

How Are Nongovernmental Organizations and their Partners Engaging Georgians at the  
Community Level?

Patricia Huffman

Trinity Washington University

I have adhered to the university policy regarding academic honesty in completing this  
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### Abstract

Western-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been working on civil society initiatives in Georgia since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. The original focus was on teaching what were known as *democracies in transition* how to adopt Western-style democracy. Thomas Carothers' work, *The End of the Transition Paradigm* (2002), challenged the aid community to stop thinking of the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union as *in transition*, and to deal with realities on the ground, focusing less on democratic transition and more on building civil society. The new approach is to become more engaged with the communities in which they operate, to encourage more citizen participation, and to promote the sustainability of local NGOs, focusing on community-based initiatives related to politics, education, health, or the economy. As a consequence of new methods of engagement, the individuals tasked with engaging the Georgian public must adapt their thinking about what they do and how they do it. This phenomenological qualitative study shows what new initiatives NGOs are undertaking in Georgia in response to this challenge, the ways NGO personnel are changing their methods, and how NGO personnel experience the shared phenomenon of encouraging citizen participation in Georgia. Face-to-face and Skype interviews were conducted with NGO and aid professionals, scholars of democracy and civil society, and officials of agencies involved with civil society development in Georgia to learn how NGOs and their representatives are adapting to the new paradigm.

*Keywords:* NGOs, CSOs, civil society, democracy, nonprofits, international development, international affairs, Georgia, the Caucasus, community-based initiatives, grassroots initiatives, citizen participation, capacity building, sustainability

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### Introduction

Since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been developing civil society in countries such as Georgia, taking cues from the foreign policy of the US government (Aksartova, 2006; Carothers, 2002; Ishkanian, 2007; Lutsevych, 2013; Matveeva, 2008; Mendelson, 2002). After the first decade of Western nations teaching democracy to newly independent states, Carothers (2002) recommended that the international community stop referring to countries like Georgia as being *transitional democracies*, and furthermore, to change the focus from creating democracies to building sustainable components of civil society from the ground up. The new paradigm included meeting with communities on a grassroots level and creating partnerships with governments, businesses, and other NGOs in areas such as health, education, and economic development, and increasing civic participation (Carothers, 2002; Civil Society Institute, 2010; East-West Management Institute, 2010; Hough, 2011; Lutsevych, 2013; Ritvo, Berdzenishvili, Khazalia, Khidesheli, Liqokeli, & Samkharadze, 2013; Salamadze, Romanadze, Faniashvili, & Kartoza, 2007; United States Agency for International Development, 2010; United States Agency for International Development, 2013). Surveys of Georgians have shown further efforts are necessary to engage them with NGOs (Caucasus Research Resource Center, 2012; Hough, 2012; Navarro, 2014; Stewart, 2004).

A culture of mistrust of foreign organizations and a lack of understanding of what NGOs do have hampered the efforts of NGOs in Georgia (Jarabik & Yanchenko, 2013; Lutsevych, 2013; Matveeva, 2013). Surveys of the Georgian public's attitudes exist (Caucasus Research Resource Center, 2012; Hough, 2012; Navarro, 2014; Stewart, 2004); perspectives of experts working on NGO programs in Georgia are hard to find. This research looks at what specific new

initiatives NGOs are taking in Georgia as a result of the change to a community-based approach, and how NGO workers are adapting to meet the needs of their intended beneficiaries.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The challenge for NGOs working on civil society in Georgia is to increase citizen participation and help create sustainable, community-based organizations. Because this signifies a change from the focus on democracy promotion, the research shows how NGOs are addressing this need with new initiatives, and attempts to understand how NGO workers and their partners are experiencing the phenomenon of adapting their approaches to the new paradigm.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine changes in the strategies of NGOs, the new initiatives to which these strategies have led, and to understand the challenges experienced by NGO workers who are implementing these strategies. The phenomenon being explored is tentatively called *the community-based approach* to demonstrate that a change has occurred whereby Western aid organizations are utilizing local and already established groups in Georgia to carry out civil society projects. The strategy of inquiry was qualitative face-to-face and Skype interviews of nine professionals involved with civil society building activities in Georgia. Anticipated outcomes included: 1) a description of relevant projects that demonstrate NGOs' focus on community; 2) an understanding of practices that NGOs are using to become community-oriented; and 3) practicable items for the toolkit of current and prospective NGO workers to increase effectiveness on the job. Delimitations included the inability at this time to interview Georgian beneficiaries of civil society initiatives in-country.

### **Significance of the Study**

NGOs might use the information gleaned from this study to promote their work to Georgians and the international donor community, and might share new practices with other NGOs to increase their impact and efficiency. Through traditional and social media, Georgians might learn about new programs and become more involved. Through publication of the study, NGO professionals can apply new strategies to their organizations. Through locally-driven projects, donors can see the impact of their funding on communities. For individual NGO workers, the results of the study may offer a realistic picture of challenges and rewards of working on civil society projects, specifically in Georgia, but also generally in countries that are looking for ways to increase citizen participation.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

For the first decade after the end of the Soviet Union, NGOs taught democracy (Mendelson, 2002) to newly independent states like Georgia. In the 2000s, NGOs began looking at community-based organizing rather than a top-down approach for building civil society (Civil Society Institute, 2010). Like many countries of the former Soviet Union, aid organizations came to Georgia to promote democracy in the context of political participation around election campaigns. The focus on promoting democracy in a sequence of steps according to Western standards is called the *transition paradigm* by Thomas Carothers (2002), which he criticizes for several reasons. The primary piece of Carothers' work applied to this study relates to the sequencing of civil society development after a country transitions from a nondemocratic system towards something like democracy the way we understand it in the West. Carothers explains it as democratic movement (opening) followed by the collapse of an old regime and establishment of new institutions (breakthrough), after which follow all of the expected reforms and structures

inherent in democracies with vibrant civil societies (consolidation). He notes that Western aid promoters had expected that countries of the former Soviet Union would move along this trajectory and that elections should mark the breakthrough that leads organically towards all the benefits of robust civil society that one could hope for. While democracy development can stagnate, there is no reason why civil society development should wait for democratic institutions to consolidate. Carothers' lesson for the aid community was to not expect a sequence to unfold in the order described above, and to be aware that elections alone do not automatically lead to other types of reform.

Carothers (2002) acknowledges that the development aid community has advocated for other types of programs than democracy promotion. However, in places like Georgia, the main focus for a long time continued to be on elections. Justification for earlier aid efforts was often satisfied by receiving a commitment to work towards democratic reform from officials in the governments of transitioning countries. What was previously left out of the equation, and which is now coming to the fore, is the local context in which NGOs operate and the priorities of communities. In Georgia, there has been political and institutional reform, yet Carothers' calling out of the aid community for their focus on democracy remains valid. Some NGOs waited for successful elections before focusing on other community issues. Many NGOs have learned from experience gained in the context of political campaigns and sought ways to apply these lessons to organize communities for other initiatives. Parliamentary elections in 2012 and presidential elections in 2013 showed that Georgia could function as a democracy. The good news for Georgian civil society is that not all NGOs were waiting for elections to start building the capacity of local communities to advocate for other changes. Recommendations from Georgian civil society organizations have called for more interaction with the Georgian public to seek their



input on what would benefit them vis-à-vis building a participatory democracy, which includes a wide array of activities beyond casting ballots at election time (Civil Society Institute, 2010). For purposes of this research, the new theoretical perspective will be called the *community-based approach*.

### **Research Method**

Creswell (2009) discussed the characteristics of qualitative research. The researcher is the data collection instrument, since qualitative interviews are conducted by the researcher. On the positive side, this means the researcher can ask follow-up questions during an interview as responses cue new ideas. As the researcher learns more from the participants, the research questions can be modified. This expectation of adaptability is why qualitative research can be described as having *emergent design*; the plan for the research is subject to change once interviews are underway. On the other hand, the previous views and experiences of the researcher cannot help but color the way the researcher interprets what he or she sees and hears. This explains why qualitative research is *interpretive*, because two researchers may interpret one response differently. In a phenomenological qualitative study, the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon as it is experienced by participants, and continually checks with the interviewees that the information is interpreted correctly. From the information gleaned from participants, the researcher attempts to organize the data into themes that lead to theories to explain the phenomena, which Creswell calls a *holistic account*. Building from small bits of data to larger categories that lead to explanations is called *inductive data analysis*, another characteristic of qualitative research. All parts of the interview process above are subject to change as the researcher cycles through the process of interviewing, coding, checking for accuracy, and seeking patterns (Creswell, 2009, p. 175-176).

The worldview employed in this research is constructivist, because it seeks to understand meaning from the views of the participants through open-ended questions that take into consideration the social, cultural, and historical contexts of life as an NGO worker in Georgia (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Data collection consisted of face-to-face and Skype interviews with nine experts and professionals working with NGOs in Georgia, focusing on how NGOs are engaging the Georgian public at the community level and how personnel are experiencing the phenomenon of changing their approach. The questionnaire was structured to capture two aspects of the experience of engaging the public in Georgia: how the work of NGOs has changed and the shared phenomenon of NGO workers adapting to and carrying out a new paradigm. Open-ended questions enabled the researcher to discern the general themes present; follow-up questions brought more clarity to those themes. The open-ended questions began with the interviewees' perspectives on how civil society is progressing in Georgia, with more specific questions related to the theoretical construct. NGO professionals were asked how their organizations utilize social media, social entrepreneurs, coalitions and partnerships, young Georgians, and informal networks to engage Georgians. When NGOs follow the priorities of Georgians at the grassroots level, Georgians become more engaged, which is a hallmark of participatory democracy. The result of civic engagement is robust civil society. This is sustainable when it occurs by Georgians' initiative, not that of foreign governments and donors. As a result of this new, community-based focus, NGO workers have had to adapt their approach to their jobs and to the communities in which they work. The personal and professional challenges to a new way of thinking in the field of civil society building have been explored through the nine interviews.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Civil society organizations (CSOs).** “Community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations” (World Bank, 2013, p. 1).

**Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).** Organizations created by individuals to address social or political issues, which are not political parties (US Department of State, 2013).

Unless quoting an author who uses the term *CSO*, for consistency, the term *NGO* will be used throughout the research.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This study attempted to clarify what new initiatives NGOs are undergoing in order to better reach the people they intend to serve. By interviewing experts who are currently working on projects in Georgia, the research shows how well their organizations are responding to calls for a new community-based approach to civil society and democracy building. Interviews with experts on the development of civil society in Georgia add context by highlighting what challenges and opportunities have arisen as the new approach is adopted by NGOs. The study makes no attempt to rate the success of NGOs or offer advice to NGOs; however, it shows common themes among the ways the approach is applied, what is working, and what needs to be reevaluated. In order to generate new phenomenological themes to explore, semi-structured interview questions provided the most opportunities for participants to share their interpretations of the common experience of civil society development in Georgia.

This study can only accomplish a portion of the research, which ideally would be done with a larger sample including more participants in Georgia. This is a small sample of experienced NGO administrators located in Washington, DC, and Tbilisi, Georgia, all of whom

speak English. The intention is for the group of participants to be an accurate representative sample of the types of individuals concerned with civil society development in Georgia, regardless of location or language. Because the size of the population being interviewed is only nine individuals, the research strove to glean information from as many different perspectives as possible, that is, from leaders of think tanks, foundations, polling and research organizations, democracy promoting organizations, and NGO partners in multilateral organizations and private enterprise. The scope was limited to discussions of how NGOs are addressing the call to engage communities, though information pertaining to how government agencies in both the US and Georgia are supporting this effort were considered. The enabling environment for NGOs as it exists in Georgia has been helped by cooperation of the Georgian government, especially in the realm of tax laws and judiciary reform, but this is not the focus of the study. The results of this study, though the sample was small, can be generalized to apply to many organizations in Georgia to indicate trends in NGOs' approaches.

Participants were permitted to discuss projects in great detail. When confidentiality limited the interview responses, non-identifying information about projects and changes in strategy were allowed. Participants understand that this study is for research purposes and not part of any intervention, but results of the study may be published for the benefit of the wider NGO community and its beneficiaries. It is not within the scope of this research to study where funding comes from for international NGOs, fundraising for Georgian NGOs, Georgian nonprofit law, democracy-building, or US policy in Georgia.

## **Summary**

This interpretive, qualitative phenomenological study sought to understand the phenomenon of engaging the public in Georgia as it is experienced through NGO personnel and

their partners working on new civil society initiatives in Georgia. In the long term, it is hoped that innovative practices will be applied that are more effective than past efforts at community engagement, and that NGOs continue listening to Georgians and adapting projects and programs to better serve intended beneficiaries.

### **Literature Review**

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, countries such as Georgia have been expected to transition to democracy with aid from Western governments and international nongovernmental organizations. The model driving this expectation is based on Huntington's (1991) *Third Wave* of democratic change, in which citizens of newly independent countries seek self-determination through democratic institutions. Carothers (2002) interpreted Huntington's *third wave democracy* as the *transition paradigm*, a popular concept adopted by Western governmental and nongovernmental organizations to frame their aid program expectations. This paradigm includes, among other assumptions, that transitional countries are moving towards democracy as the West understands it, democratic elections are the goal, and that institutional and cultural legacies need not be considered in the process. This outlook changed after the World Bank International Development Association's 2005 Paris Declaration. In the last decade, the trend has been an emphasis on citizen engagement, tailoring initiatives to local contexts, and coordinating efforts to avoid duplication (Baimyrzaeva, pp. 65- 69, 2012). This literature review will examine the role of nongovernmental organizations in Georgia's civil society and the challenges of community engagement in Georgia.

### **Civil Society Development in Georgia**

International relations and nonprofit management intersect in the world of international development through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs). The World Bank refers to *civil society* as:

[T]he wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide of

array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations (World Bank, 2013, p. 1).

The development of civil society in Georgia since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 has been led by international NGOs and CSOs (Aksartova, 2006; Carothers, 2002; Ishkanian, 2007; Lutsevych, 2013; Matveeva, 2008; Mendelson, 2002). In the early stages, Western governments, and the US government more than any other, provided aid directly to the new government in Georgia (The Atlantic Council, 2011; Nichol, 2013; Phillips, 2004). Soon after, NGOs and CSOs took the lead, but many received funding from USAID, which gave the impression that the US government was behind the operations (Jarabik & Yanchenko, 2013; Lutsevych, 2013; Matveeva, 2013). After 2003's Rose Revolution, local NGOs and CSOs were founded in Georgia, many with a focus on politics (Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, 2011; Lutsevych, 2013; Nichol, 2013; Rimple, 2013). The quasi-NGO, National Endowment for Democracy, offered fellowships and exchanges in line with US foreign policy to assist in democracy promotion, funded by the US Congress (National Endowment for Democracy, 2012). The latest iteration of NGOs and CSOs in Georgia is concerned with sustainability of local nonprofits (Civil Society Institute, 2010; East-West Management Institute, 2010; Hough, 2011; Lutsevych, 2013; Ritvo, Berdzenishvili, Khazalia, Khidesheli, Liqokeli, & Samkharadze, 2013; Salamadze, Romanadze, Faniashvili, & Kartoza, 2007; United States Agency for International Development, 2010; United States Agency for International Development, 2013). The problem with this is that there is no history of nonprofit organizations in Georgia, no tradition of helping people outside of one's family or community, and a reluctance of international donors to fund groups that they have never heard of (Caucasus

Research Resource Center, 2012; Hough, 2012; Navarro, 2014; Stewart, 2004). The current focus of international NGOs and CSOs in Georgia is to train local leaders in nonprofit management principles, encourage participation of local populations in grassroots activism, and develop coalitions of smaller NGOs and CSOs to work on projects and seek funding together, rather than competing for funds and duplicating efforts (Civil Society Institute, 2010; East-West Management Institute, 2010; Hough, 2011; Lutsevych, 2013; USAID, 2010). Volunteerism, partnering with the government and local businesses, and social media-based promotion are all in their infancy in Georgia (Rimple, 2013; USAID, 2010; USAID, 2013). The younger generation, seen as more open to new ideas, is expected to lead the change in developing a flourishing nonprofit sector in Georgia (Civil Society Institute, 2010; Hough, 2011; Lutsevych, 2013).

Civil society and democracy were the chief concerns both of the US government and NGOs in the former Soviet Union (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002; Aksartova, 2006; Ishkanian, 2007). NGOs are created for ideologies, political causes, social issues, interest groups, and religions, and can be involved with politics or operate outside of politics (US Department of State, 2013). They are voluntarily formed by citizens who share common interests or concerns, and focus on policy research, advocacy, human rights, or democracy. They can be humanitarian organizations, private foundations, charitable trusts, fund providers, associations, or non-profit corporations, but not political parties. They receive funding through individual private donations, businesses, philanthropic foundations, and grants from governments (US Department of State, 2013). Around the time the Soviet Union was breaking apart in 1990, the World Bank reported there were 6,000 international NGOs in the world. In 2006, there were over 50,000. CSOs have influenced public policy and provided social services, and are major players in global development (World Bank, 2013).



The US Department of State clearly supports the work of CSOs:

Robust civil society - independent of state control or government involvement - is necessary for democracy to thrive...civil society organizations have played a key role in protecting human rights, human dignity, and human progress...public interest is served best when private citizens and members of civil society are able to choose the aims, organizations, and causes they support (US Department of State, 2013, p. 1).

“Embracing the idea of civil society enabled foreign aid institutions to make themselves relevant to the world after the Cold War” (Aksartova, 2006, p. 1). Funding from the US government and US-based foundations in the 1990s made democracy and civil society promotion in post-Soviet states possible. Democracy and civil society were promoted by NGOs. The tenets of civil society matched US foreign policy, and went with other Western ideas like privatization, free market economy, and democracy (Aksartova, 2006).

Ishkanian hypothesized that the method of democracy promotion introduced by CSOs impacts the success of actual democratic change in a country (Ishkanian, 2007) NGOs claimed democracy promotion would strengthen civil society. Western-funded NGOs have been accused of meddling because building civil society and democracy were in line with the policies of the US government. Non-state actors like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) make grants for democracy-building and depend upon the US government for funding (Ishkanian, 2007).

Democracy building through NGOs did not lead to greater civic participation because NGOs did not start from grassroots organizing in local communities. Locals did not decide which organizations would flourish; donors did. Some NGOs formed just to take advantage of grant opportunities. With all the money being given to democracy development, there was

pressure to demonstrate success and accountability. Whether or not the NGOs were effective did not matter to donors, because success was measured by the number of NGOs (Ishkanian, 2007).

Mendelson and Glenn (2002) discussed challenges for NGOs and CSOs in the former Soviet Union, especially related to how NGOs focused on Western-style democracy. They defined civil society as “public interest advocacy organizations outside the control of the state that seek to influence it on behalf of public aims” (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002, p. 6). They found that NGOs focused on elections, media, advocacy, and conflict resolution. Mendelson and Glenn wanted to understand the strategies of NGOs in order to improve democracy-building efforts, and how international NGOs had influenced local movements, what Western practices were sustainable, and what the consequences were of NGOs’ investments of time and money. They interviewed leaders of international NGOs and local activists to find out the answers.

Mendelson and Glenn found that NGOs had achieved a large amount of influence for relatively small amounts of money. International donors have funded civic advocacy. International donors and NGOs have helped local activists put democratic institutions in place. The problem was how the local organizations were run and whether they were connected with their communities. The authors claimed that, despite the growing number of NGOs, NGOs focused on what the donors wanted, rather than what the local population needed. British and American NGO professionals came to teach people the ways of Western democratic institutions. Civil society development was an essential first step for democracy-promoting organizations.

Stewart focused on NGO development in Georgia and Abkhazia during the first decade after the fall of the Soviet Union. Stewart briefly explained that Soviet citizens were not familiar with civil society organizations because they had only been exposed to state-controlled institutions. The Georgian government was suspicious of NGOs for their criticism of the

Georgian government, and Georgian people were suspicious of NGOs' motives. Democracy became associated with Western interference. Because of competition among NGOs for funding, NGOs tailored their programs to suit the needs of donors, rather than the needs of Georgian communities (Stewart, 2004). This was not sustainable.

USAID rates countries on the ability of NGOs to operate effectively. Georgia is rated as mid-transition for NGO sustainability. Georgia has grassroots initiatives, professional and interest-based groups, advocacy and watchdog structures, think tanks, charities, and foundations, with an increase in youth groups. The challenges for NGOs in Georgia include their relationship to the Georgian government and a reduction in foreign funding. USAID suggested NGOs in Georgia cultivate relationships with local donors and partner with the government for funding. Better long-term and strategic planning is essential. Economic hardship has led to cooperation among NGOs for survival. NGOs must become more efficient, get closer to citizens, and form around concrete, stakeholder-driven issues (USAID, 2009).

Coordination among NGOs has led to some success. Rimple (2013) reported more than two hundred NGOs and media organizations in Georgia successfully campaigned to change legislation affecting politically active organizations. This was during the same year as parliamentary elections. CSOs drew attention to human rights violations against prisoners, sanctions against members of the political opposition, campaign finance, and media bias.

USAID (2013) publishes a yearly ranking of CSO sustainability in Eurasian countries. Countries are scored as *sustainability enhanced*, *sustainability evolving*, or *sustainability impeded*. In 2012, Georgia ranked as *sustainability evolving*. Over 17,000 CSOs are registered in Georgia, but only a portion of them are operational. Reliance on donor funds has resulted in instability and staff and program cuts, especially outside the capital. Donors have been hesitant

to fund operational costs, preferring instead to fund projects. Old equipment is a problem. Individual and corporate philanthropy are not widely practiced, and corporate social philanthropy is a new concept. In-kind donations do occur, as does corporate philanthropy to organizations that have personal connections to local businessmen. It is difficult for CSOs to retain qualified staff because many have gone to work for the new government, a phenomenon which also happened in 2004 after the Rose Revolution. The labor market is competitive, which has implications for staff retention and volunteerism.

CSO cooperation with the government is evolving. Legislation in Georgia does not generally encourage philanthropy, and CSOs are challenged by high payroll taxes and taxes on economic activities. The Ministry of Justice gave out the first state-issued grant to a CSO in 2012. The Georgian government issued eleven grants totaling \$60,000 in 2012 to CSOs working on civic activism, juvenile justice, criminal justice, and electoral reform (USAID, 2013). The parliamentary elections of October, 2012 provided CSOs with media exposure and a role to play in the public discourse at the time. CSOs received media attention during the 2012 elections, providing exposure that could increase support from their communities and decrease reliance on donor funds (USAID, 2013).

The East-West Management Institute (EWMI) has recently implemented USAID's G-PAC program. G-PAC, which stands for Policy, Advocacy, and Civil Society Development in Georgia, started in 2010 and was completed in 2014. One of the goals of G-PAC was to increase the level of civic engagement by CSOs, especially to protect the interests of citizens, while increasing citizen participation to influence official policies through coalitions of CSOs, the media, and government (EWMI, 2010). EWMI is currently implementing a new program funded by USAID. Advancing Civil Society Organization (CSO) Capacities and Engaging Society for

Sustainability (ACCESS) is a five-year initiative begun in 2014 to find innovative ways to empower communities, especially outside of Tbilisi, and to encourage citizens to take ownership of local CSOs. The goal is to improve leadership, build capacity, and promote sustainability of community organizations to help them advocate for policy changes for a more responsive government (USAID, 2015).

According to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the following areas of democracy-building still need work: civil society, cyberspace, legitimacy and political ideas, and governance. NED operates the World Movement for Democracy, International Forum for Democratic Studies, Journal of Democracy, Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program, and Center for International Media Assistance. NED is funded by the US Congress and provides grants to organizations working on democracy (NED, 2012).

Civil society should include dialogue in public space about problems the community wants to solve. Lutsevych (2013) noted the disconnection between NGOs and the communities where they operate. Local businesses have not been contributing very much to local NGOs, and people that NGOs are working around still do not know what NGOs do. Citizens should be “actors for change, not consumers of democracy assistance” (Lutsevych, 2013, p. 2). Citizen participation could be encouraged through membership dues, public community meetings, media outreach, and volunteering. Grassroots initiatives should be supported. Local innovations are more sustainable than the redistribution of Western aid. NGOs should use social media to mobilize people, especially to reach younger and more active potential participants. NGOs should be making their presence known via the web to increase their exposure. Lutsevych recommended that donors invest in organizations for long-term sustainability, rather than for short-term projects (Lutsevych, 2013).

Organizations that receive funding from the US government are on the front lines of the new initiatives in civil society development. The 2009 NGO Sustainability Index and the 2012 CSO Sustainability Index put out by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) highlight challenges and potential avenues for success. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and East-West Management Institute (EWMI), like USAID, receive funding from the US government (NED, 2012; EWMI, 2010). Their analyses are not focused on critiques; rather, they focus on new ideas that might work to engage the public in Georgia.

The lack of scholarly research on how NGOs are moving away from the transition paradigm toward a community-based, cooperative approach may be because there has not yet been enough time to see new initiatives through or gauge their progress. It is clear what has not worked (donor-driven projects that were not initiated by local communities), and who has been driving democratic change (Western governments, mainly the US). Now is the time to find out how NGOs are addressing new expectations for community engagement in Georgia.

### **The Role of NGOs**

In 2010, the Civil Society Institute (CSI) held a conference for leaders of local CSOs to prioritize next steps for Georgia's nonprofit sector. Interactions with the public and cooperation between CSOs were top priorities. They recommended that international aid organizations shift their focus from the government to community-based organizations. CSOs that engage target groups will encourage partnership from the Georgian government, the business community, and other CSOs. Concentrating efforts among CSOs can increase efficiency (CSI, 2010).

The conference participants determined that feedback and participation of target groups are key factors to increasing public awareness of CSOs' activities. Beneficiaries of CSOs should be involved in formulating strategies. CSOs should receive feedback on a regular basis and tailor

efforts to the local environment. The demands of the public should drive the CSOs, not the demands of the donors. Strategic plans should include means to measure and evaluate both long- and short-term results. Staff should be taught how to evaluate programs and services according to principles of nonprofit management. CSOs should respond to the needs of constituencies and communicate openly about projects, funding, and achievements. In addition, they recommended cooperation with the media to increase transparency and public trust (CSI, 2010).

The conference ended with recommendations for minimum standards to enable a more effective environment for CSOs in Georgia. State-issued grants and tax breaks for CSOs were a priority. Streamlining the grant application process was mentioned, as was a desire for funders to shift from funding larger, well-known organizations to funding smaller grassroots CSOs. Donors were advised to not focus on short-term achievements, and instead to work on long-term sustainability. Better feedback mechanisms are essential for CSOs to coordinate donor goals with community goals. This can be achieved with round tables and workshops among target groups, donors, and CSOs. The final recommendations included establishing a uniform culture of accountability for CSOs operating in Georgia, and communicating this strategy for accountability through an integrated web portal linking all CSOs. This will enable the formation of coalitions, better public access to services provided by CSOs, and direct feedback from target groups. For those people who live in the rural regions of Georgia, public meetings may be a better forum. Cooperation with the media can also help achieve the goals of CSOs to educate the public on their activities and encourage civic participation (CSI, 2010).

The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) (2011) provided an analysis of issues that CSOs face in Georgia, all of which determine attitudes towards civic engagement. Georgia's strengths include organizational experience, potential for

development, and adherence to democratic values among CSOs. Georgia's weaknesses include low levels of organization, a disabling external environment, concentration of government power, and CSOs not working to become membership-based organizations (CIPDD, 2011). One reason for a concentration in government power resulted from CSOs themselves. After the Rose Revolution in 2003, many CSO activists went to work for the government, then influenced donors to fund the government directly (CIPDD, 2011).

Georgia has progressive CSOs, including think tanks, watchdogs, and professional associations. Only one to two per cent of Georgia's population is active in socially-oriented CSOs, one per cent is active with politically-oriented CSOs, and volunteering is unpopular. Lack of participation is said to be due to the economy and lack of trust in public institutions. However, some people take part in demonstrations. Political activism is higher in cities, but membership in CSOs is higher in rural areas. Most members of CSOs are women, middle class, rural, and young or middle-aged (CIPDD, 2011).

CSO coalitions and networks are gaining popularity. Some come together only for the duration of a funded project due to demands of donors, who focus short-term results rather than on sustainability. Many CSOs' focus is either pro-government or pro-opposition around election time. The trend is for fewer CSOs to survive year after year, while those that survive take larger shares of funding (CIPDD, 2011).

CSOs have been dependent on large international donor funding, but resources have decreased since 2003's Rose Revolution. CSOs need to cultivate relationships that will lead to individual donations, business donations, and government funding. CIPDD found that international donors preferred giving to established organizations over newer, smaller ones, and preferred to give to known organizations in the capital that could distribute funds to regions.



CIPDD recommended that to strengthen Georgian civil society, and thus engage the public, better coordination among CSOs is necessary, as is communicating unified views to the public (CIPDD, 2011).

### **Challenges of Community Engagement**

Current literature primarily focuses on how the transition paradigm has not been effective in promoting democracy, and how the focus on local initiatives can be put into place. Now is the time to check in with NGOs to see how their new initiatives are working out. This information is found more on websites and news feeds, less in scholarly research. Hough (2011), Ritvo et al (2013), and Navarro (2014) all surveyed Georgians. Hough (2011) found that further qualitative analysis was needed to determine the incentives for social entrepreneurs to become active in formal organizations. Ritvo et al (2013) found significant levels of mistrust towards NGOs in Georgia. Navarro provided a data set on public attitudes on a range of topics related to civil society in Georgia. Mendelson and Glenn (2002) and Matveeva (2008) noted that NGOs did not appear to respond to changes in their environment; Aksartova (2006), Ishkanian (2007), and Lutsevych (2013) posited that NGOs were serving the donors' needs rather than the intended beneficiaries of international NGOs.

Hough provided concrete recommendations for ways that NGOs could engage the Georgian public. Hough (2011) worked with East-West Management Institute and USAID to design a survey on civic engagement and Georgian attitudes towards NGOs. Hough found that NGOs had not made an impression upon Georgians about what their work entails, and that there was a mismatch in priorities of NGOs in Georgia and what issues Georgians would like addressed. The study showed that Georgians would be willing to engage with NGOs if NGOs tailored their projects to Georgians' priorities. Hough also found that Georgians already had

informal support networks among family and communities, but Georgians do not have the history of civic engagement that would allow them to trust NGOs (Hough, 2011). USAID invested \$90 million in civic engagement and participation initiatives in Georgia under the G-PAC program. This funding has supported meeting spaces, training, civic education, and a survey by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) on the role of social capital (informal cooperation in communities) in civic engagement. Through focus groups and interviews, CRRC found informal networks of family and friends that operate similarly to civic organizations of Western countries. The difference is that Georgians are more comfortable offering assistance to people of their in-group than to strangers (Hough, 2011). After helping to design the survey, Hough analyzed the results in order to help NGOs become more effective in general and better at engaging citizens in particular, while encouraging more efficient use of grants from G-PAC. The civic engagement survey involved questions about participation in NGO campaigns, membership in organizations, and social attitudes. The results showed five issues that NGOs needed to address in order to increase civic engagement among Georgians. They included the public not knowing what NGOs were doing, NGOs working on projects that Georgians did not want (issue mismatch), a culture of dependence on family and friends for assistance, economic challenges, and a lack of the culture of civic engagement. The opportunities identified by Hough include Georgians' openness towards NGOs, respect for community activists, and positive impressions made by individual staff members of NGOs. Younger Georgians were the most open towards civic participation and engaging with strangers. The question in the end was how to more formally engage those who were willing to participate, including formalizing informal networks into organized groups. Hough recommended further qualitative research to identify social entrepreneurs, their constraints, and what incentives they

needed to become active with NGOs. In light of the EWMI G-PAC Report on Civic Engagement, Hough recommended seven ways to increase citizen engagement in Georgia. They include public information campaigns about the role of NGOs; NGOs changing focus to economic issues that the public has requested; showing the human face of NGOs rather than the institutional role; engaging younger Georgians; working with existing groups rather than creating new NGOs, utilizing informal networks to engage communities in NGO activities, and supporting local social entrepreneurs. Success in these areas will help Georgians to play a larger role in their government and offer a model for other young democracies, which in turn will justify the effort made by USAID in Georgia (Hough, 2011).

An alternative view was provided by Lutsevych, who believed the problem of engagement could not be remedied by NGOs. According to Lutsevych, as of January, 2013, civil society in Georgia has not thrived (Lutsevych, 2013). Citizens are not engaged and have little influence over their government. NGOs are funded and influenced by the West, which gives Western donors more access to the government; the public has a lesser voice in the affairs of NGOs. The way forward for civic engagement is through social media and public demonstrations, both of which make a larger impact on Georgian government policy than NGOs. Western-funded NGOs maintain the status quo of supporting the same groups in Georgia, when Georgia needs its citizens to take on the mantle of civic engagement so they can build democratic traditions in their country (Lutsevych, 2013). Lutsevych discussed the culture of NGOs, citizens' ideas about democracy, the role of Western-funded NGOs, and nascent civic organizations in the context of emerging civil society. The author also mentioned the importance of the rule of law, political participation, accountable institutions, and independent media as part of the foundation of civil society, clarifying that civil society is "a public space for citizens to engage in collective

debate and self-expression, and where public opinions that influence public policy are formed” (Lutsevych, 2013). NGOs view citizens as beneficiaries rather than participants, which prevents citizens from becoming forces driving change.

Jarabik and Yanchenko analyzed results from the CRRC 2012 public opinion poll and the Lutsevych (2013) paper. They found that civic participation or participation in CSO activities in 2011–2012 in Georgia was 4.8% among those surveyed. Trust in CSOs was 18%. The authors suggested that Georgians had a receptive attitude towards civic participation, but Georgians tended to depend on the government, rather than community initiative, to take care of their needs (Jarabik & Yanchenko, 2013). The biggest concerns for Georgians were jobs, poverty, healthcare, pensions, and inflation; human rights, fair elections, and freedom of speech were not high priorities (CRRC, 2012, in Jarabik & Yanchenko, 2013). The authors further asserted that even though Georgians claim that economic needs trump civil rights and freedoms, they need to be educated on the rights and responsibilities of a democratic civil society (Jarabik & Yanchenko, 2013).

### **Review of Related Research**

Country reports by civil society and aid organizations have provided the bulk of the information used to generate the theoretical construct of this research. Recommended focal points for future community-based efforts of NGOs include coalitions and partnerships, informal networks, social entrepreneurs, young Georgians, and social media. The Civil Society Institute’s 2010 Development Effectiveness Conference in Georgia made recommendations to include all of these initiatives based on feedback from participants (CSI, 2010). Hough’s research (2011) found the same areas for improvement recommended by Georgian citizens that resulted from face-to-face interviews throughout the country (Hough, 2011). The Caucasus Institute for Peace,

Democracy and Development (CIPDD) (2011) analyzed civil society development in Georgia and found that citizen participation was low and sporadic, partly for economic reasons and partly from distrust of public institutions; participation usually occurred around political events. They recommended that CSOs collaborate and communicate a unified view to the public (CIPDD, 2011). Stewart (2004) analyzed the challenges faced by aid organizations in Georgia and concluded that local context must be considered when determining the needs of potential beneficiaries (Stewart, 2004). Stewart's work appeared at the time the paradigm was shifting from top-down to community-based, and was an early call for a new way of looking at civil society building. Mendelson (2001) pointed out the success of NGOs in the former USSR as evidenced by growth and numbers, but noted that the time had come for less reliance on international norms of democracy and more focus on regional practices (Mendelson, 2001, p. 233).

Scholars such as Lutsevych (2013), who wrote on the Open Democracy website, have also recommended community participation and consideration of local contexts to increase relevancy of NGOs operating in the former USSR. Lutsevych stressed the need to use social media for networking and activism, especially for reaching young Georgians and promoting the work of local NGOs (Lutsevych, 2013). Mendelson (2001) focused on how to spread Western ideas promoting civil society in the former USSR, and recommended involving local leaders (referred to as *political entrepreneurs*) to lend legitimacy to NGOs. Included in this strategy are adapting Western ideas to local contexts and avoiding competition with traditional cultures of organization (Mendelson, 2001, p. 241). Lutsevych (2013) stressed the importance of reaching young Georgians through social media to encourage activism. In addition, Lutsevych pointed out that the growing informal activism among youth in the former USSR could better be supported

through smaller charitable and community organizations, rather than large NGOs (Lutsevych, 2013).

Informal networks for disseminating ideas have a historical legacy in the former USSR; this has been a challenge for legitimizing NGOs in the eyes of local communities. Adapting to this cultural context would help NGOs to be accepted and their ideas to not seem like Western interventions (Mendelson, 2001, p. 243-244). Lutsevych (2013) suggested NGOs follow the trend of informal activism that is growing in the former USSR, which necessitates focusing on grassroots initiatives rather than formal NGO apparatuses. Mendelson (2001) recommended that NGOs in the former USSR work towards building local partnerships among other NGOs, unions, and the government (p. 235-236). The reason behind this is the previous focus of local communities adapting their priorities to suit the needs of international NGOs, which led to missed opportunities to solve locally relevant problems (Mendelson, 2001, p. 234).

### **Theoretical Construct**

This qualitative research study is interested in exploring how NGOs and their personnel are engaging Georgians at the community level, based on a shift in the last decade from pushing Western-style democracy to cultivating a community-based approach to civil society building (Mendelson, 2001; CSI, 2010). The nations of the former Soviet Union have only been independent for a little over two decades. The first decade of independence was characterized by Western NGOs exerting influence in the spirit of Samuel Huntington (1991), with Western democracy vanquishing communism. However, the process of encouraging democracy has evolved to consider the local culture and the needs of communities (East-West Management Institute, 2010).

The concepts in the theoretical construct come from several sources within the literature review. However, only one paper mentioned all of the concepts together as targets for future efforts: the published results of the Civil Society Institute's conference (CSI, 2010).

**NGOs engaging Georgians.** The recommendations from CSI's 2010 conference all related to NGOs becoming more involved with Georgians at the grassroots level, and the need for NGOs to hear what local communities wanted to work on before launching new projects. Local communities need nonprofit management training in order to streamline their processes and use effective language to communicate with NGO workers about projects. The ways that CSI has identified to reach Georgians include the following: young Georgians, informal networks, social media, social entrepreneurs, and coalitions and partnerships (CSI, 2010).

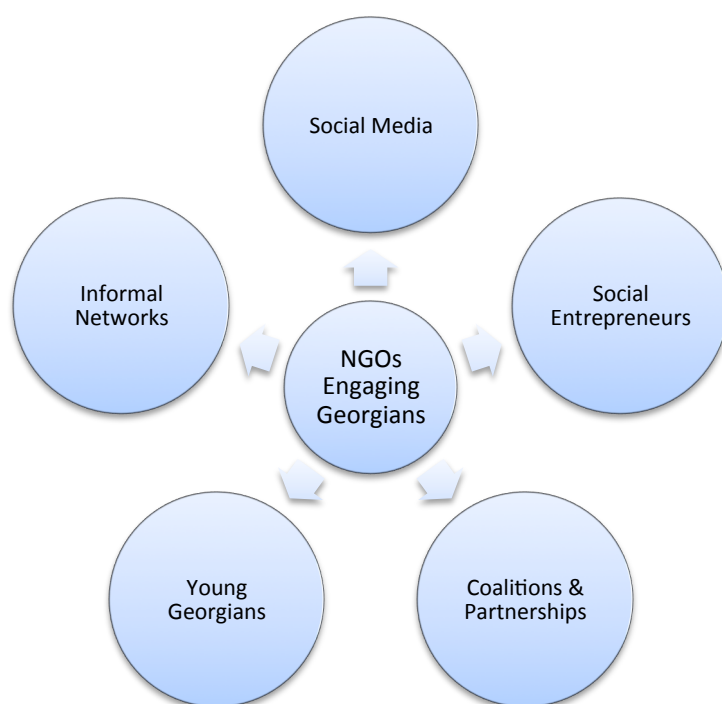
**Young Georgians.** Young people are more receptive to new ways of interacting with wider ranges of the population and are more likely to use newer forms of communication such as social media. Young Georgians can be reached via social media and encouraged to participate in community events (CSI, 2010).

**Informal networks.** Throughout Georgia, informal networks are in place that relay information and rally individuals to action. These can be community groups, neighbors, families, classmates, or sports clubs. These networks should be utilized for community engagement by NGOs since they are already in place (CSI, 2010).

**Social media.** Traditional media, such as newspapers and television, are not as effective as social media at reaching large numbers of people. Furthermore, social media provides instant, unedited communication. Social media is the recommended method of reaching people that have mobile phones, especially through text messaging, and those who have computers and Internet-capable phones via Twitter and Facebook (CSI, 2010).

**Social entrepreneurs.** Every community has leaders that can be identified as the people who get things done. NGOs that can identify these leaders are more likely to earn the trust of the communities in which they seek to operate, and information about projects will spread more quickly, especially among older populations who do not use social media (CSI, 2010).

**Coalitions and partnerships.** Rather than bringing outside organizations to start projects in Georgia or creating new organizations, partnerships should be cultivated with existing organizations, including with private business and government (CSI, 2010).



*Figure 1.* The theoretical model of NGOs engaging Georgian citizens.

### Summary

The literature has shown that engaging Georgians is the key to building civil society. Georgians have been utilizing social entrepreneurs and informal networks to organize citizens, but need more training in nonprofit management in order to carry out sustainable projects. If NGOs and their partners can reach Georgians at the community level, through young Georgians,



social media, and building coalitions and partnerships, Georgians will attain more of their goals without duplicating efforts and wasting resources. In the next chapter, the way to find out whether NGOs are heeding this advice will be discussed.

### Research Methods

When theories are developed based on the shared experiences of a group of participants, it is called phenomenology (Merriam, 2002). The researcher seeks to define and categorize the phenomena that the participants have lived through and reported to the researcher, thus generating a theory to explain the main features of the shared experiences (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011, p. 58). In this study, the participants are all involved in the phenomenon of encouraging civic participation among Georgians, a practice that is undergoing a change in method (from top-down to bottom-up). Through interviews, the experiences of these professionals were categorized and themed, with a focus on disentangling from old ways of promoting democracy to new ways of allowing communities to chart their own democratic destinies according to local perspectives.

The primary collection of data in phenomenological qualitative research comes from interviews carried out by the researcher. Because of this, researchers must guard against bias. In conducting the interviews, it is necessary to suspend judgment. *Epoche* is the term applied to this concept of setting aside, or being aware of, any beliefs that could influence the interpretation of interviews (Merriam, 2002; Merriam-Webster, 2014).

This phenomenological qualitative research has been conducted according to the theoretical perspective of constructivism. The constructivist worldview guides the researcher in determining common themes inherent in the experiences of participants; in this case, participants with expertise in Georgian civil society development. Constructivism is concerned with understanding the views of participants and generating theories based on the reported interpretations of these experiences by participants (Creswell, 2009, p. 6). This study is constructivist in that it seeks to understand how the individuals interviewed construct their role in

the experience of civil society building in Georgia. This study is phenomenological in that it deals with the shared experiences of people working for democratic change in Georgia, and seeks the essence of what it is to work at civil society building in Georgia (Merriam, 2002).

Data exists on the perceptions of Georgians regarding democracy and civil society; the challenges of professionals charged with implementing democratic change with the focus on community empowerment have not been thoroughly explored. This research endeavors to show how individual professionals are experiencing 1) a change in their identity as facilitators, planners, or directors of NGOs engaged in civil society building; 2) how they analyze what is happening with civil society in Georgia and the role they play as members of NGOs; and 3) how outside experts, such as those in academia or government, perceive the role of NGO personnel within Georgia. Responses from interviewees inside the NGO community have been compared to determine any mismatch in expectations or applications. Results of interviews have been submitted to participants to ensure their views were interpreted accurately; this is a strategy for validity known as *member checking* (Merriam, 2002). With the new information gleaned from speaking to experts in the field of civil society development, the latest trends have been summarized so that other professionals in the field can adapt their policies to maximize efficiency, thereby not wasting time, resources, and effort on outdated and ineffective practices.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher has investigated what specific new initiatives NGOs are utilizing to engage Georgians at the community level and how their organizations and personnel have changed their strategies in order to address calls for a new community-based approach. Research was conducted with face-to-face and Skype interviews of participants that are currently or have

recently been working on projects in Georgia or working for organizations that are involved in civil society development in Georgia.

**Research question one (RQ1):** What specific new initiatives are NGOs working on to engage Georgians at the community level?

**Proposition one (P1):** NGOs are engaging the public at the community level through social media, young Georgians, social entrepreneurs, collaboration with businesses, government, and other NGOs, and through informal networks.

It was expected that participants would respond that their organizations are focused on one or more of these methods or groups to engage Georgians at the community level. However, through the interviews, other types of community engagement and challenges to the above-mentioned routes of engagement were discovered.

**Research question two (RQ2):** How have organizations changed their strategies to adopt a more community-based approach?

**Proposition two (P2):** Some organizations will be further along than others in adopting new strategies of community engagement, based on the type of work those organizations do and their specific projects.

Various time and budgetary constraints, as well as whether government agencies are involved, mean it is likely that some organizations may have knowledge of the need to change approaches, yet have not been able to implement new approaches fully or to the extent necessary. Interviews further illuminated the issues that prevent or inhibit organizations from engaging Georgians at the community level.

**Research question three (RQ3):** How have individual NGO workers experienced the shared phenomenon of having to adapt their approach to their jobs as a result of a paradigm shift?

**Proposition three (P3):** Some NGO personnel find it easy to change, others do not. The reasons for ease of adaptability are related to personality traits of individual workers, but also can be related to projects in progress in which NGO personnel have already invested time and effort.

Some NGO personnel face challenges to adapting their strategies for carrying out their work. This may be because they have achieved some degree of success with engaging their communities and are taking on more priorities. On the other hand, NGO personnel have experienced challenges related to the lack of a culture of volunteerism and different work habits in Georgia.

### **Setting**

Potential participants were identified through networking at conferences in Washington, DC and via professors at George Washington University. Originally, the researcher had expected personal contacts made at events on the former Soviet Union, public diplomacy, international security, and international development would provide the most participants. However, the majority of the participants were recruited from two sources. One source was a State Department contact whom the researcher has never met face-to-face. This contact was provided by an acquaintance made at a public diplomacy conference held at the State Department a few months before recruitment for participants began. The other participants originated from contacts of a professor at George Washington University. Interestingly, though the participants came via unrelated sources, the participants had worked for some of the same organizations at some point in their careers. In the end, only one of the participants came from the originally expected source,

which was a conference on democracy held at the Jamestown Foundation two years before recruitment began. The organizations where the participants work or have worked are for the most part the exact organizations the researcher had wished to contact. In order to maintain the confidentiality of participants, these organizations will not be named. While only two of the nine participants wished to remain anonymous, for consistency, all participants were given pseudonyms and every effort was made to avoid identifying their organizations.

### **Population**

Participants for this study consisted of NGO professionals, scholars, and officials that are or have been involved in civil society development in Georgia. Nine participants were interviewed for the study. Participants were recruited through contacts in Washington, DC's international affairs community. The research strove to provide a maximum variation sample (Merriam, 2002) by interviewing participants from academic backgrounds, multilateral agencies, and NGOs. According to Merriam (2002), qualitative phenomenological studies can uncover themes and make generalizations about the population under study, which have relevance to the phenomenon or theory being uncovered. However, Merriam pointed out that research on smaller populations faces some challenges to its validity due to the small sample size, but that researchers asking probing, unstructured questions, even to a small population sample, can achieve great depth in the responses. This is important to phenomenological research because the researcher is not trying to prove a theory; rather, the researcher looks for the common threads that link the experiences of the individuals interviewed for the study.

Purposive sampling is the term described by Remler and Van Ryzin that indicates that participants are chosen not to provide a large, random sample (as in quantitative research), but because those participants have a perspective or role that is relevant to the study. Purposive

sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling, which is not seeking generalizability as much as depth of understanding. Thus qualitative research can utilize *small n sampling*, which means a small number of participants are chosen to analyze based on their experience with a phenomenon (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). In order to create both depth and breadth of responses, additional participants were recruited utilizing snowball sampling. Snowball sampling provides the researcher an opportunity to locate more potential participants through recommendations made by interviewees (Merriam, 2002; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011).

Merriam (2002) discussed how meaning is interpreted differently by people who appear to be involved in the same experience. Meaning cannot be quantified, but patterns can be established. This is why research that seeks to understand how individuals experience the world they inhabit is called the *interpretive* qualitative approach. Merriam also discussed the *critical* qualitative approach, which focuses on social and political realities, and on empowerment. According to Merriam, “[T]he researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis” (2002, p. 5). This leads to research being vulnerable to bias and also being inductive, that is, generating theories after data are collected. Theories generated in this way are necessary because there are not current theories available that address the research question. The research endeavors to describe the new theory based on the details as seen by the participants (Merriam, 2002).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Since this study involves human participants, National Institutes of Health (NIH) guidelines have been followed in order to protect the rights of the individuals and the confidentiality of the subject matter discussed. According to the NIH online training for Protecting Human Research Participants, researchers must adhere to three principles outlined in

the Belmont Report of 1979, created by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. These principles are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect for persons includes making sure that participants understand the risks and benefits of their participation in the research, and that researchers avoid influencing participants via coercion or excessive compensation. Beneficence requires that researchers minimize risk and maximize benefit, maintain participants' privacy, and that Institutional Review Boards approve research before it takes place. Justice ensures that participants are treated fairly and equally (National Institutes of Health, 2014). Before undertaking the interviews, participants read and signed the informed consent document (see Appendix B) and the interviewer asked if the participants had any questions. Participants were informed that the signed informed consent documents will be held for three years in the possession of the researcher in a locked, secure place, and then destroyed. Participants were given numerical pseudonyms (Participant 1, Participant 2, et cetera). None of the organizations where participants currently work are identified by name, and care has been taken to describe participants' backgrounds in a non-identifying way. The researcher made clear that the information acquired in the interviews will be for academic research purposes only. The researcher endeavored to accurately record the responses in the way the participants intended, and has invited the participants to read the research before it is published in order to ensure accuracy. Participants were informed that they could stop the interview at any time if they became uncomfortable for any reason. Participants could request that their participation in the study be withdrawn if this occurred (National Institutes of Health, 2014). The researcher sought IRB approval for *expedited review*, which, according to Remler and Van Ryzin, indicates there is minimal risk to participants involved in the study (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011).



**Research Design**

Potential participants for this project were identified through professional contacts of the researcher and the researcher's colleagues in the international affairs community in Washington, DC. The participants for this research project were contacted by the researcher or colleagues of the researcher by email. Potential participants received an email inviting them to make an appointment to be interviewed for approximately thirty minutes. Interviews for US-based participants took place in the offices of the individual participants, in a quiet and private setting. Interviews with Georgia-based participants took place via Skype from the private home of the researcher to the offices of the participants. On the day of the interview, participants signed a consent form that included permission to record audio of the interview. Written notes were also used. The confidentiality of data and privacy of individuals have been maintained, according to NIH standards, and identities have been protected (National Institutes of Health, 2014). Before the interview, the participants were asked if they had any questions or concerns. During the interview, open-ended questions sought an understanding of the organization the participants work for and their role within the organization, participants' impressions of working on and in Georgia, and the extent of change that has occurred related to the subject of a changing paradigm of engaging Georgians at the community level. Interviewees were asked to reflect on their challenges and experiences at work, and opportunities for probing questions were utilized as new themes emerged. Explanations were elicited upon hearing any use of acronyms germane to the field of international development. The interviewer remained on alert for any change in body language or inflection that might have indicated discomfort with revealing information, and the interviewer took care to maintain the comfort of the participant. The researcher clarified points made in the interview, and employed member checking to be sure the content was accurately

assessed. Participants were offered a copy of the research once completed. At the end of the interview, the researcher asked if there were any other potential participants they might recommend. The researcher then thanked the interviewees, left contact information for any further comments or concerns, and followed up the interview with a thank-you note.

### **Interview Instrument**

According to Creswell, interviews are typically used for qualitative research because the researcher has the ability to modify questions as new themes arise. Limitations include bias on the part of the researcher and interviewees (Creswell, 2009, p. 179). Creswell recommends open-ended questions for qualitative interviews so that interviewees are free to give as much information as they like, rather than trying to fit their responses into a limited frame of reference (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). Interview questions are based on the theoretical construct and literature review. The researcher has the opportunity to glean more information from open-ended questions' responses by asking probing, clarifying questions. For example, when asked about social media used to reach young Georgians, a follow-up question can ask what type of social media is preferred (such as Twitter or Facebook). See Appendix C for the set of open-ended questions proposed for the interviews.

The researcher provided the questionnaire to participants via email to review before the interviews. Participants were encouraged to answer the questions in order, giving longer responses when they wanted, and skipping questions if time was short or if particular questions did not apply. To elicit further details, the researcher asked probing, clarifying, and follow-up questions. For example, in response to semi-structured questions on how their organizations engage Georgians, some participants gave brief descriptions of programs that were unfamiliar to the researcher. As much as time permitted, the researcher encouraged participants to elaborate on

how the programs work, the origins of the initiatives, and recruitment procedures for the programs. See the example below.

Semi-structured question: How are you engaging Georgians through youth?

Probing question: Could you elaborate on how you recruited participants and what they do in the program?

Other times when probing questions were necessary involved the advice to Georgians. While no one hesitated, occasionally participants' responses were vague, saying, for example, that Georgians need to work harder.

Open-ended question: What advice would you give to Georgians?

Probing question: What are Georgians doing or not doing to make you say that?

Participants occasionally described entities with which the researcher was unfamiliar. For example, one participant was talking about his experience helping a trade organization work with newly independent states of the former Soviet Union to establish laws governing interstate commerce. This came from the open-ended question about participants' experiences with civil society in Georgia.

Open-ended question: How did you first become involved with civil society in Georgia?

Clarifying question: Could you repeat the name of the organization and describe what they do?

Occasionally it was necessary to get more background on how the participant's organization operates. For example, one NGO focuses on data collection through public polling. This required follow-up questions on the scientific methods the organization uses for its data collection and how it weights data and ensures reliability and generalizability.

Open-ended question: How does your organization interact with Georgians?

Follow-up question: How do you determine who you interview in a household?

It was necessary to ask a variety of probing, clarifying, and follow-up questions due to the open-ended nature of many of the questions. The semi-structured follow up questions provided ample opportunity for lengthier descriptions of the responses. These types of questions allow a robust description of challenging, innovative, and surprising scenarios.

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

Data from interviews have been analyzed using process coding, theming the data, writing analytic memos, pattern coding, and triangulation. Saldana (2009) described first- and second-cycle coding methods for researchers to categorize data gathered during interviews and observations. He compared coding to the assembly of a piece of furniture; when the pieces arrive, you inventory them. Those materials correspond to the codes you make in the first cycle. The arrangement and assembly is like what happens in second-cycle coding (p. 150). Coding was assisted with MAXQDA software.

This study is concerned with how NGOs are engaging Georgians at the community level, which focuses on processes. Process coding was utilized for first-cycle coding, since engaging Georgians can be categorized with the *-ing* words in the theoretical construct (engaging youth, building partnerships, using social media, identifying social entrepreneurs, and utilizing informal networks). Examples of these processes were analyzed in the second cycle of coding, pattern coding. Themes related to how NGOs are adapting their procedures to these processes emerged during interviews, and those themes were coded as pattern codes. Pattern codes are meta-codes that organize the data and give meaning to the organization (Saldana, 2009, p. 150). Analytic memo-writing took place after individual interviews to capture the essence of the interviewees' experience with these coded processes. Once the interviews were completed, triangulation

helped ensure a complete understanding of common themes based on analytic memos and each interview's codes. As coding progressed, triangulation assisted in identifying any previous assumptions about the process of engaging Georgians (Saldana, 2009; Wood, 2011).

**Process coding and initial coding.** Saldana (2009) describes twenty-seven types of first-level coding divided into categories. Process coding and initial coding are elemental methods. Elemental methods provide the most basic way for beginning researchers to code (Saldana, 2009, p. 66). Process coding was employed to determine how responses to multiple questions could be associated with themes of the theoretical construct (engaging Georgians via social media, youth, social entrepreneurs, informal networks, and coalitions and partnerships) (Saldana, 2009, p. 77). Initial coding (also known as open coding) was employed during the first stage of analysis to provide new codes for interview responses that had not been anticipated. Initial coding is useful for addressing developing categories that reveal themselves during data analysis (Saldana, 2009, p. 81).

**Theming the data and writing analytic memos.** The research showed common themes experienced and activities shared by NGOs working with Georgians. These themes emerged from small bits of data that were coded and categorized, then translated into themes that were used as the basis for generating new categories. The relative importance of these activities to the theoretical construct was determined by two factors: the length of time that participants spent describing themes related to engagement and whether they chose to speak about those themes at all. After every interview, the researcher wrote analytic memos to interpret the essence of these experiences as conveyed by the participants. Saldana stresses the necessity of writing analytic memos and notes that define the codes. The researcher utilized the functions available on

MAXQDA to make notes by the codes. Saldana recommends that analytic memos be written for both first- and second-cycle codes (2009).

**Pattern coding.** Saldana (2009) describes six types of second-level coding. Second-level coding shows the relationships between themes developed in first-level coding. Pattern coding organizes the codes around a pattern of activity while at the same time putting emerging themes into a smaller number of more succinct categories (Saldana, 2009, p. 152). In this study, pattern coding was chosen to show how organizations are prioritizing and finding innovative solutions to meet the challenges of engaging Georgians in civil society building at the community level. Four categories were created as meta-codes to encompass the first-level codes. The meta-codes were the definition of civil society, challenges, priorities, and innovation. Engaging the public was viewed as a top priority that was challenging and required innovative thinking. Since engaging the public was referred to in the three categories of challenges, priorities, and innovation, it was not considered a separate category.

**Triangulation.** The last part of coding was triangulation. According to Wood (2011), triangulation occurs when first- and second-cycle analytic memos are compared to ascertain any new understanding of either level of code when compared to interview data. Triangulation that compares early inferences with later ones in the same study allows researchers to revisit earlier first-cycle assumptions and check their validity within the second cycle framework (Wood, 2011). Merriam stresses the importance of strategies for validity and reliability, which include triangulation, in addition to member checking, peer review, maximum variation sampling, awareness of researcher bias, and in-depth description of the research (Merriam, 2002).

**Summary**

This phenomenological qualitative research study seeks to understand the experience of NGO personnel and their partners who are working to engage communities for civil society building initiatives in Georgia. Professionals in the NGO community in Washington, DC and Tbilisi, Georgia were interviewed with open-ended questions that allowed detailed and deep descriptions of the shared experience of working under the new paradigm of a community-based approach to civil society building. National Institutes of Health standards were followed to ensure confidentiality and privacy, as well as protection of the well-being of participants. The data analysis strategy consisted of two-step coding (process and pattern), as well as writing analytic memos and utilizing strategies for validity such as member checking and triangulation. The aim of the study was to ascertain whether changes are taking place on the ground and whether NGO personnel are making changes to their approach. Adaptations to the new paradigm can be shared throughout the international affairs community in order to increase awareness of best practices and inform decision makers within NGOs about where further adjustments need to be made.

### **Findings**

The themes, categories, and patterns that resulted from data analysis include activities and strategies that NGOs are using in Georgia to engage the public. Georgian and American professionals were interviewed to share how their organizations are engaging Georgians at the community level. Their responses were categorized in the first cycle with process coding to match the theoretical construct and open/initial coding for other themes. These themes were given names (taxonomy) to guide how to group the data. The four groups that resulted were civil society, challenges, priorities, and innovation. From there, most of the data was put in those four categories. Differences in the definition of civil society were revealed at the outset of interviews. Challenges provided many shared experiences among participants. Funding, sustainability, cultural issues, and community involvement are concerns for all NGOs in Georgia. Priorities were also shared. NGOs are helping Georgia to meet the requirements of the European Union Association Agreement, working on women, youth, and minority issues. NGOs are building coalitions and partnerships and exploring ways to engage communities. Innovations are happening with mobile phones, social media, youth, and co-designing between experts and beneficiaries of services. While not all of the participants' organizations were engaging in the same way (social media, youth, informal networks), they were all working on challenges, priorities, and innovations. These three shared themes of challenges, priorities, and innovation experienced by participants allowed the researcher to understand the phenomenon of NGOs engaging the public in Georgia. The three themes became the meta-codes used in second-cycle pattern coding. Triangulation was used to check earlier analytic memos against later ones. The participants are all involved with civil society building, working in grant making, democracy promotion, public polling and research, private enterprise, and a multilateral organization. Their



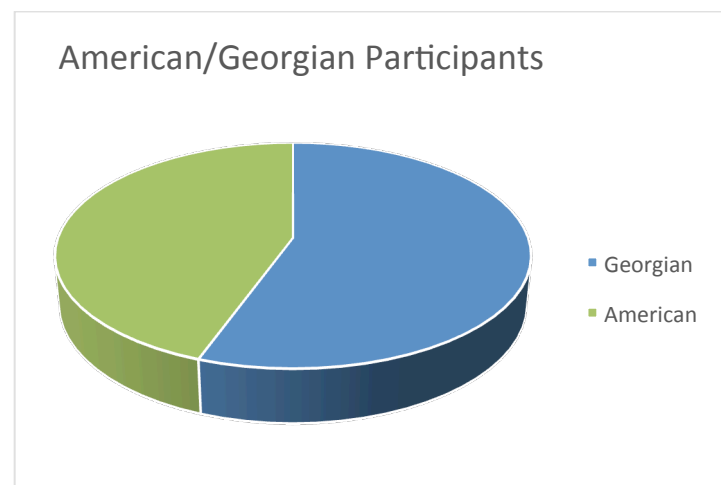
backgrounds and education share many similarities. All of them have been active in civil society building in Georgia for more than a decade, some since the early 1990s. All the participants share a commitment to positive change in Georgia.

### **Participants**

The nine participants interviewed represent a range of organizations engaged in civil society building in Georgia. There were several instances in which the organizations where the participants work are connected professionally, either from working together on projects or from spinning off one organization from the other. The breakdown of participants by gender, location, and nationality was more or less even. Interviews were conducted with four of the participants in person in Washington, DC and via Skype for five of the participants located in Georgia. The US-based participants were all Americans, and the participants in Georgia were all Georgians. Five of the participants were male, and four were female. One of the females was American, three of the males were American. Three Georgian women and two Georgian men participated. Most of the participants hold senior positions within their organizations. Six of the organizations where participants work are considered NGOs or CSOs. Two of them deal with polling and research, and two are involved with both civic engagement and grant making. One works on democracy development, while another works on democracy development and grant making. One participant deals in telecommunications, another works for a multilateral organization, and one for a think tank that convenes people to strategize practices to apply in various contexts.

There are many shared connections among the participants' backgrounds. Five of the participants worked for the same NGO (or its local partner organization once it became its own entity) in Georgia in the early 2000s, some at the same time, though none of them currently work together. One of these participants and two other participants worked for another NGO that

focuses on democracy and governance, though not at the same time, with one working for that NGO currently. One of the participants helped to create the NGO where another of the participants currently works. Four of the five Georgians have held faculty positions at Tbilisi State University in the past, while one is currently a lecturer at a different Georgian university. Two of the participants have law degrees, two have a Ph.D., one is currently working on a Ph.D., and all but one have master's degrees. One did not give details about her education. Below is a profile for each of the nine participants, who are designated by pseudonyms. For example, Participant 1, 2, 3, et cetera. Each participant's identity will remain confidential.



*Figure 2.* Nationality/location of participants. Out of nine participants, five were Georgian and four were American. Only Georgians were interviewed in Georgia and only Americans were interviewed in America.

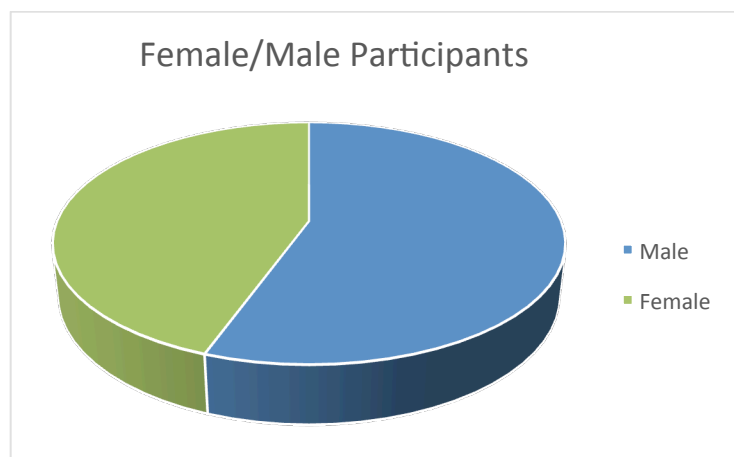


Figure 3. Breakdown by gender.



Figure 4. Type of organization.

**Participant 1** is the Executive Director of a nonprofit based in DC that focuses on strategic convening. This means that experts and other interested parties contribute their expertise to finding innovative ways to solve problems and rework best practices in a multitude of fields. They do this at seminars, workshops, and trainings worldwide. It is similar to a think tank, with an emphasis on convening. He first became involved in civil society building in Georgia in the 1990s as a regional director with an internationally-known NGO that works on democracy building. He later joined another well-known NGO as Vice President for Program

Development, where he worked on lobbying efforts to establish international transportation standards among countries in the Caucasus. He was instrumental in creating polling and research centers in the Caucasus and in setting up a Georgian-run partner organization as a spinoff of a US-based NGO. He then served as president for the entire network of partner organizations in the Caucasus before taking his current position. He holds advanced degrees in law.

**Participant 2** first experienced Georgia as an intern for President Shevardnadze's chief foreign policy advisor during the civil war in 1993. He returned in 1995 with a venture capital firm to put up the first mobile cellular system there. He currently works in the telecommunications field and partners with NGOs on innovations in micro lending and grant making to better implement projects. He has provided advice on strategic planning, risk management, and policy analysis to corporations and governments, with a focus on technology, defense, and natural resources. He has authored or co-authored articles that have appeared in The New York Times and International Herald Tribune. He holds a Master of Arts in International Relations from George Washington University and a JD specializing in Project Finance from Georgetown.

**Participant 3** is the president of a Washington, DC-based NGO's legacy institution in Georgia that builds the capacity of communities to mobilize for change. She worked for UN agencies before being hired as Country Director for her current organization's parent NGO. Her NGO offers grants and training in program implementation to local NGOs that focus on a range of areas, including advocacy, youth, gender, cross-community cooperation, corporate philanthropy, and public-private partnerships. She holds a Master of International Affairs from Columbia University and has completed advanced studies at Tbilisi State University, where she was an associate professor of social sciences.

**Participant 4** works for the same Washington, DC-based NGO where Participant 3 worked before the local organization was spun off in Georgia. He began over a decade ago in Georgia as Associate Country Director for the South Caucasus regional office and currently works in the DC office as Director of Program Development. Before that, he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Central Asia. He holds a Master of Science in Development Management from American University.

**Participant 5** is the president of an NGO in Georgia that collects data and research relevant to policy makers and other NGOs engaged in advocacy. Before joining his current organization in 2007, he worked for civil society organizations in Georgia working on transparency and governance. He has a Master of Public Administration from American University, a Master of Political Science from Central European University, and received his Diploma in History from Tbilisi State University, where he was an assistant professor for political science, economics, research, and statistics courses. He is currently working on a Ph.D. from Central European University.

**Participant 6** is a program associate for a multilateral organization's Georgia office. She works on the government's portfolio dealing with themes of youth and partners in society, and has recently added innovation and engagement to her focus areas. She has worked for her organization for over a decade and writes a blog describing trends and international events related to youth, technology, and citizen engagement. Before her current employer, she worked as a news anchor and editor for a national television station. She received her education at Tbilisi State University, where she later lectured on languages and literature.

**Participant 7** is the cofounder and co-director of a policy research organization in Georgia. Her NGO has conducted public opinion polling and research on democracy, minority

issues, and education. She has been a fellow at the Wilson Center and at Central European University researching in the fields of policy and participation. Before that, she worked for an international democracy and governance NGO. She holds a Ph.D. from a European university and was an associate professor of social sciences at Tbilisi State University.

**Participant 8** has over twenty years of experience working for an NGO that focuses on democracy promotion and election monitoring. Her organization works in Georgia supporting political parties that are actively representing citizens' interests in Parliament. They also work with civil society organizations promoting citizen participation and political processes, and support issues of gender equity and women's participation in politics. She is the Regional Director of Eurasia and oversees programs throughout the former Soviet Union. She holds both a Master of International Affairs and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University.

**Participant 9** works for an international democracy and governance NGO as the Civil Society Program Coordinator. He manages the European Union integration program. His organization has been in Georgia for twenty years and has been involved in almost every aspect of policy development. Before that, he worked for the Georgian government at the Office of the State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. He later joined an international NGO to manage their European Neighborhood Policy program, and then worked for an international NGO that deals with migration. He holds a Master of Arts in European Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies from a European university.

### **Data Analysis and Coding**

Data for this study were coded using process, initial/open, and pattern coding. The original codes were based on the theoretical construct to focus on the activities of engaging the public (using social media, social entrepreneurs, and informal networks, mobilizing youth,

creating coalitions and partnerships). Codes not fitting with the theoretical construct were created in the first cycle using initial/open coding. Themes emerged and taxonomies developed, which guided the categorization in second-cycle pattern coding. Analytic memos were made throughout the data analysis. Earlier impressions were revisited after each interview to check for new insights or to reveal assumptions, using triangulation.

The meta-themes that emerged were based on shared experiences of participants related to challenges, priorities, and innovation associated with the phenomenon of NGO work in Georgia. Challenges involved culture and habits, community involvement, funding, and sustainability. Priorities included youth, women, and minorities, building coalitions and partnerships, changing the culture, and implementing the European Association Agreement. Innovation centered on youth, mobile phones, social media, and co-designing. These categories helped to explain the focus of participants.

**Process coding and initial/open coding.** Creating partnerships and coalitions, involving youth, using social media, allying with social entrepreneurs, building social networks; these parts of the theoretical construct can be described with *-ing* words. Process coding uses *-ing* words as categories for activities (Saldana, 2009, p. 77). The initial step for coding in this study was to organize the raw data from transcribed interviews using Dragon voice transcription software and MAXQDA data analysis software. Process codes based on the theoretical construct were created first, but more codes were created according to the responses to interview questions. There were originally around sixty codes. The codes were then arranged according to their relationship to the theoretical construct.

Another method for ascribing meaning through naming during first cycle coding is taxonomy (Wood, 2011). Taxonomic categories were developed to discern the attitude of

participants towards the themes identified in process coding and to categorize them as challenges, priorities, or innovation. During this phase, it became clear that the participants had different definitions of the overarching theme of this research, the meaning of civil society. Defining civil society was added to the taxonomy categories. Taxonomies developed during first-cycle coding led to the meta-codes eventually chosen during second-cycle pattern coding.

Upper-level categories were created to organize the process codes and open/initial codes into meta-codes and sub-codes. Identifying themes related to the codes allowed categories to be formed. Categories included defining civil society, challenges, priorities, and innovation. The researcher wrote the following memos to describe the taxonomies.

The first level of analysis produced upper-level categories to serve as themes for process codes related to the ways that NGOs engage Georgians. The first theme, *defining civil society*, proved to be necessary to define the outlook of the participants. Civil society can be about a process of civic engagement or the existence of groups in public spaces. There is a distinct difference in the views of some participants that civil society is not a space consisting of civil society groups but rather a process of citizens interacting with each other to effect change.

The second theme was *challenges*. When participants described the challenges they faced, it became clear that funding, lack of citizen engagement, local work ethic, uninformed Westerners, conflict regions, and controversy needed to be addressed as a single category. One of these themes, engagement, is the subject of the thesis, so it is listed not under challenges but under the next theme.

*Priorities* came about in the interview not only as a result of the theoretical construct on engaging Georgians, but also in discussions related to working with the government, capacity building, technical training, economic issues, healthcare, and education. However, some of these



priorities were not mentioned again during interviews due to the focus of the interview questions on engagement. This is probably because healthcare and education are provided by the government. Participants spoke about how they are reaching out to citizens and how citizens are forming groups. There are likely groups of engaged citizens working on healthcare and education, but this was not discussed in this study.

*Innovation* came up a few times when participants discussed citizen engagement and different types of technology to reach them. In particular, mobile phones for micro lending came up, as well as targeted initiatives to create mobile phone applications to report issues affecting particular regions or to solve problems faced by people everywhere in the world. One participant reported that her organization is using the term *citizen experts* to show how they rely on ordinary people to tell the organization what the priorities should be. Other innovations included youth empowerment projects that involved grant making.

The following section will address the themes of the interviews that led to the main categories in the taxonomy themes. The resulting categories include defining civil society, challenges, priorities, and innovation. The researcher will describe and discusses each of the categories.

Table 1. *Taxonomy development.*

Key Words and Phrases	Resulting Category
Process, relationships, interest groups, voluntary organizations, engagement	Defining Civil Society
Engagement, culture, habits, funding, donor-driven programs, sustainability	Challenges
Youth, community engagement, capacity building, building coalitions & partnerships, evidence-based policy analysis, EU Association Agreement	Priorities
Citizen experts, co-design, mobile phones, social media, youth empowerment	Innovation

***Defining Civil Society.*** Defining civil society elicited responses that showed the many ways it is conceptualized. Some participants focused on the process, while others focused on the existence of civil society organizations. Below are examples of the range of views in responses to the question, “What is civil society?”

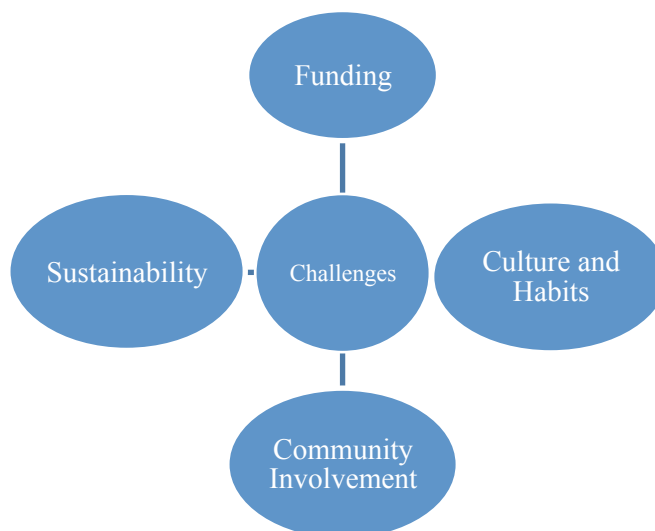
That's a key question...it's more of a process than an actual entity, not NGOs per se, although they are part of civil society. Civil society is what is happening, a process that is going on in which people are organizing in a way, associating in a way, to work toward the public good that engages the government, engages the business sector, and engages the media, and creates a dynamic. It's a dialogue a lot of times, but the results of civil society's work are usually toward the public good. I know this is somewhat of a specific kind of definition that comes out of the Eastern European experience. Some will say it doesn't still have to be public good but I like that part of the definition, Participant 1.

I think civil society is groups – relationships - that are outside formal structures and processes of governance, things that exist among citizens that don't have the imprimatur of direct government control on them. I think it's about...action among those people, so it's not so much the institutions themselves necessarily, although they could be an important part of it, but the way people sort of interact, most importantly how they cultivate political values and political culture that makes them predisposed to think in certain ways. Civil society there still has not settled down...matured in that way. There's a certain volatility to it that does concern me a little bit. On the other hand, I think they've managed this last couple of transitions, Participant 2.

Depends how we look at [it]. The general definition is the groups of people in society, groups that form different interest groups and influence society, and it can be religious as well as community groups, as well as different membership organizations or professional associations. In terms of how we define civil society for our foundation, for our purpose it's basically the groups. It's from registered or unregistered groups that form the group with a specific interest, but we don't work

with the religious, we don't fund the religious institutions or any military, and basically for us the civil society that we support is the group that promotes democratic rule and democratization. We don't work with the conservative groups, as you can imagine, Participant 3.

Civil society in this country, especially when elite talks about that - you know civil society representatives are also representatives belonging to those elite, which is very tiny in our context - they also attach value to it: civil society as only those groups that are doing good things. To me, that's not the right definition. I think what is in the roots of civil society is a kind of self-organization without top-down involvement. Now whether [it] does good things or bad things, it's another question. It can do both and it depends for whom good and for whom bad. For example...we have several kinds of anti-Western, pro-Russian, pro very traditional, anti-modernization groups revived. So some people would say, 'Oh this is not civil society because they are doing wrong things,' but in fact this is also civil society. I would say there is as much competition between different civil society groups as among political forces. These are self-organized groups of individuals who rely on different values. These values are not always acceptable across the board. It's very hard to accept sometimes, even more in civil society than in the political sphere, Participant 5.



*Figure 5.* Challenges for NGOs in Georgia.

**Challenges.** The main challenges for organizations in Georgia include those that are universal, such as funding, those that are common in the former Soviet Union, such as controversy surrounding NGOs as helping only the elite, and challenges unique to Georgia, such as a different work ethic and level of commitment from government, NGO staff, and citizens. The sections below will reveal the challenges as seen and experienced by participants. Challenges have been subdivided to reflect the general area of concern. The categories are shown in Figure 5: culture and habits, community involvement, sustainability, and funding. Three of these categories will be examined in the following paragraphs. Five participants spoke of the challenges of funding. Four of the participants wanted Georgians to be more professional and work harder. Participants 5 and 9 cited planning as an issue. Nearly all participants offered examples of the cultural context in Georgia to explain the lack of community engagement.

*Culture and habits.* Soviet legacy, mistrust, poverty, unawareness, disinterest; these are all possible reasons why Georgians do not readily become involved with NGOs. The problem is not that Georgians avoid getting involved in community activities. Georgians are ready to mobilize for a crisis or to help a neighbor. The challenge is how to get the Georgian public to take part in organized activities with less tangible and immediate results. Planning and professionalism have been identified as issues. The comment below is from Participant 9, a Georgian.

[Georgians] hate planning, it's clear, for each and every stage. And timekeeping. Most important [is] to respect the morning because they start working here very late in the morning and they basically lose the entire day. This is something which I would love to advise to my Georgian colleagues, well colleagues generally, it is not only here... they start in Georgia at 9:00, well, officially it starts at 10:00, but it starts with the colleagues coming with the coffee box, sitting in the kitchen drinking coffee and basically starts at 11:00. Planning is something very

important...financial planning, which is drastic here in Georgia, unbelievably low, and timekeeping, something very, very important.

Other Georgians summed up their impressions by saying Georgians needed to be more hard-working and professional. Participant 1, an American, was a little gentler in his assessment.

Well, you know cultures are different...people didn't necessarily come in at seven in the morning the way I always tried to beat the clock and be in earlier than everyone else. Is it wrong? They come in late but they stay late.

While some participants spoke about work habits, others spoke about the culture of mistrust. Trust is an issue that prevents communities from working together, but it is also a legacy of the reputation of NGOs. Participant 5's assessment is not very positive about the culture changing. He gives a thought-provoking description of attitudes towards NGOs in Georgia.

The problem here is still dependence. Civil society did not start by its own initiative in our region. It was encouraged from outside and after 20, almost 25 years, it continues to be like this. For example, right now if you look [at] who makes the biggest impact in this country, these are a handful of civil society organizations. If you know who they are, to make it very cynical but also quite true, they are implementing arms of USAID. Without that, their impact would be close to zero. So now this raises a question: how this support for 25 years does not build capacity to be an independent player. At least to diversify your funding so much that you're not an implementing arm of one country's one agency, but you really represent some interests which are inside the country, and the interests you represent also try to support you through some monetary or nonmonetary resources...So that's a huge problem and I don't know what will change that, probably nothing, in the foreseeable future...it's not only supply side that is guilty there, it's also demand side. We know this from our surveys, that civil society organizations are among the least popular organizations in the country. They are as unpopular as political parties, as untrustworthy as the courts. So basically, in

the eyes of general public, these are self-proclaimed and self-appointed elitist groups that pretend to act on behalf of regular citizens. Regular citizens don't believe in that and don't endorse that self-appointed nature of those individuals. So that's how it is understood by people. Because it's not grassroots, it's not initiated by people, it's not seen as something grown inside. That creates a huge obstacle for internal development.

How this common perspective developed is further elucidated by Participant 2. He describes how some NGOs took advantage of the rush to send development aid into Georgia in the early years, and how the reputation of NGOs serving the elite has perpetuated.

These organizations had a couple problems. They had been chartered under [lax] regimes, some not just in Georgia, all throughout the region. Some people apparently made a fair amount of money from these things...[and] engendered certain negative perceptions...it's supposed to be nonprofit, help the world and all that. Of course, a lot of Western NGOs, too, have made a lot of money. Nobody generally knows anything about Georgia when they go there. I think you get two kinds. This is a lot less the case with NGOs. I don't really remember working with people who didn't want to be there. At NGOs, you either move on or go native...but more like USAID contractors. I have a very, very negative view of a lot of what I saw, because you had a lot of people going there...people sent there that would not know anything about the place, not care about it, pulling down their American salary plus per diem. I was with a large US company during the intervening years doing a security-related project there, so I saw some of this through that lens. More recently there was this \$40 million, four- or five-year economic prosperity initiative run by USAID. Great idea, extremely poorly conceived and executed, given to a company that didn't have any experience with [doing this work in Georgia]. It's a colossal waste. I saw some really terrible things happen...a lot of things went wrong with US assistance...like really wrong.

Another problem Georgians have experienced with NGOs is not just the expectation that things will change, but that they will change quickly, as some NGOs have been seen to portray it. Participant 5 explains how anti-Western groups could take advantage of this.

As we go closer to the West, meaning the European Union and NATO, and these...[NGOs'] expectations of pretty quick improvement of [the] economic situation... which is not expected at all [by the Georgian public]. An even more unrealistic thing, progress in restoration of territorial integrity, this is not expected either, so on the one hand, there will be frustration of false expectations, and on the other hand, there'll be these groups [that] will be strengthened because that's what they are saying. They are not saying that the West is evil, they are saying that it's useless. The future could give them some support to those ideas, because sometimes pro-Western NGOs and pro-Western political forces also are trying to sell these ideas as having potential to bring results very quickly, which is also not true.

It is clear that NGOs have a long way to go before the Georgian public trusts them. However, as NGOs become more involved with their constituencies and address the concerns generated by local communities, the image of the elite NGO will change. This will take time. As the Georgian population takes ownership of civil society organizations in their communities, these organizations will be able to attract the interest of individuals, which in turn will help with sustainability and funding.

*Funding.* Funding is a challenge for the sustainability of NGOs in Georgia. Most NGOs receive money from outside of Georgia and have to adjust priorities to attract donors. The culture of philanthropy has not yet taken hold, and recent changes to the tax code to encourage corporate philanthropy have not yet resulted in sustainable funding for local NGOs. Participant 7's NGO has experienced this problem. "We are dependent almost entirely on foreign donors and on their

money and on their desires what to study...and behave according it. We have to accommodate what is offered, so this is the major challenge.” Participant 6 further explained the dilemma.

Civil society [organizations are] totally dependent. It's not so sustainable. Very few are self-sustainable, if any. They're totally dependent on donor funding, which makes them less focused on their area of interest and they are often spread thin. They try to do everything, you know, gender, economic development, whatever the donor demand is. They have to balance the two. They have to juggle the two. If they [want] to survive, they have to earn.

Inflexibility of donors is also a problem. Participant 1 shared his approach to the problem and how a local foundation can be more flexible when funding priorities change.

The major challenge...that most NGOs face is the funding...because the funding is almost 95% coming from outside the country. So there's not a lot of indigenous philanthropy and support for civil society...How do we overcome that? I was a pretty good fundraiser, so we wrote proposals to USAID and sometimes we didn't like having to implement projects that were so prescriptive. The best case scenario, of course, is...when a foundation would say, ‘We really like your organization. Here, we’re going to give you this lump sum amount of money, unrestricted, to do your work without putting a lot of contingencies, projects, and evaluations on it,’ because the other part of the problem that I think a lot of civil society organizations face in Georgia is that as you implement a project, that if it's more than a year...the underlying circumstances may change while you're completing the project. Unfortunately, not all funders are accepting of a rewrite of the project based on changed circumstances. In transitional countries, things happen very fast, and so I think that is always going to be a problem. The good thing about, for instance, the way the funding [through the local partner organization] is, they said, ‘Okay we want to work in these areas,’ but then they're also very accepting of some general changes along the way...If you want to work in this whole area of one specific field and then suddenly realize that somebody else, a bigger player, has come in and they're doing all this work, you need to adjust the program...they are accepting of that.



Participant 4 also described the need for flexibility in program implementation.

There are always challenges that you are faced with in implementation. Sometimes your grantee underperforms or you have a partner who is not pulling their weight on implementing a project. Then you need to re-jig and adjust and it's a real challenge, where you need to stay on top of it and move to the end and make sure it gets resolved. Program implementation is always messy and it's never as clean and as beautiful as you lay it out in the proposal.

Local sources of funding need to be found. The type of heavy reliance on funding from outside of Georgia is not sustainable. Participant 3 says, "International funding at some point...will dry up and I don't see any local funding coming towards the civil society groups." Participant 5 suggested membership dues to help fund local organizations, but considers it an inadequate solution for now, even for one of the best-known NGOs in Georgia.

[I] don't know what will be or what's the solution. I think it still takes a lot of foreign assistance before it becomes sustainable and homegrown...Now there's only one organization that is membership-based, only one that I know, the Young Lawyers' Association...I don't expect that membership fees will be more than 2% of their budget. So it tells you how much can you rely on members...and they have probably more powerful members than any NGO, because every other high official is [an] ex-member of that organization, including the chair of the parliament, many, many MPs, and many ministers...It's a powerful organization, but still cannot sustain itself without substantial help from Western aid organizations, so kind of unfortunate situation.

Recent changes to the tax code intend to make it easier for corporate philanthropy to occur in Georgia. Participant 3 explains,

There is no specific law on philanthropy, but in terms of the tax code...some of the articles talk about the charity status and how the corporations can donate only to organizations that have the charity status. So you can get charity status as an organization if you file for the status...if most of your activities are focused on

social missions and most of your activities work towards this and it's noncommercial, although even if you have a charity status, you can also do some economic activities, basically making profit, but it should not be a major part of your operation. You need to submit and publish to the tax authorities, but also publish an annual report that also talks about your activities that are mostly development or humanitarian. If you have this status, then the corporations can donate money...I don't remember the percentage, I think it may have changed, but after all the taxes, but before the profit tax...you can save up to 8% of your profit tax.

Currently NGOs in Georgia are seeking ways to broaden their funding sources. Dependence on international donors is not sustainable, but local sources have not yet stepped up. Encouraging citizen engagement is already difficult, and engagement must first occur before potential local donors see the value in supporting NGOs. Innovative solutions to funding will continue to be a challenge for NGOs in Georgia.

*Sustainability.* Sustainability is a concern for NGOs in Georgia. Funding is a part of this, as is capacity-building for local CSOs and other groups. Sustainability involves technical training and nonprofit management skills such as grant writing, monitoring and evaluation, and increasing membership. Georgia faced challenges after the Rose Revolution in 2003 when well-trained NGO professionals went to work for the new government. Participant 4 described the effect,

When the Rose Revolution took place, there was the great sucking sound of civil society activists being pulled into government. It affected our organization...one woman who was a program officer for us went into the government and became the president's special advisor for minority areas and then went on to do other things within the government. It was just remarkable that we would see our staff, or...managers of CSOs that we had been longtime partners with suddenly moving to very different positions in the government.

Participant 6 also talked about the experience.

We used to have much more vibrant civil society before the Rose Revolution...especially if I compare the situation after the independence [in the 1990s] and the amount of young people who were trained abroad and those who came back. They all got involved in in the civil society sector...we had this brain drain...brain drain had an enormous effect...after the revolution...they're all [in] the government...it takes time before you create a new generation.

Participant 2 had praise for the technical training that took place as a result of USAID programs, especially as it affected the Georgian government.

Some of the best parts...of what was done is the technocratic training level for government bureaucracies, particularly, and that's really not the case throughout the government with financial services, particularly with revenue. They were trained very well, I mean by global standards, quite competent or even good...this is post-Rose Revolution...and I have mixed views of the Rose Revolution. I am...sorting through what all that means now, but it is true it did at least deal with a sort of corruption and did professionalize the government. As a consequence, you tend to have bureaucrats that actually know probably a lot more than some of the people in the industry, which is very high, not the sort of thing you would normally expect, because those people didn't necessarily have access to a lot of international training.

As NGOs train Georgians to maintain sustainable organizations, there is still the danger that NGOs will not directly see any benefit. This is because well-trained NGO personnel can take their skills and find jobs within the government or private sector. Brain drain is a significant problem for the sustainability of NGOs in Georgia. The indirect benefit for NGOs is that they have friends in government and private industry to work with them. With that possible eventuality in mind, it is still necessary to build the capacity of local civil society organizations to handle non-profit management themselves. Larger NGOs continue to train personnel at small

NGOs to help them address their priorities and achieve their goals. The NGO community in Georgia has not yet achieved a critical mass of trained-up personnel. Once this happens, the danger of losing staff to other sectors will diminish and local NGOs can plan better, knowing that they have competent staff that will stay with them.

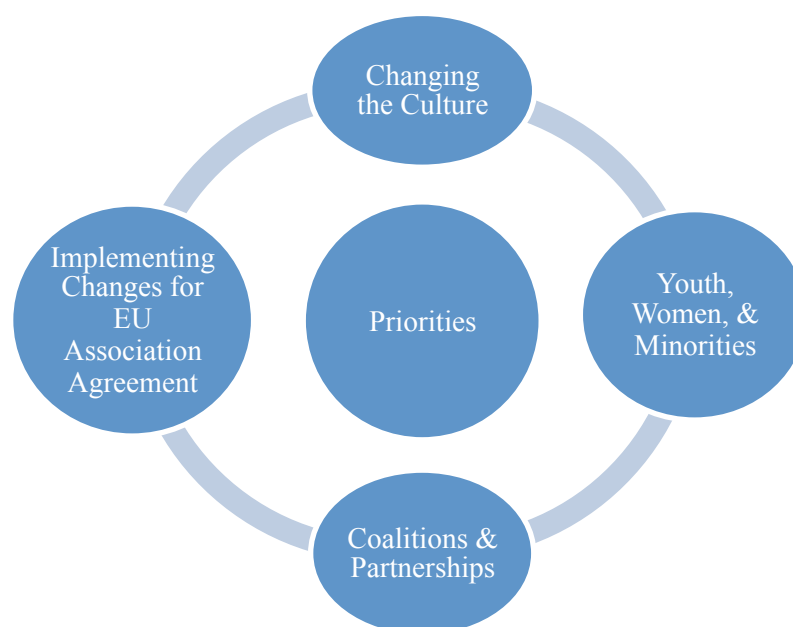


Figure 6. Priorities for NGOs in Georgia.

**Priorities.** Four main priorities emerged from the interviews. They included implementing changes related to Georgia's European Union Association Agreement, building coalitions and partnerships, changing the culture of noninvolvement, and youth, women, and minorities. When discussing priorities, participants gave a broad range. Participant 6 recommended looking at the UN's Millennium Development Goals, taking their sixteen suggested global priorities, and comparing them to Georgians' goals. Her organization put out a report that resulted from qualitative research in Georgia, which she described.

The top three are employment, education, and healthcare, but also their key focus is engagement. [Georgians] want to be part of the decision-making process and

this was never a separate priority...this was brought about by face-to-face interviews [and] by group discussions, that people want to be engaged, they want to be involved, Participant 6.

The following two participants listed multiple priorities for their respective organizations. Engaging citizens is only one of the priorities that NGOs have for Georgia. Participant 9's comments demonstrate the wide range.

We have the following programs, this is the EU integration program, we have a health program, we have education, media, local governance, so these are the activities that we are doing in Georgia now. We are doing the grant making, basically supporting our partners to carry out some policy research and advocacy activities. We are basically working on three different aspects. We have three sub-goals. One is monitoring the implementation of the Georgia Association Agreement, which went into force on 1st September last year. We have to promote the protection of personal data. The third one is promote the protection of minority rights...basically all kinds of minorities, meaning sexual minorities, ethnic minorities...basically everybody.

Participant 6 also described a range of focal points. She works for a large multilateral organization that is officially involved with the government of Georgia to implement a number of improvements, but her organization also works with citizens and other NGOs.

Our main mandate is working with governmental institutions for capacity building and management of environmental issues, conflict prevention and neutrality, and economic development. The key focus at this point is the reduction of poverty and working with groups like women and youth, poor women and youth.

NGOs in Georgia are balancing multiple priorities, all requiring funding and citizen engagement. Through coalitions and partnerships, NGOs can consolidate resources and address their priorities together. NGOs are working both directly and indirectly on issues that Georgia must address in order to meet the EU Association Agreement requirements. As NGOs continue

to coalesce around these common issues, civil society in Georgia will be strengthened and ordinary citizens will benefit.

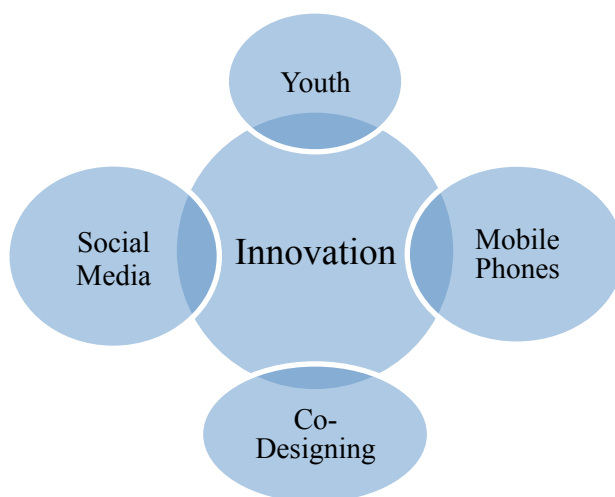


Figure 7. Innovative ways NGOs are engaging the public in Georgia.

**Innovation.** Innovation is expressed by NGOs' approaches to programming and developments in technology. Participant 6 talked about the need for NGO staff to change their views of the citizens they work with, "You go to the person who needs your services, not as a beneficiary, but as someone who knows the best what the solution should be." This is a new way of thinking for her organization and they have put it into practice by referring to the population as *citizen experts*. Beneficiaries are invited to participate in the design of new technologies that will serve them, a process called *co-design*.

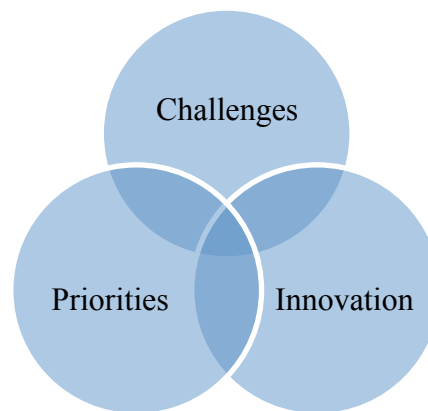
The most prolific commentary on innovation was about the use of social media to engage Georgians, especially Facebook and mobile phones. Participants provided examples of civil society in action that included using social media for mobilizing communities, targeting youth, and working with local government. Mobile phones are being used to transfer money, report infrastructure issues to local authorities, and to map demand for services. Other innovations

include empowering youth in communities as grant makers. These specific initiatives will be addressed in the discussion of Research Question 1.

**Pattern coding.** What started as around sixty codes was eventually reduced to five meta-codes and twenty sub-codes. Examples of citizen engagement were grouped into the more all-encompassing meta-codes codes of challenges and priorities. A separate meta-code code was about the meaning of civil society. Sustainability was a meta-code code that came about as the data were analyzed. Some data existed with multiple different codes, with innovation eventually being attached to examples in many categories. This led to the creation of the meta-code of innovation. The meta-codes that remained formed the themes for further analysis. They were the meaning of civil society, challenges, priorities, and innovation. Nearly every sub-code that emerged could be placed in one of these four categories, with some sub-codes being placed in more than one of the meta-codes. Data overlapped; one theme in an interview could include several different sub-codes. One sub-code could be applied to a variety of themes. For example, innovation was originally a sub-code applied to social media and youth. Eventually innovation became a meta-code to cover engagement activities, youth, technology, mobile phones, and social media. Throughout the data analysis process, codes were changed, deleted, and reassigned.

The meta-codes from first cycle coding that remain are challenges, priorities, and innovation. It is possible to draw connections between all of these codes. Within each of these categories are details that describe the nature of engagement. How the participants view the methods of engagement are key here. Some participants did not make engaging through social media a priority. Some were not focused on youth. Some found working with government challenging, while others have found innovative ways to partner with the government, and another has a mandate to work with the government, making it a priority. As can be expected,

there is overlap among these areas. Challenges become priorities, innovation is necessary to meet challenges and priorities, and sometimes coming up with innovations is the challenge.



*Figure 8.* Categories associated with NGOs engaging the public in Georgia.

Coding has identified patterns that demonstrate current priorities of NGOs in Georgia. The main priorities for NGOs engaging the public are innovation in youth engagement, coalitions and partnerships, using evidence-based data for policy change, and social media. One pattern that was absolutely clear is that NGOs are innovating not just ad hoc, but as part of their strategies for citizen engagement. In their efforts to find innovative ways to engage the public, NGOs have found partners experienced with public polling to provide data on the priorities of communities. Organizations have also worked with partners and coalitions to find out what is working in other communities, regions, and countries, especially with youth and social media. A positive development is that the Georgian government is actively working with some of the organizations represented by the participants. Several participants mentioned the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, which succeeded in lobbying the government for policy changes, especially in the judiciary system and the area of civil rights. Advocacy on the issues that concern citizens most has become a major part of what NGOs do in Georgia. This includes advocating for minority rights and displaced or refugee populations. Challenges exist in all of the



above areas, however, as some NGOs have not utilized social media to engage the public, some are engaging with youth not directly, but through partners, and some organizations have multiple priorities that in the long run are contingent upon donor funding, and thus continue to be designed around the priorities of donors.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation allows the researcher to compare data from every stage of the analysis to find new themes and to check early impressions against final results (Merriam, 2002). After every interview, analytic memos were utilized to form initial theories about how the participants viewed their experiences. These memos were compared to responses at the first and second stage of coding. Final impressions were compared with earlier ones to see if any themes were missed and if anticipated themes were actualized.

As a result of triangulation, the initial impressions from the interviews showed a focus on examples of challenges faced by NGO staff and the ways they engage the public in Georgia. After the first cycle of coding, multiple codes surfaced as a result of initial (open) coding. The large number of codes gave rise to the need to categorize them into impressions based on how the participants viewed engaging the public, and whether the phenomenon of engaging the public and the methods of engagement were considered challenges, priorities, or innovation. The second cycle of coding clarified the positions of the participants as responses were once again analyzed to determine the relationship between themes grouped under taxonomic categories and whether the categories had overlapping themes. Community engagement was found to exist in all categories, whether as challenge, priority, or innovation, so the focus then became how to describe community engagement as it relates to other themes within the category. An example of this is how to engage the public by building partnerships and coalitions. Partnerships and coalitions are being used to promote civil society in Georgia, with participants naming it as a

priority. However, participants described challenges they have experienced, especially related to foregoing their preferred priorities in order to meet the requirements of funders. In the first cycle of coding, structural coding put partnerships and coalitions as a means of engagement, and the researcher anticipated challenges related to sharing information or duplicating efforts. Fundraising came up as a challenge on its own in the first cycle of coding, but it was not until the second cycle of coding that the connection between donor requirements and funding was seen as making an impact on partnerships and coalitions.

The literature review provided a thorough understanding of current issues for NGOs engaging the public in Georgia; triangulation allowed the researcher to check the concepts in the literature review against the experiences of NGO personnel in the field. Participants are all familiar with these issues, and have deep and comprehensive knowledge of the latest innovations, as the researcher had expected. Therefore, the language of the researcher was broader than the language used by participants to describe their experiences. Throughout the triangulation process, the researcher ensured that any unfamiliar concepts presented by participants could be made familiar by tying them to known trends discovered in the literature review, clarified with follow-up questions during interviews, and compared during coding. While the broad concepts that the researcher expected remained true, details of these concepts proved to be exciting and encouraging. The most noteworthy new perspective was that the Georgian government is becoming more responsive to citizens' priorities, but, unfortunately, citizens are still largely unaware of how NGOs are helping to make these changes for Georgians. This challenge can be met with more information sharing, not only through traditional ways such as research and data reports, but also through better policy analysis, media coverage, and using social media to broadcast the achievements of NGOs.

**Summary**

The nine professionals interviewed for this qualitative study on how NGOs are engaging the public in Georgia provided insights to their shared experiences that proved that they are committed to engaging the public. They are aware of the need for NGOs to change their reputations from elitist organizations that serve a well-connected few, and acknowledge the context of Georgia's history and culture. Their responses showed a focus on the challenges, priorities, and innovation involved with becoming more community-focused.

Through two-step coding (process and initial/open in the first cycle, pattern in the second), taxonomy, analytic memos, and triangulation, data analysis revealed that each meta-code of challenges, priorities, and innovation had a set of sub-codes to describe the activities of NGOs to meet the needs of the Georgian public. Challenges included culture and habits, funding, sustainability, and community involvement. Priorities included changing the culture; youth, minorities, and women; coalitions and partnerships; and implementing changes to meet the requirements of the EU Association Agreement. Areas for innovation are social media, mobile phones, youth, and co-designing between NGOs and beneficiaries. The next chapter will show specific examples of how NGOs are meeting the needs of communities in Georgia by addressing these challenges, priorities, and innovations.

### Discussion

Engaging the public in Georgia takes a variety of innovative forms. Participants described how they and their organizations use social media, mobile phones, youth, and coalitions and partnerships to meet community priorities. Some priorities, like youth, have been a focus for years, while others, such as gathering accurate data to advocate for change, highlight newer concerns. There is a lack of everyday community involvement in Georgia. In times of crisis, however, whether a political demonstration or a neighbor in need, Georgians can mobilize. NGOs in Georgia want to show communities that there are ways to come together outside of times of crisis. NGOs are looking for innovative ways to connect communities with their local and national authorities to report concerns and share suggestions. NGOs are building coalitions and partnerships to increase their reach and effectiveness, and to speak to policy makers with one voice. Collaborations have produced technical innovations to engage and inform communities, and to serve people with disabilities. Beneficiaries of services are being asked to contribute their ideas, a practice called *co-design*. Citizens know what their communities need, and now organizations are promoting the view of citizens as experts. The literature suggested that NGOs engage more at the community level to make sustainable positive changes. NGOs have responded to the call to become more community-focused, primarily through coalitions and partnerships, social media, and youth.

### Research Questions

**Research question one (RQ1):** What specific new initiatives are NGOs working on to engage Georgians at the community level?

A review of the literature highlighted the need for NGOs and other organizations working on civil society to change their thinking from the top-down, one-size-fits all approach to

development that was popular during the years when Georgia was transitioning to democracy. NGOs and their partners in government, business, and multilateral organizations were tasked to become more innovative in their practices, including giving more control to locally-based civil society organizations, which could be partners, spinoff organizations, or independent operations. The results of the interviews demonstrated that NGOs operating in Georgia have heeded this call. Engaging citizens is a priority across the board. Lessons have been learned pertaining to the sustainability of NGOs in Georgia, with twenty years of assistance by Western NGOs revealing a dependence on outside aid that is unsustainable. Capacity building of local NGOs and engagement of citizens are keys to breaking this cycle of dependence. The following sections will describe the challenges to community involvement in Georgia and how NGOs are innovating to meet communities' priorities.

***Challenges to engaging Georgians.*** Participants described the challenges they faced in getting Georgians to come together. Trust issues, apathy, lack of information, or something in the Georgian character were all offered as explanations. Participant 5, a Georgian, described how he experienced it.

No one dies of hunger in the country because people help each other. It's kind of personalized, 'I help you because I want to show that I like you and I care about you, also I feel more proud about that,' but people don't feel more proud to take care of the space where they gather all the time. I think Georgians don't like accepting help, but I think the biggest driver is this reciprocity, expectation of help if you need it in return, and this explains why people don't do things where no one will return anything personally to them. If you do something commonly you will enjoy a portion of benefit but not everything to yourself. For example, I have a small [court]yard where I live. It's a small [apartment building] and the fence was broken and no one ever tried to repair it. Everyone was complaining. Then I repaired it. I paid for that. The neighbors will be very happy but everybody

was coming and watching, and I was also helping the guy that I hired for that, so I was working myself. They would come and watch and say, 'Oh, that's a great thing,' but I swear no one lifted a finger to take part, to take one brick and put it there so that would be [their] contribution. They said, 'Oh, tell us how much you spent and we will collect money and give [it to] you.' Of course no one did. It's strange. These are not poor people...judging by [their] cars they are not poor. Sometimes [poverty] is understood as the root problem...people have [such a] hard time to figure out how to feed their families tomorrow and they don't think about other issues, which is true, but only partially. This example that I just gave is not a poverty issue; it's an issue that you don't care about certain things because it's not your private benefit. It's a big issue which is really hard to understand, let alone solve. It is very paradoxical because there are extraordinary examples of collective action, but sometimes you see nothing.

***Lack of everyday involvement.*** Some participants described the ability of Georgians to organize during an election or a crisis, and how NGOs are educating Georgians on how to take ownership of their communities. Participant 3 described why her organization works on citizen engagement in the Caucasus. "Everyday engagement is not very active...they can mobilize quickly and react to injustice when there is a critical situation. This is when most civil society in Georgia comes together, when there's a crisis." Her organization recognizes this is not sustainable, so they focus on changing it. "We are very much focused on engaging communities, empowering people and the communities to effect change for social justice and economic prosperity so that they are responsible for their own lives." Participant 6 explained the origin of the problem and how it needs to change. "It probably has to do with trust in the process of governance per se. People need to trust the process of governance at the local level so they believe that who is elected at the local level really is representing them."

The culture of engagement must change, but this is not the job solely of NGOs. In order to get Georgians involved in community work, NGOs have to find incentives to attract

Georgians. Georgian communities need to communicate those priorities to NGOs. Engaging Georgians will continue to be a challenge. Mistrust or unawareness of what NGOs do is common in Georgia. NGOs are associated with elite groups, grant seekers, and outside influence. Georgia lacks a volunteer culture, but people do mobilize around crises. Whether it is poverty or something else that disinclines Georgians from community engagement is up for argument. Participant 5 explained this aspect of Georgian culture as he sees it, referring to *social capital*. According to Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, "Social capital refers to the collective value of all "social networks" [who people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other ["norms of reciprocity"] (2015).

Based on our earlier research on social capital, probably the biggest obstacle of the citizens to organize themselves, this is poverty. In terms of social capital, they don't trust each other, they don't want to act together for shared goals. They have this always. See, the problem above all, they [say about making an effort], 'If I do that, then they will not do anyway, so why should I do these kind of things?' That kind of vicious cycle. I don't know. I don't think anyone does know what to do with that. If you trust the literature on that, this has worked out through centuries of repeated actions and trials and errors, so we should wait quite a bit to have that type of government-generated [social capital], because if you live in pretty much rural areas, you can hardly survive without each other's help, but this help is there. It's not that it's not there. It comes when someone dies, or in some kind of extreme situations, but no one will aggregate their resources, say, to have a better road or to have a cleaner area. You saw in this country how dirty everything is around because no one cares about common space. It's a really strange situation where you have kind of contrasting things, when you see help and assistance and aggregation of resources on things that are important, but are very personal. But if it is not very personal, then you don't see that that much.

Participant 6 spoke about the need to take the spontaneous volunteering of the Georgian community to the national level.

The notion of volunteerism in Georgia still has to be developed...it's kind of conflicting and contradictory. It remains within the community, but it doesn't escalate nationally. So beyond their community, that's right, we do not have a system which allows this partnership at the community level to bring about change in the way we manage the country as a whole. So we still need to learn how to translate this community unity teamwork.

***Engaging through informal networks.*** Informal networks are used in Georgia to engage the public with varying results. Weaknesses of informal networks are documentation, focus, and follow-through. Participant 6 says it can be difficult to substantiate that your assumptions are sound. Participant 1 says, “It can be not specific enough, it can be emotional. You may have unanticipated results...the November 2007 student uprising was a result of social networking. People got upset and started gathering...some of those things get out of control sometimes.” Yet informal networks can help assess attitudes of people in areas that are not being formally served. Participant 9 is promoting the EU Association Agreement in Georgia. He often has to meet with the public in remote places to explain what the Association Agreement means for Georgia as the country aspires to join the European Union. This involves dispelling myths and countering propaganda from Russian “NGOs” created to discourage Georgians from supporting EU accession.

[Using informal networks is important for] promoting your values and promoting the EU Association Agreement, and what is the Association Agreement? [It] runs more than 1000 pages and you cannot ask a person in the mountainous part of Adjara to read it from beginning to the end. It actually took me four months with that document to fully understand what it is all about. I'm traveling to those regions personally and I do have meetings with them. I go to the villages, to the co-ops, little houses where we ask our partners there to mobilize the community. We bring printed materials there. A very famous one is *10 Myths about the Association Agreement*. There are misperceptions, like ‘That's terrible, that would



kill our identity. It is basically better to go to Russia than to go to European Union.’ To stop this perception somehow, to promote the European values, we are trying to engage with them on this face-to-face basis and meetings.

Participant 9 had recently met with a group of teachers representing faculty of schools that are run by the Georgian Orthodox Church to discuss concerns about the Association Agreement. The results were positive.

There was a meeting between three experts, including myself, on the Association Agreement and the representatives of the teachers which belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church. It is believed here that they are the staunchest opposers of the Georgian Association Agreement and it turned out that actually this is a misperception, especially for that group. They said that [the meeting] helped them a lot to destroy all these [impressions] that they had, and wrong [impressions] that they had of the Association Agreement and generally Georgia's European [push].

Countering Russian propaganda about the EU Association Agreement is another challenge that Participant 9 faces. It necessitates him engaging the public face-to-face via informal networks. He talks about his experience with this below.

Pro-Russian NGOs, which are mushrooming in Georgia, they're promoting Russian ideas, saying, ‘What about neutrality for Georgia? What about European Union where you have same-sex marriage? Would you like this kind of country here in Georgia?’ They say that [the] Association Agreement is actually nothing but a piece of paper and you can't implement that. They say that it's better to become part of the Eurasian Economic Union because Russia would guarantee first the protection of your identity; second, this is a country which has the same religion and they can easily understand you better than Europeans or Americans; and third, you can easily export your items, like agricultural products and wine, to Eurasian markets, to Russia, to Kazakhstan, to Belarus. They're going to [the] regions. In Adjara, say if you have tangerines, they say that it's difficult to sell your tangerines. They go to the peasant, they say to the peasant, ‘You can't sell your honey or your tangerines to the European Union,’ because despite all this

Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement that Georgia has with the European Union, which is part of the Association Agreement, ‘you can’t sell it because it doesn’t meet the phyto-sanitary norms and you can never meet the phyto-sanitary norms because it’s very hard. It takes a lot of investment.’ They’re saying that Russia is ready to open the gates for your market, the door for your products, you can just easily sell it to Russia.

Participant 7 uses informal networks for some of her organization’s data collection.

Of course when we want to get some respondents, when we want to interview some people, you have to call your friends...without this it’s difficult to engage people in focus groups or in anything because there are no incentives and the civic consciousness is not very high in Georgia.

Participant 6 pointed out her concerns about using informal networks. Though informal networks can help NGOs get to the core of an issue in ways they might not be able to do with formal networks, it can be difficult to substantiate or follow through on. Informal networks can address the same type of inquiry as formal interactions, and the results can be used to plan future interventions. The problem Participant 6 sees with informal engagement is that it impacts the ability to provide research as evidence to demonstrate that one’s assumptions are sound.

***Engaging through coalitions and partnerships.*** NGOs engage the public through coalitions and partnerships in various ways. The most common way is through grant making, which is a function of five of the organizations represented by the participants. Another common method of partnership is through training and capacity building. Participant 3 described her organization as a parent to smaller NGOs in Georgia, providing training and funding. NGOs in Georgia have formed coalitions with other NGOs, the Georgian government, and multilateral organizations to advocate for policy changes and changes in government institutions. Successful campaigns have included the establishment of an ombudsman’s office to hear citizens’ complaints and changes to the legal environment in Georgia. Both initiatives improved civil

rights, minority rights, and transparency in the judicial system. These campaigns were successful because the coalitions brought together many groups to speak with one voice and make an impact.

The NGO where Participant 8 works has been active in Georgia for more than twenty years. Her NGO partnered with the International Society for Free Elections and Democracy (ISFED) when they came to Georgia in the early years. Over the years, ISFED has become more sophisticated and now the two NGOs combine efforts to monitor elections. She elaborated how the relationship has evolved.

ISFED is a very accomplished nonpartisan citizen election monitoring group. When they first started monitoring elections, their needs in terms of international partnership and support were very basic: how to recruit volunteers, what to expect at elections, how to write reports. By now, by 2014, ISFED is one of the most experienced, skilled professional citizen monitoring groups in the world that [we] work with anywhere. Their needs are highly specialized and technical. It's not training that we're providing so much, not even advice. It's sort of peer-to-peer engagement. The methodologies that they use evolve year-to-year and month-to-month and need to stay updated. They are very sophisticated technologies and methodologies, so we work with them on that. Their needs are not basic organizing anymore.

Participant 5 is hoping to build coalitions to share work and to improve funding opportunities. However, he wants it to take place organically.

It was realized by donors that single organizations cannot achieve much one by one, so they encourage these coalitions a lot and they achieve results, but this is kind of imposed, it's not naturally built. What we're planning at [our organization] is to start building not permanent coalitions, but what is known as issue networks, and these can be done because of convenience, not because of coalitions. Because of this [you have] division of labor.

Participant 7's NGO has been in small and large coalitions. Her experience with small coalitions has been limited, but her experience with a large coalition demonstrated the type of change that coalitions can impact.

We are building coalitions, but they are not very strong. We had a conference in Istanbul, and it's not only Georgians, it's South Caucasus Women for Peace. They are a coalition of many women's NGOs. We're also a member of some other networks, [but] I'm not sure that they are very active. The biggest network [in] which we're also a member [is the] Eastern Partnership Network and this network is more active. There was this movement against police wiretapping, so this Eastern Partnership organized some actions against it and we were partners.

Coalitions and partnerships are important for NGOs of all sizes to reach more people, speak with a louder voice, and effect changes of greater magnitude than would be possible with small NGOs working alone. The trend is growing, and the participants all demonstrated a commitment to continue building on this.

***Social media, mobile phones, and innovation.*** Several participants described exciting innovations in social media, including with mobile phone technology, though not all participants' organizations were using social media to reach Georgians. Out of nine participants, four reported that their organizations were actively using social media to engage Georgians and promote their work. Of the other five participants, two spoke of how they utilized Participant 5's organization's website, blog, and Facebook page. Two other participants chose to skip the question, and one said her organization did not use social media very much.

Social media, including mobile phone technology, is used to mobilize and inform communities, but it also provides a means for individuals to communicate with larger organizations, including local authorities. Two participants spoke highly of Transparency

International's innovations, including *Hackathon* and *Fix My Street*. Participant 3 described how innovative technologies are working in this area.

One of the projects we implemented was with Transparency International's Fix My Street. It's not a Georgian thing; it started, I think, in Britain first, and now it's all over the place. Basically you use the application online, or you use the mobile application, to report about the problems in the street. So the local authorities check this as well and try to respond as soon as possible.

Participant 6 spoke about creative competitions known as *Hackathons*. These involve all types of technology. She explained how they work.

Hackathon is a call for competition for tech guys, mainly tech guys who are into computing and designing and developing programs, etc. Hackathons...include participation of not only tech guys, but also designers, and it can be different designers, web developers. So it has to be a group representing different promoters... The point of getting together is to come up with a prototype or model of a solution to a specific problem, which the competition announces for, and they come up with this model within three days' time. So they have only three days to work on this model.

Participant 6 shared a recent innovation that her organization will be trying out with authorities in one of Georgia's regions. This came about as a result of an event similar to Hackathon supported by a European government in partnership with her organization.

We have the...governor who wants to test it in his region. So at this point what we're doing is we're developing terms of reference, actually we're writing it now. We have a program for local development, local governance, regional development. We will be testing out this tool and how we can reach out to communities and how this tool can help the local administration to plan...regional development or local development planning to enlist the feedback from people.

Participant 6 also mentioned an interactive website called My World ([www.myworldgeorgia.org](http://www.myworldgeorgia.org)), which allows individuals to rank priorities for their regions and view results for the entire country by clicking on regions of a map.

Co-designing is another concept that Participant 6 highlighted. These are solutions for any type of situation. Civil society development has recently tried to be more inclusive of people with disabilities. Innovations for the disabled can serve to educate others, for example, with applications that teach sign language. Participant 6 elucidated further.

Within the framework of this innovation is testing the new method of co-designing. Co-designing is a method where you bring together the service providers, the beneficiaries or users of the service, and the experts in the field...you have only three days' framework, but you come up with a prototype...[W]e did this kind of workshop for the persons with disabilities and within three days we came up with five prototypes. For example, a sliding door, how you can improve [doors for] a person in a wheelchair. He cannot open the door and close it, but if the door [is] sliding, then it's easier. So we actually produced a prototype, how it should look...what features it should have, which they can take to an investor or to an interested party. The other was teaching sign language. For example, a computer application or game that you can install in public places and a camera can capture your gesture. For example, 'hello' is like this, and it can prompt you to say hello, and if you say it correctly you will score something. So it's kind of a game. It's fun, but raises awareness...The third one was...for blind people. You can have an application on the cell phone. You direct the camera at the object and it will translate it into audio output. Yes, and we actually prepared the prototype of this program in three days...You don't think about it, but how blind people can work on a specific application if you only added a shortcut to the application, because they are good with working with keyboards. So instead of just prompting to use the mouse, if you program to use the shortcuts you can actually have blind people working on these applications...We had a workshop in Georgia to devise services for persons with

disabilities...so that they could access emergency services when they want to...This is the new approach. We are taking our first steps on this way. So from the first results we can clearly see the benefits of such engagement.

Participant 2 spoke of innovation with mobile phones for financial transactions. NGOs have used mobile money platforms created in partnership with telecommunications companies and financial institutions to disburse microloans. Participant 2 played a role in bringing this technology to the Georgian public.

I came back in 2010 with a mobile financial services company that we started. It was in large part initially focused on expansion of access to finances using mobile phones and we worked with a number of NGOs there. It uses a USSD interface. A really simple phone can do this with a star short code. It allows people to get their microloan disbursements from the phone and make their repayments on the phone. You have these cash agents around the country. We have done a lot of consulting work around Africa...There's been a lot of attempts to sort of transpose it to different environments. In Africa there are some endogenous factors that make it more likely to succeed, like a lack of a banking infrastructure. In Georgia you have a legacy, Soviet banking infrastructure. It wasn't great, but it was there...So if you get the loan disbursement on your phone, depending on who the NGO is, you can restrict them and say that that loan is only for buying seed or fertilizer. You go to that participating merchant and you do a short code and there's a little five digit number on that location and you can click on that merchant and you click in that amount...the merchants are partners because of the NGOs. With the NGOs...we created an ecosystem...We are now developing ways that we can do that over a tablet to be 4G and a more sophisticated interface.

Social media is important for sharing information. NGOs use their websites, blogs, and Facebook pages to inform and engage the public in Georgia. Participant 5 described how his organization engages Georgians through their website and how information moves through social media, sometimes with unintended effects.

We have a data portal where you can play with the numbers yourself and make your own conclusions and that's developed exactly for this purpose. We also are trying to post as many charts from there on Facebook as possible so that people click and go there and potentially do more. This works pretty well...Almost half a million charts [have been] generated since February 2013, so it is used a lot by students, by journalists, by NGO activists, and this also has a spillover effect because it doesn't stay with one person. It's not like you just clicked and saw the chart and then it ended with that; it gets written somewhere [or] shared with someone else through Facebook, and that's why social media is very useful, and very contaminating in a way, of different stories and, unfortunately, both right and wrong. We have sometimes situations where someone writes something and totally misinterprets the data and, because of these current developments in social media, it's almost always [too] late to correct the mistake, because already hundreds or thousands of people have seen [the] wrong interpretation...The advantage, and also disadvantage, [is] that it gives a very democratic space for playing with data and telling stories with data as people like themselves.

Other participants use social media to inform communities about their work, like Participant 3. "We have the website and it tells about our programs, but also opportunities for training, capacity building, but also the grant opportunities. We are running youth programs and we use social media to engage them more." Participant 1 gave other examples of social media's usefulness. "[M]ore people have smart phones... [and] access to computers...I think that's a great way to connect with youth, for building coalitions...It can be a mechanism to inform coalitions. For instance, we quickly have to meet because this decision has been handed down...if you're looking at a coalition for a fair and free judiciary, for instance." Participant 9 shared the pros and cons of Facebook, and how his NGO depends on social media.

Facebook is...how we are promoting our work from time to time. We are organizing the conferences and seminars and [they have] very good media coverage...[W]e had a very interesting seminar with the implementation of the



antidiscrimination law and all the main broadcasting stations were there. They put it on their news sites. That's in the interaction not only with the TV, but print media. We are supporting some of them and that helps us to interact with the people here, the citizens of Georgia...[A] problem is we don't use much Twitter. Twitter is not very popular in Georgia. I don't know why...[W]e are using the TV and this is the main means of communication, and then we do use Facebook, which is also helping a lot [with] our website, which is, thanks to our PR manager, regularly very quickly updated in a very timely manner. So that's website, Facebook, and TV are the main means of communicating...[Georgians] really are addicted to Facebook; sometimes they spend all the days and nights, instead of working, they're sitting on Facebook and chatting. [It's not] in each and every village, they do have the Internet, [but] the penetration is not very high. So...I would say it puts some limits on how it's done...Facebook is the best means of connecting with youth...[W]e have the closed Facebook group where we bring all the coalition members and that's a way of promoting. If you have an organizational meeting of some sort, like maybe to explain what to expect, to dispel myths about the Association Agreement...that's how we are promoting our work.

Some NGOs are using social and traditional media to gauge the messages reaching the public. Participant 6's organization conducted media analysis during the last elections and they are now using similar techniques with social media.

We had an interesting project on media monitoring. It was monitoring the elections and how elections were featured by media. An interesting study has come out of it. So we're not only working using social media, but also study how social media is used by different actors in our country... How much time was allowed in pre-election campaigns [by] the media for different political parties, what was the tone of the coverage, how the media covered, was it biased, was it nonbiased? However, with the innovation we are trying to find new models. For example, a social media network analysis tool that we plug in. There is open

source software where you can enter the text and you can have the most frequently used words pop up on the screen and you can analyze them.

As the above examples show, NGOs in Georgia are utilizing social media and mobile phone technology in impressive and innovative ways. Roughly half the participants are actively using social media and constantly developing new applications. Some NGOs are not regularly using social media, but rely on other NGOs' online tools to gather data. In addition to using social media to engage Georgians, social media can be used for data analysis and sharing data. Some NGOs benefit from new technologies developed by other NGOs. Innovation in social media allows for information sharing both to and from individuals, with opportunities for government authorities and NGOs to collaborate with communities.

***Engaging the public through youth.*** Participants of this study revealed several innovative initiatives to engage young people. Community youth serving as grant makers is a very successful project. Youth Bank is the name of the project. The Northern Ireland Community Foundation brought the idea to the Caucasus in partnership with an NGO in Georgia. Participants 3 and 4 also spoke highly of Youth Bank. Participant 1 described their work.

We got a group of kids together and gave them some training on what it means to be a grant maker, identify projects, figure out how to get the community involved, give them a small amount of money to fund the project, and then they have to report back. Youth Banks were given like \$1000 or \$2000 a year, which could go for about five projects. They would fund five projects and create community engagement.

Participant 4 gave further insight to the work of Youth Bank, including how the project engages youth across sociocultural divides.

[L]eaders in their community provide them with training and then some modest financial resources to then turn to other young people in their community and say, 'What are the priority projects for you?' It's youth trying to inspire other young

people, so it's a program with a great multiplicative effect in terms of engaging young people. This Youth Bank is essentially a small grant committee and they have two hundred bucks a pop to distribute for a given project. They need to get out into the community and among their fellow young persons and tell them, 'Look, we have some resources. Please submit some project applications together with at least four of your close buddies...projects to rehabilitate a discotheque or to bring back or install a couple of basketball hoops... put lights over a soccer field so the games can continue later at night. These are all types of projects we have funded. The leadership piece of it comes in having to communicate to other young people, to explain what is on offer, and then to review those project proposals that come in. Also on occasion tell people no, that your project was, of all the ones that we received, was not selected for funding. That's a hard message to deliver and requires some backbone and some leadership to explain why these three projects did get funded and that one didn't. It's a really excellent program for strengthening youth leadership in rural and urban communities in Georgia. It's a really important project, especially for engaging young people and also across conflict divides...Armenians and Azeris in Georgia get along fine. It's across the Azerbaijani-Armenia line where it has proved to be really exciting and interesting and also across the Georgia-Abkhaz divide, which is really important. It's a gulf that is very difficult to bridge even still.

Georgian youth have many options for getting involved in their communities. The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association has lobbied the government, NGOs have mediated between students and the government for school reforms, and young people have participated in the UN's European Youth Parliament. All of these opportunities are the work of NGOs and multilateral organizations in Georgia. Young Georgians have taken part in competitions to develop computer applications to solve community problems and have been instrumental in spreading information. Participant 6's organization convened youth civil society organizations from Romania and Georgia to teach them how to design projects and present them to local

authorities. Participant 3 summed up her organization's views. "By using youth we see the trends in communities. They're kind of like our agents there. They will transform the messages that we have to deliver to communities."

**Research question two (RQ2):** How have organizations changed their strategies to adopt a more community-based approach?

The literature emphasized the need for NGOs to change from being top-down to bottom-up service providers. The majority of participants spoke of how they had changed in order to do this. Some participants described changing staff from international to local, while others described strategies to lay the foundations for policy changes. Another conceptual change involves how beneficiaries are viewed. Participant 6 shared how her organization had begun to seek the advice of the people they serve.

Describing the user-centered approach that we are trying to adopt, this is mainly what we are trying to do, is to shift the focus from service providers to the users as experts. Citizens as experts, I think this is the key major change.

***Collecting data for evidence-based policy making.*** One of the most intriguing examples highlighted the importance of collecting accurate data and making it available to others to use for evidence-based policy making. Several respondents spoke about data collection as a key development in the trajectory of a changing paradigm. This includes research and public polling. Two of the respondents did not cite data collection as a change, however, because their organizations were conceived for that purpose. Participant 1 described how things used to be and how that situation resulted in the creation of a new research organization.

The World Bank had data that they collected and that they gave to the government but they didn't share with anybody. The US government had IRI (International Republican Institute) collecting data [that] they used for their own internal purposes. Neither the data nor the methodology they used in collecting the data

was shared...civil society was absolutely at a standstill because you need to have a starting point. You have to have some at least some quantitative numbers instead of everybody qualitatively telling you what they think is right, subjective. We realized this was a huge problem and decided that it would be a really smart idea to start [a resource center for data collection to be used for policy analysis].

Participant 5 works for the NGO that Participant 1 helped to create. He explains the relevance of data to equality and access to information.

To decrease inequality in terms of access to information...this is very important...inequality increases almost in every aspect of our political or social or economic lives. Inequality increases in terms of what people know about what's going on, because quality data is expensive, and only those who are already powerful have access...political or economic elite. They manipulate those data to convince those already powerless that what they are doing is right, or what they cannot do cannot be done because of objective reasons, not because of their poor performance. So in that situation I think our small intervention is pretty important.

Trust is an issue between Georgians and the government. Participant 5 continued his explanation of aspects of Georgian culture that his NGO is working to correct.

This history of telling people that everything is going well when it is not is kind of repeated over and over in this country and we didn't go very far from the Communists in that dimension. Our government [is] always trying to portray [the] situation [as] much, much better. Every government tries that in some ways, but you know, here, it's is huge gap between what is painted and what is real.

A currency crisis over the Georgian lari illustrates his point that it is better to be armed with data than with feelings.

If not [for] the data, it [would] be much easier for the powerful group to try to convince general public that everything is better than it is in reality, and we have a history of that. Even now, it's kind of coincidence, now we have a small crisis of lari. It depreciated a lot in a week in comparison with dollars and that means that

everything gets more expensive because Georgia depends on imports...so imported things become more expensive. When we people want to buy whatever [we] need to sell, they try to sell for higher price and everyone is worse off. But now the government officials and...former Prime Minister, today said that, 'Everything is going great. Economy is growing, don't worry, everything is perfect,' and there is no reason to be worried about government performance. Of course people are not stupid to believe that, but it is easier to challenge those ideas when you have something to rely on [besides] your feeling.

NGOs are recognizing the importance of data to support their work. Two of the participants work for NGOs that do research and public polling. They make data publicly available, one via social media. Many participants spoke about the importance of data for evidence-based policy making, and the need for smaller NGOs to utilize data to strengthen their advocacy work. Participant 5 described his NGO.

We call ourselves a data tank. We are data collectors most of the time. The difference between us and other NGOs is that we don't do advocacy ourselves. We collect data which are relevant for policymakers, for other NGOs who are engaged in advocacy, and we can help them, we do help them, if they want to know how to use data to improve their campaigns or advocacy or working in general, but we don't do it ourselves...so indirectly, we still believe that we are helping civil society development in this country, because [our NGO] is probably the only organization which produces systematically publicly available data in this country.

While data are publically available, this does not mean the information is interpreted or used correctly. Citizens have access to the data to make their own judgments, yet attempts to influence the public with bad data are common. Participant 5 described examples of data manipulation that occurs in Georgia.

[In] one of our presentations, which was about justice, we had a slide where we were asking about perceptions, hypothetical scenarios. If, let's say, a rich person is

against poor person in a court, what would you expect the judge to do? People would say...that rich people would win and poor people would lose...probably the same everywhere. Then [the journalist] used something like *Georgian Courts Are Discriminating against the Poor*, or a title like that. First, it's a hypothetical question, it's not real...if you see the title then you expect that...something really interesting is there, and then you read it [and it is] not like that at all...there are a few cases in our history where journalists are trying to make their own stories. The one big example also is from a big national TV [station] where they have technologists for that. They [used] all our charts but arranged them as they liked, so that the story that was conveyed on the presentation and what they showed was totally different. That was about pre-election polls. Their interest was to highlight good things for the ruling party, [but] the presentation was about everything, which had both good and bad news for the incumbent party, but they picked only good news. That happens a lot. It's not easy to stop anyone from doing that... it's free, it's available. So you can go and double check and you can verify things and then you make your own conclusion or you challenge that conclusion and that's it. Ultimately that generates some discussion, which is pretty much in accordance with our objectives. We don't think that we can change the world, but what we can do, and what I think we are doing, is we are generating discussions which may lead to something, it may not. We don't know, but it's better than talking about gossip, better that some people talk about some facts. [Better that] they interpret those facts correctly or incorrectly, rather than, 'Oh, some politician thinks so and I don't believe him, therefore I think something else,' and that's our history. It's not made up, that's our political context and everyone does it. Once someone said that even a priest cited our data, of course for his own advantage, saying that the patriarch is the most trusted person in the country, as polls show. But even that we thought was kind of a revolution, because the priest had to cite some numbers to convince followers that the patriarch is really popular, not because he is popular by blessing, but he's popular because polls show so.

***Hiring Georgians.*** Another way that NGOs have changed in Georgia is by hiring more Georgian staff. Georgians are empowered not just in their positions at NGOs but also by having

local knowledge to apply when implementing projects and determining if the approaches are correct. Participant 3 described the change at her NGO. “[Our organization] started in ’94, but by 2000 I think they were ready. Before we had some of the ex-pat staff, actually last year; basically now it's fully Georgian.” Participant 4 worked for the larger organization that spun off the local one that Participant 3 described. He explained the way the smaller organization evolved.

We were established in 1993. We created field offices in all of the countries of the former Soviet Union and then, beginning in 2004, about 10 years ago, we began spinning off those field offices as locally registered foundations. So what we did was we would register a new entity, and in the case of Georgia the name of the entity is [partnership organization], and we would help that entity create a board and all of the systems and policies and procedures to run their organization at a Western standard, at a standard that fit with good donor stewardship, so that they could accept funds from a variety of donors and we could confidently say to those donors that their money would be handled and managed appropriately. We granted these new organizations all of the equipment that was in our representative office in that country and in a couple of cases, Georgia being one of them, we bought them office space...they have an office that was funded by [us]. The partner [organization] is led entirely by Georgians. The senior managers are all Georgians, they have a board that is comprised of both internationals and Georgians, and together the senior managers and the board guide the activities of the organization.

NGOs working in Georgia have adapted their strategies to better engage with Georgians. Georgians are found in more NGOs and in higher positions than before, which facilitates trust between NGOs and communities in Georgia. Georgians can bring their knowledge of language, customs, and networks to promote the work of NGOs. Data collection for evidence-based policy making has helped change laws in Georgia. Public polling, data collection, and research facilitate NGOs’ advocating for policy changes. Responsive government is developing in Georgia, though



trust in the process of governance is still lacking. NGOs recognize that expertise exists at the community level, and are approaching communities to set priorities and provide feedback.

*Building coalitions and partnerships* is an inherent function of many of these organizations. They do this as grant makers, as well as by working with government, business, media, and other NGOs. Some partnerships involve only grant making, while others are for data sharing, and others are to strengthen the voices of NGOs and community organizations. Some coalitions were formed to meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the EU's European Partnership requirements. Participant 3 pointed out that her organization acts as a parent to smaller NGOs and helps them to build their capacity. Her organization's partners included an independent regional radio station and local authorities working to protect livestock from disease. Her organization was also part of a large coalition of diverse groups supporting judiciary transparency and independence. The result was an improvement in civil rights and fairer trials for those facing prosecution. Participant 4 also spoke of coalitions to improve the rule of law and his organization's facilitating role in advocating for change in the legal profession with the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association. Participant 1 described the successful result that came about through this same coalition.

We were definitely building a very specific kind of coalition. We were working with East-West Management Institute and had funding from USAID to create a coalition for fair and free judiciary and that was not the easiest coalition to start. It started with about 28 civil society NGO members. Some of them were associations, like the American Chamber of Commerce, who had a very different agenda from human rights organizations, like the Young Lawyers' Association. So it was a work in progress all the time. Yet in the end I think that coalition made a huge impact on creating a public dialogue about what it means to have a fair and free judiciary, between these NGOs and the judiciary, which had never really sort of been open to that kind of dialogue. That all started in the Saakashvili

era and continued with the new government...so I think it really made a huge difference.

Participant 8 said that her organization works with coalitions during election campaigns to share data, monitor polling and results, and strengthen political parties. Data collection NGOs provide the government and other NGOs the evidence they need to support their work. However, coalitions have pros and cons. As Participant 3 pointed out, “The strength of the coalitions is you speak with one voice and the government listens more. The weaknesses [is] because you have different groups, it takes longer to agree on things or it needs extra overhead to run the coalitions.”

Participant 1 described some of the challenging aspects of coalitions and the different definitions of what constitutes the public good.

You try to work with the stakeholders that are going to be critical to making change...it's different in every situation. You don't always have to have everyone...you also want to create some sort of ability to go and include people who want to be included, but it's impossible to have everybody be included all the time...[C]ivil society organizations don't speak with one voice...it is multilingual...constantly speaking with multiple voices, because different formations and different groups of coalitions of people are constantly saying different things. Some are a little more conservative, some are a little more progressive, and all think that they're doing the public good. It's different definitions of what the public good is, too. For instance, the church in Georgia thinks that they are doing public good. In many cases, they are doing very good things, but on anti-homophobia day, when the priests come out and start beating the human rights activists, I think that's a little silly.

***Mobilizing communities.*** Georgians come together over pressing issues, which include elections and problems that threaten communities. Civic action in Georgia is often spontaneous.

NGOs can facilitate the non-spontaneous mobilization of citizens to make change in their communities. Participant 3 elaborates.

The level of engagement [is] as in many Eastern European countries and the post-Soviet countries. You see everyday engagement is not very active, engaging on a day-to-day basis, but what you can see, they can mobilize quickly and react to the injustice...like the street protestor...when there is a critical situation. This is when most civil society in Georgia comes together, when there's a crisis, either social, political, or any other type of crisis...like right before the elections or during the election period ...civil society mobilized with the action, often street action, but combined with other actions...this is when you see that they are most active, that basically they can mobilize entire society. You also can see actions on different levels. We invest in the group...that builds the capacity of activism in the small community, to monitor the service delivery, or to influence the local governments to deliver certain services. For example, [the] remote area Svaneti...ADB, Asian Development Bank, is financing the Georgian government to put a road up there...the communities were told their land will be cut, they have to do renovation inside of their yard while the road is put there and they don't get any compensation...We're supporting the group there and teach how to do civil monitoring. They look at the project, they see that they are not even on the map of this project, so they get in touch, with our help, with the headquarters of ADB and they talk to officials here in Tbilisi and [at ADB] so they improve. ADB is notified so they get the proper maps...these households were not registered there. As a result...the project is changing. They are compensated for the length that their [land is] cut and of course for everything else that they have to do...we help them to mobilize to improve things on the local level.

Marginalized populations may have trouble voicing their concerns. This category includes migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and people in underserved regions. Participant 6 mentioned the work of Participant 7, who arranged focus groups in remote areas of

Svaneti, and with former prisoners, drug addicts, and the elderly. Participant 5's NGO has also held focus groups as a type of mobilization.

They had focus groups on migration...including with migrants and return migrants, with households that had migrants. We also had [focus groups] about gender issues, men and women, a lot of focus groups about political issues, how people assess [the] political situation, political parties, political leaders...also with IDPs about their socioeconomic conditions and about their preferences and suggestions, what should be done to improve the situation.

Sometimes it is hard for NGOs to reach a population they want to serve because of border conflicts. Participant 6 explains.

With the conflict-affected areas, like Abkhazia, like IDPs...this is the major thing because you do not have much flexibility. It's very difficult to operate there and reconciliation is not easy...they're not in one place...sometimes it's because there are administrative borderlines, sometimes it's because you have restrictions on the other side of the borderline. It's not just about people who don't want to communicate with each other; you can't even communicate with any of the parties...it's difficult. In the year 2000, there were more NGOs working on the Abkhazia territory than now. They are shrinking.

**Research question three (RQ3):** How have individual NGO workers experienced the shared phenomenon of having to adapt their approach to their jobs as a result of a paradigm shift?

Participants had little to say about how they had personally changed as a result of the shift towards community engagement. Some participants said that they had not changed, or that they had not been old enough to work during the period before the paradigm shift, and some skipped the question. Participants mostly focused on changes in the way their organizations think about and interact with the public, and the necessity to serve the needs of the public, the donors, and the government. They invest time and energy to find ways to engage Georgians, but realize

that a lack of engagement is embedded in the culture and may take a generation to change. Participant 9 cited the 2008 war with Russia as the biggest challenge he has faced, and lamented that the war reversed a great deal of the progress Georgia had made in all aspects of civil society. Participant 8 spoke of the criticism her organization faced in the polarizing political environment of presidential and parliamentary elections. Though it was challenging, it did not warrant a change of her organization's strategy. She described the situation below.

Sometimes people don't like the information in the public opinion polling research that we do. It's politically inconvenient to acknowledge that it's accurate. It's politically convenient to shoot the messenger publicly even if you know that it's true and working with that, I mean it's not pleasant to be criticized, but we understand the politics. When you're in politics people have to take positions that they may or may not believe or feel strongly about, but it's what they need to do and we're comfortable with that. But not everybody recognizes the political nature of that ...we stand by the polling and we're comfortable. We can handle criticism and we understand where it's coming from. Often we would get criticized publicly in the press and then privately the very same people will be saying, 'Please can you give me a briefing on that polling?'

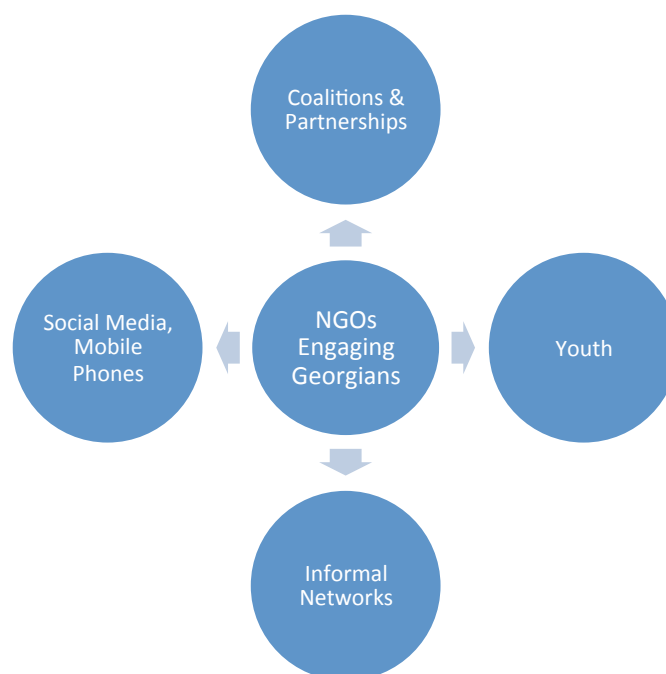
A view of this situation from the Georgian side was expressed by Participant 7, who shared a lack of trust in the work of some NGOs that is still widespread in Georgia. She explained how this can happen below.

[B]efore the parliamentary elections they were doing these surveys every three months showing what were perceptions and inclinations of people toward who. They were showing that the National Movement was 60% or 65% and this Georgian Dream had 5 or 6%...and it was like this all the time and they were not calculating the people who did not answer. [The percentage of people who] did not answer was about 50%. They were promoting this National Movement very strongly and you knew this. There was much debate about this on television and the people got this feeling of...results [not] being true. It reflects on you because

they don't believe, they think that you will write whatever you like, it doesn't matter what people say.

Participant 5 expressed hopes that his data collecting NGO could become more of a think tank. He said that his organization's strength was data collection and research, but he wants to partner with someone who can translate the data into conclusions that can be used in policy analysis and advocacy.

Participants 3, 6, 7, and 9 described what was lacking in the Georgian government. Participant 7 felt the government violated her privacy when she partnered with them. Participant 9 said the government was closing its doors on NGOs. Participant 3 did not feel the government was directly fighting with her organization, just not listening. Participant 6 said that there had been no ombudsman to hear citizens' complaints in Georgia when she started at her organization. Her organization was instrumental in creating the Office of the Ombudsman. Participant 9's organization is currently working on a memorandum of understanding with the ombudsman and the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association to improve human rights and anti-discrimination in Georgia.



*Figure 9.* Modified theoretical construct.

## Conclusions

NGOs are engaging the public in innovative ways. The theoretical construct proposed social media, young Georgians, coalitions and partnerships, informal networks, and social entrepreneurs as the primary avenues. A modified theoretical construct would remove the category of social entrepreneurs. No one is using social entrepreneurs, though Participant 2 is clearly a social entrepreneur himself. Informal networks are used to share information and garner interest in focus groups. NGOs are using social media and coalitions and partnerships. Facebook is very popular, yet Twitter has not yet taken hold. Engaging the public through youth is a priority among NGOs. Partnerships and coalitions have been utilized by all of the participants' organizations. Traditionally the partnerships have involved larger NGOs making grants to smaller ones. As a result of recent efforts to build capacity and promote sustainable local NGOs, partnerships are considered essential for the survival of smaller, locally-based NGOs, especially as donor funding decreases and competition for funds becomes more intense. Donors need to see

results and expect accountability from NGOs. NGOs partnering together can speak with a stronger voice and can share knowledge about nonprofit management practices. NGOs are seeking input from communities in every area in which they operate.

Table 2. *Methods of engaging the public actively used by participants.*

Method of Engaging Public	Participant								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Social Media	x	x	x		x	x			x
Informal Networks					x	x	x		x
Youth			x	x		x	x		x
Coalitions & Partnerships	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Social Entrepreneurs		x							

### Recommendations and Implications

This research is intended to be shared among three main groups: NGOs interested in innovation and collaboration; officials of government institutions who want an understanding of community priorities and current innovations that NGOs are implementing; and scholars of development practice, international affairs, post-Soviet studies, and organizational management. As a result of the study, it can be stated these NGO personnel are aware of the need to become more community-oriented, not only to better serve the Georgian public, but also to ensure the success of their initiatives. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that NGOs are concerned with the sustainability of local civil society organizations and are providing funding, training, and other support, such as collaboration and access to accurate data to facilitate evidence-based policy analysis. NGO personnel would like to see Georgians leading their communities to effect positive change. This will result in increased trust in NGOs and a better understanding of the



work that NGOs do in Georgia. Beyond that, the culture of not getting involved in community efforts may change once people see that NGOs are providing the skills and competencies needed for Georgians to affect policy on their own.

The recommendations resulting from this study focus on three challenges: changing the culture, becoming community-driven, and funding. NGOs are already collaborating with each other and the government, but more collaboration with business is necessary. Collaboration with Georgian CSOs and other locally-based institutions, whether private or public, will increase the reach of NGOs by bringing them closer to where Georgians already are; NGOs will not seem faraway and elite. Social and traditional media are playing a large role in promoting NGOs. NGOs should develop their social media engagement. NGOs can provide training in this. Student volunteers can build their skills by maintaining websites. In the future, as Georgian mass media becomes more independent, more opportunities will arise for unbiased coverage of NGOs' projects. As more Georgians become involved in community efforts, media coverage of these efforts will increase the acceptance of volunteering in Georgia. The problem with volunteering is that it is not a tradition, and there is no reciprocal reward. The effort may be individual or group, but the benefits are shared and may not be realized immediately. Georgian volunteers are essential for sustainability. The sustainability of locally-based NGOs can be attained by building the capacity of locals to seek and apply for grants, maintain accountability, and operate transparently. As the Georgian government has also been taking steps to become more responsive and transparent, officials can provide leadership in this area. Additionally, the Georgian government can continue to open up opportunities to give grants to local organizations that are serving the public's needs. The government should broadcast these funding opportunities and tell Georgians how they may apply for them, as well as how businesses can take advantage

of recent changes in the tax code to allow for corporate philanthropy. Contributions from the business community have the potential to supplement decreased funding from international aid. Lastly, NGOs need to incentivize volunteering. This can be done by offering training in skills that are transferable outside of the NGO community, and are essential to improving the economy, education, and political awareness. As demand for training increases, NGOs should be prepared to meet demand with facilities and staff to carry these projects through.

The importance of data is a theme that stood out from the interviews. Participants described how data can be used to support assumptions, which translates into concrete positions on policy recommendations. NGOs are training individuals to analyze the media and read publically-available data to check facts. As Georgian communities become aware of the power of data for effecting change, they will be able to influence authorities to act on their priorities.

Future research to extend this study would be useful in three areas: the role of media with NGOs, government partnerships with NGOs, and opportunities for women and minorities to take part in civic engagement in Georgia. Participants spoke of recent changes in media freedom and in the judiciary, with improvements in the areas of human and civil rights. Many of these changes are taking place as a result of Georgia's Association Agreement with the European Union. Environmental protection and upgrades to international trade practices are other components of the Association Agreement that could be explored in relation to the work of NGOs.

### **Summary**

This qualitative phenomenological study has been conducted to determine how NGOs are engaging the public in Georgia. In the first decade after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Western NGOs came to Georgia to help with democracy transition. Communities had their own

priorities and held a view that NGOs were in Georgia to promote an agenda that did not consider the local context. Thomas Carothers (2002) suggested that NGOs stop focusing on elections. NGOs could help civil society organizations in Georgia become sustainable, but the focus of NGOs had to become more community-based. NGOs had to find ways to engage the public and work on changing NGOs' reputation as grant funders for the elite.

The research intended to explore what was tentatively called the *community-based approach* of NGOs engaging the public in Georgia. The aim was to examine changes in the strategies of NGOs, what initiatives the new approach has led to, and what challenges the participants have experienced. While all the participants experienced similar challenges, they all shared a commitment to building civil society. The attitude of most participants about the outlook for citizen engagement in Georgia was positive, though there was some consternation about why Georgians could mobilize for a crisis, but not on an everyday basis. Participants described how they have personally engaged with Georgian communities on behalf of their organizations, and how they have facilitated projects that were led by beneficiaries. The interviews yielded many innovations that can be shared to increase NGOs' effectiveness in Georgia. Participants demonstrated that their NGOs had adapted to the community-based approach and that they had adopted a view of the citizens as experts.

NGO personnel have become community-focused. They engage the public via social media, youth, coalitions and partnerships, and informal networks. NGOs share challenges and priorities. They are aware of the need to listen to what communities want, and are building the capacity of local civil society organizations to dialogue with authorities and effect positive change. The disinclination of Georgians to participate in civic activities means that NGOs must find a way to incentivize volunteering. NGOs are training individuals to write proposals, follow

accountability and transparency standards, and use data to advocate for evidence-based policy changes.

An informed and active public fulfills the earlier goals of NGOs of building democracy, with the focus being on meaningful applications beyond elections. When citizens have the skills they need to hold their government and media accountable, to advocate for community initiatives, and to fund their activities, the knowledge transfers throughout the community, which has implications for the entire country. Georgians have expressed a willingness to become involved in policy decisions that affect them. NGOs can continue to extend their reach by partnering more with government institutions and continuing to build coalitions. NGOs teach smaller organizations how they can engage through social media and informal networks. Youth play a role in community engagement and teaching technical skills to older people. NGOs must plan to accommodate demand for training as Georgians learn how NGOs can empower them.

As Georgia implements changes as part of the European Union Association Agreement, NGOs will continue their work explaining the standards to Georgians. NGOs have programs to improve civil rights, media freedom, education, health, and the environment. The Georgian government has demonstrated that it is responsive to NGOs that form coalitions that speak with one voice on issues such as judicial reform. The government has made changes to the tax law that encourage corporate philanthropy. NGOs and government must work together to promote these changes through traditional and social media, informal networks, and community events. The outlook for citizen engagement is hopeful. NGO personnel are committed to the view that citizens know best what they need, and have enlisted their help to develop innovations. The issue is still trust. NGOs are engaging the public in Georgia to change the culture. They understand that it is important to show the value of civic action on an everyday basis. When Georgians no

longer see civil society as separate from themselves, then NGOs will know that they have succeeded.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Dear (participant's name),

My name is Patricia Huffman and I am a Master of Science in Administration candidate at Trinity Washington University. As a requirement for the master's degree, I am conducting a research study entitled "How Are Nongovernmental Organizations and their Partners Engaging Georgians at the Community Level?" The aim of this research is to understand the experiences of those who work with civil society organizations that are adapting their strategies in response to Georgians' priorities.

With your consent, I would like to interview you by phone or in person for approximately thirty minutes in mid-November. You will be asked questions about how your organization is reaching out to communities in Georgia, including through social entrepreneurs, informal networks, partnerships, media, and youth. The purpose of this study is to add to the emerging body of knowledge of civil society building through community-based initiatives in Eurasia. You have been invited for the study because your organization has been involved in civil society building in countries of the former Soviet Union.

As the primary researcher, I will be conducting the interview and will take care to explain your rights as a participant and maintain confidentiality. Please see the attached consent form, which you will be asked to sign as a condition of your agreement to participate in the study. Please read it carefully, for your signature implies that you fully understand your rights. Should you have any questions, feel free to ask.

Please respond by phone to (202) 590-5299 or email to provide a date and time when you can be interviewed. I am available Monday to Friday during normal business hours. Thank you very much for your consideration. I look forward to working with you soon.

Sincerely,

Patricia Huffman  
MSA Candidate, Trinity Washington University  
huffmanp@students.trinitydc.edu

**Appendix B: Informed Consent Form****How Are Nongovernmental Organizations and their Partners Engaging Georgians at the Community Level?**

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study examining how nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are engaging Georgians at the community level, which will add to the knowledge related to how civil society organizations are currently adapting their programs in Georgia. My name is Patricia Huffman and the data collected in this interview will help fulfill the requirements for a Master of Science in Administration in Non-Profit Management at Trinity Washington University. I am under the supervision of my faculty advisor Dr. Kelley Wood.

**Participation Requires of You:** Your participation will entail a face-to-face or telephone interview that will take approximately 30 minutes. As the primary researcher, I will be conducting the interview by asking you questions that focus on your experience working for organizations whose program strategies have changed in response to Georgians' priorities. There is no planned use of deception involved in this study.

**Your Privacy:** Your participation in this study and your responses will be kept confidential. Any reference to you will be by pseudonym, including any direct quotes from your responses. This document and any notes or recordings that might personally identify you as a participant in this study will be kept in a locked place that only the researcher will have access to. Only the researcher and the research supervisor might know who has participated in this study. Three years after the completion of this research study all personally identifying information will be destroyed.

**Risks to you:** There are five acknowledged risks generally associated with participation in research studies such as this one: Physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal. The researcher foresees minimal risk for those who choose to participate in this study. There are no foreseen physical risks associated with this study; other risks might include the following:

You might experience anxiety, discomfort, or negative emotions as a result of responding to the questions asked of them in this research study. If you experience a negative reaction, you may choose to skip the question, to withdraw from the study, or you may contact my faculty advisor or the SPS Institutional Review Board, especially if your discomfort continues after the study. See the contact information on the page below.

You might experience social, economic, or legal implications if you share your responses or your participation in this study with others. If you choose to participate in this study, you are encouraged to keep your participation in this study and your responses confidential. The researcher will maintain your confidentiality throughout the study, and will destroy the records of your participation three years after the study is complete.

**Benefits to You:** There are not foreseen direct benefits to you regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that you are assisting in furthering the knowledge related to this research topic, and assisting the researcher in completing the MSA degree requirements. There is no compensation associated with participation in this study.

How Are Nongovernmental Organizations and their Partners Engaging Georgians at the  
Community Level?

This document acknowledges you understand of your rights as a participant in this study, which the researcher has explained to you prior to signing this document.

I acknowledge that the researcher has explained my rights, the requirements of this study, and the potential risks involved in participating in this study. I understand there is no compensation for, or direct benefit of participating in this study. By signing below and providing my contact information I am indicating that I consent to participate in this study, that I am at least 18 years of age, and I am eligible to participate in this study.

I may withdraw from this study at any time by notifying the researcher by email. If I have any concerns regarding participation in this research study I may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Kelley Wood, or the BGS IRB committee. The BGS Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversees the ethical practice of research involving human participants conducted by students of the trinity Washington University School of Business and Graduate Studies. You may ask for a copy of this document for your own records.

Signed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number, Email Address, or Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation,

Patricia Huffman  
MSA in Non-Profit Management  
Trinity Washington University  
Email Address: [huffmanp@students.trinitydc.edu](mailto:huffmanp@students.trinitydc.edu)

Research Supervisor: Dr. Kelley Wood  
MSA Program  
Trinity Washington University  
(202) 884-9620, or  
[woodke@trinitydc.edu](mailto:woodke@trinitydc.edu)

SPS Institutional Review Board Committee  
(202) 884-9620, or  
[SPS@TrinityDC.edu](mailto:SPS@TrinityDC.edu) with SPS IRB in the subject line.

**Appendix C: Questionnaire**

1. How did you first become involved with Georgia and/or civil society building?
2. What does your organization do in Georgia?
3. What is your role in this organization?
4. What is civil society?
5. Can you give me an example of civil society in Georgia?
6. How is civil society doing in Georgia today?
7. How does your organization interact with Georgians?
8. How have you changed the way you engage with Georgians since your organization first became active in Georgia?
9. How are you using social media to engage Georgians?
10. How are you engaging youth in Georgia?
11. Are you building coalitions in Georgia?
12. How do you identify who your organization works with in Georgia?
13. Are you using informal networks to engage Georgians?
14. What are the strengths and weaknesses of connecting with Georgians via social media?  
Through youth? By building coalitions? Through social entrepreneurs? By using informal networks?
15. What is the major challenge your organization faces in Georgia?
16. What challenges have you had to overcome in Georgia?
17. What metaphor would you use to associate with your experience in Georgia, either personally or professionally?
18. What advice would you give to foreign NGO staff considering work in Georgia?
19. What advice would you give to Georgians if you could be completely candid?
20. Who else would you recommend I speak to about this subject?