The Rise of Small-Scale Development Organisations

The Emergence, Positioning and Role of Citizen Aid Actors

Edited by
Hanne Haaland, Sara Kinsbergen, Lau Schulpen and Hege Wallevik

ISBN: 978-1-032-13232-7 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-22825-7 (ebk)

First published 2023

Chapter 1

The Articles of Faith of Citizen Aid Actors – between Dreams and Realities

Sara Kinsbergen, Hanne Haaland, Lau Schulpen and Hege Wallevik

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

The chapter DOI: 10.4324/9781003228257-2

The funder of the Open Access version of this chapter is Radboud University Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Anthropology and Development Studies

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

1 The Articles of Faith of Citizen Aid Actors – between Dreams and Realities

Sara Kinsbergen, Hanne Haaland, Lau Schulpen and Hege Wallevik

Introduction

What Is the Book About?

Over the past two decades, many countries in the Global North witnessed an upsurge of ordinary citizens actively engaging in the field of international development. For various reasons, they start their own initiative and directly support individuals or communities across the globe. We here refer to this as Citizen Aid Actors (CAAs). Whereas this phenomenon is not something new, with some of these organisations having their roots in missionary work dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, there has been an apparent increase in active citizen engagement in development work and humanitarian assistance from around mid-2000 (Fechter & Schwittay, 2020, Kinsbergen et al., 2021, Schnable, 2021). These initiatives mirror a change in civic engagement where globalisation and individualisation are underlying forces. Develtere (2012) describes this process as the 'mainstreaming of international development'. In addition to these more general macro processes, an overly professionalised development sector is given as an explanatory factor for the rise in the number of citizens aiming at helping people more directly than donating to existing development organisations. People want to contribute by engaging themselves. This 'need to help' has also been discussed by Malkki (2015), who argues that we need to consider people's need to be connected to a larger cause.

In this edited volume, we study the rise, identity, position and the (changing) role of citizen aid as part of a (changing) international aid architecture. Bosch (2011) describes aid architecture as 'a complex "ecosystem", with many different types of organisations delivering assistance in a variety of different forms'. For Kharas and Blomfield (2013: 63), aid architecture refers to 'the set of rules and institutions underpinning the framework through which aid flows to developing countries'. Building on these definitions, in this book, aid architecture refers to the amalgam of actors or players, instruments, approaches, goals in the field of international development cooperation (Severino & Ray, 2009, Bosch, 2011, Kharas & Blomfield,

DOI: 10.4324/9781003228257-2
This chapter has been made available under a CC-BY-NC-ND license.

2013, Develtere et al., 2021). Aid architecture scholars agree that it is 'an increasingly fragmented system containing numerous agencies' in which 'new modalities of assistance are emerging with the growth of privately funded non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and South-South development cooperation' (Kharas & Blomfield, 2013: 63). It is within this changing structure that we study CAAs.

CAAs have been researched and labelled under various terms by academics in different countries, ranging from 'fourth pillar' actors (Develtere & DeBruyn, 2009), 'citizen initiatives' (Pollet et al., 2014, Schulpen & Huyse, 2017), 'private development initiatives' (PDIs) (Kinsbergen, 2014), 'grassroots international non-governmental organisations' (GINGOs) (Schnable, 2016, Appe, 2020, Davis, 2020, Davis & Swiss, 2020) to 'citizen initiatives for global solidarity' (CIGS) (Haaland & Wallevik, 2017) and 'personalised aid' (Fylkesnes, 2019). In this book, we use a definition to move beyond the diverse terminologies that have been used in the academic literature to describe citizen initiatives. We define a CAA as an initiative, either formally registered or not, instigated and led by individual citizens or a small number of citizens that offer, mainly voluntarily, direct financial and non-financial support to individuals, institutes or organisations in countries in the Global South. Whereas we recognise that these types of initiatives emerge globally, this book starts from CAAs originating in countries in the Global North.

This book presents a multi-cited perspective on CAAs. The first part of the book starts from a Northern perspective, where we have seen CAAs emerge, from an analysis of how and why citizens in countries such as Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States actively engage in the field of international development. Starting from an understanding of this development actor, the second part will delve into the role these actors take on in the Global South, i.e. the countries where they operate with a particular focus on topics such as partnerships, shifting power, embeddedness, accountability, exit strategies, sustainability and solidarity. Through case studies from different countries in Africa and Asia, part two explores these themes from different standpoints. In general, this book provides new understandings of CAA across contexts. When debating both decolonisation and localisation of aid, such insights into CAAs ideas and doings across contexts within the so-called 'aid land' (Fechter & Hindman, 2011: 3) are pertinent.

This first chapter introduces the book and sets the stage by discussing the emergence of CAAs in international cooperation and the coming of age of the academic community studying these. We will discuss how these actors reflect diversity resulting from the time and space in which they emerge and operate. However, we also argue that a set of characteristics unites them. We discuss this by introducing the articles of faith of CAAs, based on how this actor self-identifies. All scholars who contribute to the book are academic frontrunners in their own country when it comes to studying

CAAs. Their contributions show how this field of study matured over the past decade. At the same time, this research field still finds itself in the early stages. We, therefore, end this introduction by outlining a future research agenda to enrich our understanding of the phenomenon.

Academic Research into CAAs – From Infancy to Maturity

Although some CAAs date back to colonial times, it is only recently that academics caught interest in the phenomenon. While recognising that the 'category NGO is notoriously hard to fix' and the term 'masks great diversity and assumes an unproblematic boundary' (Lewis & Schuller, 2017: 634), research on private development organisations (mainly under the name of NGO studies) has focused primarily on a few big organisations (Banks et al., 2020). While acknowledging the diversity in the sector, at the same time, relatively little is known about that same diversity. In the mid-2000s, the first academic studies on CAAs started to unfold the identity and role of CAAs. In both the Netherlands and Belgium, scholars started to question who the founders of these organisations were, why they decided to set up their organisations and how they shaped their development interventions. These collaborations resulted in publishing a first special issue on the topic (Pirotte, 2013). Whereas Belgian and Dutch scholars exchanged from the start, it took until 2014 to expand the research community with researchers from outside of these countries, starting with Norway. In 2014, during the first European conference on Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity, over 100 practitioners, policymakers and academics from 15 different European countries discussed the identity and role of CAAs. They exchanged ideas about the support provided to them. From 2009 onwards, the small academic community increasingly shared their research during various academic conferences across the globe, conferences both in the broader field of third sector research (such as the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) and The Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA)) as in the more specialised field of international development (such as the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) and humanitarian aid (such as The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM)). They started presenting their work during panels and organising their own panels around the topic of CAAs. Interesting was the initial turn-out during these panels, with the presenters often presenting for one another. The few external attendants that did show up all confirmed the increasing number of CAAs in their respective countries and the relevance of CAA research. These panels further expanded the community, currently covering researchers in the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.

While these scholars, each coming from different academic disciplines ranging from anthropology to public administration, initially studied this

phenomenon isolated from each other, it is interesting to see the commonalities between the study approaches and the findings. First, all scholars started to understand the phenomenon, more precisely the *who, why, how and what* of the work of CAAs. Second, all scholars positioned CAAs in the field of international development and hence considered them as development organisations. They consider CAAs a specific branch within the national aid architecture. This is also reflected in the names used to refer to CAAs, including words as 'aid' or 'development'.

Increasingly, the different scholars started to relate to the work of fellow academics in this field, reflected in the increased number of cross-references. More importantly, they started comparing research findings, building on methodological approaches, and using each other's terminology.[1] This increased interaction and cooperation is also reflected in two additional special issues (Schulpen & Huyse, 2017, Fechter & Schwittay, 2019), of which one was also turned into a book (Fechter & Schwittay, 2020). The academic community further matured despite being confronted with hesitance among researchers, policymakers and practitioners working in the more established (research) field of international development. Whether implicit or explicit, the relevance of this specific research area was being questioned, resulting in challenging endeavours to secure research funding. However, over time, the changing aid architecture with increased recognition for non-ODA players broadened the space for CAA (Richey & Ponte, 2014). Research findings that undeniably show the growing number of CAAs in many countries in the Global North (Kinsbergen & Koch, 2022) contributed to increased recognition of the citizen aid actor in itself and increased interest in academic research in this area.

A Pluriform Civil Society

NGOs Entering the Field

To understand the emergence and position of CAAs in the field of international development, we start with a brief reflection on how NGOs emerged in the field and how they took a position. When NGOs increasingly became prominent actors in international development in the 1980s–1990s of the previous century, expectations were high. Their growing presence in the field was received with a sigh of relief by, amongst others, governments. They considered NGOs the much-needed add-on to their toolkit that could be employed in realising their development agenda. NGOs nurtured this hope by claiming they were good at 'reaching the poor, […] using participatory processes of project implementation, […] being innovative and experimental, and […] carrying out their projects at low cost' (Tendler, 1982: iv). When confronted with the limitations of large-scale, overly bureaucratised government or multilateral donor agencies, NGOs set hopes for their innovative approaches and cost-efficiency.

Furthermore, NGOs would offer a genuine development alternative because of their alleged direct links with grassroots (Banks & Hulme, 2014). At the same time, neoliberal critiques on the role of the state of the time urged governments to step back and make room for a development alternative, allegedly provided by NGOs (Mitlin et al., 2007). Their strong embeddedness in local communities would enable them to act in a participatory manner and to provide people to people development. Because of these acclaimed comparative advantages, resulting from their organisational features and their strong mission-driven approach, NGOs were expected to excel both in their service delivery function and in their civil society function (Banks et al., 2015). There was a strong belief in the promised prospects of NGOs since they provided a direct answer to the experienced challenges.

Not only was there conviction in the alternative offered, but the field of international development was less crowded than it is today, implying that the competition for funding was not as fierce as it is these days. Therefore, the belief in NGOs was accompanied by a growing share of the aid budget being dispersed via NGOs providing them at that time with the kick start allowing them to survive their 'child's disease period'. All in all, we can say that it was precisely their being different that resulted in the then development establishment[2] receiving NGOs with open arms and was key in the process of legitimising NGOs.

At the same speed with which they were embraced, so came the critiques. From the start, scholars pointed out that 'these comparative advantages were based on ideological grounds rather than evidence' (Banks et al., 2015: 707). In 1982, Tendler undertook a first systematic attempt to test the claims against reality. She warned that NGOs gave themselves a hard job in meeting their own expectations. When 'put to the test of their own self-descriptions, in fact, PVO [Private Voluntary Organisations] may sometimes not look as good as they deserve' (Tendler, 1982: 3).

In the years to come, scholars increasingly critiqued NGOs for not living up to the expectations, with the depoliticisation of the work of NGOs being at the heart of their analysis (Ferguson, 1990). Both internal and external pressures resulted in most NGO efforts 'remain[ing] palliative rather than transformative' (Banks et al., 2015: 708). Central to the anamnesis is the increased dependence of NGOs on donor funding which undermines the strengths that once justified an increased role for NGOs in development (Hulme & Edwards, 1996). Their encapsulation in the aid system, accompanied by, amongst other, funding requirements, donor alignment and bureaucracy, results in an increasing 'mismatch between these [NGOs'] visions and the ability of NGOs to influence the drivers of social change through their programs' (Banks et al., 2015: 710). According to NGOs' critics, Drabek's warning dating from the mid-1980s seems to have been realised. NGOs became 'yet another system of aid managers and disbursers rather than development agents in their own right' (Drabek, 1987: x).

Despite the critiques, NGOs and NGO funding still takes up a significant part of the development scenery and the budget for development cooperation in general. NGOs are considered a critical part of civil society that, despite the described shortcomings, bring about a different approach towards 'doing development' compared to other actors in the field such as bilateral and multilateral agencies, membership or community-based organisations.

Citizen Aid Actors; a New Branch in the Aid Taxonomy

The entrance of NGOs in the field of international development in the 1980s was thus accompanied by a heated debate on their role in both academia and policy. Interestingly, CAAs' entrance is left undiscussed until today in many countries in the Global North. In countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, CAAs' entrance resulted in a debate on the role of CAAs. Especially the impact of their development interventions in the Global South became the subject of debate. At best, they are considered an expression of and a contributor to a strong support base for international development cooperation in their home countries in the Global North (Kinsbergen & Molthof, 2021). At worst, they are considered amateurs who, due to their lack of experience, are prone to repeat old mistakes within the field of development intervention (Schnable, 2021). Among established development actors, a type of discomfort can be noticed when analysing their response to the rise of CAAs: should they consider them as potential allies, competitors or amateurs they must avoid?

Overall, we find that there are significant differences in how CAAs are perceived and received by established development actors and academics. Unlike the NGOs, *being different* is no longer considered a competitive advantage, but turns out to be critical in delegitimising Citizen Aid as development actors. They do not *walk the walk, talk the talk*, and are, therefore, not considered part of the development community (Develtere, 2012). As already mentioned, critics seem to expect that the voluntary nature of CAAs, with mostly non-trained staff running the organisations, makes them prone to upholding an old-fashioned development paradigm. In understanding this overall critical stance, it is arguable that an advanced (critical) understanding of the role of development actors resulting from 40 years of academic research and policy debate plays a role in this. In addition, compared to the 1980s, the field of development cooperation became more crowded with a large number and variety of actors taking up a position, resulting in saturation in the funding field of international development. With aid budgets being under pressure, CAAs are not so much considered as allies but as competitors fishing in the same pond of donors. Overall, the current establishment receives CAAs with scepticism, and there is a reluctance to acknowledge them. At the same time, part of CAAs

is not looking for this recognition or uptake in the establishment. They tend to deliberately take distance from the established actors and criticise them for being costly, bureaucratic, and distanced from those they want to help.

Citizen Aid Actors Situated in Time and Space: The Importance of Contextualisation

CAAs differ from other development actors based on two key features: their overly voluntary nature and small-scale nature in terms of budget and (voluntary) staff. At the same time, CAAs are not birds of a feather. The extent to which they are recognised as development actors, but also how they emerge, are organised, and operate are shaped by both time and space (context). Four different contexts are crucial in understanding the diversity among CAAs: (1) country of origin, including the national aid environment; (2) country of operation and the environment; (3) the international aid system and finally; (4) the 'zeitgeist'.

The National Context Where They Emerge

Studies so far show that their recognition as part of civil society in their countries of origin and the support they receive varies significantly. In some contexts, this can be explained by the role of civil society, in general, and its relations to, for example, the state (e.g. the United States). In other contexts, the political environment and the varying importance of development cooperation determine the room to manoeuvre for CAAs (Pollet et al., 2014). We also find that the enabling environment for CAA varies significantly between countries and is subject to change, affecting the ease to start a CAA and operating as such. Whereas in some countries, such as Belgium, no formal registration is required to operate as a CAA, the threshold to start a CAA is higher in other countries. Changing rules and regulations can also significantly impact the room to operate for CAAs. This is, for instance, clear in the anti-money laundering policy in the Netherlands, because of which many CAA face challenges in opening a bank account, transferring money or making use of payment service providers. In some countries, like Norway, CAAs are hardly, if at all, acknowledged by established aid actors (Haaland & Wallevik, 2017). That makes them less subject to public scrutiny and debates and less supported by, for example, government funding systems.

The Country Context Where They Operate

Existing research on CAAs learns that their role is shaped not only by the national context where they emerge but also by the countries where they operate. Insight from CAA studies thus far provide context-specific findings

from the Global South (Schulpen & Huyse, 2017, Fechter & Schwittay, 2019, Schnable, 2021). What is evident from these case studies is how CAAs are shaped by local structures and conditions. Some areas are, for instance, more prone to host a multitude of CAAs due to being popular tourist areas, such as the Gambia, where interaction between tourists (potential CAAs founders) and recipient entrepreneurs is frequent (Haaland & Wallevik, 2017). Moreover, countries which have been focus areas of bilateral development aid, such as Kenya, have often experienced a steady flow of foreign visitors and development workers, which also may stimulate the emergence of CAAs (Fechter, 2019, Kinsbergen, 2019). In more hostile environments, like countries experiencing conflicts or instability, the point of interaction between foreigners and residents may be more limited and thus with a lower presence of CAAs. Here, we will see CIGS emerging with the influence, for example, among diaspora milieus in the North (e.g. the Democratic Republic of the Congo). In some countries, like India, there is a decreasing civic space for international NGOs (Civicus Monitor) and thus also an anticipated less welcoming space for CAAs. All these country-specific cases add important insight to how CAA emerge, operate and manoeuvre in a national context and which structures they play upon locally in their day-to-day activities.

The Context of Development Versus Humanitarian Assistance

Many CAAs operate in a development context, where they provide support over a longer period. There is, however, also a group that is initiated and/or operates in a humanitarian crisis setting, for example, in response to the tsunami in Southeast Asia in 2004 and the so-called European refugee crisis in 2015 (Guribye & Mydland, 2018, Oikonomakis, 2018, Haaland & Wallevik, 2019, Lewis, 2019, Shults et al., 2021). While in the established field of international aid, there is a clear distinction in terms of *humanitarian* and *development* discourse, actors, interventions and funding streams, research show that the same strict division of labour is largely absent among CAAs. The flexible character of CAA allows them to switch along with the circumstances face by the communities where they operate and to work on the humanitarian-development nexus (Kinsbergen et al., 2021). The rapid turnaround to meet needs shows from the response offered by CAAs during the COVID-19 crisis and CAAs providing refugee support in Greece that quickly shifted their focus to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. CAAs major calling is to help people they consider to be in need; whether this is in a place of chronic poverty or in a place of an emergent crisis seem to be of less importance. What is imperative though is the (personal) connections that need to be made for a CAA to emerge and start operating. Despite the less clear divide between development and humanitarian aid, research learns that the context wherein they operate affects, for example, their relating to other, more established development actors.

Zeitgeist – The General Spirit of the Time

CAAs also need to be contextualised in the specific time that they are emerging. It can be argued that the socio-political and economic circumstances in which CAAs came about and whereto they responded, affect the nature and role of CAAs. CAAs founded to support the work of a missionary in the 1970s differ from solidarity committees that were founded all over the world in the 1980s in response to the Apartheid regime in South Africa, to support the Zapatistas in Mexico or the Sandinistas in Nicaragua which, on its turn, cannot be compared to CAAs that are established in 2014 following a holiday in, for example, Tanzania. The political environment of the 1980s that defined the motives, rhetoric, goals and actions of solidarity committees is significantly different than the zeitgeist of the mid-2000s where a large number of CAAs emerged. Most of these CAAs' work in a development context can be defined as depoliticised (Kinsbergen et al., 2021), whilst in a crisis context this varies (Rozakou, 2017, Shults et al., 2021).

The Articles of Faith of Citizen Aid Actors – Communality within Diversity

While acknowledging the differences between CAAS in terms of time and space, this book starts from the idea that CAAs as a group can be distinguished from other actors based on a set of similarities across them.

A first rough meta-analysis of the findings of different CAA studies learns that overall (1) the large majority of CAA is voluntary run and (mostly as a result of this) (2) small scale in terms of budget and people involved, (3) they are largely privately funded rather than publicly and (4) most often, but not only, initiated by citizens without a professional background in international development and finally, (5) most of them started unplanned after having experienced a life-changing experience during a holiday or longer stay in a country in the Global South, with countries on the African continent, followed by Asia, being the most prominent among CAAs' intervention countries. Of course, variety in the genesis and nature of organisations is large with some people starting their foundation after a military mission or adoption of children. In addition, there is a large group of people from diaspora communities that provide support to their (families') country of origin (Guribye & Tharmalingam, 2017, Appe, 2022). In most countries, founders of these do-it-yourself development organisations are of middle age, but it goes without saying that also young people returning from an international volunteering experience or internship can be found among the founders.

We will start the process of unfolding the identity of CAAs along the lines of four self-articulated articles of faith of CIGS. We consider these articles as the self-identification of these organisations, articles that binds CAAs

despite their differences. In similar manner as done by Tendler in 1982, for what she referred to as Private Voluntary Organisation (PVOs), based on 'what they do, and reading what they write, one finds that […] common themes emerge, in addition to heterogeneity'. We draw these articles from the substantive generated body of knowledge, which is the result of 15 years of research, conducted by academics who study a similar phenomenon in several northern countries. Different than Tendler (ibid.), we will not use the articles as an actual evaluation framework. We will, however, apply the framework to unravel the identity of CAAs starting from their self-identification. The articles characterise the *who, why, how and what* of CAAs. We distinguish the following for articles: (1) development with a human face, (2) cost-efficient, (3) no red-tape and (4) additionality in the Global North and Global South.

We will first describe how each article manifests itself and, subsequently, how it co-determines the identity and role of Citizen Aid and how the interplay between these articles facilitates or possibly obstruct their role. While doing so, we will introduce the different chapters of the book and their contribution to the process of unfolding CAAs.[3]

Development with a Human Face

As described, most CAA founders start their own organisation resulting from a personal calling. Following this, they run their organisation from their living rooms and kitchen tables, therefore also being referred to as homemade aid. In the local newspaper, when visiting your bakery, at the school of your kids or during the Sunday mass: the development initiatives supported and co-founded by fellow citizens are omnipresent in the daily life of many.

The founders of CAAs demonstrate that in the field of international development no license to operate is required. Different than other professional fields, such as medicines or the legal field, international development is not characterised by clear cut boundaries, not determined by legal frameworks defining who can and cannot enter the field as a professional. In theory, independent of qualification, people can initiate their own organisation. It is your neighbour, colleague or friend that initiates its own foundation is requesting for a donation and provides you directly with follow-up, making the interaction more personalised compared to that with larger-scale development organisations.

This strong personal involvement makes CAAs well positioned to turn complex challenges into smaller, personalised stories and make development cooperation from a faraway capital city phenomenon into an almost sensory, close to home experience. By doing so, they are able to countervail feelings of 'not my business' or fatality by concrete stories of change and provide their audience with a toolbox to act and contribute to this change, either as volunteer or donor. One could say that, albeit most often

unintentionally, CAAs contribute to restoring the human face of development cooperation that is at risk because of processes of overly professionalising and bureaucratising development organisations (Develtere & DeBruyn, 2009).

This people to people approach positively affects donors' willingness to donate (Kinsbergen and Schulpen, 2011). In addition, in some countries in the Global North, this personal approach and the strong local embeddedness of CAA founders in their hometown communities result in governments seeing a particular role for CAAs in broadening and strengthening the public support base for international development in their own backyard (Kinsbergen & Molthof, 2021). Similar to celebrity humanitarians such as Angelina Jolie, on a local level, they are considered the perfect spokespersons to inform and involve fellow citizens in development cooperation reaching audiences that would otherwise not be informed on or involved in issues of international development. But this personal approach, with a central role for the CAA founder, is not unambiguous. In Chapter 5, on the life trajectories of American CAAs, Allison Schnable, Susan Appe and Janet Jock explain how the strong identification of a CAA with its founder, initially benefits the organisations, with CAAs' heavily relying on the personal network of the founder for donations. At the same time, their study shows how this pivotal role of the founder also strongly determines the life trajectory of the organisation, with the growth, persistence or dying of the organisations being largely in the hands of the founder and succession of the founder a complicated endeavour.

In Chapter 8, on Citizen Aid Celebrities, Anne-Meike Fechter makes abundantly clear that their local celebrity status also comes with responsibilities in the Global South. Examining citizen aid through the lens of celebrity offers insights into the ambiguous and sometimes problematic role of charismatic founder figures. Having a prominent status allows them to intervene in ways not sanctioned by the international aid community but also often turns them into 'heropreneurs' that ignore local circumstances and have not identified a sustainable path forward.

CAAs people to people approach is not only reflected in their relations with their supporters in the Global North, they also tend to do so in their southern partnerships. Local counterparts are selected *by hazard*, and not based on extensive selection procedures or audits, which implies anyone can end up being the counterpart of a CAA; be it a tour guide, a teacher or the founder of a community-based organisation. The latter is clearly described and analysed in Chapter 7 by June Fylkesnes and Mieke Molthof in their chapter on local coordinators of Norwegian CAAs in The Gambia. These local coordinators or brokers are vital for establishing and maintaining connections and enabling transactions between the North and the South. In doing so, they perform many different roles (facilitators, mediators, translators, interpreters) and as such strongly influence CAAs and their work because of their central brokering role.

The partnerships of CAAs with their counterparts in the Global South are often long-lasting with many of the CAAs taking up a very personal approach to their partnerships. This is the result of the strong interwovenness of the *personal* and the *professional* in their partnerships (Kinsbergen et al., forthcoming). Especially when starting, there are no set frameworks or memoranda of understanding including clear timeframes. It is, hence, not a formal contract underlying the partnership, it is often the personal relationship – it's 'a social contract'. By doing so, both in their country of origin as in the countries where they intervene, CAAs may contribute to the process of democratising the field of international development.

At the same time, research learns that this personal approach to their relations not only has positive implications for their partnerships. The personal relationships with their private back donors, for example, results in a strongly felt pressure to present them with tangible results in the short term and to respond to particular wishes and preferences of donors. Whereas also more established organisations have to withstand pressure from their donors, with CAAs this pressure comes from people they have personal relationships with. Research also learns that the often-informal nature of the partnerships can be a stand in the way for local participation and ownership and processes of shifting power. That same warm, friendly relationship that binds them, can complicate the process of addressing concerns, discussing expectations, roles and responsibilities and results in uncertainties at the side of CAAs' counterparts. This becomes especially apparent in the ending of the partnerships, as can be read in Chapter 10 of Sara Kinsbergen, Anne-Fleur Lurvink and Imke van Mil. Their study shows, how the personal involvement that lies at the heart of the start of the CAA can also become a burden to the CAA founder and can trigger the ending of the partnership.

Cost Efficient

The voluntary nature of CAAs could be referred to as the most important distinguishing feature of CAAs compared to larger NGOs. Across countries, a large majority of CAAs operates on a voluntary basis. This is something many of them take pride in and explicitly articulate, either verbally or in writing on their websites and in newsletters. A frequently made claim by CAAs is that because of their voluntary nature, different then with other development organisations, every cent reaches the poor. A cost-efficient working manner is hence at the heart of the identity of most CAAs and forms an important part of their attractiveness for both volunteers and back donors. Both consider overhead costs as mal spending of their donations and want their gifts to contribute directly to the causes of the organisations. In that sense, most CAAs have an attractive organisational model for donors that allows to indeed spend most of their funding on their projects and programmes. This cost efficiency is perceived as

attractive for donors and enables CAAs as such in their role as development actors. Available data give no indication that donations to CAA result in a decrease of donations to larger development organisations. Although hard to substantiate, we do expect that CAAs and larger development organisations are partly 'fishing in the same pond' of (private) donors. With CAAs having compelling stories for donors, this feeling of competitiveness could be a stand in the way of cooperation between CAAs and larger development actors.

At the same time, research learns their reluctance towards investment in overhead costs risk to also limit their role as development actors. Most CAAs uphold a broad interpretation of what is considered overhead: capacity strengthening, monitoring and evaluation, payment of salaries are all seen as investments that do not directly contribute to their goals and hence should be avoided. As described by Sara Kinsbergen, Dirk Jan Koch and Joeri Troost in Chapter 6 this impedes part of CAAs to reach their ambitions to grow financially, evolve their intervention strategies and realise a sustainable exit from their partnerships.

No Red-Tape

The lack of and, maybe even more, the averseness towards bureaucracy makes most CAAs operate 'lean and mean': no complex decision-making procedures, short communication lines, no lengthy application and reporting formats for their counterparts. Request by their counterparts made today can be met by tomorrow and their (private) donors receive updates regularly. In Hanne Haaland, Lee Michael Shults and Hege Wallevik's Chapter 2 on the rise of Citizen Aid in Norway, founders explain how this way of operating enable CAAs to cater quickly for needs on the ground. This becomes even more prominent in a crisis situation, as described by Erika Frydenlund, Hanne Haaland, Jose Padilla and Hege Wallevik in Chapter 11. Their study on CAAs' operations on Lesvos shows that CAA working in a crisis emphasise the advantage of being an actor that is able to turn around quickly, not having to answer to organisational regulations and thus avoiding red tape, when caring for people in need. Needs change quickly both during early phases of a crisis and in a protracted situation and the flexibility that CAA offer means that they are carving out a place for themselves in humanitarian response.

With a large majority of CAAs being run entirely by volunteers, the fun factor plays a critical role in their tendency to avoid red tape (Kinsbergen, 2014, Appe & Schnable, 2019). Founders and volunteers in CAAs explain how the work should 'stay fun' and bureaucracy is not part of that. The people-to-people engagement with counterparts and communities in the Global South, the direct involvement in the implementation and running of the development interventions they support, is what thrives many of them, with regular visits to countries where they work, being the cherry on the

cake rewarding them for all their efforts. Their reluctance towards what they would refer to as unnecessary procedures and formalities, also results in a desire not to become like larger, professional development organisations which they feel have lost connections to the lived reality of development cooperation.

Similarly, to their voluntary approach, their informalised working manner is attractive to especially private donors. However, their reluctance for red tape also comes with some limitations. First, it affects their interaction with other actors in the field of international development that have a more formalised working manner. For example, it hampers their relations to institutionalised donors that require more formalised working methods when it comes to proposal writing (requiring, for example, a theory of change) and monitoring and evaluation. Secondly, it also contributes to lack of a more longer-term vision and strategy. The high degree of happenstance that characterises the origins of the organisations often continues to define their working manner. An organisation that starts providing support to a primary school learns along the way that the high incidence of school dropout is related to poor economic circumstances of the families of the children, upon which they decide to expand their intervention area to healthcare and start supporting a local clinic (Kinsbergen & Koch, 2022). Whereas their flexible nature allows them to easily adapt their intervention strategy, the somewhat ad hoc nature of it turns out to stand in the way of strategies that intentionally aim for systemic change (ibid.).

Additionality in the Global North and the Global South

According to Chambers (1987), seeking high additionality as a development actor requires 'identifying and matching needs and opportunities; assessing comparative advantage – seeing what one NGO does best compare with others; learning and adapting through action; and having wider impacts' (Chambers, 1987: 1). When it comes to their role in the Global North, CAAs have somewhat ambiguous feelings towards the part they must play. Whereas some feel they have a critical role to play when it comes to awareness raising and global citizenship education, others feel this is not 'their cup of tea'. They feel it as a role that is enforced upon them by donors. Those CAAs that are involved in activities that primarily aim to contribute to global citizenship are convinced that CAAs are well equipped to do so. They are convinced that they have a unique position, hard to mimic by other actors, to inform and activate fellow citizen in their own backyard. However, established actors that criticise the work of CAAs are concerned that CAAs are more prone to the so-called white saviour syndrome and hence expect them to make use of old fashion frames in their communication, representing communities as pitiful and dependent. In Chapter 3, Lau Schulpen and Siem Bouwmeister explain how the Northern role of CAAs (i.e. working on public support) forms a crucial element in understanding

why interactions between CAAs and established NGOs in the Netherlands reached a peak in the 2000s – and also of why these interactions nearly disappeared after 2010. Their chapter at the same time shows that the government played an instrumental role on facilitating (and breaking down) that interaction; not in the last place a financially inspired instrumental role.

When it comes to their work in the Global South, most CAAs are convinced that it is additional to what other development actors are undertaking. There is a conviction amongst CAAs that operating outside the official aid system protects them from tarmac, seasonal and person biases that bring them to localities that are out of the working area of other actors (Chambers, 2006). An often-heard expression is that 'Where we work, there is no other organisation working' and 'The people we help, are not receiving support from anyone'. In addition to a felt conviction of additionality in terms of geographical choices, CAAs also express a belief in that they fill the gaps left by others. They are convinced that the work they undertake is of a type and scale that established NGOs no longer do or what the government neglects to do. The first-generation type of development interventions (Korten, 1987), providing communities with direct relief in the areas of healthcare, education and shelter, is what they feel larger development organisations have left behind. Research, however, learns that most CAAs do not undertake the steps required to reach high additionality. Earlier studies learned that CAAs tend to work in isolation, from local government officials and/or from other development actors (Schulpen, 2007, Kinsbergen, 2019).

In Chapter 4, John-Michael Davis emphasises CAAs' self-articulated motives and, certainly, their perceived added value to international development efforts. In addition to their financial efficiency, they expect their collaborative approach, their innovative development model and, indeed, their gap-filling capacity to distinguish their development efforts from more established actors. The argument of CAA's potential in aid compared to more established actors is also put forward by Junru Bian in Chapter 12. He argues the importance of examining the professionalisation within the humanitarian sector as it not only defines how aid and development should be practised but also affects the ways in which conventional humanitarian organisations and their employees see the subjects of their practice – the beneficiaries. In his discussion about the critique of NGOs, he emphasises how the professionalisation of NGOs paves the way for CAAs.

In Chapter 9, Valerie Korsvik, Lee Michael Shults, Hanne Haaland and Hege Wallevik argue to go beyond this idea of CAA having a country of origin and a country of intervention, but rather see CAA as a result of a combined effort between citizens working in two or more localities to improve people's lives. By engaging Ugandan perspectives, they aim to emphasise the experiences of Southern actors. As such, this work is relevant to both ongoing debates regarding the localisation of aid and efforts towards a decolonisation of the discourse of development.

Research Implications and a Future Agenda

Together, earlier studies on CAAs and the contributions in this book provide for a first and already quite comprehensive understanding of not only the background of CAAs across different Northern countries but also of their work in the Global South.

The above are all familiar areas of research in the field of international cooperation (and specifically of civil society organisation players – which CAAs are as well). And, as such they fit well with the six research questions central in civil society organisations/NGO research as determined by Brass et al. (2018): (a) the nature of NGOs, (b) their emergence and development, (c) how they conduct their work, (d) their impacts, (e) how they relate to other actors and (f) how they contribute to the (re)production of power dynamics. From Brass et al., we also take two recommendations which we feel are valuable for future research on CAAs as well. To these we add two additional knowledge gaps which we hope future research will fill.

The first relates to the need to address geographic gaps in order to further our understanding of the CAA phenomenon. This geographic gap both holds for the Northern countries in which CAAs emerge and for the Southern countries in which CAAs mainly work. With regard to the former, CAA research has largely been restricted to the Netherlands, Norway, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Belgium. Only piecemeal data is available on the CAA community in other (European) countries. Including other geographic areas such as upcoming donor countries in Eastern Europe, in country comparative research, would allow us to analyse similarities and differences between CAAs and their work in different countries and relate these to specific context variables such as the structure of the NGO community, governmental policy in the field of international cooperation or the volunteering culture. Likewise, inclusion of a broader range of Southern countries would allow not only for a stronger base for understanding the work of CAAs but also of the importance of local contextual variables ranging from government policies, civic space, organisational strength, local fundraising capacities and so on.

The second gap that we take from Brass et al. (2018) is a thematic one. This primarily relates to the effectiveness or even the impact of the work of CAAs. Thematically, research has focused on what for most CAAs is their central intervention strategy: concrete projects aimed at addressing shortcomings people experience in such fields as health and education. In reality, such 'service delivery' interventions are undoubtedly much broader and will include as well projects in such fields as microfinance and job creation. Studies into specific intervention fields would not only expand our knowledge about the contribution of CAAs but would also allow for a comparison with the work of NGOs. Moreover, although perhaps central, CAAs' interventions are not restricted to service delivery. They are also (conscientiously or unconscientiously) active in a more political sphere by

contributing to organisation building and/or influencing other actors (e.g. local governments or companies) and research in this field would be a welcome addition.

The latter already points to a third gap we feel future research should address: a relational gap. In the past, it has been concluded that CAAs often work in splendid isolation with few others realising or even knowing about their work and they themselves having few official contacts outside of the direct group with and for whom they work. At the same time, as players in the field of international cooperation, they are 'connected' to a plethora of other actors that are crucial for their positioning as well as for their work. These 'connected actors' can be divided into three broad groups. The first then relates to what might be called their 'back donors' with a central place for individual citizens but including also schools, companies, NGOs, and (local) governments. How dependent are CAAs on these back donors, what influence do these have on the strategy and activities of CAAs and what is the message CAAs bring across on the work they undertake? The second group comprises of all different (development) actors with which CAAs come in contact in their work including (again) local governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, NGOs and local CSOs. How does the work of CAA relate to that of these other actors? Finally, a third group to which CAAs are connected are the people for and with whom they work and that includes both those that form the local organisations and those that belong to the communities where CIGS and their counterparts work. To what extent are these local actors involved in decision-making with regard to CAA interventions? Research up to now has only scratched the surface of all these connections.

The fourth and final future path for CAA research which we emphasise here is linked to the sixth research question mentioned by Brass et al. (2018): CAA's contribution to the (re)production of power dynamics. CAAs often present themselves as having a close and equal relationship with their Southern counterparts, but they have also been accused of a rather paternalistic view and behaviour. In combination with their often strong self-image of their own capacities and strategy, this raises the question how they relate to the discussion on shift-the-power and, more broadly, that on decolonisation of aid. Are CAAs then to be viewed as neo-colonial development actors or are they a prime example of an actor that already managed to shift the power to their Southern counterparts? What can the NGO community – or perhaps the International Cooperation community at large – learn from the way CAAs give shape to this power shift?

Finally, filling these research gaps needs at least two things: (1) acknowledgement that CAA-research is a relevant research area and (2) an increase in the number of researchers and research institutions, both those working in countries in the Global South and in the Global North, dedicating at least part of their time to this. Naturally, we hope this book will go a long way in creating and strengthening the idea that studying CAAs is a worthwhile

endeavour. Worthwhile not only from the idea that they are an addition to the already existing research on NGOs and CSOs in development (cooperation) but also because CAAs are a development actor in their own right and require further critical exploration and a further opening of the field.

Notes

1 Whereas in this introduction, we use the term Citizen Aid Actors, in the book's various chapters, authors use the terminology they apply in their research.
2 'Development establishment' refers to longstanding and/or widely recognised bilateral and multilateral donors and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).
3 While presenting each of the 11 subsequent chapters of this book under the headings of one of the four articles of faith, this does not imply that this chapters do not relate to the other articles.

References

Appe, S. (2020). Beyond the professionalized nongovernmental organization: Life-history narratives of grassroots philanthropic leaders in Africa. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 31(2): 335–353. https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.2143
Appe, S. (2022). Grassroots INGOs in Africa: Perspectives on what they are (and are not?). *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 51(1): 125–147. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0899764021991672
Appe, S. and Schnable, A. (2019). Don't reinvent the wheel: Possibilities for and limits to building capacity of grassroots international NGOs. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(10): 1832–1849. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1636226
Banks, N. and Hulme, D. (2014), New development alternatives or business as usual with a new face? The transformative potential of new actors and alliances in development. *Third World Quarterly*, 35(1): 181–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2014.868997
Banks, N., Hulme, D. and Edwards, M. (2015). NGOs, states, and donors revisited: Still too close for comfort? *World Development*, 66: 707–718. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2014.09.028
Banks, N, Schulpen, L. and Brockington, D. (2020). New sectoral perspectives on international NGOs: Scale, dynamics and influences. *Development in Practice*, 30(6): 695–705. https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2020.1801595
Bosch, E. (2011) *Making the most of the international aid system*. OECD Journal: General Papers, vol. 2010/1.
Brass, J., Longhofer, W., Robinson, R. and Schnable, A. (2018). NGOs and international development: A review of thirty-five years of scholarship. *World Development*, 112: 136–149. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.07.016
Chambers, R. (1987). Thinking about NGO Priorities, IDS mimeo. 2 May 1987. p. 1.
Chambers, R. (2006). *Poverty Unperceived: Traps, Biases and Agenda*. Working paper 270, University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies.
Davis, J. M. (2020). Canada's GINGOs: Who are they, what are they doing, and what role for the future? *Development in Practice*, 30(6): 738–750. https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2020.1801584

Davis, J. M. and Swiss, L. (2020). Need, merit, self-interest or convenience? Exploring aid allocation motives of Grassroots International NGOs. *Journal of International Development*, 32(8): 1324–1345. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3505

Develtere, P. (2012). *How Do We Help: The Free Market in Development Aid*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Develtere, P. and DeBruyn, T. (2009). The emergence of a fourth pillar in development aid. *Development in Practice*, 19(7): 912–922. https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520903122378

Develtere, P., Huyse, H. and Van Ongevalle, J. (2021). *International Development Cooperation Today*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Drabek, A. G. (1987). Development alternatives: The challenge for NGOs—an overview of the issues. *World Development*, 15(1): ix–xv. https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(87)90135-5

Fechter, A. M. (2019). Development and the search for connection. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(10): 1816–1831. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1649089

Fechter, A. M. and Hindman, H (eds), (2011) *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The Challenges and Futures of Aidland*. Boulder, CO: A Kumarian Press Book.

Fechter, A. M. and Schwittay, A. (2019) *Citizen Aid: Grassroots Interventions in Development and Humanitarianism,* 40(10): 1769–1780. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1656062

Fechter, A. M. and Schwittay, A. (2020) *Citizen Aid and Everyday Humanitarianism Development Futures?* Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Ferguson, J. (1990). *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development", Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fylkesnes, J. (2019). Motivations behind citizen aid: Norwegian initiatives in The Gambia. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(10): 1799–1815. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1656061

Guribye, E. and Mydland, T. (2018). Escape to the Island: International volunteer engagement on lesvos during the refugee crisis. *Journal of Civil Society*, 14(4): 346–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2018.1518774

Guribye, E. and Tharmalingam, S. (2017). Tamil Diaspora-driven development aid: Towards an understanding of context, networks and historical changes. *Forum for Development Studies*, 44(2): 171–188. https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2016.1273849

Haaland, H. and Wallevik, H. (2017). Citizens as actors in the development field: The case of an accidental aid-agent's activities in aid-land. *Forum for Development Studies*, 44(2): 203–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2017.1305444

Haaland, H. and Wallevik, H. (2019) Beyond crisis management? The role of citizen initiatives for global solidarity in humanitarian aid: The case of lesvos. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(10): 1869–1883. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1656060

Hulme, D. and Edwards, M. (1996). Too close for comfort? The impact of official aid on nongovernmental organizations. *World Development*, 24(6): 961–973. https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(96)00019-8

Kharas, H. and Blomfield, M. (2013). Rethinking the role of multilateral institutions in an ever-changing aid architecture. In: Besada, H. and Kindornay, S. (eds.), *Multilateral Development Cooperation in a Changing Global Order*. London: International Political Economy Series. Palgrave Macmillan, 63–85.

Kinsbergen, S. (2014). *Behind the Pictures – Understanding Private Development Initiatives*. Nijmegen: Radboud University (PhD Thesis).

Kinsbergen, S. (2019) The legitimacy of Dutch do-it-yourself initiatives in Kwale County, Kenya. *Third World Quarterly*, 40: 10. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1644497

Kinsbergen, S., Koch, D. J., Plaisier, C. and Schulpen, L. (2021). Long-lasting, but not transformative. An ex-post sustainability study of development interventions of Private Development Initiatives. *European Journal of Development Research*, 34: 51–76. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00346-0

Kinsbergen, S. & Koch, D.J. (2022). The Generational Status Quo Explained: Longitudinal case studies of small Dutch NGOs. *International Development Planning Review*, 44: 457–484.

Kinsbergen, S. and Molthof, M. (2021). The rise and fall of government support for small-scale voluntary development organizations – and their remarkable resilience. *Development Policy Review*, 40(2): 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12559

Kinsbergen, S., Molthof, M., van der Hoek, L. & Vellinga, A. (forthcoming). Shift the power? Constraints and enablers of more equitable partnerships between non-governmental organizations: the case of Dutch small-scale initiatives in Uganda and India. In: Van Wessel M., Kontinen, T., and Bawole, J.N. (eds.), *Reimagining Civil Society Collaborations in Development. Starting from the South*. Abingdon: Routledge, 311–326.

Kinsbergen, S., and Schulpen, L. (2011) Taking stock of PIs: The what, why, and how of private initiatives in development. In: Hoebink, P. (ed.), *The Netherlands Yearbook on International Cooperation*. Assen: Van Gorcum, pp. 161–186.

Korten, D. C. (1987). Third generation NGO strategies: A key to people-centred development. *World Development*, 15(1): 145–159. https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(87)90153-7

Lewis, D. (2019). Humanitarianism, civil society and the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(10): 1884–1902. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1652897

Lewis, D. and Schuller, M. (2017). Engagements with a productively unstable category: Anthropologists and nongovernmental organizations. *Current Anthropology*, 58: 5. https://doi.org/10.1086/693897

Malkki, Liisa H. (2015). *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mitlin D., Hickey, S. and Bebbington, A. (2007). Reclaiming development? NGOs and the challenge of alternatives. *World Development*, 35(10): 1699–1720. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.WORLDDEV.2006.11.005

Oikonomakis, L. (2018). Solidarity in transition: The case of greece. In: della Porta D. (ed.), *Solidarity Mobilizations in the 'Refugee Crisis': Contentious Moves* (pp. 65–98). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71752-4_3

Pirotte, G. (2013). Popular initiatives of international solidarity: A laboratory of studies of international cooperation? *Mondes en développement*, 161: 7–18. https://dx.doi.org/10.3917/med.161.0007

Pollet, I., Habraken, R., Schulpen, L. and Huyse, H. (2014). *The Accidental Aid Worker. A Mapping of Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity in Europe*. Leuven-Nijmegen: KU Leuven and Radboud University Nijmegen.

Richey, L. A. and Ponte, S. (2014). New actors and alliances in development. *Third World Quarterly*, 35(1): 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2014.868979

Rozakou, K. (2017) Solidarity# humanitarianism: The blurred boundaries of humanitarianism in greece. *Etnofoor*, 29(2): 99–104. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26296172

Schnable, A. (2016) What religion affords grassroots NGOs: Frames, networks, modes of action. *Forum on Religion and Development*, 55(2): 216–232. https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12272

Schnable, A. (2021). *Amateurs without Borders*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Schulpen, L. (2007). *Development in the 'Africa for Beginners': Dutch Private Initiatives in Ghana and Malawi*. Nijmegen: Centre for International Development Issues. Radboud University.

Schulpen, L, and Huyse, H. (2017) Citizen initiatives for global solidarity. The new face of european solidarity. *Forum for Development Studies*, 44: 163–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2017.1306956

Severino, J. M. and Ray, O. The end of ODA: Death and rebirth of a global public policy (March 25, 2009). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1392460 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1392460

Shults, L. M., Haaland H. and Wallevik, H. (2021). Localizing global solidarity: Humanitarian aid in Lesvos. In: Spandler, K., Maitra, S. and Roepstorff, K. (eds.), *Localization and the Politics of Humanitarian Action in Frontiers in Political Science, Research Topic Localization and the Politics of Humanitarian Action*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.690907

Tendler, J. (1982). Turning private voluntary organizations into development agencies: Questions for evaluation. AID Program Evaluation Discussion Paper 12. Washington, DC.