citizens in ways that facilitate political change. However NGOs also work more directly with the government as consultants and advisers. This somewhat unusual role for NGOs grew out of the tremendous pressure placed on municipalities by the Law of Popular Participation (LPP). The big “institution building” NGOs are the ones most involved in this role. In Urubichá CIPCA has been the major player, but both CEASE and CEADES also have served as advisers to the municipal council. In Gutierrez CEDETI, as well as CEASE and CEADES, all have served as advisers to the municipal government. In this function, NGOs seek to help implement the reforms mandated by LPP, train the council members on the new rules and requirements, and help facilitate communication between the municipal government and community groups.

In this way, NGOs sometimes build close ties to those in power, and to political parties. However, even in this situation, the NGOs’ primary goal is to further

the interests of the underserved groups that they work with. As NGOs serve as an informal bridge between citizen groups and the municipal government, seeking to improve access, they also help open up channels for information. Having more information about how the local government works, and having access to an organization that advises the government is another way in which the barriers to change are lowered by NGO activity.

As I have said before, direct evidence linking NGO activity to these dramatic electoral changes are hard to come by. However, the activities of the NGOs – capacity building workshops in particular, but also efforts to make people feel empowered to change their own fates through microfinance loans and small business help, and even the more indirect avenues such as providing forums to disseminate health care information – all offer critical new opportunities for organizing, overcoming collective action problems, and encouraging participation. In the following section, I look at how similar NGO activities in larger towns fail to have the same effect.

### **NGOs in Larger Municipalities**

In this section, I discuss two larger municipalities in the department of Santa Cruz. Saavedra,<sup>26</sup> which is the second municipality in the province of Obispo Santiesteban, is a few thousand people larger than Guttierrez, with a population of 16,500 but is easy to characterize as a “large” town in comparison by virtue of its size

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<sup>26</sup> Saavedra is an abbreviation of the full name “General Saavedra.” It is also frequently written Gral. Saavedra for the Spanish abbreviation of “General.” Similarly, the full name of the province is “Opisbo Santiesteban” but is frequently referred to as “Santiesteban” and has several alternate spellings, including “Santiestevan” and “Santistevan.”

and connections to neighboring cities and communities. Montero, also in Santieseban, is the provincial capital, and has a population of about 80,000.

NGOs are very active in both municipalities. And, while not identical, there is significant overlap between the types of organizations working in Saavedra and Montero compared with Urubichá and Gutierrez. All four municipalities have NGOs actively working on “capacity building” and “institution building” as well as service provision development projects (health care, basic sanitation, etc.) and all four have a mix of Bolivian and international NGOs.

However, in these two larger municipalities, there is little evidence that the NGO activity sparked a real change in the political status quo. In both cases, the long-dominant political party, the MNR, has maintained its hold on municipal government, despite increasing NGO activity – and NGO activity of the type most strongly connected to political change (institution strengthening and capacity building projects).

### **Saavedra**

Saavedra, like the two smaller municipalities, is very poor and has a large indigenous population. More than half of the inhabitants live below the poverty line, and nearly 2,000 live in “extreme poverty”. Although conditions have improved considerably since the early 1990s, when more than 5,000 lived in extreme poverty, less than 9 percent of the inhabitants feel that their basic needs are satisfied. About 3,600 of the 16,500 inhabitants live in the town of Saavedra, with the other 13,000

living in more rural areas across the municipality. 26 percent of the population are Quechua, 13 percent are Guaraní, and about 2 percent are Chiquitano Indians. A major road (unpaved, but maintained) connects Saavedra with the two neighboring cities of Mineros (population 20,000) and Montero (population 80,000). The main economic activities in the area are agriculture and livestock, with some hunting and forestry economy (INE/PNUD 2005).

**Table 6.3 NGOs in Saavedra**

| <b>NGO</b> | <b>Full Name</b>  | <b>Sectors</b>   | <b>Country of Origin</b> |
|------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| CEASE      | <i>Centro de Estudios Para La Accion Socio Economica</i><br>(Center for Studies of Socio-Economic Action) | Institution Strengthening                                    | Bolivia                  |
| PCI        | Project Concern International   | Health; Basic Sanitation, Education and Culture; Agriculture | United States            |

Source: VIPFE 2006

The two main NGOs working in Saavedra are CEASE and Project Concern International. CEASE is the same NGO that works in on institution strengthening and capacity building in Urubichá and Gutierrez. CEASE is a Bolivian NGO based in Santa Cruz and has projects working with indigenous communities in several largely indigenous municipalities surrounding Santa Cruz. Their projects are similar to other capacity and institution strengthening NGOs that they conduct workshops, serve as advisers to the municipal government and community groups on the implementation of the municipal plan, and they focus on engaging previously excluded citizens into the political process. CEASE was founded in the mid 1990s following the Law of Popular Participation reforms, and began working in Saavedra in the late 1990s. .

Project Concern International, on the other hand, is one of the major United States based international NGOs working in Bolivia (along with World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and CARE). Project Concern was founded by a San Diego doctor in the 1960s and currently works in Africa, Asia, Central and South America. Its primary mission is fighting disease and providing health care to the world's poorest. Like many of the big international NGOs, it also seek to "build capacity" in their projects, claiming commitment to "community-based health and development programs...[that] empower local communities, organizations, and networks by equipping them with the tools and resources they need to deliver and sustain effective programs" (PCI 2007).

### **Montero**

Montero is the largest municipality in the province of Santiesteban, with a population of nearly 80,000. Several major roads and a rail line run through the municipality, and there is relatively easy access to the capital of Santa Cruz (several hours by bus). Montero is a rapidly growing area, with 3.4 percent growth in population annually since the early 1990s. It is slightly better off economically than the other municipalities in the area, but still 22, 500 people live below the poverty line and less than 1 in 4 say their basic needs are satisfied. Montero has an indigenous population of about 25 percent Quechua, 2 percent Aymara and 2 percent Guaraní.

The structure of the economy in Montero is quite different from the smaller municipalities. The primary economic activity is commerce and industrial

manufacturing. Consequently, Montero is much more connected to the rest of Bolivia than the smaller towns are – many people from Montero frequently visit the capital of Santa Cruz, and the town has the feeling of a small bustling town. Compared to the smaller municipalities, the population of Montero is also quite urban. All but about 2,000 of the inhabitants live in town.

NGOs in Montero cover a similar spectrum as NGOs in the other communities discussed above. There are several NGOs working on institution strengthening and capacity building. OFPROBOL and INASET, are both Bolivian NGOs working on development projects with a focus on improving participation and engaging new voices. There are also several small scale Bolivian NGOs that work regionally and have projects in Montero, CESACRUZ, a small health care organization, and FUNBODEM, an NGO that works with women to develop small businesses and handicrafts with microcredit loans.

Additionally, Montero has several international NGOs. Project Concern International, COOPI, KNH, and MME are all large scale international NGOs that work on basic service provision such as health care, sanitation, and housing, but also have a strong capacity building and community empowerment element to their projects. Project Concern is the same U.S.-based NGO that also works in Saavedra. COOPI is an Italian NGO that works around the globe. In Montero they most recently worked on an environmental clean-up project throughout the city. KNH is a German NGO that focuses on helping underserved children. And MME is an international health organization that is an official partner to the World Health Organization.

**Table 6.4 NGOs in Montero**

| <b>NGO</b> | <b>Full Name</b>   | <b>Sectors</b>  | <b>Country of Origin</b> |
|------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| CESACRUZ   | <i>Centro de Salud Santa Cruz</i><br>(Santa Cruz Health Center)  | Health; Agriculture   | Bolivia                  |
| COOPI      | <i>Cooperazione Internazionale</i><br>(International Cooperation)  | Health; Basic Sanitation;<br>Mining; Agriculture;<br>Energy; Housing;<br>Institution Strengthening                          | Italy                    |
| FUAMU      | <i>Fundación Amigos del Museo de Historia Natural Noel Kempff Mercado</i><br>(Foundation of Friends of the Natural History Museum Noel Kempff Mercado) | Environment; Education and Culture  | Bolivia                  |
| FUNBODEM   | <i>Fundacion Boliviana para el Desarrollo de la Mujer</i><br>(Bolivian Development Foundation for Women)   | Small Industry/ Artisan;<br>Agriculture; Credit   | Bolivia                  |
| INASET     | <i>Instituto de Asistencia Social Economica y Tecnologica</i><br>(Instiute for Social, Economic and Technical Assistance)                              | Environment; Small Industry/ Artisan;<br>Institutional Strengthening;<br>Education and Culture                              | Bolivia                  |
| KNH        | <i>Kindernothilfe</i>  | Education and Culture;<br>Agriculture   | Germany                  |
| MME        | <i>Medicus Mundi España, Delegacion Bolivia</i>  | Education and Culture;<br>Institutional Strengthening; Health;<br>Environment;<br>Agriculture; Housing;<br>Basic Sanitation | Spain                    |
| OFPROBOL   | <i>Oficina de Proyectos Para Bolivia</i> (Office of Projects for Bolivia)  | Institutional Strengthening;<br>Education and Culture;<br>Agriculture; Health   | Bolivia                  |
| PCI        | Project Concern International  | Health; Basic Sanitation,<br>Education and Culture;<br>Agriculture  | United States            |

Source: (VIPFE 2006)

### **NGOs and Politics in Large Municipalities**

The NGOs working in these two larger municipalities do many of the same types of things that NGOs in smaller towns do. Directly, they hold workshops to encourage citizen participation, “build capacity” among groups of previously excluded citizens, offer training sessions on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the best way to access municipal policymakers and resources. Indirectly, they offer a wide range of opportunities for association, interaction, and learning – all of which theoretically should help facilitate collective action necessary for political change. But in these larger towns, and in others across Bolivia, this activity has not coincided with significant political opening or change. Why not?

First, it is important to remember that these organizations, however political, are not political parties. They do not govern, and they do not run direct political campaigns. In large towns, the impact they have in terms of facilitating collective action and engaging new people into politics is rarely enough to change election outcomes.

Second, in large towns, it is easier for the incumbents in municipal government to take credit for the services that NGOs provide, which mitigates their role as facilitators of opposition. For example, in Montero, one of the projects that was funded by COOPI, the Italian NGO, was a project to clean up the streets. Trash collection is a challenge for most municipalities in Bolivia, large and small, and stray dogs digging through plastic bags of rotting trash is a common sight across Bolivia. As one of several projects, COOPI coordinated with the municipal government to pay for



regular trash collection. The result was a big improvement in the cleanliness of Montero's streets, which reflected very well on the incumbent municipal government. In the very small towns, on the other hand, similar projects are rarely attributed to the government; everyone knows that the NGO was responsible.

Not surprisingly, the municipal governments in Saavedra and Montero have not experienced the same kind of political change that Urubichá and Gutierrez experienced following the influx of NGOs in the 1990s. As with the small towns, the MNR has long dominated municipal politics in Saavedra and Montero. In both towns, the MNR won the municipal elections of 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1999 and 2004. MNR also won the 1993 presidential elections in both municipalities (Ballivián 2003).

### **Conclusions**

These cases are intended to give a better sense of the kinds of organizations working in Bolivia, the activities they are engaged in, and the mechanisms through which they encourage political change.

There are NGOs working on "capacity building" and "institution strengthening" in both large and small municipalities, but their effect in terms of promoting or facilitating political change appears to be quite different. In the very small towns, NGO activity seems to contribute to political change, resulting in the break-up of old monopolies of power. In the larger municipalities, on the other hand, even the same types of NGO activities do not appear to translate into political change, even when they do promote social capital and political action.

The most interesting finding suggested by the cases in this chapter is that scale appears to have an independent effect on the relationship between NGOs and political change. Whether NGOs tend to facilitate change or support the status quo does not seem to be driven purely by differences in the activities of type of NGO involved. Even in municipalities with largely similar NGOs, there is evidence that NGOs tend to promote political change in smaller communities. In the larger towns, on the other hand, their impact is more diffuse, and can even bolster the status quo when governments claim credit for the work that they do.

That is certainly not to say that all NGOs are the same, or that the actual activities NGOs are engaged in are irrelevant to their political impact. On the contrary, many characteristics of NGOs are surely critical for determining how they affect politics, including the type of service they provide, their political affiliations, political goals, and even more simply, whether or not they are seeking to promote political change. However, it is very interesting that municipalities with largely similar NGO scenes seem to show very different patterns in terms of political effects.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation began with a description of the dramatic social upheavals of October 2003 in Bolivia, when popular protests forced the resignation of a democratically elected president, led to a constitutional crisis, a period of frightening instability, and finally the election of the new populist president, Evo Morales, in a special election. Because of the growing numbers and influence of NGOs in Bolivian politics, these events set the stage for a larger debate over the political effects of NGOs in developing democracies. For NGO advocates, these events epitomized the power of NGOs to work for political change, engage previously excluded voices into the political system, and challenge traditional elite power structures. For skeptics, the events of 2003 marked an alarming shift in Bolivia's democratic landscape, creating a standoff between the state and the mobilized popular sectors and raising real fears about the stability of the regime.

After two years of high tensions and uncertainty, the election of Evo Morales in 2005 was greeted with a similarly split analysis. For some, the achievement of electing an indigenous president for the first time in a county with a majority indigenous population was an unmitigated victory. Others were more worried by the confrontational tone of the new president, who was openly hostile to the United States, and unapologetic about his plans to nationalize natural resources. Deep concerns about the governability of Bolivia continue – the state, even headed by the popular

charismatic Evo, is still unable to respond to the demands from the newly vocal popular sectors. Tensions remain high, and popular protests continue to be a normal part of daily life in Bolivia.

The two interpretations of Evo's victory are mirrored in a venerable larger debate over the role of civil society in developing democracies. On one hand, stronger civil society is seen as a key element in engaging new voices into the political system, something that is crucial for democracy to take root and flourish. On the other hand, strong civil society in the absence of strong state institutions can be a recipe for chronic instability. In the two years since Evo Morales was elected, the question remains unsettled. Civil society in Bolivia remains highly mobilized, and protests and demonstrations continue to be common events.

The particular events of social mobilization and popular protest that brought Evo Morales to power in Bolivia were not caused solely by NGO involvement in the country. However, the key role that some NGOs played in facilitating mobilization and supporting social movements, and the more indirect role that they have in facilitating collective action and bringing organizational resources to under-served communities raise the question of what political effects they do have.

This project focuses on gaining a clearer understanding of the ways in which NGO activities influence civil society mobilization, popular participation, and electoral change. It also uses empirical tools to test a number of hypotheses from a large literature that rarely uses this approach. I collected new sub-national data on NGO activity and indicators of political outcomes to rigorously explore the effects of

NGOs. I argue that NGOs, despite their position as actors outside of formal politics, are highly political entities. They have surprising and substantial effects on the political systems in which they operate, both by influencing how citizens participate in politics, and by influencing elections.

In this chapter I briefly review the major findings of this project, discuss some promising future directions for this research, and conclude with some final thoughts on the political consequences of NGO activity in developing democracies.

### **Findings**

I find that NGOs have several surprising and systematic political effects in Bolivia. First, they have strong ties to protest movements, but only weak results in boosting voter turnout. Second, they tend to hurt incumbents, but only in very small communities. In larger municipalities, they tend to have little effect on the status quo or they help incumbents. These findings suggest that there is no simple answer to the question of whether NGOs are good or bad for democracy. Rather, the political consequences of NGO activity depend greatly on the context in which they are operating, and the type of NGO in question.

### **Political Participation**

The conventional wisdom about NGOs and political participation is at least partially correct: NGOs do tend to increase overall political participation and engage new voices into the political sphere, just as the classical arguments about social

capital, civil society, and associational activity suggest they should. However, the path that this new political participation takes is surprising in a number of ways.

First, the sub-national statistical analysis of changes in the number of NGOs and changes in indicators of participation show that an increase in NGOs working in a community tends to be associated with a small increase in voter turnout. However, contrary to conventional wisdom, the boost that NGO activity gives to conventional, institutionalized participations is very small compared with the boost that NGO activity appears to give to protest movements. There is strong evidence that increases in NGOs tend to go along with increases in protests and demonstrations at the municipal level. Although a limited body of work has suggested links between NGOs and some protest movements, this is the first project to demonstrate systematically that increases in NGOs are associated with increases in protest. This finding is a crucial stepping stone for a more complete understanding of the role that NGOs play in building civil society in developing democracies. Rather than always acting as a mitigating force for the extreme demands in society, in some circumstances, NGOs, by facilitating contentious collective action, actively ratchet up the tensions between state and society.

The qualitative evidence from Chapter 4 lends further support to the argument that NGOs can play a key role in facilitating collective action, which in an environment of unresponsive government, can help foment protest movements. I compare the role that NGOs played in the development of three distinct social movements in Bolivia to expand the picture of this relationship. These case studies

suggest that NGOs have the strongest impact when the resources they bring to a community substantially change the possibilities for organizing, and when the activities of the NGO are explicitly political, such as “capacity building” work, or work focused on bringing previously excluded groups into the political process. The unambiguous role that NGOs like CIPCA played in making the mobilization of the eastern lowland indigenous groups possible is a clear example of the critical importance of resources and NGO type. Without NGOs targeting them with a political agenda, the lowland Indian groups, who live in extreme poverty and isolation, would not have had access to the minimum resources necessary for organizing. In other cases, where the resource differential is less extreme, NGOs still play a support role, but their impact is not as critical.

### **Electoral Consequences**

The second part of the dissertation turns to the question of whether NGOs tend to be a force for political change, or tend to reinforce the status quo. I find support for both sides of this long-standing debate in the literature, and identify a new key variable that conditions the effect that NGOs tend to have: the scale or size of the political community in question. Attention to the size of the political community is an exciting contribution to the debate over whether NGOs tend to help or hurt the status quo because it integrates the directly opposite predictions in the existing literature. If the size of a population is considered, it turns out that NGOs can both help and hurt the status quo – but in different settings. Specifically, NGOs in very small

municipalities tend to have the effects that the civil society literature predicts: they facilitate political change. However in larger communities, they tend to support the status quo.

The opposite effect that NGOs can have in differently sized communities is driven by two factors. NGOs, through a variety of activities and by providing opportunities for association, facilitate collective action, which is crucial to promoting political change. On the other hand, NGOs also provide opportunities for credit-claiming by politicians. Because they provide goods and services with some value in the community, politicians can gain electoral support by claiming credit for their work. Both of these factors – facilitating collective action and providing opportunities for credit-claiming – work differently in differently sized communities, leading to very different outcomes. In very small jurisdictions, the importance of new collective action is relatively large, making the engagement of even small numbers of citizens sometimes the crucial factor in an election. Additionally, credit-claiming is much harder in small towns, since people are more likely to know one another personally. In larger communities, the impact of facilitating collective action is rarely likely to matter on the scale of electoral outcomes. And credit claiming is much easier in the more impersonal settings of larger communities. Thus, in small towns, NGOs tend to promote change, but in larger ones they tend to support the status quo.

In the quantitative analysis of municipalities in Chapter 5, I find support for my argument. Comparing changes in numbers of NGOs with changes in incumbent party vote share shows a strong and significant relationship between increases in



NGOs in small towns and electoral losses for incumbents. On the other hand, in larger municipalities the effect is just the opposite: increasing numbers of NGOs tends to improve incumbent party vote share.

Case studies of four municipalities also support this idea. In Chapter 6, I compare two very small municipalities (Urubícha and Gutiérrez) with two much larger municipalities (Saavedra and Montero). These communities are similar in many ways: they are in the same region, they have similar types of NGOs working in them, they are similarly poor, and both have significant indigenous populations. However, following the introduction of new NGOs in the two very small municipalities, the incumbent political party lost for the first time in decades. In the larger communities, however, similar introduction of new NGOs did little to break up the monopoly of the dominant political party. These cases are largely descriptive, but they do lend support to the argument that NGOs can have very different effects in differently sized jurisdictions.

### **Future Directions**

This dissertation presents a theoretical framework for analyzing the political effects of NGOs, which structures the analysis around variables at three levels: 1) the community in question, 2) the NGO, and 3) the political context of the state. I argue that attention to key variables at all three levels is essential to fully understanding, or predicting, the political impact that NGOs will tend to have in a community.

**Table 7.1 Key Variables in the Analysis of the Political Effects of NGOs**

| Target Communities     | NGOs   | The State  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Size                   | Level of Resources                                     | Policy Environment (degree of hostility to NGOs) |
| Level of Resources     | Type of Activities (“political” vs. service provision) | Regime Type                                      |
| Existing Civil Society | Origin (national or international)                     | Responsiveness of Government                     |
|                        |  | State Capacity                                   |

Different sections of this dissertation focus on exploring the effect of some of these variables. Not all of them are covered in the empirical tests, suggesting opportunities for further research.

First, this project does not test hypotheses related to how the political effects of NGOs might differ in different political contexts. I do make the case that the unresponsive, weakly democratic nature of the Bolivian state is important for understanding the ways in which NGO activity influences political participation and voting for political change (in the first case by making protest a more attractive option, and in the second by biasing new participation against incumbents). However, it would be fruitful to explore whether these patterns hold true in other weakly democratic countries, and if changing levels of responsiveness or state capacity influences the general trends of how NGOs shape participation and political change.

Second, although the case studies in Chapter 4 (of NGOs and social movements) are suggestive that NGO type can be critical, the data used in this

dissertation do not allow more fine-grained tests of hypotheses related to type. Although each NGO entry includes a list of sectors in which they work, these categories are unclear and overlapping, and since NGOs can self-report as many categories as they like, it has been difficult to tease out meaningful distinctions between NGOs that are engaged in more political activities and those that are not.

However, I have recently acquired new non-public data from the government agency that collects data for the NGO registry in Bolivia. This new dataset includes information at the project level by municipality. So, instead of using change in raw counts of NGOs, I will soon be able to code information on the specific activities each NGO is engaged in. This will provide opportunities for testing more nuanced hypotheses about the effect of differences in NGOs, and also provide better tests to confirm or complicate the analyses presented here.

Third, the analysis of the effects of international NGOs vs. domestic ones proved somewhat inconclusive in this project. It could be that international and domestic NGOs are really not substantially different in their political impact, but it could also be that the measurement and coding did not accurately capture the distinction of interest. More fine-grained data on the origin of funding for NGOs would be interesting to explore.

### **Final Thoughts**

NGOs are highly political entities. Despite being “non-governmental” they have systematic and substantial effects on the local political systems in which they

operate. Further, the effects that they have – whether they tend to encourage participation through voting or street protests, whether they tend to be a force for change, or a force for the status quo – depend critically on the context in which they are working, the activities they are involved in, and the nature of the communities they are targeting.

At the heart of this project is the question of democracy. Are NGOs a positive force for democracy in developing countries? Or do they undermine democracy by supporting entrenched elites? This is a difficult question to conclusively answer. On the positive side, NGOs appear to be a positive force for participation. They engage and mobilize new voices into the political process. In a country like Bolivia with a long history of political exclusion, new participation in any form can be seen as a major improvement. NGOs also promote political change, which in the context of long entrenched local elite power monopolies in small communities can also be seen as a positive sign for democracy.

The concern is that there may be some tipping point where the strength of newly engaged popular voices proves too much for the weak state to handle, and democracy falls apart entirely. This is the classic argument of Huntington (1968), that rapid social change – of which NGOs can be seen as an instigator and facilitator – can result in dangerous instability as the state struggles to respond to new demands. Although recent events from Bolivia – and the finding that NGOs are linked to increasing rates of protest – make this concern important, I do not believe that NGOs are on balance causing more problems than they are solving. A democracy without

these forces in civil society might not be any better off – perhaps more stable, but certainly not more representative. Although this debate is not an easy one to settle, this project is an important step in the direction of understanding the political impact of NGOs in weakly democratic settings.

## Appendix A

### NGOs in Bolivia by Sector and Sub-Sector 2005

| Sector                      | Sub-Sector                                 | Number of NGOs | Number of Projects |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------|--------------------|
| Agriculture                 | Farming                                    | 136            | 327                |
|                             | Agro-Industry                              | 32             | 49                 |
|                             | Forestry                                   | 59             | 103                |
|                             | Livestock                                  | 76             | 138                |
|                             | Fisheries                                  | 11             | 15                 |
| Legal Assistance            | Legal Advice                               | 6              | 12                 |
| Communication               | Roads                                      | 10             | 11                 |
|                             | Alternative Technologies                   | 18             | 24                 |
|                             | Press                                      | 3              | 6                  |
|                             | Radio                                      | 14             | 17                 |
|                             | Television                                 | 6              | 8                  |
| Education and Culture       | Culture                                    | 36             | 64                 |
|                             | Adult Education                            | 52             | 92                 |
|                             | Special Education                          | 31             | 60                 |
|                             | Occasional Education (Workshops)           | 34             | 46                 |
|                             | Formal/ Regular Education                  | 56             | 112                |
| Energy                      | Electricity                                | 13             | 15                 |
|                             | Solar Power                                | 8              | 13                 |
| Institutional Strengthening | Municipalities                             | 61             | 109                |
|                             | NGOs                                       | 23             | 67                 |
|                             | Other Organizations                        | 80             | 226                |
|                             | Prefectures                                | 3              | 3                  |
| Environment                 | Biodiversity Conservation                  | 27             | 59                 |
|                             | Natural Resource Management                | 35             | 62                 |
|                             | Environmental Improvement                  | 55             | 76                 |
|                             | Zoning (Territorial Demarcation)           | 12             | 18                 |
| Mining                      | Cooperatives                               | 9              | 19                 |
|                             | Other                                      | 7              | 11                 |
| Small Industry/ Handicrafts | Handicrafts                                | 45             | 65                 |
|                             | Small Business                             | 42             | 74                 |
|                             | Small Industry                             | 17             | 27                 |
|                             | Textiles                                   | 32             | 51                 |
| Health                      | Dental Health                              | 15             | 18                 |
|                             | Maternal Health/ Birth                     | 9              | 12                 |
|                             | Prenatal Health                            | 14             | 18                 |
|                             | Control de crecimiento y desarrollo        | 20             | 33                 |
|                             | Cancer Detection and Prevention for Women  | 2              | 2                  |
|                             | Drug Addiction and Mental Health           | 7              | 9                  |
|                             | Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS | 13             | 17                 |
|                             | Acute Illnesses (cholera)                  | 13             | 17                 |
| Acute Respiratory Illnesses | 4  | 4              |                    |

|                  |   |    |    |
|------------------|---|----|----|
|                  | Essential Medications                           | 12 | 18 |
|                  | Traditional Medicine                            | 11 | 13 |
|                  | Other Illnesses (tuberculosis, chagas, malaria) | 36 | 78 |
|                  | Family Planning                                 | 12 | 66 |
|                  | Immunizations                                   | 8  | 9  |
|                  | Services for the Disabled                       | 6  | 8  |
|                  | Health Education                                | 50 | 90 |
|                  | Indigenous Health Care                          | 9  | 14 |
|                  | Oral Health                                     | 4  | 7  |
|                  | Sanitation                                      | 5  | 7  |
| Basic Sanitation | Drinking Water                                  | 47 | 77 |
|                  | Waste Disposal                                  | 8  | 9  |
|                  | Human Waste Disposal                            | 29 | 43 |
| Housing          | Self-Construction                               | 11 | 15 |
|                  | Construction                                    | 10 | 11 |
|                  | Repairs   | 10 | 22 |
|                  | Urban Planning                                  | 3  | 6  |

(Source: VIPFE 2006)

## Appendix B

### Summary Statistics for Chapter 3

| Variables                                  | N                 | Min. | Max.      | Mean      | Std.<br>Deviation |
|--|-------------------|------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Change in Protest                          | 314               | -2   | 36        | .26       | 2.24              |
| Protest, 2004                              | 314               | 0    | 44        | .35       | 2.72              |
| Protest, 1999                              | 314               | 0    | 8         | .09       | .66               |
| Change in NGOs                             | 314               | -8   | 138       | 2.42      | 9.59              |
| NGOs, 2004                                 | 314               | 0    | 194       | 6.22      | 14.13             |
| NGOs, 2000                                 | 314               | 0    | 56        | 3.80      | 5.34              |
| Change in International<br>NGOs            | 314               | 0    | 15        | .81       | 1.70              |
| International NGOs, 2004                   | 314               | 0    | 24        | 1.89      | 2.73              |
| International NGOs, 1999                   | 314               | 0    | 9         | 1.07      | 1.37              |
| Change in Turnout                          | 311 <sup>27</sup> | -.51 | .57       | .04       | .09               |
| Turnout, 2004                              | 314               | .40  | .97       | .62       | .07               |
| Turnout, 1999                              | 311               | .05  | .92       | .59       | .10               |
| Population                                 | 314               | 221  | 1,135,526 | 26,351.35 | 92387.92          |
| Population (logged)                        | 314               | 5.40 | 13.94     | 9.16      | 1.25              |
| Development (% houses<br>with electricity) | 314               | 0    | .88       | .27       | .21               |
| Education (% college<br>educated)          | 314               | 0    | .14       | .01       | .02               |
| Education (% primary<br>school)            | 314               | .03  | .35       | .20       | .05               |
| Unemployment                               | 314               | .005 | .48       | .08       | .06               |
| Percent Indigenous                         | 314               | .001 | .87       | .45       | .31               |

<sup>27</sup> There are three missing observations in the original data published by the Corte Nacional Electoral for 1999.



## Appendix C

### Summary Statistics for Chapter 5

#### All observations where Incumbent Party ran in both elections

| Variable   | N   | Min. | Max   | Mean | SD    |
|--|-----|------|-------|------|-------|
| Change in NGOs                                   | 296 | -8   | 138   | 2.35 | 9.76  |
| Number of NGOs (1999)                            | 296 | 0    | 56    | 3.75 | 5.31  |
| Interaction (population dummy* change in NGOS)   | 296 | -12  | 276   | 4.42 | 19.45 |
| Level of Development (% houses with electricity) | 296 | 0    | .88   | .27  | .22   |
| Vote Share for MAS                               | 296 | .02  | .94   | .56  | .24   |
| Change in International NGOs                     | 296 | 0    | 15    | .80  | 1.72  |
| Population (logged)                              | 296 | 5.40 | 13.94 | 9.17 | 1.24  |

#### Excluding cities with populations over 500,000.

| Variable   | N   | Min. | Max   | Mean | SD   |
|--|-----|------|-------|------|------|
| Change in NGOs                                   | 292 | -8   | 32    | 1.46 | 3.31 |
| Number of NGOs (1999)                            | 292 | 0    | 22    | 3.26 | 2.99 |
| Interaction (population dummy* change in NGOS)   | 292 | -12  | 64    | 2.63 | 6.34 |
| Level of Development (% houses with electricity) | 292 | 0    | .86   | .26  | .21  |
| Vote Share for MAS                               | 292 | .02  | .94   | .56  | .24  |
| Change in International NGOs                     | 292 | 0    | 4     | .63  | .94  |
| Population (logged)                              | 292 | 5.40 | 12.28 | 9.11 | 1.13 |

## Appendix D

### Description of Variables

| Variable Name                        | Description   | Source   |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Change in NGOs                       | The change in number of NGOs between 1999 and 2004  | Coded by author from Bolivian government NGO registry (VIPFE 2004, 2006)   |
| Change in International NGOs         | The change in the number of international NGOs between 1999 and 2004                        | Coded by author from Bolivian government NGO registry (VIPFE 2004, 2006)   |
| Change in Protest                    | The change in incidences of protest, demonstrations, and strikes between 1999 and 2004      | Coded by author from newspaper accounts according to the conventions of the Latin American Political Protest Project (Garrison 2001) |
| Voter Turnout                        |   | 2001 Census (INE 2006)   |
| Population Size                      |   | 2001 Census (INE 2006)   |
| Development                          | % houses with electricity   | 2001 Census (INE 2006)   |
| Education                            | % primary school  | 2001 Census (INE 2006)   |
| Unemployment                         |   | 2001 Census (INE 2006)   |
| Indigenous population                | % indigenous  | 2001 Census (INE 2006)   |
| Vote share for MAS                   |   | CNE (2006)   |
| Change in Incumbent party vote share | The Change in percentage vote share for the incumbent political party between 1999 and 2004 | CNE (2006)   |

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