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The Challenges Facing NGOs from Above and Below

Dr Armine Ishkanian, Department of Social Policy
London School of Economics

Outline

- Periods of civil society development in the former Soviet states
- Challenges to NGOs from above and below
- Scenarios

Phases of civil society development in the FSU

- Three distinct phases of development
 - 1980 – 1990 - nascent, organic, non-institutionalised
 - 1991 – 2005 – ‘genetically engineered’, top down, donor driven, alternative employment
 - 2006 – present – rise of CIVIC INITIATIVES, bottom up, not connected to or dependent on donors

Challenges facing NGOs

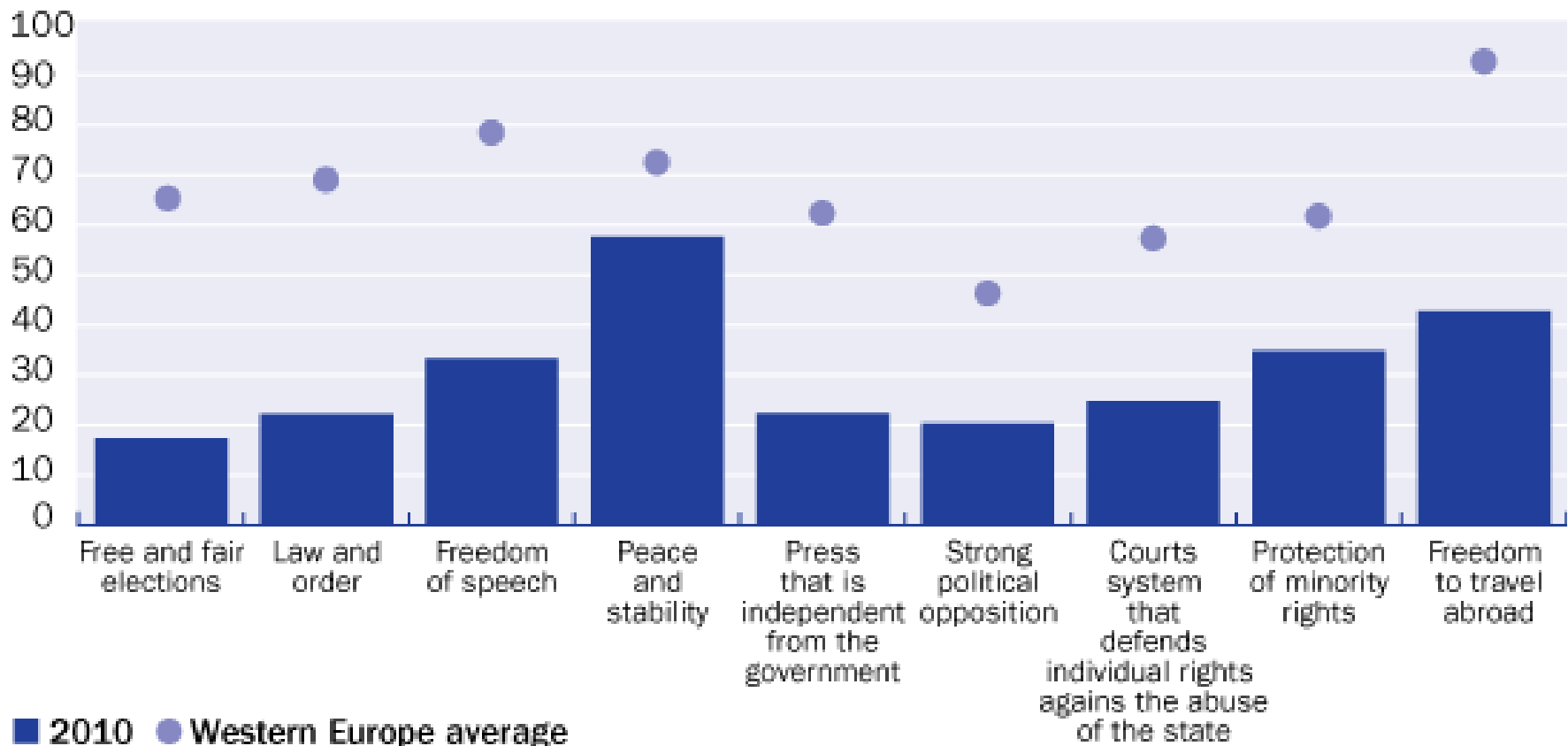
- Resource dependency
- The limitations of the legislative field
- Tensions between service delivery and advocacy
- How to maintain independence of mission, voice and action
- Achieving impact – what is impact?

Challenges from above

- “Backlash against civil society” (Howell et. Al.) after the Colour Revolutions
- Legislative measures [to be covered by Kate Levine]
- Perpetuation by Governments of mistrust and the discourses of ‘foreign agents’; ‘grant-hunters’ or ‘grant-eaters’
- The importance of public trust

Limited belief in presence of many basic institutions

% of respondents who believe that the country has the basic democratic institutions



EBRD 2011 http://www.ebrd.com/pages/research/publications/special/armenia_lits2.shtml

Trust levels in NGOs in the South Caucasus (2011-2012)

Cross-country (%)	Fully distrust	Distrust	Some-what trust	Trust	Fully trust	DK	RA
Armenia	14	11	30	18	5	22	0
Azerbaijan	6	13	27	19	8	27	1
Georgia	6	9	29	18	4	34	1

Armenia 2013 – further decline in trust in NGOs

Frequency distribution (%)

Fully distrust	21
Somewhat distrust	15
Neither trust nor distrust	34
Somewhat trust	15
Fully trust	3
DK/RA	13

Challenges from below #1

- Grassroots civic initiatives – a new type of civil society activism
- Examples from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia
Commonalities
- Why are they emerging now?

Challenges from below #2

- Grassroots GONGOs?
 - Examples
 - Implications for NGOs

Opportunities?

- The engagement between NGOs and informal grassroots groups
 - Partners?
 - Allies?
 - Adversaries?
- Glasius, M. and A. Ishkanian (forthcoming) “Surreptitious Symbiosis: Engagement between activists and NGOs” in *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*.

Scenarios

- Sketching some scenarios for the future