



Manifesto for the Mobilisation of Civil Society

Civil Society Global Network

A global awakening of civil society is underway. After a century of neglect by political movements, governments and markets, civil society is moving to the centre stage of public decision-making and entrepreneurial initiative around the world.

The old political philosophies and economic theories based exclusively on states and markets have run their course. They no longer provide meaningful frameworks for understanding the aspirations, relationships and initiatives of people in civil society. Citizen-state relationships and customer-market relationships cannot contain or express the diversity of connections and initiatives that people in civil society want in shaping their lives.

Political institutions and economic systems around the world are now sharply out of alignment with the emerging dynamism of civil society. They need fundamental reform, or replacement with new forms, to meet the needs for social initiative and connection that are arising in civil society.

This Manifesto is directed to political movements, parties, governments and social movements around the world. It demands of these organisations a re-orientation of their outlook to fit the awakening of civil society. It also seeks a mobilisation of civil society to achieve this shift.

The Manifesto provides a set of signposts for where political movements, parties, governments and social movements should be heading, and a checklist for use by civil society in monitoring their movement.

It is a tool for the awakening and mobilisation of civil society as a transformational force in global affairs.

1. Understanding the World Outside States and Markets
2. Personal and Social Relationships
3. Self-Help and Mutual Support
4. Small is Beautiful
5. A Leaner State with Less Bureaucracy
6. A Market Economy without Concentrations of Corporate Power
7. Social Enterprise in Finance and the Exchange of Capital
8. Entrepreneurship and Innovation
9. Social Enterprise in Education Health and Social Services
10. A Renewal of Democracy

1. Understanding the World Outside States and Markets

Civil society comprises the relationships and activities that make up our lives at grass-roots levels of society, in families, communities, networks and voluntary associations, independent of both government and the commercial world. The not-for-profit sector of organisations is one strand in civil society, alongside informal and voluntary forms of association. Both formal and informal activity is important for well-being in civil society.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to renew their self-understanding, language and culture by acknowledging civil society and placing it at the centre of their guiding philosophy.

2. Personal and Social Relationships

States and markets have been blind to the personal and social primacy of family and kinship relationships and voluntary friendship ties in determining social well-being and belonging. Labour markets, corporate operations, social services, health and education systems have functioned in splendid isolation from families as the bedrock social unit, eroding familial and social ties, and supplanting relationships with professional and commercial interventions. The epidemic of loneliness in the western world cannot be addressed by states or markets.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to recognise the primacy of personal and social relationships in their view of society, alongside states and markets. and re-orient public services and operations to strengthen family and caring responsibilities.

3. Self-Help and Mutual Support

Social welfare systems have been able to regulate the social consequences of capitalism to a limited extent but have succeeded in delivering only short-term, fragmented, silo-driven interventions which shuffle the disadvantaged from pillar to post. Welfare bureaucracies cannot generate the social relationships, personal stability and emotional attachments that alone can rebuild damaged and disadvantaged persons and communities. Nor have they been able to integrate self-help and mutual support into effective welfare systems.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to radically re-design welfare systems by incorporating self-help and mutual support practices and aiming to restore civil society relationships.

4. Small is Beautiful

Aggregation of organisations - suburbs, businesses, charities and associations – into larger entities has been an uninterrupted trend within states and commercial organisations for a century. Charities, schools, hospitals, and mutuels have been transformed into large corporate entities by inappropriate regulatory frameworks. Small towns have struggled to maintain viability as cities sprawl ever outwards with diminishing social connections.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to adopt a ‘small is beautiful’ social ethic and integrate it with contemporary technology-enabled economies of scale to produce liveable communities and organisations that are amenable to the cultivation of civil society.

5. A Leaner State with Less Bureaucracy

Political institutions of both Left and Right have presided over the steady growth of bureaucracy for more than a century. Neither has sought to systematically devolve power and authority to communities, non-government associations, social enterprise, families or consumers. States have steadily acquired more functions of service delivery, monitoring of compliance, regulation and surveillance.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to seek a leaner state through devolution of power and function to non-government associations and social enterprises.

6. A Market Economy without Concentrations of Corporate Power

States and markets have delivered steady concentrations of corporate power in the hands of ever diminishing numbers of owners over the course of the last century. Governments of both Left and Right have yielded to corporate demands for bailouts of failed businesses, curbs on competition, barriers for new entrants, subsidies for business inputs, and protection from competitors in the name of industry policy.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to work towards a disaggregation of corporate power and a market economy with a widespread dispersal of economic ownership throughout society, through corporate law reform, anti-trust legislation, employee share-ownership arrangements, and encouragement of entrepreneurial activity in the direction of self-employment, family-owned businesses, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals.

7. Social Enterprise in Finance and the Exchange of Capital

The accumulation of capital is too important a social function to be exercised by investor-owned financial corporations or state-owned banks. The exchange of capital is too important to be driven by short-term traders. New civil society-based financial institutions and products are emerging around the world which integrate social and financial value. New forms of stock exchange oriented to social and financial value are being explored.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to remove preferences for investor-owned financial institutions and encourage the development of new capital accumulation and exchange instruments which integrate social and financial value.

8. Entrepreneurship and Innovation

New forms of entrepreneurship and innovation have emerged in fields such social services, culture, energy, communication, and environment which were previously monopolised by states, in which citizens were typically passive recipients of services. New technology has enabled mass communication between the world's peoples in unprecedented ways, generating diverse forms of social innovation. A sharp contradiction has emerged between the social connectedness of the world's citizens, and their systemic exclusion from the centres of political and economic power.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to make diverse forms of entrepreneurship and innovation, including social, cooperative and impact entrepreneurship, as visible and public as commercial entrepreneurship and innovation.

9. Social Enterprise in Education, Health and Social Services

Supply-side provider-centred approaches to service provision have been dominant around the world for the last century, and have generated passive, disconnected recipients of services rather than participants in service design and delivery. Both states and commercial organisations have shared in the supply-side paradigm at the expense of consumers.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to abandon supply-side provider-centred approaches in social service delivery and introduce consumer-centred models based on co-design principles.

10. A Renewal of Democracy

Representative democracy is in crisis around the world. As public participation in political institutions has declined, a small, professional caste of career politicians has risen to occupy representative institutions, managing the economy and services on behalf of increasingly disengaged citizens. Rule by political elites has brought with it restricted access to public information, tightening of electoral systems to narrow participation, and growth in corruption. At the same time, new technology has enabled unprecedented openness, transparency and participation in public governance. The gap between the promise of democracy and the reality of representative government is vast.

We call upon political organisations, governments and social movements to re-invent political institutions and democratic processes so that openness, transparency and participation is enhanced and civil society is represented in public decision-making.

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<http://www.civilsociety.org.au/Manifesto%20for%20the%20Mobilisation%20of%20Civil%20Society.pdf>

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Civil-Society-Global-Network-4137855>

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