ORIGINAL PAPER

What About *Who is Mapping* and Its Implications? Comments on Brent Never's "The Case for Better Maps of Social Service Provision"

Susan Appe

Abstract The term "mapping" has garnered a lot of attention in civil society research and nonprofit studies. Important contributions to mapping discussions have often focused on definitional issues, what to include and not include, what the data is intended for, and measurement challenges. However, *the who* is undertaking the mapping is often neglected in these discussions. This short article comments on Brent Never's recent piece in *Voluntas* and the mapping of civil society and nonprofit organizations in general. Never's analysis pushes the conversation forward by recommending better maps with both supply and demand of services for funders and policymakers at the local level. However, it neglects the question of who should conduct the mapping and the implications resulting from who these mappers are.

Resume Le terme "cartographie" a fait l'objet d'une attention particulière dans la recherche sur la société civile et les études relatives aux organisations sans but lucratif. Des contributions importantes aux discussions sur la cartographie se sont souvent attachées aux questions associées à sa définition, qu'y inclure ou non, la destination des données et les difficultés d'évaluation. Cependant, l'identité de celui qui entreprend la cartographie est bien souvent négligée dans ces discussions. Ce bref article est un commentaire de la récente opinion de Brent Never dans Voluntas et de la cartographie des organisations sans but lucratif et de la société civile en général. L'analyse de Never fait avancer le débat en recommandant une

S. Appe
Department of Management, Andean University 'Simón Bolívar', Quito, Ecuador

S. Appe
The Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, SUNY, Albany, NY, USA

S. Appe (✉)
Rockefeller College, Milne Hall, University at Albany, State University of New York, 135 Western Avenue, Albany, NY 12222, USA
e-mail: appesusan@gmail.com

amélioration des cartes de recensement indiquant tant la fourniture que la demande des services pour les donateurs et les décideurs politiques au niveau local. Cependant, la question de savoir qui devrait conduire la cartographie est négligée ainsi que les implications résultant de l'identité de ces cartographes.

Zusammenfassung Dem Begriff „Mapping" ist in Forschungen zur Bürgergesellschaft und Studien zu Nonprofit-Organisationen sehr viel Aufmerksamkeit erteilt worden. Bedeutende Beiträge zu Mapping-Diskussionen konzentrieren sich oftmals auf Definitionsfragen und darauf, was und was nicht einzuschließen ist, wozu die Daten gesammelt werden und auf etwaige Probleme bei der Messung. Allerdings wird die Frage, wer das Mapping durchführt, in diesen Diskussionen häufig vernachlässigt. Dieser kleine Artikel kommentiert den kürzlichen in Voluntas erschienenen Beitrag von Brent Never und im Allgmeinen das Mapping in Bezug auf die Bürgergesellschaft und Nonprofit-Organisationen. Nevers Analyse regt die Konversation weiter an, indem er bessere Maps empfiehlt hinsichtlich der Bereitstellung von und der Nachfrage nach Dienstleistungen für Geldgeber und Entscheidungsträger auf lokaler Ebene. Allerdings wird die Frage vernachlässigt, wer das Mapping durchführen sollte sowie die Auswirkungen abhängig davon, wer sie durchführt.

Resumen El término « cartografía, mapeo o *mapping* » ha gozado de gran protagonismo en los estudios sobre sociedad civil y sobre organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro. Las contribuciones más importantes en debates sobre *mapping* se han venido centrando en la definición, qué incluir y qué no incluir, cuál es el propósito de los datos y los retos de medición. Sin embargo, en estos debates se ha pasado por alto con demasiada frecuencia quién asume la tarea. En este breve artículo se comenta el reciente trabajo de Brent Never en Voluntas y el *mapping* de la sociedad civil y de las organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro en general. El análisis de Never va un poco más allá, pues recomienda los mejores mapas con oferta y demanda de servicios para financiadores y políticos locales. Sin embargo, no se ocupa de la cuestión de quién debería realizar el *mapping* y las implicaciones que supone a quién se encargue esta tarea.

Introduction

The term "mapping" has garnered a lot of attention in civil society research and nonprofit studies. Conversations across various journals have presented and discussed challenges and debates to mapping or data collection on civil society/ nonprofit sector, including the *Journal of Civil Society* (Heinrich 2005, 2006; Sokolowski and Salamon 2005, 2006), *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (Frumkin 2006; Grønbjerg et al. 2010; Smith 1997), *Development and Change* (Biekart 2008), *American Behavioral Scientist* (Grønbjerg 2002; Lampkin and Boris 2002) and of course *Voluntas* (Anheier 2007; Fowler 2002; Taylor 2002). These

important contributions have often focused on definitional issues, what to include and not include, what the data is intended for, and measurement challenges. However, the implications of *who is mapping* is often neglected in these discussions.

Brent Never's (2011) recent piece in *Voluntas* also falls victim to this neglect and has prompted this response to discuss the phenomena of mapping civil society and nonprofit organizations. His piece on mapping social service provision is situated in the complex case of the Holy Cross Dispute in Ireland. He presents interesting recommendations and contributes to issues surrounding the mapping of nonprofit organizations and their services. However, while arguing a need for more maps *and* "more thorough understanding of sector maps" (p. 176), he avoids discussing the process of mapping, i.e., the *who is mapping?* This issue is an important gap in his analysis and recommendations. Never is not the only contributor to gloss over this issue. As a research community, we are not discussing the dynamics of who maps and its possible implications within the phenomena of mapping.

Never's Contributions

Before I argue the need to examine *who* maps, it is important to highlight Never's several contributions to the discussion. Never pushes us beyond just needing to map for mapping's sake and argues why and how funders and policymakers benefit by having more information for effective and efficient fund allocation. He has identified a path to better maps that includes information on organizations working in a given context; what and who these organizations serve; and, connecting this information to problems on the ground and when organizations are able to provide services for these problems. He argues that this more robust information can help target funding to current public problems in real time. These characteristics also enable a more balanced focus on the supply side of service provision and its demand side. His analysis of media coverage in the case of the Holy Cross Dispute supports the value of tracking needs throughout a conflict. And finally, his argument for more local level mapping is compelling in that, once again, it enables funders and policymakers to effectively and efficiently direct funds for services at an appropriate geographic scale. Through these contributions, Never pushes us to think more about mapping, its potential and challenges.

Missing: *Who is Mapping* and Its Implications

Left unanswered in Never's piece and elsewhere is: *Who is mapping?* Mapping civil society is an effort to gather, collate, compile, and/or create information on civil society and the nonprofit sector. This information may (or may not) be available publicly or targeted to specific audiences. It seems that everyone wants a piece of the action surrounding mapping civil society and the nonprofit sector; that is, a role in determining what we understand as civil society and nonprofit organizations and their functions. This is a deeply relevant question that has not been asked and

discussed in most articles, much less answered. Who does or should do the mapping? How do their objectives vary? What implications does this have on the sector and service provision?

My current research has led me to examine various mapping projects; and specifically, the variation across who is conducting the mappings and their objectives. While not exhaustive, I have identified several types of civil society mappers and their objectives (see Table 1). The first and second types of mappers have an academic objective. *Type 1* maps what has been called "global civil society" to capture a civil society that is not confined by national or regional borders (see, for example, Anheier et al. 2001). *Type 2* includes mapping by researchers in specific contexts, generally at the national level, to subsequently compare civil societies across contexts by their composition (Salamon and Associates 2004) and also by their strength and impact (Heinrich 2007; Heinrich and Fioramonti 2008). *Type 3* includes mappings that are performed by donor and international institutions often to determine possible partnerships with civil society (UNDP 2006; World Bank 2005). *Type 4* has garnered less attention but is increasingly relevant: governments at national and sub-national levels conducting mapping projects for goals that include data collection, regulation, and/or fostering collaboration (Appe forthcoming). And finally, *Type 5* are civil society organizations creating their own maps, while sometimes limited in scope, to increase public legitimacy and foster self-regulation regimes.

Perhaps, the most reflection and debate related to *the who* is mapping has been within the *Research Community (Type 1 & 2)*. Anheier (2007) situates civil society mapping within the "standard social science practice" of "using descriptive, operational definitions to 'map and measure' contours of an empirical phenomena

Table 1 Four types mappers of civil society, objectives, and examples

Mapper type (Who Maps)	Objectives	Examples
Research Community Type 1	To capture a civil society not confined by national nor regional borders	*Global Civil Society Yearbook*
Research Community Type 2	To compare civil societies across contexts by composition, strength, and impact	John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project; CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
Donor and International Institutions Type 3	To determine possible partnerships with civil society	World Bank; United Nations Development Program; Organization of American States
Government Type 4	To collect data, to regulate, and/or to foster collaboration	Argentina; Bogotá, Colombia; Bolivia; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; India; Mexico
Civil Society and Nonprofit Organizations Type 5	To increase public legitimacy and/or to develop self-regulation regimes	Collective of Civil Society Organizations, Ecuador

Adapted from Appe (forthcoming)

not yet well understood" (p. 4). Researchers argue that mapping is needed in order to see civil society and nonprofit organizations as legitimate players in policy (Salamon and Associates 2004). Criticisms of these mappers have often been based on definitional issues. For example, the *Global Civil Society Yearbook's* definition of civil society has been considered too descriptive (Taylor 2002) and "Western" (Biekart 2008); and, John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project's definition has been cited as too rooted in social and economic policy debates that inform much of the nonprofit studies scholarship in the U.S. (Fowler 2002; Heinrich 2005). Concerns beyond definition have centered on methodology. For example, CIVICUS' mapping is based on a participatory research approach at the local level in order to improve the state of civil society through local capacity building and empowerment. Such action research designs have been considered a means to address social problems while also contributing to social science, using participative approaches (Coghlan and Brannick 2001; Hale 2008; Susman and Evered 1978). Susman and Evered (1978) added a third dimension to the pragmatic and academic understanding of action research, to also include fostering capacities of people experiencing social realities under investigation. CIVICUS seeks is to strengthen civil society in specific contexts by "bridg[ing] the gap between research on the health of civil society and action by civil society stakeholders to improve that health" (Heinrich 2002, p. 4). CIVICUS seeks to empower participants and allows researchers flexibility that accounts for local and political contexts (Heinrich 2002). This has given considerable discretion to local mappers in each context causing some to question whether or not data are comparable (Howard 2005).

The *Donor and International Institutions (Type 3)* also posits questions related to *who* maps. If donors create maps, particularly in the case of foreign funding, do conflicts emerge as donors' recognition of potential service providers might be distinct from that of local actors? Regional institutions that maintain registries of civil society organizations for partnerships fall into this type of mapper. The Organization of American States (OAS) has tracked civil society organizations in Latin America since 1999 and has become a de facto accreditation process for participation in OAS activities.[1] It should also be noted that donor and international institutions not only influence our understanding of civil society through their maps. For example, some have noted potential conflicts when the international donors play a role in funding mapping projects by the research community such as The John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project and CIVICUS (Biekart 2008; Fowler 2002).

Government (Type 4) might provide an example of Never's ideal map; a map that presents the supply and demand of services at the local level to inform funding decisions.[2] For example, in Bogotá, Colombia, government authorities at the sub-national level with the help from civil society organizations are creating a "social map" of the city (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2006). First called The District Network of Cooperation for Development (RED)[3] and now the Information System

---

[1] See http://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/civil_society/registry.shtml. Accessed on September 30, 2010.

[2] This is not to say that Never's ideal map cannot be conducted by the other types of mappers.

[3] It stands for its Spanish moniker—*Distrital de Cooperacion para Desarrollo*.

for Cooperation (SICO),[4] the project has championed itself as a source of information to inform policy by collecting data on civil society organizations. The mapping includes the creation of an information system to highlight the actions of various entities working in social development—to identify needs, problems, and projections for public policy in Bogotá. The information is also intended to determine the services to be delivered by public entities and by civil society organizations (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2006; Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2010). Bogotá's "social map" provides a good case to test Never's ideal map as it seeks to capture both the supply and the demand of services in Bogotá. However, the case of Bogotá enables insights about *who* maps and illuminates challenges to government as mappers. Its implementation has been challenged by a lack of sustained funding and the uncertainty in housing it within a particular department of the government.[5] Government mapping reveals issues related to what is included (and excluded) on a map as well as the role of political will and its relationship to the sustainability of such projects by government over time. In addition, we can understand mapping efforts by government as constructing Scott's (1998) "maps of legibility." That is, mapping civil society makes (certain) civil society organizations *legible* to government officials but only offers a portion of reality as it is through the lens of the "official observer" (Scott 1998). Given this, it calls for a careful examination of government's role in conducting mapping and its implications.[6]

Civil Society and Nonprofit Organizations (Type 5) is perhaps less obvious, but this type of mapper is increasingly receiving more attention in the civil society and nonprofit literature. Here, nonprofit organizations in various contexts are assuming the act of mapping. This might be an effort by civil society organizations to control and maintain their own discourse on civil society and its role within a specific context. It is frequently a result of nonprofit organizations feeling threatened by government regulation (Sidel 2009; Gugerty 2008; Prakash and Gugerty 2010). It can be in response by nonprofit organizations to government mapping (*Type 4*) as well as an effort to organize themselves in order to seek greater public legitimacy (Brown 2007; Gugerty 2008; Jordan and vanTuijl 2006; Prakash and Gugerty 2010). Concerns with this type of mapping are that it often includes only a small sample of organizations and, more often than not, reflects organizations with a higher level of professionalization and institutionalization (Bies 2010; Prakash and Gugerty 2010), thus not representative of the entire sector. Consistent with the other mappers, issues of exclusion and inclusion are inherently woven into this model of a map. The "mappers," in any of the above "types" have the power to include and exclude within both the supply side and demand side—i.e., the public problems to be considered for service provision by organizations. As we push forward with seeking or needing better maps, these issues and possible conflicts cannot be neglected.

---

[4] It stands for its Spanish moniker—*Sistema de Informacion para la Coorperacion.*

[5] The project is currently housed in the Secretary of Planning in Bogotá.

[6] The author is currently conducting fieldwork in South America and is looking at these types of government mapping projects and their implications.

Pushing the Mapping Conversation Forward

Mapping civil society and the nonprofit sector can have many benefits—for funders and policymakers (as argued by Never), community members, social scientists, and the organizations. Indeed, the discussion is active and encourages the empirical study and comparison of civil society and nonprofit organizations. Academics, donor and international institutions, governments—which is my own research interest—as well as civil society organizations themselves are mapping. As the Bogotá case demonstrates, governments might be in a good position to construct maps that include the components of Never's ideal map, but as observed, challenges exist and implications of such maps need more attention.

As I briefly lay out above, inclusion and exclusion will be decided by who is doing the mapping. As Never and others mention, definition is one of the biggest challenges to mapping in addition to its high costs and several methodological concerns. When we map, we are constructing contours around a concept. Through their maps, mappers of civil society and nonprofit organizations illuminate the multiple realities that exist (Berger and Luckmann 1966; see also Scott 1998). Interpretive research and social construction literature can frame the inquiry into civil society mapping and its implications (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Schneider and Sidney 2009; Yanow 1999, 2007). These literatures help us understand that is a bit shortsighted to think that a map could capture everything as the mappers subjectively construct maps based on their own realities and interpretations. Never suggests in his conclusion that an ideal map can capture Smith's (1997) concept of "dark matter" in the sector. This is not a convincing argument unless contextualized by who is undertaking the mapping and thereby understanding the various objectives in the process and their subsequent implications.

References

Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá [Bogotá Mayor's Office]. (2006). *Socios por Bogotá* [Partners for Bogotá]. Accessed April 1, 2009, from www.bogota.gov.co/.../Red_Distrital_de_Cooperaci_n_para_el_Desarrollo%5B1%5D.doc.

Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá [Bogotá Mayor's Office]. (2010, March). *Sistema de Información para la Cooperación (SICO)* [The Information System for Cooperation – SICO] PowerPoint Presentation. Accessed July 2, 2009, from www.andi.com.co/downloadfile.aspx?Id=EF498E26-82B9-40AE-9199-EC3DB987B03D.

Anheier, H. K. (2007). Reflections on the concept and measurement of global civil society. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 18*(1), 1–15.

Anheier, H., Glasius, M., & Kaldor, M. (Eds.). (2001). *Global civil society yearbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appe, S. (forthcoming). Civil society mappings by government: A comparison of Ecuadorian and Colombian cases. *Journal of Civil Society*.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. New York: Anchor.

Biekart, K. (2008). Measuring civil society strength: How and for whom? *Development and Change, 39*(6), 1171–1180.

Bies, A. L. (2010). Evolution of nonprofit self-regulation in Europe. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 39*(6), 1057–1086.

Brown, L. D. (2007). *Civil society legitimacy and accountability: Issues and challenges*. Cambridge: The Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations and The John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2001). *Doing action research in your own organization*. London: Sage Publications.

Fowler, A. (2002). Civil society research funding from a global perspective: A case for redressing bias, asymmetry, and bifurcation. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organization, 13*(3), 287–300.

Frumkin, P. (2006). Book review: Civil society: Measurement, evaluation, policy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 35*, 327–330.

Grønbjerg, K. A. (2002). Evaluating nonprofit databases. *American Behavioral Scientist, 45*, 1741–1776.

Grønbjerg, K. A., Liu, H. K., & Pollak, T. H. (2010). Incorporated but not IRS-registered: Exploring the (dark) grey fringes of the nonprofit universe. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 39*(5), 925–945.

Gugerty, M. K. (2008). The effectiveness of NGO self-regulation: Theory and evidence from Africa. *Public Administration & Development, 28*(2), 105–118.

Hale, C. (2008). *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics, and methods of activist scholarship*. California: University of California Press.

Heinrich, V. F. (2002). *Managing trade-offs challenges faced in designing the implementation approach of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index*. Paper presented at the ISTR conference.

Heinrich, V. F. (2005). Studying civil society across the world: Exploring the Thorny issues of conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Civil Society, 1*, 211–228.

Heinrich, V. F. (2006). "Studying civil society across the world": A rebuttal. *Journal of Civil Society, 2*(1), 79–82.

Heinrich, V. (Ed.). (2007). *CIVICUS global survey of the state of civil society* (Vol. 1). Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.

Heinrich, V., & Fioramonti, L. (Eds.). (2008). *CIVICUS global survey of the state of civil society, volume II: Comparative perspectives*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.

Howard, M. M. (2005). Conceptual and methodological suggestions for improving cross-national measures of civil society: Commentary on Heinrich. *Journal of Civil Society, 1*(3), 229–233.

Jordan, L., & vanTuijl, P. (2006). Rights and responsibilities in the political landscape of NGO accountability: Introductions and overview. In L. Jordan & P. vanTuijl (Eds.), *NGO accountability: Politics, principles, and innovations*. London: Earthscan.

Lampkin, L. M., & Boris, E. T. (2002). Nonprofit organization data: What we have and what we need. *American Behavioral Scientist, 45*, 1675–1715.

Never, B. (2011). The case for better maps of social service provision: Using the Holy Cross Dispute to illustrate more effective mapping. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 22*(1), 174–188.

Prakash, A., & Gugerty, M. K. (2010). Trust but verify? Voluntary regulation programs in the nonprofit sector. *Regulation & Governance, 4*(1), 22–47.

Salamon, L. M. & Associates. (2004). *Global civil society: Dimensions of the nonprofit sector* (Vol. 2). The John Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies, Center for Civil Society Studies. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, Inc.

Schneider, A., & Sidney, M. (2009). What is next for policy design and social construction theory? *Policy Studies Journal, 37*(1), 103–119.

Scott, J. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sidel, M. (2009). *Regulation of the voluntary sector: Freedom and security in an era of uncertainty*. Cavendish: Routledge.

Smith, D. H. (1997). The rest of the nonprofit sector: Grassroots associations as the dark matter ignored in prevailing "flat earth" maps of the sector. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 26*(2), 114–131.

Sokolowski, S. W., & Salamon, L. M. (2005). Mirror, mirror on the wall? Commentary on Heinrich. *Journal of Civil Society, 1*(3), 235–240.

Sokolowski, S. W., & Salamon, L. M. (2006). Second commentary on Heinrich: Studying civil society across the world. *Journal of Civil Society, 2*(1), 85–88.

Susman, G. I., & Evered, R. D. (1978). An assessment of the scientific merits of action research. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 23*(4), 582–603.

Taylor, R. (2002). Interpreting global civil society. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organization, 13*(4), 339–347.

United Nations Development Program. (2006). *UNDP and civil society organizations: A toolkit for strengthening partnerships*. New York.

World Bank. (2005). *Issues and options for improving engagement between the World Bank and civil society organizations*. Washington, DC.

Yanow, D. (1999). *Conducting interpretive policy analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Yanow, D. (2007). Qualitative-interpretive methods in policy research. In F. Fisher, G. J. Miller, & M. S. Sidney (Eds.), *Handbook of public policy analysis: Theory, politics, and methods*. New York: CRC Press Taylor & Francis.