

Inquiring Activism

The Centre for Civil Society Five Years On

A Report of a External Evaluation

by

David Sogge

Amsterdam

9 September 2006

0. Background to the Evaluation

0.1 Antecedents

The Centre for Civil Society was established at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in 2001. Three years later, it underwent an external assessment, a mid-term review, as stipulated under terms of the grant by Atlantic Philanthropies. Atlantic had made continuation of its funding dependent on its results; as the outcome was broadly positive, the full amount of the Atlantic founding grant, €1,6 million, was paid out.

With the grant at an end, Atlantic's Head of Office for South Africa, Gerald Kraak and Dr. Michael Savage, a Senior Consultant to Atlantic, urged the Centre to commission an end-of-grant evaluation. With their concurrence, the Centre's Director Dr. Patrick Bond approached the evaluator, David Sogge, whose prior knowledge of the Centre had been chiefly by way of his 2003 review of Atlantic grantmaking in South Africa.

0.2 Purposes

As outlined by the Centre's Director, the evaluation's chief purposes were to assess activities and outcomes and to reflect on the Centre's positioning and its prospects for future funding. Internal management was not among focal points; subsequently, however, there was encouragement to consider that as well.

0.3 Methods

The evaluator drew together information chiefly during a five-day stay in Durban, 15 to 19 May 2006. Basic methods consisted of:

- reading documents by and about the Centre, mainly upon arrival in Durban; these are noted in Appendix C;
- interviews with Centre staff and associates, with officials and other key informants in the University; contact by telephone and e-mail with other informants sought out because of their prior contacts with the Centre or their knowledge of civil society studies; these are noted in Appendix A;
- preparation of a draft report, submitted on 26 June; a written staff response was received on 22 July; that response and subsequent communication with the CCS Director have been taken into account in drawing up this final version.

0.4 Limitations of this Study

The study was limited in time and thus in range and depth. There were no opportunities to visit township venues of Centre work or to interview informants there. Similarly, time has not allowed exploration of the Centre's international connections or its standing among comparable institutions.

The evaluator would like to express his appreciation to all Centre staff for their cooperation, with special thanks to Helen Poonen for her efficient and helpful support.

1. The Setting

In the Centre's setting, donors and academicians loom large. What is the intensity of their influence? What trends in their interests are detectible? This chapter addresses these questions with brief descriptions.

1.1 Civil Society as a focus of donor interest

In defining civil society - who's in it, what its tasks are and how it is configured - the influence of aid agencies, charities and private foundations is beyond dispute. That influence has been particularly intense in Africa. In many African countries the aid system is second only to government as a source of waged employment. Donors have helped bring into being tens of thousands of not-for-profit organisations as well as a diverse supply of brokerage, local giving, state contracting and other services that lubricate the system. These multitudes of NGOs are often assumed to be the main actors in African civil societies.

Today, tides of donor interest in NGOs and civil society have receded somewhat from high-water marks reached in the 1990s. Helping propel that shift are political and practical imperatives to "bring the state back in" and to shore up "failing states" said to threaten the West with asylum-seekers and terrorists. Moreover, years of mixed experiences have led donors to adopt more sober appraisals of NGOs as vehicles for service delivery and for citizen voice.

Yet some donors don't like those parts of civil society not under their control. Some show animosity toward the World Social Forum/"Other World is Possible" camp, due in part to that camp's having shown real muscle. As ex-World Bank economist Joseph Stiglitz put it:

Until the protesters came along there was little hope for change and no outlets for complaint.... it is the trade unionists, students, environmentalists, ordinary citizens, marching in the streets in Prague, Seattle, Washington and Genoa who have put the need for reform on the agenda of the developed world. (*Globalisation and its Discontents* 2002)

In South Africa, donor bets placed in the 1980s on civil society -- the ANC, business-linked and activist groups -- paid off handsomely in a relatively easy transition to a new constitutional order in the 1990s. Since then, however, most of the aid/philanthropy mainstream has followed paths of stabilisation, not transformation¹. Some donors even express annoyance with activists stepping on the toes of government authorities, who they feel should be given a chance to deliver - a sentiment roundly endorsed by many in government. From the activist camp come critiques of de-politicising donor mantras about participation and capacity-building: "Too much civil society, not enough politics".

¹ See for example the results of the research project, coordinated by the Institute for Development Studies of Sussex University and involving the Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg, on the impact of foreign political aid on civil society in Africa.

Yet while most donors adhere to current aid fashions or their vocational comfort zones, some are trying new approaches. Since the late 1990s these include support for:

- membership-based organisations and their networks at local, national, and supra-national levels;
- rights-based action, sometimes extending to social and economic rights, and for wider and safer political, juridical and media spaces in which citizens can pursue rights;
- local funds, whereby communities/districts (not the donors) make choices and commission projects through public processes;
- knowledge-based (policy) activism at local, national and global levels;
- 'partnerships' that enable 'micro-macro' linkages for policy activism, and allow divides separating academics and practitioners to be transcended.

Where these kinds of interventions are at work, new spaces are opening and new dynamics set in motion. These have important implications for civil society's emancipatory camp, and for donors themselves. Donors, policy- and opinion-makers and citizens at large are impressed with the staying power and accomplishments of some civil society actors such as Brazil's landless people's movement. But many are also puzzled at why other large movements, such as the South African Homeless People's Federation, collapse.

Donor enchantment with civil society as a triumphal narrative, as in former East Bloc countries and South Africa, has today largely given way to instrumental/operational concerns about capacity and delivery. But where civil society groupings actually gain capacity, surge up and take state power -- think of Hamas in the Occupied Territories or the indigenous peoples movement in Bolivia -- some donors do what they can to incapacitate them. Such hypocrisies put the usefulness of the very term 'civil society' in question. But as no rival container concept is ready to take its place, the term looks set to linger on in donor discourse for a some time to come.

1.2 Civil Society as a focus of interest in the Academy

In the 1990s excitement about civil society also grew in the academy. There was heady growth in scholarly conferences, lectures and research-and-teaching units devoted to it. That has now reached a plateau -- at least in the Anglo-Saxon world where interest first appeared. Pace-setting conferences in Manchester and Birmingham drew many hundreds of academics and practitioner in 1992, 1994 and 1999; a well-advertised sequel conference in Manchester in 2005 drew less than a hundred. Nevertheless, major centres and especially networks of research on civil society (also under designations such as non-profit, voluntary and third sector) based in the US, Canada and UK continue. Meanwhile new academic initiatives, such as in Japan, are emerging.

Driving and deepening this interest are dozens of overlapping and mutually reinforcing trends inside but especially outside the academy². Donors have

² For one observer's synopsis of what has been driving research into civil society in recent years, see Anthony Judge, 2004, *Recent Breakthroughs in Civil Society Research. Reactive vs Proactive*

influenced the course of much academic and think-tank research, but in so doing have reinforced suspicions that their interest extends only as far as getting NGOs aligned with aid agendas. Some governments are also promoting research, seeking answers to why their policies are failing to take root, or wishing to off-load public service tasks onto the private (for- or non-profit) sector. The focus of these studies is commonly on policy problem-solving, such as about how to harness associational life to health care delivery. Yet here and there, emancipatory social movements -- the long marches of the feminist and environmental movements for example -- are getting some attention.

Between these newer realms of research and other, often older realms there seem to be few bridges. Interchange with those studying the darker regions of civil society, such as fascism, seems to be weak³. Cross-fertilisation between studies of 'vernacular' or 'subaltern' forms of associational life and resistance with mainstream studies of civil society seems to be scant except perhaps in India and France⁴.

On the African continent, an epicentre of NGO development, research and teaching about civil society is generally low and unevenly spread. Intellectuals associated with the ECA's African Centre for Civil Society and especially the scholarly network CODESRIA have shown regular interest in civil society developments, but are constrained by brain drain and other setbacks to scholarship and debate on the continent. By far the densest concentrations of academic work on civil society and related nonprofit and philanthropy studies remain in the USA and the UK.

In South Africa, research about civil society is advancing, both within the academy (at Wits and Cape Town) and outside it (at the Centre for Policy Studies, Idasa, Synergos to name but three). Much of this work is held in high regard. Yet some question its advance, seeing its work as merely extractive, depoliticised and even bloodless.

Meanwhile activist scholarship, and scholar-activism -- salient features of university life in the closing years of apartheid -- are today largely subdued and episodic. Where once university faculties and students had signalled injustices and malfeasance, often "speaking truth to power", there is today quiescence. As one informant to this study remarked, "People on campus are lying low. There's a kind of internal exile, and silence."

1.3 University of KwaZulu-Natal

The historical setting of UKZN and its constituent parts help locate the Centre for Civil Society in several key respects:

Exploration of Opportunities and Alternatives?

<http://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs00s/civilres.php>

³ The neglect may be mutual. One recent historical study (Robert O. Paxton, 2004, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, London: Allen Lane) goes very deeply indeed into civil societies in Italy, Germany and elsewhere in Europe, yet contains no references to today's 'civil society' writings and debates.

⁴ The influence of writings on 'quiet resistance' such as by James Scott or Asef Bayat are not always easy to detect in much contemporary 'civil society' literature.

One, traditions of social engagement. The university has an honourable history of involvement with citizens of greater Durban/Pietermaritzburg, a metropolis renowned for social, political and trade union activism. As an informant to this study pointed out, the university was in the early 1990s home to over 80 entities engaged in public life; these ranged from legal aid clinics to day care services to low-income settlement and housing support. Today there are thought to be about 30 such initiatives at the interface of the university and its surrounding community. These can often spark the creation of knowledge, a spirit of engagement and mutual trust. Yet there is little evidence that initiatives based in the academy have the staying-power and effectiveness over organisations with *full-time vocations* in promoting emancipatory processes directly in civil society.

Two, student interest. The mix of social consciousness, curiosity and careerism may not be precisely known, but students are sufficiently motivated to create a demand for formal education (and bridges to practical engagement) in the socio-political terrains championed by the Centre. The School of Development Studies, and one or two other units in the University are at the forefront in meeting that demand at graduate and undergraduate levels.

Three, austerity measures. South African universities have been forced to adjust to limited budgets in a context of rising student numbers and rising expectations generally. The consolidation of five tertiary-level institutions into one UZKN in the past several years has generated exceptional stresses -- including staff and student resistance. The shadows cast by austerity have left the Centre standing in a spotlight, as its relative powers to spend, and to attract yet more money, have afforded it advantages not widely matched elsewhere in the university.

2. Objectives and Positioning

What objectives and positioning have guided the CCS? Have they changed? How have they cohered? To what extent does the system of objectives fit the context and institutional imperatives under which the Centre must function? These are the chief questions addressed in this chapter.

2.1 Starting-Points and Evolution of Objectives

During its first five years, the Centre's system of objectives has evolved along several dimensions.

As commissioned by Atlantic Philanthropies, a survey of expert views in 1999/2000 identified needs for a centre to "capture, build and disseminate knowledge on the non-profit sector through a programme of clearly defined activities of which the promotion, facilitation and co-ordination of research forms the core of its activities" (Social Trends Development Services, 2000, p. 14). This strategic aim arose from an analysis highlighting several key problems:

- Low 'visibility' of academic and policy studies of the non-profit sector;
- Low and uneven quality in research on the sector;
- Inadequate sharing of knowledge among academic and policy researchers.

In the preparatory phases, those framing the approach paid particular attention to public policies affecting civil society. Whereas their analysis did not touch on challenges arising within civil society actors themselves - resource inadequacies, strategic weaknesses, poor networking &c. They did not envision a role of the future entity as a 'capacity builder' in civil society.

Having set the terms of its call for tenders, and having selected a proposal from the University of Natal, Atlantic Philanthropies made its grant on the understanding that the Centre would become a scholarly think-tank whose work would influence public policy in South Africa. By 2006 it was to have contributed to the following outcomes:

- an enhanced public profile for the non-profit sector;
- the emergence of "non-profit studies" as a legitimate, acknowledged field of theoretical and empirical study, characterised by a multi-disciplinary approach and intellectual rigour;
- the publication of a body of new theoretically sound and intellectually rigorous research on the sector;
- improved policy formulation and an improved legislative and fiscal environment for the sector, as a consequence of better- targeted and better-quality policy research⁵.

⁵ These outcomes appear in the Grant Recommendation (Atlantic Philanthropies 2000, p. 6) on which Atlantic based its grant decision. They reappear in Atlantic's July 2001 letter of approval addressed to, and counter-signed by the University's Pro Vice Chancellor (Public Affairs).

Subsequently, under its first Director, the Centre's mandate widened. In addition to research, it aimed to engage actively with civil society and to strengthen training for it at several levels. According to its Constitution, ratified by the University in 2002, the Centre's core purpose has two main thrusts:

- 1) 'To promote the study of civil society as a legitimate and flourishing area of scholarly activity in South Africa'; and
- 2) 'To develop and promote partnerships aimed at knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in civil society'.

The Constitution further commits the Centre to educational roles in two different realms:

- a) post-graduate training of students pursuing masters and PhD degrees offered by the university, in collaboration with the School of Development Studies; and
- b) in-service training of 'people working in, with and on civil society'.

These tasks underwent further evolution as concrete programmes and activities emerged. Main lines of these developments are discussed below.

The following two sub-sections discuss the Centre's system of objectives according to priority social categories: *First*, academic researchers and students associated with degree-granting or other knowledge-based institutions; *Second*, citizens and activists in associational life. These two categories are not of course found in separate, watertight compartments, but they do correspond to the two main thrusts of the Centre's purposes.

2.2 Approaches in Research and Degree-based Education

The CCS set objectives for itself regarding different kinds of participants in the realms of research and higher education, depending roughly on their proximity. They may be described at four levels, as follows:

University of KwaZulu-Natal

At this level the CCS has concentrated on building its own research capacities (Research Fellows, Research Assistants, Research Interns, Post-Doctoral Fellows and the Directors themselves) and to a lesser extent the capacities of university students at PhD and Masters levels. Since 2003, Centre staff have run at least two courses at graduate levels at the School of Development Studies. Accompanying this has been regular series of shorter seminars, attended mainly by UKZN students and staff. More salient have been occasional colloquia of one to three days, often with national or foreign intellectuals as key participants, which are intended to draw audiences from across the university spectrum and beyond.

South Africa

At national levels, the CCS has geared its research and degree-based educational work in the following ways:

- Contributions to scholarly and policy debates by way of one-off research reports and books by Centre scholars and by outsiders, largely but not exclusively about civil society and politics in South Africa.

- Research, or the coordination/supervision of research by others, on prioritised sub-fields. This approach is exemplified in two large, multi-year research projects: *The State of Social Giving in South Africa* (2003-2006) carried out in partnership with the Southern African Grantmakers Association and a semi-governmental body the National Development Agency; *Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements* (2003-2005), carried out jointly with in collaboration with the School of Development Studies.
- Support to research under auspices of other universities, thinktanks and NGOs in South Africa, as well as that under UKZN auspices. The chief vehicle has been the Centre's *Programme of Research Grants* (2002-2005) managed by Centre staff as advised by a special committee.
- Other contributions to academic interchange, such as guest editing of journals and guest lecturing.

While foreign places were not excluded, the priority for South African cases and issues is apparent in all these endeavours. More recent large-scale research projects (on energy/environment, and on economic justice) retain a South African base, but show strong global dimensions as well.

Africa

At continental levels, the Centre has pursued cross-fertilisation and collaboration chiefly through:

- Management of a networking/academic support project, *Civil Society and African Integration* (2003-2004), managed jointly with the School of Development Studies, enabling African intellectuals in African universities and research networks to reflect, write and interact;
- Attendance by CCS researchers -- often with keynote roles by CCS leadership -- at meetings of academic and NGO researchers elsewhere on the continent;
- Hosting special colloquia on behalf of, or with strong representation by African university and NGO researchers.

The latter two types of activity have increased each year since 2003. In some cases these reflect the crystallisation of institutional partnerships.

Beyond Africa

At global levels, the Centre has both responded to demand and also taken proactive steps, chiefly along the following lines:

- Attendance by CCS researchers at academic and civil society conferences outside Africa;
- Guest lecturing at universities and public events outside Africa;
- Hosting graduate students, many of whom, chiefly from North America and Western Europe, come self-financed;
- Participation in (and in 2003 hosting) the International Human Rights Exchange (2002-2005), an US-accredited, intensive "summer school" involving undergraduates from North America, South Africa and elsewhere.

2.3 Approaches regarding Civil Society

The Centre has pursued objectives toward civil society actors more or less in tandem with its academic research and degree-based educational objectives. These may be grouped at three levels:

Metropolitan Durban

The Centre has directed efforts toward citizens in the greater Durban area. These approaches may be clustered and described as follows:

- Training and education and other support for community activists. Workshops for community activists began in 2002. The CCS Resource Centre on the Howard campus lends out books, periodicals and videos and offers free computer access to selected students and community activists.
- Community animation and solidarity. Led initially by their personal concerns, several Centre staff and associates have engaged in community mobilisation efforts (notably by shackdwellers, African refugees and residents affected by toxic waste) directed toward changing policies and practices of municipal authorities.
- Public lectures, debates, film screenings exhibitions and media outreach.

South Africa-wide

Centre staff have sought to stimulate activism and public debate across South Africa using both ad hoc and concerted, longer-term approaches, among which have been:

- Co-management of RASSP, the *Research and Analysis Skills Strengthening Programme* (2002-2005), which aimed to introduce selected activists and residents of low-income communities in basic methods of research for policy change.
- Public seminars. Especially since 2004 the Centre has organised occasional public seminars, intended to involve national as well as local participants, on themes ranging from HIV-AIDS to land and environmental justice to media.
- Media outreach. Centre staff regularly try to reach wider audiences via national electronic and print media;
- Networking with NGOs. Particularly since 2004 the Centre has cultivated close and often intense (even daily) contact with a wide number of South African NGOs such as the Gender AIDS Forum, Church Land Programme, African Initiative for Peace, Democracy & Development, Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI), Womandla HIV and Aids Network, AIDS Law Project, Association for Rural Advancement; Forum for the Empowerment of Women, AIDC, Groundwork and the Trust for Community Outreach and Education.

As in the case of metropolitan Durban, the Centre in recent years has tended to associate with organisations and movements whose political colours - hues of anti-neo-liberal “red” and anti-pollution “green” - are nailed firmly to their masts.

Continental and Global

While activities have not yet crystallized into a full-fledged strategy, Centre staff have, sometimes in tandem with academic pursuits, sought to engage with African and global processes in certain networks or ‘camps’ in civil society. Two kinds of activities stand out:

- Linking with activist intellectuals and their organisations, particularly those associated with the World Social Forum (Alternative Globalisation) circuits, chiefly through CCS participation in meetings - often offering a key speech;
- Presenting commentaries in print and electronic media, particularly internet sites (Z Net, Pambazuka News) with large progressive audiences.

2.4 Publishing and Communication

A number of the Centre's pursuits in academic and non-academic realms depend on communication strategies, especially publishing. These comprise all levels, and in principle transcend the academic/civil society divide. Among main routes and vehicles are the following:

- Books and articles published by external publishers; much scholarly output by CCS staff and associates aims for these channels, as influenced by standard academic incentives based on ranking systems;
- Books, handbooks and separate occasional papers published by the Centre itself, in printed form and on the Centre's website;
- E-mailed news, reports and comment via a listserv system managed by Centre staff;
- Annual reports and occasional bulletins about the Centre itself, in print and on the Centre's website;
- Research reports, articles and news reports by others, and references to internet sites, re-published on the Centre's website;
- Commentary appearing in South African media, namely *The Independent on Sunday*, *The Mercury*, *The Mail and Guardian*, *The Sunday Times* and the appearances on SAFM radio.

2.5 Discussion

From the foregoing description of the Centre's system of objectives and its evolution, a number of general patterns can be detected:

An accumulation of purposes and roles. At the outset of operations, the Centre extended its mandate beyond *studying* civil society to *building* it. Academic roles remain central, but staff have grafted on tasks of supporting and at times engaging in social justice activism. From some angles, the Centre looks like an academic/NGO hybrid.

An expansion of territorial scope. Also at the outset, staff sought to widen the geographic range of contacts and research to include the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa and a bit beyond where opportunities arose. In recent years the Centre has cast its nets routinely in intellectual-activist waters globally, while deepening links on the African continent.

These two developments are cumulative and self-reinforcing. If kept within bounds of the Centre's mandate, they would not logically pose issues of coherence. But as they grow, new relationships, expectations, responsibilities and risks proliferate. While they may infuse fresh motivation, they put claims on Centre resources, particularly management time and attention. Here the Centre's system of objectives may face severe tests of coherence.

The objectives of *both* studying *and* building civil society add complexity to the system. As they accumulate, many of the Centre's tasks and risks in this work are shared with other organisations, on and off campus. Some of these organisations

are robust, others may be anything but robust, as the history of associational life in townships and shack settlements so sadly demonstrates.

This study could not probe these realms and the Centre's interfaces with them. But in light of the long and highly mixed history of encounters between resource-rich interveners and resource-poor intervened (a still under-researched field), challenges to the coherence of the Centre's system of objectives almost certainly arise here.

Closeness of fit with context

In their design, the Centre's academic system of objectives:

- Matches many interests in the academy, and related sectors, in deepening knowledge of and debate about the interplay of associational life with public politics;
- Seeks to address two problems identified in the feasibility study, namely the low 'visibility', and inadequate sharing of research on civil society;
- Responds to concerns that the academy in South Africa is mute or passive on contemporary issues of social justice;
- Is relevant to South African needs and interests to tap into and contribute to research and debate in the rest of Africa and on global planes.

The design reflects an effort to balance a pro-active stance, exemplified in priorities put on research linked with social justice activism and social movements, with a responsive stance, as shown in the rules governing the research fund and the partnership with outside agencies interested in local and national philanthropy.

Closeness of fit with terms of Atlantic Philanthropies' founding grant

By taking on a civil society *building* purpose, the Centre's system of objectives went beyond the formal terms of the Atlantic grant. The relatively modest amount of research tightly geared to influencing the legislative and fiscal environment suggests a certain departure from formal terms of the grant⁶. As indicated in the Centre's Constitution, it chose from the outset not to study or engage in the "non-profit sector" according to mainstream definitions, such as those guiding most American academic centres. It chose instead a wider and more politically-grounded definition. By 2004 it was entertaining intellectual approaches close to those of Gramsci, Polanyi and others⁷. Thus the Centre staked out a somewhat different terrain, and took up other intellectual tools, than those implied in the grant terms. While not closing the door to more conventional sub-fields, it opened other doors affording alternative perspectives and possibilities for innovation.

Closeness of fit with UKZN institutional imperatives

Having vigorously supported a bid for the Atlantic founding grant, the university anticipated a boost to capacities in both teaching/supervision and in research, as well as well as contacts and the intangibles of public standing and prestige. But there was more. The University's Vice Chancellor at the time wanted no ivory

⁶ The Centre's role in 2002 in disseminating the results of the Johns Hopkins University-sponsored research about South Africa's non-profit sector, and the State of Social Giving project, appear to meet these terms in part.

⁷ See CCS 2004 *Annual Report* for an extensive treatment of the issue.

tower, but a centre consistent with “the university’s purposed commitment, capacity and track record in ‘engagement *with* the community in conjunction with scholarly reflection *on* the community’⁸.

Now the *balance* struck between these two pursuits and the adversarial *style* and political *colouration* of some public activities and utterances by some Centre members, may not match the kind of community engagement the Vice Chancellor had in mind. But in its broad lines, in particular the two-thrust mandate, the Centre’s system of objectives matches original UKZN ambitions.

Pursuit of intellectual and institutional interchange across Africa and globally, for example, is almost certainly consistent with principles and goals broadly shared across UKZN. One sub-set of Centre objectives, however, seems not to have crystallised in ways that some at UKZN, including present and former Centre officials, may have hoped for: a substantial teaching component at Masters and undergraduate levels. Centre leadership has tried to advance the place of teaching in the Centre’s work; as late as 2004 a plan for a research Masters in Civil Society had been mooted; but other priorities have evidently eclipsed this one.

⁸ Ann Harper 2004

3. Organisation and Management

The Centre's internal governance and management systems were not part of the evaluator's initial brief. Yet many informants in or close to the Centre offered spontaneous remarks about the internal environment. It therefore merits a place in this report. However, only a partial and fragmentary perspective is offered here; any definitive conclusions are expressly disclaimed.

3.1 Governance

As the *Mid-Term Review* of 2004 notes, the Centre "straddles two systems and procedures of organisational accountability and control". Incorporated into the School of Development Studies and active in teaching and degree supervision, the Centre is answerable to various UKZN officials and boards and to its own university-based Management Board. At the same time, it is constitutionally bound to an Advisory Board drawn from civil society, but also including two senior UKZN officials, that meets annually.

This governance arrangement looks 'heavy'. Nevertheless it appears to have worked satisfactorily. That may be due in part to the university's being represented in the Advisory Board, and in part to the outstanding support provided by the Centre for Civil Society's office staff. Therefore the work of the Advisory Board, and other governance bodies with non-UKZN members, such as the Research Board, take place routinely, without overloading the Centre's leadership.

At levels of the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences and at even higher levels, despite occasional episodes of disagreement, the Centre can usually count on sympathetic attention. In month-to-month management, however, mutual frustrations have arisen about adherence to committee obligations, and the time and attention they require. Bottlenecks are arising here. For example, the Centre's 'global reach' is taking the Director away from Durban and otherwise putting increasing claims on his time. He has no official deputy to represent the Centre in instances of university decision-making.

3.2 Basic Systems

Essential systems of financial control, communication, archiving, logistics and so forth appear to work well. However, as noted later in this report, reaching a *modus vivendi* with the University's Finance Division has required negotiations and adjustment by both parties. One instance of good performance is the Centre's timely production of reports to donors, to their satisfaction. Since 2004, the Centre's output of materials about itself -- an events and activities bulletin, an expanded *Annual Report* -- have increased, suggesting a level of cooperation among staff sufficient to generate and share information. In a fast-moving carousel of visitors, seminars, film showing and lectures it has not always been possible to provide timely advance notice of events to the wider academic community. Yet the Centre's external communication strategy is improving.

3.3 Management

Universities can be stressful places. Competition, jealousy and intrigue are, to put it gently, not unheard of there⁹. Undoubtedly the University of KwaZulu Natal is no exception in this regard. In such settings the management of people is a challenge. All the more challenging, then, is a setting like the Centre for Civil Society with both scholarly and activist purposes, academic and non-academic constituencies, citizens and foreigners, all focused on a field -- civil society -- whose boundaries seem almost infinitely elastic. As one informant to this study said, managing in such a situation is like herding cats.

Teamwork has certainly been demonstrated, but team spirit has not consistently been one of the Centre's strong suits. Opinions differ as to why this has been the case. As the Mid-Term Review of 2004 indicates, the Centre has suffered internal stress regardless of who has been in charge. A crucial fact today is that the current leadership and staff acknowledge the difficulties and are taking steps to address them, including the use of seasoned outside advisers.

It remains the case, however, that the Centre's levels of activity and output have been routinely high. Internal stress may have absorbed energies, but it has not been crippling. The effects may rather be sought in opportunities missed and capacities not developed. One such dimension is monitoring outcomes and reflective practice. Deficits here were present from the outset. When considering the University of Natal's proposed design for the Centre, Atlantic Philanthropies noted that "the single weakness of the proposal is the lack of a formal monitoring and evaluation plan".

The Centre routinely records scholarly output and chronicles activities. This work looks thorough. But the Centre does not routinely mine and reflect on experience, outcomes and systematic feedback from 'boundary partners'; at best, staff practice this at the level of projects and small taskforces. There is evidence of some joint reflection at the level of individuals; staff recently wrote and shared self-appraisals. But at the level of the organisation, reflection for steering and forging consensus on major pursuits needs further development.

3.4 Finance

An overview of the Centre's external financial support, both for core costs and project-specific, appears in Appendix B. With the ending in 2006 of Atlantic Philanthropies' support of core costs, the Centre is facing a decisive shift toward largely project-based funding. Project budgets are designed to help cover core administrative costs and if possible cross-subsidize smaller initiatives. A fundraising strategy is now emerging, and a part-time consultant will assist in scanning the funding environment and shepherding along proposals.

There are other income-enhancing opportunities to be grasped, such as charging fees for catering to needs of students and visiting scholars from rich countries.

⁹ Universities are, after all, popular settings for novels and murder mysteries. See Elaine Showalter, 2005, *Faculty Towers. The Academic Novel and Its Discontents*, Philadelphia: U of Penn. Press.

Centre staff face opportunities to enter bids for commissioned research contracts. Some European donors have begun making grants toward purposes in which the Centre can claim expertise, namely (a) knowledge-based work supporting campaigns for policy change on basic services and (b) the environments in which community- and membership-based organisations flourish or not. Structured research partnerships with foreign and domestic institutions eligible for public research funds - an arrangement not unknown for the Centre - present potentially favourable ways forward.

The Centre may continue to initiate proposals, but it will have to continue improving its responsiveness to others. Whatever the tactics and strategies developed, degrees of freedom to set one's own course are shrinking. Financial health is going to depend more on detecting what other institutions want and are willing to pay for. In that setting the Centre will be called upon to demonstrate the advantages it has relative to comparable bodies, and to negotiate arrangements satisfactory to all parties.

4. Activities and Outcomes

What has the Centre for Civil Society produced, and with what effects? What outcomes over a longer term might be hypothesized? These are main questions addressed in this chapter.

Main criteria to frame findings are drawn from the Centre's own statements of purpose, namely, its aims to promote scholarship on civil society, and to develop and promote institutional outcomes - partnerships for knowledge sharing and for capacity-building in civil society. Criteria derived from terms of the Centre's 2001 agreement with Atlantic Philanthropies are also taken into account. Those terms envision, among other outcomes, 'the publication of a body of new, theoretically sound and intellectually rigorous research on the [non-profit] sector'.

Quantitative evidence about the Centre's work is ample and fairly clear. Evidence in qualitative terms, however, is uneven and indistinct, though some indirect and subjective information is available. A full and authoritative account of the Centre's research performance is beyond the scope of this review. That would require a major comparative study, analogous to the Research Assessment Exercise of the Higher Education Funding Council for England - something that has no equivalent in South Africa. Rather than pass over qualitative issues entirely, the chapter summarises views obtained from the (small) sample of informants interviewed or reached by e-mail.

4.1 Research and Publications: Output

Production and publication of scholarly texts is the Centre's core business. Beyond writings for academic peers, its staff and associates also write for other audiences, chiefly to influence public debate. Output of both kinds has taken place at an accelerated pace since 2002, as indicated in the following table.

Table 4.1 Publications by Centre Staff and Associates¹⁰

Reported for	2002	2003	2004	2005
Books	3	1	1	3
Edited Books	2	2		2
Edited journal issues		2		1
Chapters in books	9	23	13	21
Articles in accredited journals	9	11	22	26
Book reviews	3		7	2
Reports, working papers	1	4	13	7
Articles in non-accredited periodicals	17	18	41	38

Source: CCS Annual Reports

¹⁰ These data may slightly over-state output. Some research reports reported in one year appear as journal articles in the following year, some items are translations of English originals earlier recorded, and a few items listed as forthcoming in 2003 have as of 2006 not yet been published. Care has been taken to avoid double-counting; that has been necessary because the same publications are sometimes noted in more than one annual report.

Output by Centre staff and associates -- more than 300 items over four years -- is significant. The rising number of articles appearing in accredited journals -- an indicator of good academic standards -- is particularly impressive.

Thanks chiefly to that production, Centre staff account for a rising proportion of SAPSE (South African Post-School Education) points earned by the School of Development Studies: 15 percent in 2002; 36 percent in 2004; and 41 percent in 2005.

All together, 19 persons (11 men, 8 women) accounted for the Centre's output of publications in the years 2002-2005. While Directors of the Centre and its two honorary professors/fellows have together produced the lion's share of publications, other staff have begun contributing more.

About two-thirds of publications by Centre staff and associates appear to be focused on empirical or theoretical dimensions of civil society and its socio-political contexts. Their other publications cover a diverse range of topics from trade and foreign policies to culture.

Accredited journals publishing work from the Centre range from the better-known (*African Affairs*, *Policy Studies*, *Third World Quarterly*) to the less well-known (*Journal of the Caribbean Philosophical Association*). Of accredited journals carrying three or more articles by Centre staff and associates, four are edited outside Africa (*Review of African Political Economy*, *Quest: an African Journal of Philosophy*, *Monthly Review* and *Journal of Asian and African Studies*) and three are edited in South Africa (*Agenda*, *Politikon* and *Transformation*).

Publishers outside Africa account for about three-fifths of books which Centre staff and associates have authored or edited or to which they have provided chapters. Most of the rest are South African publishers.

Dissemination of research reports and other texts takes place in the cascade pattern normal to academia -- seminar paper → conference paper → periodical/book. The mailing list for research reports currently totals 416. Most publications get a place on the Centre's website. Indeed for some papers, the website is the first point of entry to dissemination. Other audiences make acquaintance with the Centre's intellectual output by way of academic and public lectures, and the public media.

Also accounting for the Centre's scholarly output have been many dozens of other researchers and writers working with grants from the Centre or otherwise under its auspices or at its invitation. This non-CCS author output appears in table 4.2.

These non-CCS authors have produced texts shaped by (a) committee selection of research proposals (b) remarks, and in some cases guidance from CCS committees or by CCS project coordinators to researchers, and (c) peer feedback on drafts or working papers, commonly in smaller CCS seminars but also in larger workshops

Table 4.2 Research reports and other texts by non-CCS authors

Appearing in	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
CCS Research Reports	1	7	11	10	
Working papers by CCS research grant recipients (published on CCS website)		7	9	11	6
Social Movements project			13		1
Africa Integration project		1	7		
Social Giving project			1	5	
Civil Society in a Globalising South Africa				5	
Economic Justice project (Colloquium on Economy, Society and Nature)					29
Energy Project					1

Sources: CCS Annual Reports; and <http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/>

or colloquia. Thus disciplined, almost all papers by outsiders show a tight focus on civil society and related political terrains. In the case of thematic projects, they dovetail with one another. These patterns are in some contrast to the wider and looser range of publications referred to in Table 4.1.

In their geographic focus, 26 of the 40 CCS Research Reports published as of mid-2006 are largely or entirely devoted to South Africa; the other 14 papers are focused elsewhere in Africa. Of 33 papers stemming from the Research Grants programme thus far posted on the CCS Website, 31 are mainly or entirely focused on South Africa¹¹.

4.2 Research and Publications: Informants' Views

Informants to this review were asked for their views regarding the Centre's output, in particular, regarding the relevance and freshness of knowledge it generates about civil society. Synthesizing their remarks, the following findings stand out:

Quantities are impressive. Especially among those closer to the Centre or regularly exposed to its website, there is respect for the sheer amounts of scholarly and non-scholarly publications.

Awareness of output is not universal. Across a number of civil society "watchers", awareness of the Centre's publications is uneven. One said: "I haven't seen any major studies emanating from the giving study or the massive study of different new social movements. Did I miss them?". Whereas an NGO informant said, about the Centre's website as a source of knowledge, "it is pretty well the only show in town". Because informants' knowledge of the Centre's scholarly work is evidently uneven and often not very deep (even within UKZN), caution may be needed in

¹¹ In the distribution of research grants overall, South Africa is somewhat less dominant than this published output would suggest. Of 90 grants contracted as of 16 May 2006, 71 were for projects whose titles indicate South African issues in whole or in large part; six indicate Zimbabwean issues or related; 12 indicate other African countries or are geographically unspecified.

interpreting informant's wider judgements, such as those summarised in the following two paragraphs.

Political conviction looms large. Most informants perceive the Centre's output as coloured by its prevailing political persuasions. No one argues that critical, activist scholarship is a bad thing; on the contrary several hold that it is vital, and in the best traditions of the University¹². However many informants see the Centre's credibility and effectiveness potentially compromised by the ways in which its political convictions are expressed.

Emancipatory social movements merit attention, but civil society is broader. Many informants would like to see the Centre open toward a wider spectrum of segments and issues in civil society. Some see merit in considering the political roles of 'vernacular' civil society such as "burial societies, stokvels, faith-based organisations and welfare bodies". Others urge greater attention to organised labour. The general point is that by concentrating on oppositional social movements the centre has positioned itself too narrowly.

Publications are broadly relevant and fresh, but there is room for improvement. Asked for an overall judgement about relevance, freshness and other indicators of quality, most informants regard the Centre's scholarly output as having added value to some extent. Opinions about the quality of output differ across a broad range. One informant's view probably comes closest to reflecting the modal opinion: "Reasonably rigorously done and practically produced. Relevant for different audiences. . . What one would naturally expect of an academic group like this."

Centre publications show uneven levels of editorial quality in terms of fact-checking and copy-editing. Cited as an example of excellence in those terms is the Centre's recent collection of studies of social movements in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet going by the views of several informants, and the evaluator's random sampling of publications, achievement of normal academic standards is going to require further effort. One informant commented: "the formidable production & production pressure ... is sometimes at the cost of good editing and proofing".

Finally, a couple of informants called attention to gaps in periodicals for South African "civil society watchers". *Development Update* and other publications of the late 1990s no longer exist. These gaps pose opportunities to be grasped.

4.3 Education and Training

Like the School for Development Studies in which it is embedded, the Centre's educational roles are geared chiefly to the graduate levels, though it has no formal powers to admit students or qualify them for University degrees. In addition, the Centre's mandate has led it into training at community levels. The following paragraphs consider both of these levels.

¹² In backing such a position, one informant referred to the University Vice Chancellor's wish to see a new study centre (on race and identity issues) "make people feel uncomfortable".

4.3.1 University Education

Centre staff, chiefly Directors and research managers, have traditionally carried masters-level teaching responsibilities every term, together with supervision of a few PhD and Masters degree candidates.

Teaching

Since 2003 Centre staff have provided a yearly Masters-level module on Civil Society and Development spanning about eight weeks. This course drew 25 students in 2002, 13 students in 2004 and 10 students in 2005. Usually about half are Americans on self-financed study abroad programmes. Also taught by Centre staff have been a writing skills course, a module on migration, and since 2005 a development economics course.

In 2003 the Centre hosted a six-week long educational event supported by the Mellon Foundation, the International Human Rights Exchange (IHRE). Accredited in the USA, it involved 70 undergraduate students, most of them drawn from North Atlantic countries. Staff also lectured in the 2004 and 2005 IHREs, hosted by the University of Cape Town.

Thesis Supervision and other Support to Graduate Students

Since 2002, the Centre has supported at least three UKZN PhD candidates (Nthakeng, Guliwe and Chitonge) and four Masters/research candidates, although the record here is not entirely clear as some candidates may have dropped out. At present at least one other student (Amisi) is about to begin a formal PhD trajectory. From the written record it is not clear just which candidates have, as of mid-2006, achieved their UKZN degrees under Centre auspices. Centre staff may have helped supervise other PhD candidates attached to the School of Development Studies, but the written record is not specific on this point.

The Centre has also helped advance the education of perhaps a dozen other persons: Research Interns, Visiting Scholars and other graduate-level students. Many of these have come from the US and Canada. Most are self-financed, but they nonetheless put certain claims on Centre facilities, and on the time and attention of staff. Indeed one informant remarked that he found himself responding more often to North American than to UKZN students. What have these visitors contributed? Their added value seems uneven. A few have been highly active and productive, adding strongly to the Centre's academic and community work, while a number appear to have been minimally engaged, leaving only a faint trace of their presence.

Beyond teaching and direct supervision, the Centre contributes to graduate level education through its programme of fortnightly seminars on campus (15 to 20 per year) and its sponsorship or co-sponsorship of occasional off-campus workshops and seminars. It has also organised special educational events for graduate students, such as a five-day Civil Society Research Methods seminar in 2005.

With increasing frequency, a few centre staff appear as guest lecturers at other universities in South Africa and abroad, particularly the USA and Canada.

4.3.2 Training and Animation in Non-University Settings

The Centre's first major undertaking at community level was the Research and Analysis Skills Training Programme (RASSP). Financed initially by USAID, later by Finnish Embassy and EU (Foundation for Human Rights) funds, this innovative effort ran from mid-2002 to late 2004 in collaboration with a South African research NGO, the Community Agency for Social Enquiry. Starting with 240 participants from over 120 organisations across South Africa, it aimed to impart research and advocacy skills relevant to local socio-political concerns. A second round involved 92, the third round 50 trainees, from which there came 47 funded research proposals. Of these projects, 33 have seen completion. In October 2005 the Centre published a volume of ten edited research reports; two more volumes, with respectively nine and seven reports, may be published in the future. Among RASSP by-products is a 144-page *Participants Manual*, covering methods of investigation and public policy activism according to a workshop-by-workshop plan.

No formal evaluation of the RASSP has taken place and its impacts on community organising are not systematically known. Centre staff have, however, begun drawing provisional lessons from it. Among these:

- such training can draw considerable interest among community activists;
- local-level research can yield rich seams of information on which activists can frame and advance their claims for social justice;
- as a scarce good in poor communities, access to such training can have individualising effects, that in turn may produce stress in fragile organisations;
- managing the process of research grants within inflexible systems of university administration not designed for such purposes can generate frustrations.

The experience with RASSP thus demonstrates both potentials and pitfalls of work of this kind. Its importance for the Centre may stem from its having afforded direct contact with, and thus the possibility of feedback and learning from, people directly engaged in political struggles in all their complexity and contradictions.

Subsequent to the RASSP, with support of the Mott Foundation, Centre staff have mounted a series of Saturday training seminars for selected organisations. Held mainly on the university's Westville campus, these are oriented toward community activism, stimulating thinking about strategy and networking, and building specific capacities, such as media skills. In a shift of emphasis from the RASSP approach, the Centre now orients its efforts toward whole organisations rather than individual activists.

The Centre clearly seeks to transcend boundaries between academic pursuits and community animation. From late 2004 the Centre has employed an Zulu-speaking Outreach Officer to facilitate interchange with community organisations; the second of these was recruited from among successful RASSP researchers in Durban. The Centre's community solidarity and advocacy efforts have multiplied in recent years. These include advice, hosting of strategy forums, lobbying officials and advocacy in print and electronic media.

There is no set formula guiding these efforts, but rather a certain commitment to learn by doing. The Centre is not the only UKZN-based unit routinely intervening

in low-income communities in greater Durban. In the balance are questions of relative effectiveness and the avoidance of pitfalls (inadvertent contributions to intra-community tensions, external steering and disempowerment) that have in the past plagued well-meant interventions.

4.4 Promotion of Knowledge-Sharing and Public Discussion

The Centre's efforts to promote debate and to share knowledge are not readily set apart from its academic and training work. But as bounded activities the following may be considered separately.

4.4.1 Sharing Knowledge among Academic Peers

With increasing frequency, Centre staff are attending national, continental and international gatherings of social scientists. They present papers and participate in discussion panels. Written accounts of such meetings, when transmitted via the Internet, help draw attention to the Centre and position it as a bridge between academic and non-academic audiences¹³.

4.4.2 Public Lectures

Wolpe Lecture Series

Typifying outcomes on other fronts, the Centre used its position and networks to attract an external project in search of an institutional home. The Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture Series began in Durban in June 2002 under auspices of the Centre and, up until 2005, the School for Development Studies¹⁴. Up to mid-2006, at least 40 public lectures on a range of political, social and cultural issues had taken place. They featured leading public intellectuals from South Africa, Britain, Canada and English-speaking Africa. They have regularly drawn audiences of 100 to 200 people, with large numbers coming from Durban townships. Since 2003, the Centre has organised transport, and a post-lecture meal, to attract township residents. It has also organised workshops in advance of lectures to enable township residents to get more out attending events in which speakers can test the outer reaches of intellectual vocabularies. In the same spirit, in 2006 staff introduced English-Zulu interpretation during lectures.

The Centre's website carries a summary/review of each lecture or the text on which the lecture was based. In 2006 the Centre brought out, together with a US publisher, a collection of 23 lecture texts, and items related to them.

No systematic record of media effects of the lectures is available. Some lectures - especially by globally recognised figure such as Naomi Klein and Tariq Ali - probably get media attention, others not.

¹³ To take a very recent example: Patrick Bond's account of a 2006 CODESRIA gathering on trade unionism was re-posted on several general Africa news & features websites.

¹⁴ The Wolpe Trust began supporting public lectures in Cape Town in 1997. For many years it has also sponsored seminars in Johannesburg with other partners.

With one or two exceptions, informants to this study were broadly positive about the contribution these lectures, now almost a public institution in Durban, have made to public discussion. A prevailing view is that the series has helped put the Centre more visibly on the map, nationally and internationally.

Public lectures by Centre staff and Film Screenings

Staff and associates of the Centre give talks or appear on panels in non-academic settings. It also co-sponsored public cultural events -- screening of films, book launches, award ceremonies -- related to civil society. A pattern of increasing appearances in public gatherings, large and small, is detectable. In 2005 staff began an occasional series of on- and off-campus screenings of films on video.

4.4.3 Public Media

Both Centre Directors and a few other staff members regularly appear in the South African print and electronic media. They feature in news accounts (particularly of activism in Durban), interviews and invited commentary. In some instances they have published popularised accounts of research findings. In 2002 a research report on the national lottery made a big splash across South Africa. Media appearances occur episodically, not on the basis of a concerted strategy. While Centre staff often clip newspaper items, there is no registry of mentions in the media, and thus no systematic basis for assessing the Centre's external communication effects or its public profile.

The Centre has occasionally involved itself in media programming. In 2002 staff contributed research for a SABC television series, "Down to Earth" in the run-up to the World Summit for Sustainable Development. Videos of the resulting programme segments continue to be used. In 2005 staff provided research for a 13-part series in "The Roundtable", a SABC television public affairs programme. Staff have contributed to a regular column on civil society in *The Mercury* (Durban).

Engagement with local media has often had positive outcomes in as much as it nudges neglected issues back into public view and higher up political agendas. But media attention can be double-edged. Remarks from several informants to this study suggest that South Africa's media can strongly influence public perceptions -- for better or worse -- about the Centre and its approach to public issues. It may be that, in pursuing aims to influence public discussion, Centre staff have underestimated the complex ways media may condition audiences to sympathise -- or not to sympathise -- with its "messages".

4.4.4 Website and Listserve

In 2002, with assistance from a university-based specialist, the Centre set up its website. Its content grew steadily, with a certain amount of trial and error. Unviable ambitions that duplicated work by others, such as a continually updated directory of civil society organisations and the posting of a wide selection of news stories, were tried but later quietly abandoned. Over time staff have built the website around the Centre's strengths, publishing texts produced by Centre staff or under Centre auspices, adding links to other research websites and kindred

organisations, re-publishing items on civil society and related terrains. Its online library and photo archive contains around 1500 items.

The website clearly needs weeding and updating of basic information such as about organisations in South Africa, e-mail and web addresses. More urgent are needs to meet formal norms for academic items produced under auspices of the Centre itself. For example, of 12 academic papers posted under the African Integration project, only two are dated and three bear no author's name.

Staff have some historical knowledge about responses to the website, but only in general terms. In late 2003 the site got about 1500, and in late 2004 about 1800 page-views per day. Since then staff have been unable to get a reading of total usage. They have never been able to gauge which parts of the site get more attention than others, or to know something about visitors' origins. This lack of systematic data sets limits to learning and to improving the site.

Via the website visitors can subscribe to a listserve, the CCS African Civil Society Discussion Forum. Subscriber totals show the following history:

July 2002	248
November 2003	+/- 700
November 2004	+/- 800
May 2006	+/- 600

A number of informants to this study spontaneously offered compliments about the website - "fantastic", "strong website, easy to navigate" etc. While others, including some with vocations in "civil society watching" did not mention it.

4.4.5 Public Discussion: Concluding Remarks

Informants to this study expressed a range of opinions about the Centre's contributions to public debate. A number admire its boldness and energy. One informant located it "at the cutting edge of public debate and space". Another: "It's created a platform for debate in a context that was becoming increasingly orthodox." Several suggested that the centre of gravity of public discussion on civil society had shifted to Durban thanks to the Centre's academic and non-academic vitality.

Yet some informants express misgivings. Chief among them is a concern that the Centre should provide space for different standpoints and persuasions. A modal opinion was: "I often don't agree with the contribution but they are key players in public debate, certainly in left circles, and probably could broaden that a bit". These concerns are not new. The Centre's *Mid-Term Review*, covering the period before the arrival of the current Director, also called attention to them. In urging engagement across "a range of interests and groupings in civil society while staying true to its core values", that report advised the Centre to allow "its track record of research, training and outreach to speak more unambiguously for itself"¹⁵.

¹⁵ Harper 2004, p. 13

4.5 Partnerships and Networks

As noted in Chapter 2, the promotion of partnerships for knowledge-sharing is one of the Centre's founding purposes. This section reviews outcomes on that front.

4.5.1 Cooperation with Academic Institutions

UKZN and SoDS

The Centre's website lists nine organisations as "key partners". Only two of these are academic bodies, namely those in which the Centre is institutionally nested: the University and its School of Development Studies. This review could not study the Centre's relationships with its tutelary bodies in any depth. Several themes were detectable in spontaneous comments by a number of informants. They may be briefly noted:

- In jointly developing two research projects - on social movements and African Integration - the Centre and the School of Development Studies have cooperated successfully.
- The Centre, and its leaders, have marked profiles; that salience can sometimes overshadow the School and the University in which the Centre is embedded.
- Discontinuity in Centre leadership has, predictably, required mutual adjustments all along the way. Institutional cooperation has thus been "in transition" throughout most of the Centre's first five years.
- Mutual frustrations have bedevilled the Centre's role as a grant-maker in the context of a university financial system not geared for such tasks; a *modus vivendi* was, however, eventually hammered out.

Under the UKZN's 13 Schools there are many specialised centres. It is plausible to assume that in some cases, the funding, leaderships, academic disciplines and vocations of those centres tend to push them toward autonomous positions vis-à-vis the university. It would require a comparative review of their working relationships with their tutelary bodies to conclude that the Centre for Civil Society is orbiting in an extreme position rather than merely bumping along somewhere in the middle. In any case, this study detected views and degrees of concern that suggest reasons for the Centre to reflect systematically on current and future challenges to daily diplomacy and longer-term working relationships.

Beyond UKZN

Beyond its "key partners", other university-based researchers and academic networks have been pursued and cultivated. Many of these links go beyond one-off episodes, indeed a few resemble durable partnerships. Joint work in defined programmes give them content and direction. Representatives of other South African universities, for example, serve on the Centre's Research Board in governing the Grants Programme. The African Integration project involved, as a core purpose, the setting in motion of collaboration among many African academic units; it laid the basis for a follow-up proposal, currently awaiting final approval by the Ford Foundation, for engaging a number of African universities in a network. Paralleling that effort is the Centre's increasing involvement in CODESRIA, a leading social science research network in Africa.

Institutional outcomes are emerging on global levels. The Centre's pursuit of certain bounded topics - water, energy, the environment - has led to contacts and working relationships, in some cases joint projects, with scholars or academic units in Europe and North America specialising on those fields. The Social Giving project has given rise to a student exchange programme with the University of Bologna, Italy, on philanthropy studies.

Driving relationships with some higher education bodies in North America have been their imperatives to line up educational experiences chiefly for their students. The School for International Training and Bard College are examples. It might be argued that the Centre has no business catering to relatively advantaged Americans. Yet given massive shadows the USA casts over the rest of the world contrasted with massive deficits in American notions about the rest of the world, any contribution to addressing the latter problem may bring benefits that far surpass the costs.

Broadly speaking, the demand from northern institutions for learning opportunities for students and research partnerships far exceeds their supply in the global South, where South Africa stands out as an especially attractive place for a number of practical and political reasons. This lopsided situation would seem to favour the Centres negotiating new arrangements -- perhaps financially as well as programmatically - that tip the balance toward South Africa.

4.5.2 Cooperation with Other Knowledge-Based Organisations

Cooperation with other knowledge-based bodies beyond academia has been part of the Centre's approach from the outset. The Human Sciences Research Council took a share (20 percent) of the time of the Centre's first Director. The International Society for Third Sector Research has been a focus of Centre engagement, particularly in the early years.

Since 2004 the Centre has put a lot of energy into forging new ties, thus re-positioning itself nationally and globally. In South Africa it has started sharing information, and organising joint events, with policy activist NGOs, noted earlier in this report. More striking are ties emerging beyond Africa. These have grown in geographical scope, intensity and frequency. Also other kinds of organisations are being sought out, especially new hybrid circuits where the academy overlaps with civil society. An example is the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), a regional network of academics, activists and writers, with a secretariat in Seoul, South Korea.

In two spheres with strong knowledge-based actors -- the public sector and organised labour -- the Centre has yet to develop strong connections. Several informants to this study said that the Centre should reconsider its positioning on both fronts. One informant urges it "to cultivate better links with the public sector policy makers and regulatory agencies. By doing so, it can better influence progressive policies". Another informant, also supportive of its goals, said that the Centre should "systematically develop links with the labour movement and try to ensure closer links between the labour movement and popular organisations and social movements".

On the global plane, the Centre is positioning itself close to emancipatory social movements. Peter Waterman, emeritus professor at the Institute of Social Studies (The Hague) and long-time observer of global movements, locates the Centre with respect to an initiative in the Netherlands, which he sees as close to mainstream thinking about civil society, and to a study unit on global governance at the LSE in London. After describing the UKZN Centre for Civil Society as “serious and highly-productive”, he concludes:

If we were to construct a global civil society spectrum, it would seem possible to place the Dutch project at the ‘engaged’ end, the UK one in the middle and the South African one at the ‘autonomous’ end. ... I use [the term autonomous] here loosely to also include possibly non-workerist anarchists and other emancipatory tendencies that critique old emancipatory traditions such as social democracy, communism, and radical nationalism/populism. Whereas the latter are customarily state-oriented, the autonomists favour self-organisation, the surpassing of both capital and state, as well as social and human alienation in all its forms¹⁶.

4.6 Activities and Outcomes: Conclusion

In the short space of five years, the Centre for Civil Society has built up high grounds from which a number of streams of research and discussion have begun flowing into academic and broader public life. The Centre’s hallmarks are large amounts of critical scholarship combined with assiduous networking, especially beyond the academy. In a period when some civil society organisations have moved beyond charity and service delivery into knowledge-based policy campaigning, the Centre has advanced to meet them on the frontiers of the academy and activism. In this it is helping pioneer a new, multi-actor, multi-discipline, multi-level approaches to scholarship combined with vigorous activism.

Though not without precedent in the University, the Centre’s approach -- perceived as challenging to the state and allied with township protest -- has provoked controversy. Its activities and strategies are in fact rather broader than this perception, and to some extent the nuances of some of its public initiatives have been lost under the simplifying lenses of public media and tendencies on all sides to play up dramatic episodes and striking personalities.

Yet it remains the case that the Centre has -- consistent with its mandate -- sought to combine the role of rigorous *researcher* about civil society with the role of *coach*. Yet on some fronts it is moving beyond provision of training and the building of bridges between the academy and the township. In the balance is the question, as yet unanswered, as to whether the Centre can successfully combine its two mandated roles with a third, that of outright *player* on political pitches of civil society.

¹⁶ Peter Waterman, 2006, *Global Civil Society 2005/6, The Saga Continues*
<http://www.nigd.org/docs/GCSSagaContinuesOctober2005PeterWaterman>

5. Conclusions

This study has found grounds for the following conclusions.

5.1 The Centre is meeting its Constitutional mandates.

In terms of its Constitution, the Centre is fulfilling its two over-arching purposes: *First*, promoting civil society studies; and *Second* promoting partnerships for knowledge-sharing in civil society. In terms of the Centre's main formal objectives, this review found evidence indicating advances toward all four:

- 1) "multidisciplinary research projects into, for, by and with civil society":
 - strong output in quantitative terms;
 - rising quality, as indicated by increasing uptake in accredited journals and prominent publishers;
 - successful promotion of research at community level by community activists and by professional researchers on terrains of social giving;
- 2) "in-service training programmes for people working in, with and on civil society":
 - township groupings in greater Durban being reached in unusual programmes for media, advocacy and other skills;
- 3) "postgraduate training at the masters and PhD level":
 - regular provision of Masters-level courses;
 - supervision of a few PhD candidates and a number of Masters students;
- 4) "virtual and face-to-face forums...conferences and... a globally accessible website":
 - provision, with others, of an active public platform in Durban;
 - pro-active in sustaining a variety of seminars, colloquia &c., especially in promoting interchange with the rest of Africa and globally.

The range of civil society organisations of current interest to the Centre may surpass the range envisioned under the Constitution. NGO-like activism is developing in tandem with scholarly pursuits; that balance is not easy to sustain. The Centre is a hybrid that might be better termed, in a manner of speaking, the "Social Justice Studies and Animation Centre".

5.2 The Centre is meeting most of the terms of its grant from Atlantic Philanthropies.

There is evidence that the Centre has achieved and in some areas surpassed the medium-term outcomes stipulated under terms of its five year grant from Atlantic Philanthropies. Outcomes clearly surpassing original targets include new research areas, networks and global dissemination. It has also leveraged substantial additional funds for activities not originally envisioned; the Atlantic Grant was the essential fulcrum for doing so.

Substituting the University's "civil society studies" for Atlantic's original "non-profit studies", there is also evidence that the Centre has begun to meet some of the grant's longer-term ambitions, namely:

- an enhanced public profile for civil society studies;
- civil society studies emerging as a legitimate field of study;
- publication of a body of new, theoretically sound and intellectually rigorous research on the sector.

Outcomes in "improved policy formulation" are being achieved only modestly or tangentially, at least according to conventional models of policy change (see further under 5.4).

5.3 Management demands have multiplied.

Management has not been easy. Tasks have accumulated in promoting scholarship, public debate and community animation. However those activities' differing constituencies, directions and tempos are not easy to reconcile under management rules designed mainly for the academy. Moreover, the Centre is now heavily engaged in networks at local, national and especially global levels. Yet despite these new burdens, discontinuities in leadership and internal stresses, the Centre has maintained forward motion in a complex environment, helped in no small way by good office support and essential administrative systems.

5.4 Achieving coherence among structural and political positions poses conceptual and organisational challenges.

Beyond its positioning vis-à-vis the University, community groups in greater Durban, and civil society and public actors in South Africa, the Centre has positioned itself on a global stage. By adding a strong African, and more recently a non-African dimension to its networks, the Centre has surpassed the limitations of its formal mandate to focus on South Africa. The range of issues it addresses is also fairly diverse, thus positioning among civil society and scholarly networks is complex.

In some of its scholarly activities and in most of its public debate and community animation work, the Centre has positioned itself politically, sometimes in outspoken ways. In its animation work, the Centre takes a 'bottom up', or 'from the outside in' approach to policy change. It holds, generally, that social justice activism will foster political pressure conducive to better laws and fiscal rules¹⁷. In so doing it holds that understandings of *public policy* require active attention to, and engagement with, the sweaty and messy world of *public politics*.

Such approaches have sometimes placed the Centre in contested stances toward public authorities. The Centre's staff notes, however, that "Great care has been

¹⁷ A testable hypothesis would be that some work under Centre auspices is indeed improving community-level government practice, but through pathways perhaps not envisioned when this objective was framed. Should this hypothesis be confirmed -- as well it might -- then the challenge for the Centre is to enable other scholar-activists to show further merits of the approach and improve upon it.

taken by individuals not to undertake adversarial things in a manner which brings the Centre into disrepute. If individuals have clashed with public authorities, they have done so in their own personal capacities”.

5.5 The Centre is shifting gears to maintain forward motion financially.

The end of substantial, long-cycle core funding is propelling the Centre toward reliance on project-based funding with shorter cycles. Along with more frequent and intense use of capacities in grant-seeking and the servicing of grant-makers, the Centre will also need to seek out and develop a number of additional research partnerships with other academic or other knowledge-based institutions. On both these fronts, the Centre is advancing well, but will require continued vigorous and sympathetic support from within the University and beyond.

6. Recommendations

On the basis of the foregoing, it is recommended that:

- 6.1 The Centre should re-structure its activities in ways that enable its scholarly, public debate and community animation work to inspire and cross-fertilise each other, but that also respect those activities' distinct, specific potentials and the approaches and capacities needed to realise them. This three-way arrangement might be called something like the UKZN Social Justice Studies Consortium.
 - 6.1.1 The Centre's community animation/training work should undergo a careful independent external review, preferably with conceptual models and concrete cases of community intervention (of which there is a rich supply in South Africa) as points of reference;
 - 6.1.1.1 The Centre's community animation work might be enhanced if operated as a distinct, but affiliated "Inquiry/Action Training Academy" for the promotion of community- and membership-based action-research, emancipatory activism and student/academic solidarity with it. Durban's Workers College, Chicago's Midwest Academy and other initiatives that promote organisation- and leadership-building in civil society may serve as sources of concepts and practice.
 - 6.1.1.2 If the external review were to indicate the validity of the approach just outlined, then a deeper feasibility study should be undertaken to produce a range of alternative models regarding this "academy", including its development as a joint project with other organisations.
 - 6.1.2 The Centre's work in stimulating public attention and discussion should be maintained. There should be developed, preferably in consultation with existing partners, the School of Development Studies and the Wolpe Trust, fuller strategies for promotion of a broader South African public discussion on civil society topics via public forums, a renewed website, public media and possibly production of an accessible periodical in printed and electronic (downloadable) formats.
 - 6.1.3 The Centre's scholarly work should be further enhanced as organisationally distinct from the animation/training work, but bound to it by University staff and student participation.
 - 6.1.4 All three areas of work should operate under university auspices, though the animation/training branch might best be designed for eventual autonomy. An enhanced Advisory Board should share jurisdiction over the new three-part arrangement.
- 6.2 The Centre should use its solid accomplishments and its university relationships as fulcrums for leveraging funds and other resources. Studies of social movements and their political contexts clearly form one cluster of accomplishments; the Centre's international network of scholarly and activist organisations is another. A careful inventory of areas of research interest in grant-making agencies in North Atlantic countries would reveal potential sources of funding, either for contracted research or for research designed by

the Centre to overlap with those agencies' interests and experiences. Consideration should also be given to how the Centre can improve its income by requiring a subsidy or fee in the case of foreign students from advantaged countries seeking study sojourns under Centre auspices.

- 6.3 The Centre should continue pursuing the development of concepts to guide research and discussion of civil society. Together with others¹⁸, Centre staff are aware that fresh, complex understandings of civil society are needed; reflections on them should be ploughed back into Centre research and activism strategies.
- 6.4 In light of the Centre's frequent salience in the public media regarding these complex issues, a clearer communication strategy is needed. The Centre should, as a matter of routine, gather feedback about its external communication and resulting public profile. Based on such information it should frame principles and a policy for communication designed to gain and retain important allies, and the public at large, and reduce risks of distancing them.
- 6.5 The Centre should develop routine means for internal consultation and reflection in two dimensions:
 - 6.5.1 mining experiences and feedback on outcomes, and applying the resulting findings and analyses toward both toward enriching intellectual endeavours and piloting ways forward for the Centre;
 - 6.5.2 enhancing mutual clarity, understanding and confidence so that a sense of team purpose and teamwork might emerge. The Centre should make use of external advisors to help address the latter dimension, particularly to help in diagnosis and in developing a plan of approach.

¹⁸ See Sophie Oldfield, 2006, 'Moving beyond polemics: civil society politics in South Africa' *Critical Dialogue - Public Participation in Review*, Vol 2 Nr. 1, pp 28-33

Appendix A Persons Contacted

Centre for Civil Society

Ms. Amanda Alexander, Visiting Research Scholar
Dr. Richard Ballard, Grants Programme manager
Mr. Baruti Amisi, Research Assistant
Prof. Patrick Bond, Director
Dr. Sufian Bukurura, Research Director
Dr. Ashwin Desai, Honorary Research Scholar
Mr. John Devenesh, Webmaster
Dr. Alan Fowler, Honorary Research Professor
Dr. Adam Habib, Part-time Research Professor, ex-Director
Ms. Annsilla Nyar, Research Fellow
Mr. Richard Pithouse, Research Scholar
Ms. Helen Poonen, Senior Administrator
Ms. Amy Ramsamy, Finance Administrator

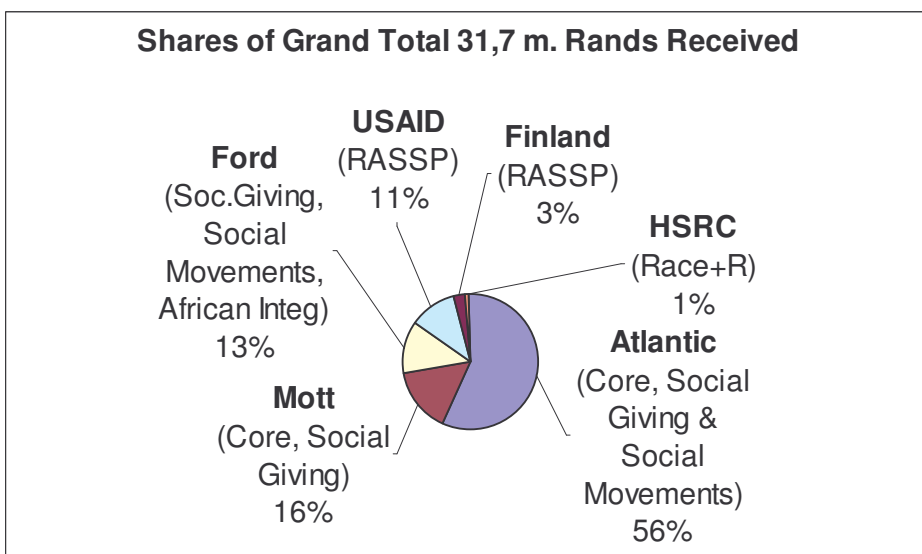
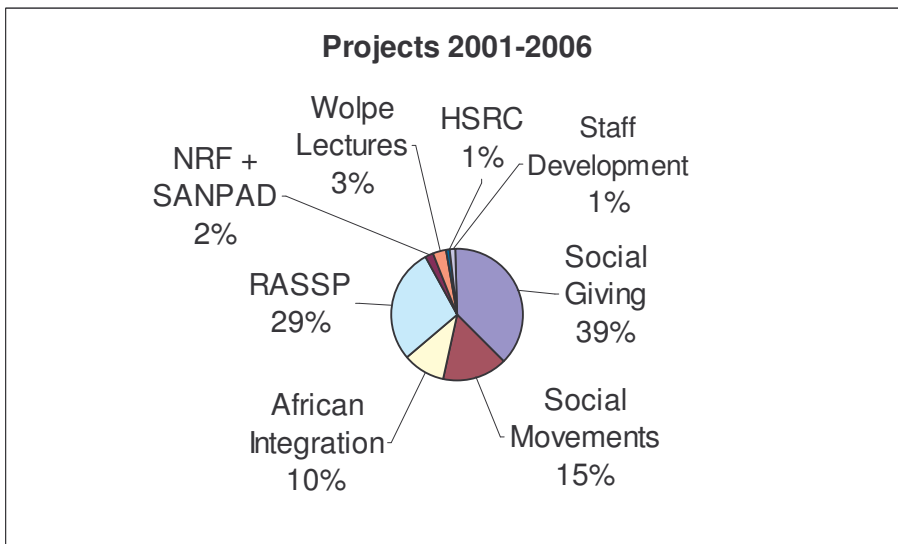
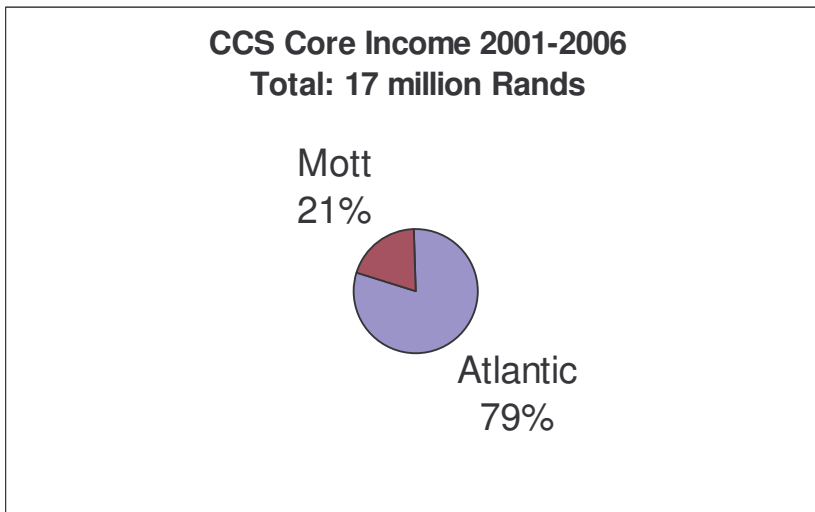
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Prof. Ahmed Bawa, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research, Knowledge Production & Partnerships)
Mr. Bruno van Dyk, Executive Director, UKZN Foundation
Prof. Francie Lund, School of Development Studies
Prof. Brij Maharaj - former CCS Research Director
Prof. Donal McCracken, Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences
Dr. David Moore, Dept of Economic History and Development Studies
Prof. Mike Morris, School of Development Studies
Prof. Vishnu Padayachee, Director of School of Development Studies (on leave)

Donors, Civil Society, University-based, &c.

Dr. Russell Ally, Director, Mott Foundation, Johannesburg
Mr. Brian Ashley, Alternative Information and Development Centre, Cape Town
Dr. Joel Bolnick, COURC, Cape Town
Dr. David Evaratt, Director, Strategy & Tactics, Johannesburg
Dr. Steven Friedman, IDASA, Johannesburg
Mr. David Hallows, independent, Durban
Ms. Ann Harper, independent, author of CCS 2004 Mid-term Review
Mr. Allan Kaplan, independent, Cape Town
Ms. Dot Keet, independent, Cape Town
Mr. Gerald Kraak, Director, South Africa Programme Atlantic Philanthropies, Jhb
Ms. Christa Kuljian, Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg
Mr. Ezra Mbogori, Director, MWENGO, Harare
Mr. Ashraf Patel, Programme Officer, Open Society Initiative, Johannesburg
Mr. Bobby Peek, GroundWork, Pietermaritzburg
Dr. Mike Savage, independent, Cape Town, consultant to Atlantic Philanthropies
Dr. John Saxby, independent, Pretoria, civil society specialist (formerly lead civil society policy specialist for CIDA, Ottawa)
Prof. Jeremy Seekings, Sociology Dept University of Cape Town

Appendix B: Finance



Appendix C: Documents

Atlantic Philanthropies, 2000, *Grant Recommendation Summary, Natal University Development Foundation, Faculty of Community and Development Disciplines Centre for the Study of the Nonprofit Sector in South Africa.*

Ballard, Richard, 2005, *Course Syllabus Civil Society & Development*, Masters Programme in Development Studies, School of Development Studies

Benjamin, S., 2005, *RASSP, Report to CCS Advisory Board*, November

CCS, *Annual Reports: 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005*

CCS, *Narrative Reports to Atlantic Philanthropies:*

- 1) 1 July to 31 December 2001
- 2) 1 January to 31 July 2002
- 3) 1 June to 30 November 2002
- 4) 1 June to 30 November 2003
- 5) 1 December 2003 to 31 May 2004
- 6) 31 May to 30 November 2004
- 7) 1 December 2004 to 31 May 2005
- 8) 31 May to 30 November 2005

CCS, *Events and Activities* (occasional bulletin): January-April 2005; May-August 2005; January-April 2006

CCS, 2003, *Participants Manual, Research and Analysis Skills Strengthening Programme (RASSP)*, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/files/RSSP2.pdf>

CCS (various contributors) *CCS Staff Self-Appraisals*, typescript May 2006

CCS/SoDS, 2005, *Progress Reports for Atlantic Philanthropies on the Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements Project*, (December 2003, November 2004, May 2005, December 2005)

CCS (no author specified) 2004, *Research and Analysis Skills Strengthening Programme, Report to CCS Advisory Board*, November

Harper, Ann, 2004, *Mid-term Review of the Centre for Civil Society*, 3 November

Kotzé, H. 2004, *Grant Programme & Post-Doctoral Fellowships, Report to CCS Advisory Board*, November

Padayachee, V. and M. Muchie, 2004, *Civil Society and African Integration, Report to CCS Advisory Board*, November

Social Trends Development Services, 2000, *Towards the Establishment of a Knowledge-Based Entity Tasked With Studying and Promoting Study on the Non-Profit Sector in South Africa, Draft Synthesis Report*, May [author: Josette Cole]