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Transnational social capital:
the socio-spatialities of civil society

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Abstract   *Civil society remains a contested concept, but one that is widely embedded in global development processes. Transnationalism within civil society scholarship is often described dichotomously, either through hierarchical dependency relations or as a more amorphous networked global civil society. These two contrasting spatial imaginaries produce very particular ideas about how transnational relations contribute to civil society. Drawing on empirical material from research with civil society organizations in Barbados and Grenada, in this article I contend that civil society groups use forms of transnational social capital in their work. This does not, however, resonate with the horizontal relations associated with grassroots globalization or vertical chains of dependence. These social relations are imbued with power and agency and are entangled in situated historical, geographical and personal contexts. I conclude that the diverse transnational social relations that are part of civil society activity offer hope and possibilities for continued civil society action in these unexpected spatial arrangements.*

There has been a significant amount of scholarship on the development of civil society, both theoretically and, more recently, as an avenue through which to mobilize development (Edwards 2014; Edwards and Hulme 1995, 1996). While civil society remains ambiguous and difficult to define, its use in development discourses and practices has often been tied to 'Westernized' framings of civil society, which articulate ideas of development through liberal democratization, a minimal state and civil society as an effective welfare provider (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Lewis 2002; Mamdani 1996). In global development processes, civil society has been accused of 'being rendered technical', of being turned into an apolitical body heavily associated with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and with adopting universal frameworks that neglect the informality, incivility and cultural difference that come with civil society

organizing in different places (Banks et al. 2015; Lewis 2002; Mamdani 1996; Obadare 2011, 2014). Ideas of transnationalism have been deployed in development discourses in two distinct ways – either as a local phenomenon, which emphasizes the position of civil society at the bottom of chains of dependence, or in terms of a more amorphous, networked global civil society.

Drawing on bodies of work from studies of social movements and contentious politics, as well as development studies, I begin the article by considering how transnationalism has permeated civil society theory and practice. I then move on to discuss empirical material drawn from research on civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Caribbean islands of Barbados and Grenada. The empirical analysis demonstrates the crucial importance of transnational social relations and shows how an examination of some of the key features of these different relationships complicates our normative ideas about what constitutes transnational civil society.

I show that the myriad of social relations involved in civil society work are spatially rich and operate simultaneously through multiple socio-spatial realms, thus contributing to broader debates on the socio-spatiality of civil society. This emphasis on connections helps one to understand civil society action beyond the usual place-based/-global network binaries and to see the relations that aid civil society beyond those formally ascribed to it. I conclude by describing how the transnational social relations that are part of civil society offer hope and possibilities for continued civil society action in these unexpected spatial arrangements (Massey 2004, 2006, 2014), thereby contributing to the body of work that considers the diverse geographies and spatialities that are crucial for civil society theorizing (Mercer et al. 2009).

Transnationalism within civil society scholarship

In development studies, the concept of transnationalism is often limited to a nebulous notion of a global civil society or to a form of vertical dependency in which civil society is seen as the local element in the transnational development hierarchy (Bebbington 2004; Bebbington and Kothari 2006; McFarlane 2006; Mercer et al. 2009). These two dichotomous positions have resulted in calls for more contextualized accounts of what social relations contribute to civil society action and the varying geographies of these relations (Bebbington 2007; Mercer et al. 2009; Naughton 2014). In this section, I examine how scholars, to date, have thought about the transnational social relations that contribute to civil society.

Given that most development interventions involve movements of money, people and knowledge, it is impossible to deny the transnational nature of global development and of the industry and actors associated with it (Mosse 2013; Murray Li 2013). The transnational nature of 'Southern' civil society in development discourses is sometimes conceptualized through the social relations that civil society groups may have with donor organizations and NGOs in the Global North. These tend to take the form of unequal relations, exacerbated by processes of professionalization and financial accountability (Jenkins 2005; Mawdsley et al. 2002), accentuating vertical dependency relations between Northern and Southern organizations (Fowler 2000). The rhetoric of

partnership is often prominent in these social relationships, but evaluations of partnerships between Northern and Southern NGOs have tended to highlight the inequalities between them, with the Southern ones invariably seen as poor relations in a lopsided friendship (Porter 2003; Reith 2010; Van Rooy and Robinson 1998). Porter's (2003) work in Ghana points to the frustration that many NGOs express over this unequal master–servant relationship, yet she also comments on how many NGOs accept these facets of clientelism in their work, despite realizing that these relations restrict the role they can play in poverty alleviation. Much of the work on international donors and civil society points to vertical relations of power, with Southern civil society very much at the bottom of what Tvedt (1998: 75) calls 'a transmission belt of powerful language and of Western concepts of development'. Despite their appearance of equality, transnational partnerships are therefore seen as potentially part of a chain of dependency inducing relationships (Fowler 2000).

These transnational relations emphasize the localness of civil society groups in the Global South. Local civil society is often conceived through its attachment to place and through social relations and capital that are embedded and formed in the locality. This links to the World Bank's original construction of civil society through an agenda of good governance, which emphasizes action at the nation-state level, increasing decentralization and local community participation in the development process (Abrahamsen 2004; Porter 2003; World Bank 1989). It also projects a certain territoriality, particularly of community-based groups defined and legitimized within this transnational chain for their ability to be 'local', presuming that they operate through local, proximal connections and as an avenue through which 'the community' can cultivate its own development projects (Jeffrey 2007, 2008; Mercer and Green 2013). This attachment to community lends a level of credibility to such groups and it is their 'grassrootsness' that (partly) contributes to their legitimacy (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2011). CSOs have frequently been criticized for being unable to 'live up to' their grassroots claims, for their lack of accountability to their grassroots constituents and for being unrepresentative of the local community (Banks et al. 2015; Fagan 2005; Hashemi 1995; Mercer and Green 2013).

In contrast to this verticality, by focusing on networks, scholarship on transnational and global civil society tends to disrupt territorially-based understandings of civil society's socio-spatialities (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Transnational civil society differs from the locally-embedded NGOs described above, which, despite their virtues, languish at the bottom of a vertical hierarchy of power relations, entangled in complex chains of dependence (Mercer and Green 2013). A focus on transnational civil society accentuates the creation of a space for horizontal organizing, the free circulation of information and involvement in global governance (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Holzscheiter 2016; McFarlane 2006; Pieck and Moog 2009), while still potentially reflecting identities associated with nation-states (Falk 1998). Davies (2008) contends that transnational civil society is comprised of groups that transcend national boundaries but lack a global reach. The transnational networks formed by alliances of grassroots civil society groups are viewed as opportunities both to fight local struggles and, presuming engagement with a more radical politics and a more even spread of socio-

spatial relations beyond the nation-state, contribute to progressive global politics (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2011; Cumbers et al. 2008; Escobar 2001; Featherstone 2008; Ferguson 2006; Massey 1993; Mercer et al. 2009; Piper and Uhlin 2004; Routledge 2008). Theories of transnational civil society are, however, often criticized for neglecting power relations, asymmetries of wealth and the significance of national borders (Doherty and Doyle 2006; Pieck and Moog 2009).

The more ambitious and ambiguous term, global civil society, is also prevalent in the civil society literature and is presented simultaneously as an ideological hope, a normative ideal and an empirical phenomenon (Chandler 2004; Dallmayr 2007). It can refer to formal groups, global alliances and informal networks (Baker 2002). Beyond these institutional arrangements, the term can also be thought of as a product of globalization, a consciousness movement of global citizens who articulate resistance to neoliberalism and certain patterns of globalization (Buckley 2013; Falk 1998; Kaldor 2003). These groups are not only global in scale, but they also have a global orientation, or, as Falk (1998: 100) contends, through networked actors and transnational social movements, they produce 'globalization-from-below' (Long 2008). This problematizes the normative moral stance of global civil society. Lipschultz (2007) argues that global civil society is purely an extension of economic capitalism; Worth and Buckley (2009) contend that it is a space for elitism; Berry and Gabay (2009) articulate parochialism within global civil society; and Bergesen (2007) questions whether a global civil society is in fact a Euro-centric model of transnationalism that excludes movements that do not fit the 'civil' narrative (Kaldor 2003). While the spatial framing of global civil society accentuates connections between 'global citizens', it ignores the possibility of more vertical power relations.

Given that transnationalism has become increasingly important to understanding development (Bebbington and Batterbury 2001), McFarlane (2006: 35) argues that we need to pay more attention to the 'nature and role of transnational networks' beyond the dominant conceptualizations. These efforts highlight the interconnected nature of civil society work, go beyond vertical dependency or flattened horizontal relations in their understandings of how transnationalism shapes civil society, and emphasize the importance of following the varied flows and dispersions of different materials and discourses (McFarlane 2006, 2009). The transnational network has become an important development actor (Henry et al. 2004; McFarlane 2006: 37, 2008). For example, Bebbington (2004) uses a network typology to understand NGOs and McFarlane (2009) supports the idea of translocal assemblages. Both articulate the need to understand development through the transfer and exchange of resources, materials and ideas across space, and accentuate the distinct power dynamics between different sites. Bebbington and Kothari (2006: 854), who demonstrate how examining development networks reveals how certain patterns of knowledge and practices are sustained through space and time, argue that, to understand what NGOs do, 'it can be helpful to see them in terms of different relationships: among individuals across different locations'. A more fluid approach to transnationalism can be seen in the work of Baillie Smith and Jenkins (2012) who contend that civil society activists in India employ cosmopolitan subjectivities in their work and Mercer et al. (2009) question the formalized versions

of transnational civil society with their explorations of the transient connections within diasporic associations. They contrast the ephemeral relations that are part of transnational hometown associations with the rigid network framing of diasporic civil society within policy discourse.

These bodies of work chime more readily with scholars of contentious politics who are interested in a particular type of civil society action and who use different interpretations of space to derive their theories about how political change occurs (Dikec 2012). In particular, these spatial theories challenge the binary between the local and the global, thus stressing the interconnected nature of the world in which we live (Cumbers et al. 2008; Massey 1994, 2005). Spatializing political action makes it easier to recognize the interdependence of local contestations and wider global activities, as well as to acknowledge the less visible articulations of political activity (Davies 2012; Featherstone 2008; Kothari 2012). Featherstone (2008), in rejecting a territorially dominated account of political action, argues that local politics always occurs through relations across space; it entails developing a progressive local agenda by incorporating ideas from further afield.

Generally, development scholars working on civil society outside the social movement arena are reluctant to embrace 'the possibility of more fluid transnational relations; they tend to associate civil society action with a singular scale and are caught between a binary of locally-embedded, territorial and vertically dependent groups and a more nebulous global civil society. The spatialities and geographies in between these forms of organizing need to focus on the multiple angles and socio-spatial topographies of civil society work. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of understanding sustainability, potentially by examining the environment in which civil society groups exist and the relationships they form (Arhin 2016; Fowler 2016; Hayman 2016). The literature considers how the sector can bolster itself in the face of multiple stresses, how it can sustain itself in an increasingly restrictive environment (CIVICUS 2018), and how organizations can continue their work with reduced levels of international funding (Cieslik 2016; Claessen and de Lange 2016; Edwards 2014; Galvin and Iannotti 2015; Hailey and Salway 2016; Wood 2016).

Following Naughton's (2014: 18) proposition that 'social capital is a lens through which to tell stories about different socio-spatial relations', by examining the social resources engaged and mobilized through civil society action, I comment on the socio-spatialities of civil society work and show how civil society groups sustain their work in the context of multiple stresses. Bebbington (2007) and Naughton (2014) show how socio-spatial relations challenge normative spatial constructions of civil society and allow some groups to gain influence and power. It is necessary to articulate the importance of social relations and resources in civil society work and to understand their forms and processes when divorced from a desire to foster an environment in which this could happen. Here, I take social relations as an analytical tool, something to 'think with' about civil society and as a way of interrogating the static spatial framings that dominate the civil society literature. I do not conceive of social capital as a stock of civicness to be created and accessed, but rather as the intimate set of social relations that shape civil society work. The social resources to which I refer in this article are

those that exist between people – for example, friendship, volunteering or acts of reciprocity.

Context and methodology

I have drawn this article from a wider research project on the contribution of CSOs to sustainable development in Barbados and Grenada. These countries, which are located in the Lesser Antilles group of islands in the Eastern Caribbean, have, according to CIA estimates taken in July 2015 and July 2016, populations of 291,495 (CIA 2016a) and 110,694 (CIA 2016b) respectively. Like much of the wider Caribbean region, the islands share histories of slavery, migration, colonial oppression and struggles for independence (Beckles 2006; Brizan 1984; Steele 2003). On the islands, which suffer from economic and environmental vulnerability, significant efforts have been made to diversify the economy since the 1970s (Commonwealth Secretariat 2015a, 2015b; Lewis 1993; World Bank 2016). Despite their vulnerability, however, both islands have achieved high levels of human development, as measured by the human development indictor, with Barbados marginally ahead of Grenada (UNDP 2017). Although these achievements are to be celebrated, concerns remain over the unevenness of this development, which is characterized by precarious job security, high unemployment, environmental vulnerability, cultural and social inequalities (Baptiste and Rhiney 2016; Bishop 2010; Wiltshire 2015).

It is in this context that civil society groups actively work towards incorporating a diverse range of activities, ideas and framings of what sustainable development may mean. Civil society groups are working in the fields of food, energy, sovereignty and security to mitigate climate change, enhance wellbeing and conserve the regions natural and built resources. CSOs have come to be seen as important development actors in the Caribbean, with increasing external funding provided to organizations in the 1970s and 1980s, when these relatively newly independent states were development targets for the USA, Canada and the UK (Webson 2010). As in other regions of the world, CSOs were seen as an effective alternative through which to enact development (Banks et al. 2015; Bebbington 2004), yet CSOs in the Caribbean have been criticized for allowing the state to co-opt them (Girvan 2012; Moloney 2013), for lacking the capacity to manage development projects efficiently (Peters and McDonald 2010), and for mis-managing their finances (Bishop et al. 2013).

In detailing the complexities of community involvement in participatory planning in the Eastern Caribbean, Pugh and Potter (2001) and Pugh and Richardson (2005) conclude that there is a tendency for powerful individuals to control community planning, thus reinforcing elite power structures. In their evaluation of civil society activity in Grenada in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan, Peters and McDonald (2010) report that CSOs were able to respond quickly and flexibly but were constrained by their limited experience of project management and difficulties in retaining staff. These issues are articulated elsewhere, with Hinds-Harrison (2014) outlining the inability of Caribbean CSOs to engage effectively with digital technology and Girvan (2010) commenting that the technification of trade policy, alongside civil society's

understanding of such policy, severely restricted their ability to influence regional trade negotiations.

The role of civil society in governing the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has also been questioned (Bishop et al. 2013; Bowen 2013; Girvan 2010, 2012; Hinds-Harrison 2013; Montoute 2016). Civil society groups have also been criticized for their involvement in regional integration mechanisms, such as the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), with Bowen (2013) arguing that they deliver services, build communities and promote sustainable development, but that their weak organizational capacity and leadership prevents them from fully participating in regional governance.

In this article, I focus on the responses of civil society actors from groups based in Barbados and Grenada, 45 of whom took part in the project between September 2015 and March 2016. The project sought to learn more about the everyday experiences of development actors who were moving away from applying normative definitions to attempts to strengthen democracy or contest their effectiveness. The involvement of civil society groups from both islands was viewed as an opportunity to draw out similarities and differences in their narratives in an effort to develop ideas about civil society that might articulate across different places, while still embedding these ideas in the context of the Eastern Caribbean. I used semi-structured interviews and, less frequently, repeat interviews and participant observation. I recruited the participants via internet searches and snowball sampling. To get a sense of the sort of civil society activity associated with developmental concerns in Barbados, Grenada and the wider region, I tried to gather the data from a wide range of CSOs, to incorporate groups of different forms, and to work on a variety of scales with different sorts of engagements with sustainable development. Despite the diversity of the organizations involved in the project, the majority were small community-based groups with few full-time paid staff. I interviewed 33 actors in Barbados and 26 in Grenada, in sessions ranging from 45 minutes to more than two hours. The majority of interviews took place face-to-face at a location of the participant's choosing, with seven undertaken via Skype. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, I have used pseudonyms and altered location names and other identifying details. With permission, I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews, which I then data coded and analysed manually.

Caribbean civil society: beyond the local or the global

In this section, I consider the ways in which the socio-spatial relations associated with civil society work in the Caribbean challenge normative assumptions about transnational relations in civil society. Civil society actors place a great deal of emphasis on the importance of social relations in their day-to-day work. As Lincoln, the founder of a Barbadian CSO, stated on 23 November 2015, 'our ability to really carry out programmes is because of our network, which we have built up over the last 38 years – a vast network of friends, well-wishers and supporters.'

My main focus is on social relations that extend beyond the proximate and local. While civil society groups in the Caribbean engage in diverse social relations, some of which may be embedded in place, I am interested in the transnational ones in ostensibly

local or community-based civil society groups, to which the majority of the research participants belong. These groups focus on seemingly local concerns, yet geographically distant relations that extend beyond the aspatiality associated with bonding, bridging and linking capital, are crucial to their work (Naughton 2014; Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000). The groups are not transnational in the sense that they work on global issues or define themselves as part of transnational networks, yet they use transnational capital to further their apparently local causes. They also challenge the idea that their transnationalism places them at the bottom of a vertical chain of dependence, thereby stressing aspects of civil society agency (McFarlane 2006). There has typically been less attention paid to how local or community-based groups, whose work is often fixed in place, are also transnational and deterritorialized because their relations exhibit forms of power and agency that differ from the normative understandings of transnational civil society. I am interested in how seemingly place-based civil society activity is partially shaped through connections with diverse geographical locales, but in ways that differ from our usual understanding of transnational civil society (Featherstone 2008; Massey 2005).

Attention to transnationalism is particularly important in the Caribbean, where both contemporary and historical development is intertwined with the influence of outsiders, mobility and migration (Beckles 2006; Brizan 1984; Payne and Sutton 2001; Puri 2014). While human mobility is important to our understanding of Caribbean development, mobility associated with materials, knowledge, ideas and culture is also crucial when considering the region and its interactions with more distant places. Stuart Hall (1991), for example, persuasively argues that the Caribbean has always been present in the UK, symbolically and materially, through the sugar with which we cook, the stately homes built from the profits of the slave trade, and tourism advertising. Paul Gilroy (1993), who speaks of the double consciousness required to be both European and black, uses the metaphor of a ship crossing the (black) Atlantic to reveal the circulation of ideas, activists and political projects, while scholars like Edouard Glissant (1997) express the importance of creole identities and articulate the syncretic uniqueness of island life (Pugh 2013). Likewise, island scholars stress how islands negotiate both highly mobile and isolated spatial relations and arenas of connectivity (Baldacchino 2007, 2016; King 2009; Mountz 2015). Pugh (2013), for example, highlights how Derek Walcott's (1974) work rejects Caribbean culture as a mimic of 'little Africa' or 'little England', seeing folklore, religion and the Caribbean carnival as examples of the agency that Caribbean people acquire to metamorphosize and create new cultural traditions. This emphasis on the mobility of people, ideas and culture, and the effects of mobility, remains a significant feature of Caribbean life today and inevitably shapes contemporary civil society.

In this article, I engage with the transnational nature of CSOs in the Caribbean through the social relationships that their members form through their work. As we shall see, this deviates from the dominant understanding of transnational civil society. I aim to open up a discussion about what might constitute a transnational or global civil society, and to rearticulate it as a spatial framing for thinking about civil society. To do so, I examine how transnational social relations intersect with civil society activity and contend that this can be highlighted through stories of personal mobility and

connections with the diaspora. First, I contend that individual mobility is integral to civil society in the Caribbean. Second, I consider how connections with diasporic groups foster a version of transnational civil society.

Articulating social relations: what counts as transnational civil society?

Personal mobility

The social relations on which civil society relies are often embedded in pre-existing social structures. For example, they might draw on the social resources of a religious community or on particular cultural connections and capital (Bourdieu 1986), but this does not imply that they are based solely on territorial relations. The social resources, including friendships and close family relations, that stimulate civil society activity are not bound by locale, but extend beyond the boundaries of the nation-state to friends and family living overseas, with the geographies of these relations shaping how civil society action plays out in place. Personal mobility is also an important aspect of civil society work, a way of developing social and human capital and it plays a role in shaping political subjectivities and building civil society activity (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2011, 2012, 2016; Davies 2014; Nagal and Staeheli 2016; Staeheli et al. 2016).

Sheller and Urry (2006) argue that mobility plays a key role in many aspects of our lives and that our world can be interpreted as one of objects in motion and of flows of knowledge and ideas. Work within the mobilities paradigm incorporates the large-scale movement of people, objects and capital, as well as the more local everyday movements across the various spatiotemporal scales. This body of work also considers forced and blocked mobilities (and immobilities), and stresses that mobility is co-constitutive of social difference, for example through gender, age and race (Büscher and Urry 2009). Mobilities therefore shape and define identities through bodily movement, communication and virtual travel (Urry 2007). In a political context, mobility is often considered in terms of how mobile subjects might shape political and social processes. This includes canvassing migrant communities (Smith 2008) and the participation of emigrants in formal politics and social movements (Boccagni et al. 2016). Mobility covers the movement of not only people but also of knowledge, ideas and financial resources. Interest in the movements of non-human also extends to considerations about how knowledge, ideas and policy flow, and are actively channelled through particular relational complexes and, in turn, sustain and modify the original concept (Bebbington and Kothari 2006; Laurie et al. 2003; Peck and Theodore 2012). This approach emphasizes the instability of many of these flows and the way that objects, knowledge and ideas change through the circulation process and the practices associated with making a thing mobile (Larner and Laurie 2010). In the context of policy mobility, Cochrane and Ward (2012) argue that policies are actively circulated and fed back into global networks, thus implying that policy making is entangled with relational and territorial space. For example, global policies circulate, but are reworked and realized in different ways depending on the local context.

Personal mobility, including an education in the West (Nagel and Staeheli 2016) and participation in international events (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2016; Staeheli et al.

2016), shapes the engagement of people with civil society. Nagel and Staeheli (2016) show how the environmental discourses of Lebanese NGO activists reflected ideas about the civic virtues of green space, which they derived from their Western education and wider student experiences and then translated into their own environmental activism. The role of international travel in producing particular subjectivities and forms of capital can also be seen in the influence that international events have on civil society. Nagel and Staeheli (2015) document the role of participating in transnational citizenship conferences in the creation of young global citizens and Baillie Smith and Jenkins (2011, 2016) show how international events are often conceived as key moments in activist biographies in that they broaden their horizons and develop their human capital. As Colin, the founder of a Barbadian CSO mentioned in his interview (25 September 2015), he found inspiration to develop his organization and broaden his horizons from studying in Canada and being part of a network of Caribbean students:

> Four years ago, I went to study policy … I have a Masters' [degree] in engineering, but I went to study policy. …Well, to be straight, my supervisor was an agricultural economist in Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan grows food. It's as simple as that; it grows wheat and barley and all sorts of good things, so I ended up in agriculture because that was where she was from and where the money was available. … I got interested in food security because it's agriculture, there's always a food conference going on. … So, I tended to go to lots of conferences on food security and some of them were with some people from the Caribbean. It sparked my interest and when I came back [to Barbados] that was it. [On] day three, I was with a friend and she had a friend and we were in the car; we were talking about this thing and then we met every week for about four months just to put together the organization.

Colin's educational experience outside Barbados is rooted in numerous geographies. First, Saskatchewan University has links with the University of the West Indies and, as Colin put it, there is a network of students there from the Caribbean. Saskatchewan is a heavily agricultural rural province in western Canada, and its university is renowned for its expertise in agriculture and food. Engagement with these forms of knowledge, and with other Caribbean students there, influenced the way Colin thought about his civil society work and subsequently developed his organization. For him, exposure to thinking about food security in a particular way was a key factor in how he set up his civil society group to operationalize food security practices in the Barbadian context (Cochrane and Ward 2012). This was much like the importance that the activists interviewed by Baillie Smith and Jenkins (2011, 2016) accorded to international events. Other participants spoke of the influence of international travel on their subsequent activism, including youth conferences and trips overseas, and the loss they felt when this was no longer a viable option. As Pam, the founder of a Grenadian CSO, explains about her experiences of connecting with other Caribbean activists outside Grenada (interview, 1 February 2016):

> The women's movement in the region grew out of that networking and that opportunity for sharing experiences. You might have heard of the CAFRA [Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action] and that organization, which basically at this stage is pretty dormant, I haven't heard nothing [*sic*]. … That was a university without walls. It was real. I mean my own growth out of that process. I remember when we used to have those CaribPEDA [Caribbean people's development agency] meetings, for example, when you came from a CaribPEDA meeting you knew the region. I didn't have to go to Belize the meeting could have been in Grenada, could have been in St Vincent. … We've lost that.

This shows that, for civil society actors, personal mobility is highly precarious, fluid and contextual, and situated within wider geopolitical and developmental processes (Nagel and Staeheli 2016). Pam highlights the importance to her development work in Grenada of travelling around the Caribbean and connecting with other activists. However, she realizes that this is largely an activity from the past, for a loss of funding has dismantled regional connections and profoundly changed the nature of Caribbean regionalism. Civil society actors have now lost the connections they once had with their counterparts on the other islands, along with the social capital that these connections produced (Bishop and Payne 2010; Grenade and Skeete 2015).

Other participants also, like Colin and Pam, spoke of their time spent overseas as a catalyst for their subsequent involvement in civil society. They articulated this in different ways – as an opportunity to bring back the knowledge and ideas they had gained outside the island, or as a way of giving back and reconnecting with the region after a period away. For some, civil society involvement was a way of embedding themselves back in the society after a long absence, as well as a chance to become a part of island life and ecology. As David, the director of a Grenadian CSO (interview, 12 February 2016) comments:

> When the group was formed, I was overseas. When I arrived in Grenada in late 2009, I was briefed about what the group intended to do. I'll say, well yes, I could be part of that because, for me personally, I like the passion of being in nature, natural resources, I love that, so I joined the group in late 2009 and one of the main focuses was pulling the community together.

These connections with overseas travel create social capital for the various CSOs. For example, David's desire to reconnect with the Caribbean provided his group with social capital in the form of his passion, skills and drive. It is important to remember, however, that there is a politics to this mobility (Adey 2006). That not everybody can access overseas travel or study, and that mobility is often bounded within geopolitical networks of contemporary and historical connections and wider societal trends, produces particular patterns of transnational mobility (Davies 2014; Kitchin and Dodge 2005; Nagel and Staeheli 2016). The benefits gained by overseas travel also depend on the relative immobility of others. Returning to Colin's example of how the place-based connections of one of his friends assisted in the formation of his organization:

> [Claire] gives the culture, she knows the communities, because she works in culture. So, she knows the communities, which is one of the other reasons why it has not been as difficult getting into the communities because she has a level of legitimacy, she knows musicians, she knows artists, right so she is already in the community.

Colin juxtaposes his time studying overseas with the place-based connections of another member of his group. Both are required to make his work successful, as he draws on both transnational and much more local relations to shape his engagement with the community he works with. This opposes the tendency to view transnational relations as more important for civil society organizing, for it is necessary to recognize the interconnections and merits of both local and transnational social relations (Mercer et al. 2009). Spending time overseas offers Caribbean civil society actors a chance to gain knowledge and ideas, but, as in David's case, civil society work also provides them with a route back into their community. Spending time overseas can stimulate their desire to contribute to the community on their return and build the social capital of civil society. It is important to recognize that transnational mobility is a source of capital and power for some civil society groups and a way of gaining advantage (Naughton 2014), but, since it is not available to all, is has the potential to aid some groups to the potential detriment of others (Massey 1994). It is also precarious and relies on wider geopolitical circumstances (Nagel and Staeheli 2016; Rogaly 2015). Travel is intertwined with historical and geopolitical narratives of Caribbean mobility and represents a politics of opportunity in the development of civil society activity. Overseas mobility can potentially improve the resources that actors are able to bring to civil society, but it also promotes particular versions of what sustainable development may encompass (Baillie Smith and Jenkins, 2011, 2012, 2016; Bebbington 2007; Nagel and Staeheli 2016).

Diasporic connections

While understanding that the transnational mobility of civil society actors can play a part in shaping civil society action, the migration of Caribbean nationals on a more permanent, albeit sometimes fluid, basis also shapes Caribbean civil society. Diasporic groups are now increasingly recognized as development actors and this recognition gives their role a certain complexity (Mohan 2008; Mullings 2012). Mercer et al. (2009) challenge assumptions about the greater power of the diaspora compared with more localized relations in the activities of home-town associations in Tanzania. Budabin (2014) points to the difficulties that diasporic groups may face in trying to gain political access, while Mohan (2006) argues that such groups in Ghana are too place dependent and reluctant to challenge an overbearing state. Civil society actors in the Caribbean, however, actively maintain and develop relationships with Caribbean nationals in the diaspora that go beyond the provision of financial support for their work. This is particularly apparent in Grenada, perhaps because of economic differences but also because its outmigration patterns are greater and more diverse than elsewhere. The

deterritorialized nature of civil society is also visible in Barbados, where civil society groups draw on their 'international friends' without using the language of diaspora. These transnational connections are not evenly spread around the globe but, unsurprisingly, follow patterns of Caribbean migration, with connections more likely in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia. This reinforces the idea that transnationalism is bounded by particular networks of mobility associated with historical geopolitical connections rather than that it produces an even spread of connections around the world (Kitchin and Dodge 2005; Mercer et al. 2009).

The governments of many Caribbean nations now actively foster relations with their diasporic communities with a view to engaging them in entrepreneurial economic development in their 'home' countries (Hosein et al. 2006; Mullings 2012; Nurse 2015). Less attention is paid to the social involvement of the diaspora in civil society and to using diasporic knowledge, skills and social resources to build it. Civil society actors are using their pre-existing connections with the diaspora to aid their cause, which may be based on geographical ties to particular connections, personal connections to those who have moved overseas and, more recently, crowd-funding projects that directly appeal to diasporic communities. Civil society actors feel that this engagement enhances the status and kudos of their work, so imbuing it with greater cultural capital. As Felix, the president of a Grenadian CSO comments (interview, 2 March 2016), 'if I could get that commitment … and say yes, the members of the diaspora are willing to help, … I think it would go down much nicer.'

Other civil society groups use the advantages they gain from their overseas social ties with people living in the diaspora to improve their own access to the state. Civil society actors sometimes encouraged their colleagues in the diaspora to lobby their embassies or high commissions about issues of concern, viewing the diaspora as having power and influence The latter often view the people in the diaspora as having power and influence. They are the members of society who have done well, the best students who have been offered scholarships abroad to study, with the less successful members of society left behind on the island. The diaspora is therefore perceived as housing the high-status, influential groups and individuals, which is echoed in the way the state also engages with it. The publicity material that the government of Barbados produces for its annual conference to encourage diasporic entrepreneurship in the country discursively positions the diaspora as comprised of wealthy elites, of whom the nation should be proud. In fact, the opposition party in Grenada has identified diasporic involvement in development as one of its 12 core principles (*Barbados Advocate* 2016; Government of Barbados 2013; *New Today* 2016). As Herbert, who founded a Grenadian CSO puts it (interview, 2 March 2016):

> Over the years we have had a member in New York, we have [a member] in Canada and we just have a new contact in the UK, a gentleman by the name [of Walter]. [He] … is due here in May and we want to talk in detail with him. He is giving us some pointers in order to raise funds. But [Leonard] is one of our early contacts … and we have been in correspondence over the year [on] how he can assist the foundation. … He was instrumental in motivating us to have a

website that can serve as a marketing tool. It was his idea and we managed to do that successfully and also to institute a PayPal account and it [too] was through his initiative.

The social relations that Herbert describes bring significant advantages to his group. With the assistance of an interested member of the diaspora they had been able to develop their website and utilize a Paypal account to increase their revenue, providing access to valuable resources (Bourdieu 1986). These were not the sorts of connections one would normally find in the grassroots alliances of global civil society groups (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2011; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005); rather, they were personal relationships with individuals in the diaspora who were keen to contribute to the workings of a CSO in Grenada. The connection began with a letter Walter wrote to a Grenadian newspaper questioning the extent of Herbert's connections to Grenadian diasporas around the world, and how these communities might be of further use to his group. Herbert responded by welcoming the suggestions and developing a personal relationship with Walter, who gave him useful ideas about how to develop his work. Herbert's comments also show how the higher status and contacts of a member of the diaspora might enhance a group's social capital (Bourdieu 1986). Diasporic contributions to CSOs in the Caribbean go beyond financial assistance to incorporate the crafting of new ideas and, in some cases, raising overseas awareness of issues at home. In Walter's original article to the newspaper, he highlighted the various ways in which the diaspora could help Caribbean CSOs, with many of these ideas implicitly connected to his knowledge and familiarity with the UK and to post-colonial connections between the UK and Grenada.

Other participants echoed Herbert's proactivity in building relations with members of the diaspora. Trevor, the co-founder of another Grenadian community-based group explained (interview, 7 March 2016) the significance of the diaspora for sustaining his group's work, and the efforts his group made to foster and maintain these connections:

[The diaspora] has contributed significantly. In fact, we work hard in terms of developing. What we did was, we developed, for example, the New York connection. Villagers who have gone to New York and live right, so what we do was to develop [a] relationship with them to see how they can support things that happen back home. … So, whatever they do they send it back home and from time to time we have major activities some of them would try to come home for that activity you know. So, what you're doing here you get their support and still keeping your connection overseas and them as a community inside of New York. We have tried to develop several of these, some people might call them different names, the politicians might call them cells, so for example in the UK, in all the key places we think we have our people reside we try to make that connection. …We picked up on all these countries where we figured there was lots of our people residing. We established a relationship. … Facebook is also important; how do we keep in touch with them? Whenever we

have a death, this is what is happening and they know, they can see we post the pictures and feel part of that connection so it's very, very important.

These narratives on the diaspora draw attention to the uneven distribution of power between diasporic and local CSOs. Through the connections he could evoke in the UK, Walter was able to make use of potential solutions available in the diaspora, about which Grenadians might not have thought or had sufficient capital to access. Through their contacts, status, knowledge and skills, people in the diaspora are perceived as bringing forms of social capital with them. This is evident, as Trevor mentioned, in the way CSOs reach out to diasporic groups for support, actively making links with them. However, local CSOs are not solely dependent on diasporic groups, for they also provide a channel through which members of the diaspora can maintain their own Caribbean connections. As Trevor's comments show, his group's overseas links give the diaspora important avenues through which to remain connected to 'home' and an opportunity to build the diasporic community overseas. These relationships go beyond purely assisting the group with financial or other types of support. For example, the group's Facebook page is a useful avenue down which Trevor's CSO can send information about community life to the diaspora and maintain some of its links with it. This two-way connection was also evident in the comments of Alyson, who founded a Grenadian CSO that used diasporic engagement in a different way. During a participatory planning exercise with her local community, Alyson asked members of the diaspora to direct their thoughts towards community development. As she explains (interview, 5 February 2016), 'we set up the information via the Internet and the diaspora responded and they started to remember things too and then send information and the list grew even bigger and took on a life of its own.'

These examples show that the diaspora provides CSOs with important social resources, which include lobbying the state, accessing funds, knowledge and skills, forming bonds, and bridging and linking types of capital (Szreter and Woolcock 2004). However, these connections are not aspatial and associated with uneven geographies. Civil society actors in Grenada engage more deeply with their diaspora than their counterparts in Barbados, possibly due to historical and contemporary political and economic circumstances. Diasporic connections are also unevenly spread geographically. That the United States, Canada and UK feature so much more prominently than other places shows that the different forms of social capital are situated historically and geographically (Bebbington 2007; Schuller 2007). We can only make sense of this form of social capital through understanding the geopolitical narratives surrounding the Caribbean diaspora and its diverse relations with different Caribbean islands. These forms of social capital are also entangled with power (Naughton 2014) as it circulates between the diaspora and civil society. In one sense, civil society groups rely on the diaspora for social capital, yet there is also a sense in which being involved in Caribbean civil society offers something to members of the diaspora.

This sense of different forms of transnational social relations, each imbued with uneven circulations of power and entangled in historical, political and contemporary economic processes, does not resonate with the framings of transnational civil society

that Davies (2008) described, or with a wider idea of global civil society articulated through globalized grassroots alliances (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2011; Cumbers et al. 2008). Yet, neither do these descriptions fit with the idea of local civil society being at the bottom of a transnational hierarchy. By exploring the social connections that contribute to civil society we can understand its work as both 'intensive, yet also spatially extensive' (Davies 2012: 283). This goes beyond groups being influenced by political action elsewhere, as Featherstone (2008, 2010, 2012) described in his work on solidarity, but social resources, emotional support, ideas and encouragement go beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, and thus raise the prospect that local CSOs, despite calling themselves community-based, sustain their work through spatially extensive connections. These diverse transnational connections shape civil society action in a variety of ways. We have seen how personal mobility can stimulate a desire for engagement with civil society on returning to the Caribbean and how social relationships with members of the diaspora encourage engagement with the state and facilitate access to valued resources. To some extent, these social relations resonate with forms of bonding, bridging and linking capital, but they also articulate the diversity of social relations that sustain civil society work and the need to understand the sometimes very personal stories associated with the formation of social capital, rather than seeing social capital as a stock resource that is available to all (Naughton 2014). These social relations are also embedded in very particular geographies, which follow the patterns of Caribbean migration and mobility.

In this article, I have looked at the everyday socio-spatial relations in civil society work that often challenge pre-existing ideas about how one should think about civil society from a transnational perspective. There has been a tendency to downplay the complex dynamic geographies of CSOs in favour of more static understandings. The transnational nature of civil society is often considered in terms of vertical, hierarchical models of civil society in which local CSOs are understood through their unidirectional dependency on international donors, or through the distinct frameworks of transnational and global civil society that limit the importance of the nation-state and emphasize horizontal organizing and informal relations (Davies 2008; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Doherty and Doyle 2006; Kaldor 2003). Exploring the socio-spatial relations associated with civil society work predominantly conducted by local and community-based groups in the Caribbean, highlights the importance of these diverse transnational connections. This research therefore calls into question what notions of transnational civil society might mean and who these conceptualizations might exclude. It also highlights how transnational relations are imbued with flows of power, which is something that global civil society scholarship has been criticized for neglecting (Naughton 2014). A focus on social relations encourages consideration of civil society as more interconnected than many community-based framings allow, beyond those that are situated within global grassroots alliances (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2011). These interconnections are, however, geographically, historically, politically and personally situated (Bebbington 2007; Schuller 2007), with civil society groups in Barbados and Grenada exhibiting different transnational social connections, based on their differing histories of migration and mobility and personal activist biographies.

Conclusion: rethinking transnational civil society

Stories about everyday social relations contributing to civil society organizing in the Caribbean contrast the dominant ways that transnationalism has been considered in the context of civil society. Narratives of social capital show how transnational aspects of civil society encompass the individual mobility of civil society actors and diasporic connections. They provide a deterritorialized sense of domestic civil society, but one that is distinct from the global or transnational one that Kaldor (2003) or Davies (2008) defined. These are not the relationships of 'grassroots globalization', horizontal organizing, or alliances between social movements; rather, they are imbued with power and show the diversity of the transnational social relations that contribute to civil society activity. Examining these social relations shows how civil society activity and contemporary sustainable development are attached to wider historical and contemporary geopolitical transformations, particularly the role of geopolitics in mobility and migration patterns in the Caribbean, and how spatial understandings of civil society are not just formed in the present, but also made through historical processes. Exploring the everyday narratives of the social resources that CSOs use has shown that traditional understandings do not fully account for the transnational aspects of civil society. We need to explore what categories such as transnational civil society might mean and highlight the agency involved in spatializing civil society (McFarlane 2006; Noxolo et al. 2012).

A focus on the interconnectedness of civil society can be understood as a political process and as an attempt to produce alternative narratives about its characteristics (Herod and Wright 2002). The transnationalism associated with civil society within development discourse makes complexity simple, enabling the formation of a universal model and rendering civil society technical (Ferguson 1994; Murray Li 2013). These dominant versions of the discourse neglect the structural limits of civil society formation and fail to do justice to an understanding that acknowledges the less visible relations through which most civil society work is conducted and sustained. A focus on messy social relations makes international donors less visible and potentially reduces their importance in civil society action. An engagement with the more complex transnational social relations that are part of civil society reveals new possibilities for action, for example in this case through diasporic relations, and helps to explain why some groups and ideas become more influential than others. From hearing and recounting stories of everyday social relations and from privileging the less coherent versions of the socio-spatialities of CSO work, it becomes clear that civil society is always in process – never fixed or static, but interstitial, fluid and unfinished. This notion of untapped potential and connections yet to be made (Massey 2005; Massey 2009 et al.) fosters hope for ongoing, creative and resilient civil society work.

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