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**CIVIL SOCIETAL INVOLVEMENT IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE:  
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Civil societal organizations (CSOs) have come to play quite a significant role in processes of global governance in the last couple of decades. This thesis explores the implications of this participation for the transformation of the global status quo, defined as a particular historical structure combining economic, political and ideological elements, by looking at the evolving relationship between international organizations and CSOs. It takes civil society's interaction with the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization as case studies. It concludes from these case studies that international organizations try to absorb the transformatory potential of CSOs, and incorporate them into the project of the consolidation of a neo-liberal hegemony at the global level by pursuing a strategy of "transformism". The dynamics of this relationship seem to refute the idea that CSOs currently act as agents of progressive social change on the world stage as a force autonomous from both the global economy and the states system.

## ÖZET

Sivil toplum örgütleri, son yıllarda küresel yönetim süreçlerinde çok önemli roller oynamaya başladılar. Bu tez, uluslararası örgütlerle sivil toplum örgütleri arasındaki evrimleşen ilişkiye bakarak, bu katılımın ekonomik, siyasi ve ideolojik unsurları içinde barındıran tikel bir tarihsel yapı olarak tanımlanabilecek küresel statükonun dönüşümü açısından olası etkilerini incelemektedir. Olay çalışmaları olarak, sivil toplumun Birleşmiş Milletler, Dünya Bankası, Uluslararası Para Fonu ve Dünya Ticaret Örgütü ile olan etkileşimini ele almaktadır. Bu olay çalışmalarından varılan sonuç, uluslararası örgütlerin sivil toplum örgütlerinin dönüştürücü potansiyelini emmeye ve bir “dönüşümcülük” (*transformism*) stratejisi çerçevesinde sivil toplum örgütlerini küresel seviyede neoliberal hegemonyanın pekiştirilmesi projesinin bir parçası yapmaya çalıştıklarıdır. Bu ilişkinin dinamikleri, sivil toplum örgütlerinin küresel alanda küresel ekonomi ve devlet sisteminden otonom bir güç olarak ilerici toplumsal dönüşümün ajanları şeklinde hareket ettikleri fikrini çürütür niteliktedir.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
CARE	Cooperation for American Relief Everywhere
CSO	Civil societal organization
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
D-GAP	Development Group for Alternative Policies
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCS	Global civil society
GDP	Gross domestic product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IBRD	World Bank
IGO	Inter-governmental organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International non-governmental organization
MNC	Multinational company
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODA	Official development assistance



OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSIA	Poverty and Social Impact Analysis
SAPRI	Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WDR	World Development Report
WSF	World Social Forum
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
WTO	World Trade Organization

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed an immense growth in the number of civil societal organizations trying to advance various social goals in all corners of the earth, including the First and Third Worlds as well as in the countries that formerly constituted the Second World (Salamon & Anheier, 1997, 1996). The same period was also characterized by a considerable increase in the number of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). This is paralleled by the growth in the number of trans-border coalitions forged between locally and nationally based civil societal organizations (CSOs). Today, there are more than 30,000 INGOs, and around 20,000 transnational civil society networks active around the world. The great majority of these (90 %) have been established in the last 30 years (Edwards, 2002, 71).

In addition to this growth in numbers, one can observe an expansion of the scope of the activities of CSOs, and of the influence they exert upon on the world stage<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, both the concept of civil society and the contribution of civil societal actors to global governance have been attracting more and more attention in

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<sup>1</sup> Here it should be noted that international solidarity between various local/national civil societal movements, or the globalization of civil society, is by no means a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. Social movements of international scale, such as the anti-slave or the women's movements, have a long history that reaches back to 19<sup>th</sup> century. Besides, people formed international solidarities, even in times when "international" was not conceptually applicable to the issue at hand, around religious identities in earlier centuries. However, as these examples suggest, while the phenomenon of a globalized civil society is not new, there is an undisputable increase both in the sheer quantity of transnationally active civil societal organizations as well as in the number of issues they try to address in the last couple of decades (Huizer, 1996).

both policy and academic circles<sup>2</sup>. Not very surprisingly, accounts of the phenomenon vary greatly. At the one end of the spectrum, there are those who view the increased role of civil societal actors in global governance by and large a positive development. In this reading, transnational civic activism appears as a progressive force on the world stage; a potential panacea to the many ills of the international order, from underdevelopment to lack of democracy, from environmental degradation to gender inequality (Falk, 2000, 1998, 1993; Lipschutz, 1997, 1996; Shaw, 1994; Wapner, 1995). At the other end are those who adopt a skeptical attitude towards the power of a transnationally active civil society to transform global governance for the better in any significant manner (Brigg, 2001; Macdonald, 1994; Pasha, 1996; Pasha & Blaney, 1998, 1993; Rieff, 1999; Wood, 1995). Needless to say, this categorization provides an oversimplified picture of the civil society debate.

This thesis aims to take a closer look at the interaction between civil societal actors and the institutions of global governance, as well as to assess the consequences of this interaction for the transformation of the latter. In this respect, it tries to answer the question whether the agency of civil society has the potential to transform the global status quo.

In order to answer this question, first the meaning of civil society should be clarified. This is not an easy task given the long history of the concept. Besides, the term civil society is currently invoked to refer to too many different things<sup>3</sup>. Despite

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<sup>2</sup> Among the recent major theoretical works devoted to the subject matter of civil society can be counted, Cohen & Arato (1992), Gellner (1994), Keane (1988a), and Waltzer (1998).

<sup>3</sup> Alison Van Rooy (1998) identifies six alternative usages of the concept of civil society in the literature. First, civil society is a moral goal to be achieved, and in that sense describes the good society we want to live in and within which civic values and norms prevail. Second, civil society is a collective noun that covers a wide spectrum of organizations separate from both the state and the market. Third, civil society is described as a space for action in which civic associations flourish or wane. Forth, civil society is a historical moment in the development of Western societies, and its rise

such diversity, the term is predominantly used today to refer to “the realm of autonomous group action distinct from both corporate power and the state” (Cox, 1999, 10). This definition, in fact, is grounded in a particular reading of civil society from within the liberal paradigm, and has its roots in Alexis de Tocqueville’s account of American civil society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Axtman, 1996). While not agreeing with the latter part of this definition (the separation of civil society from the state and the economy), this thesis considers institutional autonomy from the government and the not-for-profit nature as the necessary starting points to empirically delineate the contours of civil society conceived at the global level<sup>4</sup>.

Based on these two criteria, transnational associational life is composed of a great variety of organizations. In terms of institutional form and geographical reach, it covers a broad spectrum from well-established INGOs to local community groupings with no official standing. The funding patterns are also highly diverse. The respective percentages of membership fees, philanthropic contributions, income from the sale of goods and services and governmental funding in the financial architecture

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is parallel to the rise of individualism, and the modern idea of rights and freedoms. Fifth, civil society is used in an anti-hegemonic sense that implies resistance to domination. Finally, civil society is described as an anti-statist force to counter the power of an overbearing and repressive state.

<sup>4</sup> A growing number of scholars employ the concept of “global civil society” (GCS) to refer to this emerging realm of non-state and non-market activity at the global stage (i.e. Anheier, Glasius & Kaldor, 2002, 2001a; Falk, 2000, Kaldor, 2003; Lipschutz, 1996, Waltzer, 1995). There are also others who prefer terms such as “international” (Colas, 2002) or “transnational civil society” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Smith, Chatfield & Pagnucco, 1997) to describe the phenomenon at hand. While the adequacy of the use of the concept of civil society, which has historically been utilized with reference to domestic political systems and in contexts where central political authority exists in the shape of state institutions, for the analysis of global processes may be questioned, the proponents of the concept of GCS argue that it is no longer possible to confine the concept of civil society to the domestic realm in the context of globalization. First, they point to the existence of international CSOs and transnational platforms such as coalitions and networks that link numerous national/local civic initiatives. Second, they highlight the global nature of problems that civic activists try to address regardless of the geographical reach of their operations. At a more normative level, a globalized civil society is viewed indispensable to the project of undermining the primacy of states in world politics as well as to counter the growing power of global economic forces. It is also assumed that, even though many people around the world do not have the chance to travel across borders and even access to telephone, let alone the Internet, they share a global consciousness, and this alone makes them a member of the GCS (Anheier, Glasius & Kaldor, 2001b).

of civic associations vary greatly throughout the world (Salamon & Anheier, 1997, 1996). In terms of organizational purposes, it would not probably be an exaggeration to say that nearly in every area of human activity people join together to advance common goals from disarmament to animal rights, from religion to sports. The goals pursued may benefit a limited group of people, and hence may be of a more private nature, or else they may aim for the realization of broader public interests. In conjunction with this point, some organizations have a large membership basis while others consist of a handful of people. Again, in terms of organizational purposes, transnational civil society includes both “good” and “bad” elements such as religious extremists, ultra-nationalists and illegal organizations<sup>5</sup>.

Given the diversity of the associational universe, it is no coincidence that there is no agreement in the literature on the relationship of civil society to the established order. Differences result not only from definitional variations but also from diverging conceptualizations of social change, its conditions as well as its desirability. For one thing, ontological and epistemological assumptions greatly influence the way social change is defined within a given perspective. It may be of material or ideational nature. Second, it may refer either to the transformation of the

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<sup>5</sup> There is no agreement in the literature on whether to include ethnic and religiously based identities, racist and certain right wing elements as well as illegal organizations into the definition of transnational civil society. For instance, Richard Falk, in a 1998 article as well as in his book *Predatory Globalization: A Critique* (2000), categorizes these groups as instances of “backlash politics”. He considers the rise of “backlash politics” as a response to economic globalization as much as the rise of global civil society. Yet, he claims that “backlash politics” is not a part of global civil society. Ronnie Lipschutz (1996), another champion of the global civil society discourse, hardly ever talks about any other transnational civic actors, other than those who are affiliated with environmental concerns in his works. In contrast, the definition of transnational civil society employed in this thesis encompasses CSOs of all ideological persuasions and purposes for there is no basis for such an exclusion except particular normative convictions. Talking about only those aspects of transnational associational life that “we like” is prone to produce a biased picture of the phenomena. An additional danger comes from the ethnocentrism inherent in not considering identities based on primordial ties as legitimate members of civil society. More crucially, focusing exclusively on declared intentions of civic actors distracts attention from the structural implications of their activities the highlighting of which constitutes one of the principal concerns of the present thesis.

words and deeds of social actors or of the deeper social structures underlying human action<sup>6</sup>.

More importantly, the positions of particular perspectives on social change have a lot to do with the relationship of the ideas promoted by these perspectives to the power relations prevailing in society. To quote Robert Cox on this point, “[t]heory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose” (emphasis in the original, Cox, 1996b, 87). That is, the fact that people of a liberal persuasion typically approach social change in gradualist and reformist terms cannot simply be explained with reference to their ontological and epistemological assumptions even though these do play a great role (Vincent, 1992). On a more normative reading, they may be said to be content with the established order, with all relations of domination/subordination that order entails, and it is this contentment that lies at the heart of upholding reform over a radical restructuring of social relations. This final normative point brings us to the distinction between “problem-solving” and “critical” theories.

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<sup>6</sup> Materialism and idealism are the two major ontological positions in social sciences regarding the nature of social reality and, by implication, of social change. At the risk of simplifying, it could be argued that materialism is based on the assumption that social action is a response to material circumstances that surround human beings. Idealism, on the other hand, points out the fact that humans are essentially conscious beings who interpret and attach meanings to their actions. Consequently, social reality, from an idealist standpoint, consists of the ideas that people utilize to make sense of the world. Nominalism and realism constitute the two contrasting ends of the epistemological debate. Nominalism takes the view that the concepts we use to define social reality are mere names; that is, they are only convenient generalizations making infinite numbers of particular phenomena intelligible. Since it is impossible to come up with concepts to cover all relevant particularities of the social world, one should denounce the possibility that our knowledge of the social world corresponds to the reality of it. What matters more, in the light of the purposes of the present thesis, is that, from a nominalist standpoint, social reality is taken to be as an aggregation of particular events and things that constitute various dimensions of human experience, whether material or ideational. In stark contrast to the nominalist position, realism locates social reality elsewhere, in the social structures and forces underlying social action. Unlike the previous perspective, these structures are not conceived as the total sum of what individuals do and say. They represent a deeper reality that may not be immediately revealed through observation (Johnson, Dandeker, & Ashworth, 1984).

“Problem-solving” theories are those theories that take for granted, and hence do not problematize, the power relations and the particular historical structures they are imbedded in. Consequently, they approach problems as temporary glitches essentially manageable with the conceptual tools the dominant “framework for action” provides. Their main purpose is “to make these relationships and institutions [that constitute the dominant framework for action] work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble” (Cox, 1996b, 88). The questions they raise as well as the answers they give never go beyond the limits their perspectives impose. This is, by and large, a result of the lack of self-reflection; of a disability to consider their perspectives as historically and geographically bound theoretical constructs. Lack of critical reflection upon the theorization process manifests itself in a bold claim to objectivity, characteristic of problem-solving theories. Far from providing a value-free depiction of “what is”, problem-solving theories are characterized by a certain conservative bias in relation to the established order for they assume the fixity of social relations across time and space (Cox, 1996b).

In contrast, the main purpose of “critical” theory is to put under scrutiny what problem-solving theories take for granted: particular social structures and power relations within the framework of which both social action and theorization of it takes place. The main *problematique* of critical theory is to understand how the current order came about as well as to explore the dynamics of its transformation. It does not hold a claim to objectivity both in the sense that it is aware of its own relativity, and that it explicitly seeks to imagine alternative world orders. Critical theory may address the same problems as problem-solving theory, but unlike its

contender, it seeks to transcend the borders of the existing order in its search for answers (Cox, 1996b).

While the ontological and epistemological premises of a given perspective is the key to understanding where that perspective locates the origin of social change, at the level of individual action or the social forces underlying that action, the “problem-solving”/“critical” theory distinction is most insightful on the desirability as well as the tolerable limits of social change. With respect to the question “can the agency of civil society be relied on to undertake social change?” these insights lead to a three-fold categorization of approaches to the transformative power of civil society on the global stage.

The first set of approaches contends that civil societal actors can initiate progressive transformation of mechanisms of global governance by reforming the institutions and ideas that comprise it. This argument is largely advanced from within the ranks of liberalism, and stays within the parameters of problem-solving theory<sup>7</sup>. That is, civil societal actors are given the task of “fine-tuning” the existing global order. A second set of approaches directs attention to the social structures and power relations as a source of the current troubles of global governance, yet do not think that civil societal action can transform them. Among these radical approaches can be counted world-system theory, Political Marxism and Foucauldian social theory. Finally, there is the Gramscian International Relations theory, which, from a

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to stress here that there is no one-to-one correspondence between a problem-solving approach and the appraisal of the agency of civil society. For instance, neo-realism fits perfectly well into the definition of a problem-solving theory. Yet, at the same time it is ultimately distrustful of civil society’s capacity to transform international politics. Among the major factors that lead to such a position can be counted neo-realism’s structuralist ontology, the ontological priority it accords to states, its undertheorization of social change, and its lack of belief in the possibility of progress in international relations. More on these points see, Cox (1996b, 1996c, 1980), Dunne & Schmidt (2001), and Pasha (1996).



historical materialist perspective, highlights the importance of social structures as the framework for social action in a given historical period. This approach considers civil society to be a site for both the reproduction and transformation of social structures.

In order to assess the validity of these claims, the dynamics of the relationship between major institutions of global governance and CSOs both in terms of policy dialogue and project implementation will be explored. The intergovernmental institutions that will be focused upon are the United Nations (UN), the World Bank (IBRD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The choice of institutions is not arbitrary in the sense that they represent the most powerful institutions of global governance; as a result, most preferred targets of civic activists. More importantly, all of those organizations have recently improved their relationship with civil societal organizations quite substantially both in policy discourse and practice, despite differences in sophistication, and enjoy a trend-setting position with respect to other intergovernmental organizations.

One tentative conclusion that can be drawn from this examination is that the “reality” of civil societal involvement in the processes of global governance does not correspond to the overly romanticized depictions of this involvement as a wellspring of democratic energies and developmental possibilities. Nor does it lead one to abandon all hopes with respect to the positive transformations in global governance towards a more egalitarian and just world order likely to be brought about by a mobilized global citizenry. At this point, Gramscian International Relations theory displays considerable strength in understanding the transformatory potential of CSOs

on the world stage without privileging in its analysis either the agency of civil society or global social structures. For one thing, it helps one to expand the discussion beyond the existence of “bad” elements, such as ultra-nationalists, religious extremists, or “puppets” of foreign departments, within an otherwise benign transnational civic realm as a barrier before is progressive potential. This, the Gramscian perspective achieves, by situating the operations of civil societal actors in their proper socio-economic context, and by examining the relationship between global civic activism and historical structures forming the background of these activities. In this way, it is able to call into question the aura of optimism resulting from a discussion kept at the level of declared good intentions of civic activists, and of the reforms in global governance they managed to achieve. On the other hand, highlighting the socio-economic context does not necessarily lead to a total denial of the agency of civil society in the shaping of global governance. Civil society, in this respect, can be a source of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces.

The thesis is organized in the following way. Chapter two aims first to provide a descriptive account of the participation of CSOs in global governance. It starts out with a general look at the notion of global governance and its various aspects. Then, three different categories of civil societal participation in processes of global governance are examined. These categories are the implementation of official policies, participation in official decision-making, and the formulation of unofficial regulatory schemes. The second major objective of chapter two is to provide a general overview of liberal-pluralist arguments on the progressive role of civil society in global governance by focusing on their expectations. In both the donor and scholarly literature, there appears to be two major hopes tied to a robust and active

transnational civil society. These are the role of civil societal organizations in the democratization of both national and international institutions, and in the improvement of development practice towards a more egalitarian, participatory and sustainable direction. Then, the ideas of a number of prominent liberal scholars of transnational associational life, namely Ronnie Lipschutz, Richard Falk and Paul Wapner, are explored. What unites the arguments of all three authors is their focus on the potential of civil society to transform the normative aspect of global governance.

Chapter three looks at the second set of approaches to the global governance-civil society *problematique* identified above. First, the arguments of world-system theory with respect to the relationship between the capitalist world economy and the transnational associational life are placed under scrutiny. Second, the views of Political Marxism, as they appear in the writings of Ellen Meiskins Wood, are explored. Finally, the way Foucauldian social theory approaches the category of civil society and its embeddedness in the practice of judicial and disciplinary power is examined. The common denominator of these perspectives is their refusal to see civil society as an agent of social change, defined as the transformation of relations of domination/subordination. In the case of world-system theory, world capitalist system appears as the ultimate determinant force on the world stage, which brings in its train all other aspects of social phenomena including transnational associational life. Political Marxism defines civil society as the realm of particular interests, and hence the primary site of the reproduction of capitalism. Social change, it claims, is only possible through class struggle, not through fragmentary emancipatory activities of CSOs. Foucauldian social theory also considers civil society as a realm of power

relations. Yet Foucault's understanding of power differs significantly from the Marxist conceptualization of social power in the sense that he is more concerned about the exercise of 'disciplinary' power through the micro processes of social relations through the construction of knowledge than economic sources of domination.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to a detailed analysis of Gramscian International Relations theory, and its implications for the study of the interaction between transnational associational life and institutions of global governance. First, the Gramscian notion of civil society, hegemony and social structures are discussed. Then comes an account of how his ideas are adapted to the study of international relations in general and of international institutions in particular. Following this account, the Gramscian perspective on international institutions is compared and contrasted with liberal and realist positions on the same issue. The final section of Chapter four looks into the actual record of international institution-civil society collaboration in terms of both participation in official decision-making and implementation of official policies.

The fact that this thesis focuses chiefly on the problematic aspects of civil societal participation in global governance should not be taken as a sign of total depreciation of the activities of CSOs on the world stage. Rather, the argument is that such organizations should reflect upon the socio-historical conditions within which they operate, and develop a full consciousness of the relationship of the problems that they address to dominant power relations in society. Otherwise, notwithstanding the good intentions of their members, CSOs may consolidate the global status quo,

and as a result may contribute to the prolongation of socially destructive aspects of global governance.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY: CIVIL SOCIETAL ACTORS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter has two major objectives. The first one is to present an empirical account of the current involvement of civil societal organizations in mechanisms of global governance. Therefore, it has descriptive rather than analytical intent. The second objective is to provide an overview of the many expectations attached to transnational civic activism in terms of reforming mechanisms of global governance.

With this purposes in mind, first the meaning of global governance will be clarified. This is followed by a descriptive account of the three principal ways through which CSOs participate in global governance. The last section presents an examination of the types of reforms that are hoped to be brought about by civil societal actors on the world stage. This is not meant to be an exhaustive account. Rather, the focus will be kept on the issues of global democratization and development in terms of both their institutional and normative dimensions.

## 2.2 THE MEANING OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

In order to clarify the meaning of “governance”, and subsequently “global governance”, first, its differences from the concept of “government” should be examined<sup>1</sup>. This examination will open up the possibility of taking the discussion beyond the measurement of the influence of civil society on states and inter-state agencies.

To begin with, governance, connoting the presence of a system of rule regulating the interactions of collectivities falling within its purview, has two major dimensions. The first dimension refers to the formal side of governance, which is based upon the existence of formal authority and a system of sanctions, usually of a coercive kind, as the source of regulatory power. The second dimension is mainly intersubjective, and is based on shared meanings, or more clearly on the consent of those voluntarily accepting the normative basis of that system of rule and hence considering it legitimate. The former dimension points to the governmental aspect of governance whereas the latter sheds light upon the possibility of informal and non-governmental modes of organizing human activity. (Rosenau, 1992). The fact that governance encompasses all of the steering mechanisms operative in the life of a collectivity, and in that sense goes beyond governmental regulation creates specific advantages for the use of this concept with reference to global systems of rule.

For one thing, there exists no central authority presiding over world affairs, namely a world government. As many students of international relations have

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of “governance” in particular, and “global governance” in general has been subject to many criticisms since it was first popularized by Rosenau and Czempiel (1992). Its scope, its clarity as a concept, its differences from international regimes, and its relationship to neo-liberalism are only a few aspects of the global governance discourse problematized by students of the phenomenon. On the controversies surrounding the concept, see De Alcantara (1998), De Senarclens (1998), Finkelstein (1995), and Smouts (1998).

observed before, particularly those studying international regimes, this anarchic condition does not directly result in fully chaotic and unpredictable relations among various actors (state and non-state alike) in the global arena (Haggard & Simmons, 1987; Kratochwil & Ruggie, 1986; Little, 2001). There is a good degree of regulation observable in world affairs from arms proliferation to the setting of technical standards for internationally traded commodities despite the absence of a “world government” to ensure obedience to these regulatory frameworks (Finkelstein, 1995; Rosenau, 1992).

The absence of a world government, however, is not sufficient to justify the appropriateness of governance to denote global-level regulation in view of the fact that sovereign statehood involves an exclusive claim to a state’s ability to steer social relations within and outside its borders. Here, it is necessary to have a general look at the transformations brought about by globalization on the exercise of state sovereignty, and assess the validity of this claim in the light of these transformations. Jan Aart Scholte’s (2002) discussion on how globalization – “a reconfiguration of social space” towards the direction of “supraterritoriality” – has resulted in a parallel “reconfiguration of regulation” (287) may be quite illuminating in this respect. With the unfolding of globalization, he claims, the state has ceased to be the primary locus of societal regulation. Its sovereign claims are challenged first by its increasing inability to effectively control transborder flows of goods, services, ideas as well as, to a certain extent, peoples, and to find answers to problems of a global nature. Second, territorial citizenship has been partially eclipsed by the advent of new supra-state loyalties, such as gender, race, as well as transnational values, such as human rights and ecological conservation, which, for some people, override the primacy of



national sentiments. One may also add the emergence of sub-state identities, along with supraterritorial ones, with sufficient power to undermine territorial attachments (Rosenau, 1995). All these developments culminate in a gradual relocation of regulatory authority both towards supra-state bodies such as the WTO as well as sub-state arrangements such as municipalities, and as a result create multilayered regulatory mechanisms.

Moreover, an increasing number of private actors such as multinational companies (MNCs), transnational movements and INGOs undertake regulatory roles and hence take part in a process of privatization of global governance, both independently as well as in collaboration with states (Scholte, 2002, 2000). In other words, what we see in global governance today is a multitude of “sponsors”, which can be broadly categorized as state and non-state ones, creating and maintaining systems of rule both separately as well as jointly (Rosenau, 1995).

### **2.3 WHAT ROLE DOES CIVIL SOCIETY PLAY IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE?**

All in all, as the above discussion suggests, global governance involves both formal and informal arrangements. It stretches from the local to the global level, and has its sources in the activities of both public and private actors. There are many points of entry for CSOs into the workings of global regulatory arrangements. One way of categorizing this contribution is provided by Scholte (2000, 151-156). In this regard, there are three different roles undertaken by CSOs in global governance keeping in mind considerable overlaps among them. These are the implementation of official

policies, participation in official policymaking, and formulation of regulatory schemes outside official circles.

### ***2.3.1 Implementation of official policies:***

One of the areas within which CSOs' participation in global governance has become increasingly visible is the implementation of projects. A growing number of grassroots, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are subcontracted by certain intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as various UN agencies and the World Bank to implement policies and projects in the fields of development, poverty eradication, environment, humanitarian assistance, empowerment of women, and the like. The development of World Bank-NGO collaboration since the early 1970s is a case in point. While there were only a few NGOs taking part in World Bank sponsored projects in the 1970s, the percentage of projects involving NGOs reached 12 % by 1990. In the fiscal year 1999, NGOs were present one way or another in 54 % of all World Bank projects (Clark, 1999). Not only the World Bank, but also various specialized UN agencies, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), collaborate with NGOs in the implementation of various projects. For instance, in Brazil, UNICEF had funded and supported NGOs fighting against the murder of street children in Rio de Janeiro, an action which proved to be quite controversial at the time (Stiles, 1998). The complex interaction between the UNHCR and humanitarian NGOs in myriad humanitarian crises is already a well-known phenomenon (Baitenmann, 1990; Cross, 2001; Rieff, 2000).

Another evidence for the growing role of NGOs in the implementation of official projects can be found in the changing pattern of official development assistance (ODA) flows to recipient countries. More and more, ODA from both multilateral and bilateral donors reach countries through NGOs at the expense of governments. For instance, OECD members now channel approximately 5 % of their ODA through NGOs (Clark, 1999). This proportion reaches a high point of 11 % in the US (Clark, 1999) as well as in the Netherlands and Switzerland (van Rooy, 1998).

### ***2.3.2 Participation in official policymaking:***

Nowadays, it is rather difficult to find an IGO without official provisions sanctioning the inclusion of NGOs in their decision-making mechanisms relating to global issues either on an *ad hoc* or routinized basis (Scholte with O'Brien and Williams, 1998). This inclusion usually takes the form of consultative arrangements rather than full powers to influence policy outcomes. Not only IGOs, but also an increasing number of governments, most of which are located in the industrialized world, actively cooperate with NGOs on a range of domestic and international policy issues. For instance, the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs meets representatives of various NGOs, mostly working in the field of human rights, once a year for purposes of consultation prior to the principal meetings of UN Commission on Human Rights (Baehr, n/d).

One of the most institutionalized mechanisms for sustained NGO participation can be found within the UN system. It is one of the oldest as well. The UN, starting from its establishment in 1948, allowed NGOs to consult with the

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and officially stipulated this in the Article 71 of the UN Charter. The number of NGO liaison offices throughout the UN system is now more than one hundred, and they cover at least twenty-six issue areas (Alger, 1996). Additionally, the number of NGOs granted consultative status with the UN increased to 1350 in 1998 from 41 in 1948 (Alger, 2002).

Here, it is also imperative to talk about the ever-growing role of NGOs in all stages of major UN world conferences. NGOs attend both the preparatory and final stages of these conferences. Some register with the conference and some do not, and yet all NGOs work with impressive energy during these conferences to influence official delegates as well as to form coalitions and networks. In addition to the extracurricular activities organized by NGOs, a parallel NGO forum is held along with most of these conferences. Not surprisingly, the number of NGOs participating in UN conferences rose gradually over the years. In 1972, less than 300 NGOs were present in the Stockholm Conference on the Environment whereas in 1995 3,000 NGOs got accreditation for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, a figure which excludes numerous unregistered NGOs (Clark, Friedman & Hochstetler, 1998).

Consultative arrangements between NGOs and IGOs are not limited to the UN system. The World Bank and the IMF, both of which are formally part of the UN system, have also established various mechanisms to allow for more NGO input in their decision-making processes. The IMF, for instance, since the early 1980s has made various institutional arrangements through which members of civil society can better and more easily approach the institution. In 1981, it established an External Relations Department, a development followed by the formation of a special Public

Affairs Division within that department in 1989. The Fund also gradually increased the number of resident representatives in various countries from a low point of 20 in the early 1980s to 68 today. In addition to the fact that more information on the Fund's operations has been made public over the years, the venues (such as seminars and conferences) where the IMF staff and members of civil society can meet and exchange ideas have also been diversified and grown in numbers (Scholte, 1998; Camdessus, 2000).

The World Bank, in the same vein, has specific departments established for the purpose of coordinating the dialogue between the World Bank and members of civil society. The NGO and Civil Society Unit, located in the Social Development Department, is the main instrument through which the Bank integrates civil societal concerns into its operations. In addition, the Civil Society Thematic Team, located at the headquarters of the Bank, is responsible for guiding and facilitating Bank-civil society dialogue. At regional and local levels, all the Bank staff is advised to pay attention to the concerns of civil society in their operations (Browning, 2000).

It is interesting to note that the doors of even the WTO, which has recently come under sustained attack from a global coalition of CSOs, are not totally closed to members of civil society. Somehow ironically, during the memorable "Battle in Seattle", where thousands of activists from around the world united in their opposition to the WTO in the streets of Seattle, there were 700 NGOs accredited to take part in the ministerial meeting (Kaldor, 2000). In fact, since the Singapore Ministerial Conference in 1996, the NGOs can formally attend the ministerial sessions of the WTO after getting accreditation from the organization (The World Trade Organization, n/d). In addition, in the Article V of the Marrakesh Agreement

establishing the WTO, there is specific reference to the relations with NGOs. With the decision adopted by the General Council on 18 July 1996, the WTO further elaborated on its relations with members of civil society, and “recognize[d] the role NGOs can play to increase the awareness of the public in respect of WTO activities and agree[d] in this regard to improve transparency and develop communication with NGOs” by adopting a set of guidelines (The World Trade Organization, 1996, para.2). On the whole, however, the WTO’s dialogue with civic associations at the decision-making level remains underdeveloped in comparison to the World Bank and the IMF, the other two major institutions of global economic governance (Scholte with O’Brien and Williams, 1998).

### ***2.3.3 Formulation of unofficial regulatory schemes:***

In essence, this aspect of NGO input into global governance is closely related to the earlier-mentioned process of the privatization of governance. More and more, private actors, whether they are of a ‘for-profit’ or ‘not-for-profit’ nature, take active part in the creation of regulatory mechanisms sustained by voluntary adherence of the parties involved rather than by the coercive powers of states. Private credit-rating agencies, such as the Moody’s Investor’s Service and Standard and Poor’s Rating’s Group, and the World Economic Forum illustrate quite well the ‘for-profit’ dimension of this phenomenon. On the non-profit side, the Ford Foundation, Greenpeace and the Sierra Club with their global operations are only a few examples of the scope of global regulatory activity taking place outside the public sector (Rosenau, 1995; Scholte, 2000). There are also hybrid (or “jointly-sponsored” in Rosenau’s [1995] words) mechanisms within which governmental and non-

governmental actors work in collaboration with each other. The setting of international standards within the framework of the International Organization for Standardization, which regards itself an NGO and consists of public and private standards-setting bodies of 117 countries, is a case in point. The recent introduction of ISO 14000 environmental management standards to act as a voluntary code of conduct for global businesses, and its subsequent recognition and integration into domestic jurisdiction by many states quite well illustrates the power of such hybrid organizations in global environmental governance (Clapp, 1998).

#### **2.4 LIBERAL/PLURALIST APPROACHES: CIVIL SOCIETY AS THE MODERN SAVIOR**

Having drawn the factual contours of the global governance-civil society *problematique*, it is now possible to move on to a detailed examination of the arguments of the proponents of transnational associational life with respect to its transformative potential. This examination reveals at least two broad themes. The first theme relates to the democratic potential of civil society and the possibilities of global democratization based on the observation that current global arrangements leave much to be desired in terms of their democratic qualities. The second one relates to the improvements that can be brought about by civil society in development practice given the all-too-visible side effects of recent economic policies such as growing human misery and economic inequality.

### ***2.4.1 Democratization and Civil Society***

One major development of the late twentieth century that caused the practical and theoretical threads between civil society and democratization to be woven was the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe. Social movements in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World against authoritarian regimes provided the additional inspiration necessary to further these linkages (Encarnacion, 2002)<sup>2</sup>.

The above-mentioned role of civil society in the transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes, albeit of a liberal democratic kind, appears as the first dimension of the democratic potential of civil society (Pasha & Blaney, 1998). Underlying this is a belief in the indispensability of a lively civil society for the realization of democracy. This indispensability arises from a number of premises. First, civil society, it is claimed, can check the power of the state. Second, the pluralism of civil society is conducive to the dispersion of power and interests in society. Third, associational life encourages political participation. Fourth, civil society is the ground to built the legitimacy for a stable state. Fifth, new political leaders are trained in civil society. Lastly, civil society is an antidote to authoritarianism (Diamond as cited in Van Rooy & Robinson, 1998, 44).

One of the major reasons why certain donors support civil society empowerment is this supposed role of civil society in the promotion of liberal democratic regimes around the world (Sabatini, 2002). For instance, civil society development has recently become the most outstanding item in the democracy

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<sup>2</sup> While these events formed the practical impetus to integrate the issue of civil society into democratization debates, the theoretical basis of this linkage can be traced as far back as to early 19<sup>th</sup> century political thought; to Alexis de Tocqueville's observations about American democracy as expressed in his infamous book *Democracy in America*. A reformulation of Tocqueville's ideas appeared in the 1950s through the works of American pluralists. On Tocqueville's ideas on democracy and civil society, see Axtman (1996) and Cohen & Arato (1992). On the place of voluntary associations in American pluralist thought, see Marger (1981), and Bealey (1988).



assistance programs of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The money that the USAID devotes to this cause has increased from \$56.1 millions in 1991 to an estimated \$230.2 millions in 1999. Besides, USAID financial support for civil society assistance outnumbered those allocated to “Rule of Law”, “Governance” and “Elections and Political Processes” programs in 1999 (Carothers, 1999).

A survey of donor literature on civil society reveals three major expectations in this respect. The first one is the ability of civil societal organizations to generate countervailing forces to state power, supposedly used in a corrupt and excessive manner in many Third World polities, and hence to contribute to good governance in these societies. The second one is the pressure that may be exerted on the state by civil society for the construction of democratic institutions such as free and fair elections. Still another expectation is the cultivation of democratic norms and values, namely a “democratic culture”, in the civil societal realm necessary for the healthy operation of democracy. These are the norms and values associated with “civil” behavior such as tolerance for diversity (Van Rooy & Robinson, 1998). The UN also joins this donor chorus by putting emphasis on the necessity of a robust civil society for the promotion of democratic institutions and culture (Joyner, 1999).

Civil society is hoped to contribute not only to the democratization of single governments but also to that of international institutions. Increased civil societal participation in the operations of IGOs, at the decision-making and implementation stages, is hoped to provide a cure for the well-known democratic deficits of these organizations as well as of global governance in general. The first one of these deficits is the lack of accountability. To say the least, to argue that these

organizations are accountable because the member states are representative of their national constituencies is highly problematic. For one thing, not all of these governments are democratically elected. Even when they are so, it is never for sure that the concerns and interests of marginalized sectors of society make their way into governmental policies (Birdsall, 2001). Additionally, even if one assumes that member governments truly represent the demands and concerns of their societies, the institutional structures of these organizations actively hinder the participation of all member countries in their decision-making on an equal footing even in cases such as the UN where formal equality of all members is officially recognized (Woods, 1999). One should also note the fact that many intergovernmental organizations have taken a life of their own, with armies of international bureaucrats and technocrats no longer simply executing the directives given by member states (Scholte, 2000). More often than not, the complexity of institutional procedures and the technicality of language used in negotiations and documents prevent full governmental control. This is particularly true for developing countries some of which do not even have permanent missions in the headquarters of the organizations in hand. For instance, as of late 1999, a single person, Iftekhar Chowdhury, worked as the coordinator for the forty eight poorest countries of the world in Geneva for trade negotiations. Only fourteen of these countries could afford to send representatives to Geneva (Tabb, 2000). In this respect, it is not mere coincidence that many CSOs prefer to pressure IGOs themselves rather than their national governments (Birdsall, 2001). In sum, the representativeness of IGOs and that of governments comprising them should be examined separately. Moreover, only in a few IGOs near universal country membership exists even though limited membership organizations such as the

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or G-7 with their decisions influence the fate of peoples all around the world.

One proposal to ensure the accountability of these organizations is the establishment of parallel people's assemblies such as the proposal for setting up a UN Parliamentary Assembly (Alger, 1996). However, the practicality of such a proposal has attracted certain criticisms (Scholte, 2002). Another panacea for the lack of accountability is expected to come from the establishment of mechanisms to ensure NGO participation in the workings of these organizations (Scholte, 2002; Sewell and Salter, 1995; Woods, 1999). As mentioned earlier, a great many organizations from the UN to the World Bank have already given NGOs various types of consultative status. Yet, the level of responsiveness of these organizations to the advices of NGOs is open to question.

A second important democratic role attached to civil society concerns the enhancement of the transparency of global regulatory mechanisms. Currently, many crucial decisions regarding global governance are taken behind closed doors or at least they are not made public. The record of the global media in directing attention to such important processes is also rather dubious. An active transnational civil society is believed to have the potential to right this wrong of global governance as exemplified in the leakage and the publication of the draft document of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment by Canadian and American NGOs (Scholte, 2002; Sewell and Salter, 1995).

Third, improved participation of civil society in the workings of IGOs could make sure that all the parties affected (the "stakeholders") have a say in the formation and implementation of their policies. This is important because increased

participation has the potential both to empower underprivileged sectors of society and to bring global governance closer to the practice of participatory democracy (Scholte, 2002).

Still another possible democratic function of the civil society is its being a site for democratic deliberation as well as public education on global issues (Scholte, 2002). This deliberation is already taking place in parallel forums organized by NGOs during major UN conferences. The World Social Forums, which were organized with the participation of thousands of activists from around the world, simultaneously with the World Economic Forum in Davos, which is a gathering of business leaders from around the world, are also a case in point (Teivainen, 2002)<sup>3</sup>. Still another example is the International NGO Conference on Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Kyoto and Manila People's Forum on APEC of 1996 both of which included serious discussion and exchange of ideas on the words and deeds of the APEC as well as its undemocratic aspects (Doucet, 2001).

If IGOs were to become more accountable and more transparent to members of civil society, if they were to become more responsive to the voices of so-called stakeholders as well as more attuned to the public debate on their operations, an additional benefit would come in the form of their increased legitimacy. For IGOs, increased legitimacy translates into smoother as well as more effective governance

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<sup>3</sup> The World Social Forum (WSF) defines itself not as an organization or a "united front platform" but as "...an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a society centred on the human person" (World Social Forum 2004, n/d). The first three WSFs took place in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in the years 2001, 2002 and 2003. The last one was held in the Indian city of Mumbai, between the dates January 16-21, 2004. For more information on the WSF, visit World Social Forum 2004 (n/d) website.

since “people can feel that they own the process more and that it works in their interest” (Scholte, 2001)

What is striking about the democratic potential of civil society examined above, whether at the level of single nation-states or international system as a whole, is the fact that the discussion is conducted with the conceptual tools provided by liberal democracy. In other words, what is expected from civil society to advance both nationally as well as transnationally is liberal democratic institutions and norms such as civil rights and liberties, plurality, accountability, transparency, checks and controls on state power at the expense of many historical alternatives such as direct/participatory democracy and socialist/substantive democracy. More importantly, such a vision takes global socio-economic structures for granted since it is founded upon the premise that democracy and capitalism are perfectly compatible. To say the least, this is a premise far from commanding universal acceptance (Pasha & Blaney, 1998; Wood, 1995).

Even among the proponents of the basic principals of liberal democracy, there are a number of scholars who increasingly question the links established between civil society and democratization. While not denying the indispensability of a vibrant civil society for democracy, they point out that there are fundamentalist elements among CSOs with practices and purposes incompatible with and harmful of liberal democracy. Incompatibility arises from the fact that these groups adhere to a non-liberal notion of the individual. In other words, religious and ethnicity-based CSOs subjugate the individual to community solidarity and values, and consider individual identity in essentialist terms (Kadioğlu, 2001). These identities are not subject to individual choice and autonomy, and, as a result, cannot constitute the

basis of a democratic civil society. In addition, ethnic and religious groups, more often than not, possess great societal visions through which they generalize their version of the “common good” to other identities with competing claims (Keyman & İçduygu, 2003). This is viewed to be destructive of democratic pluralism. These sorts of identities, which call for an extension of civil rights and liberties in the name of a stronger civil society vis-à-vis the state, are indeed, the argument goes, “abusing” the concept of civil society since they are not content with living their own “good” within the social space opened for them through these rights. To put it differently, what their identity claims lack is a respect for “difference” (Keyman & İçduygu, 2003)<sup>4</sup>.

There is also another line of criticism based on empirical studies of the relationship between a lively associational life, measured by average number of civic organizations participated in per person, and the success of democratic arrangements in a given country. The findings suggest a low level of correlation between the two variables. For instance, in the context of Latin America, Chile and Brazil (2.32 and 2.13 organizations per person respectively) have the highest levels of associational density by this measure. However, the democratic credentials of these countries are quite dubious. In contrast, Uruguay, with a very low level of associational activity (1.39), ranks much higher than the previous two countries by the standards of liberal democracy (Encarnacion, 2002).

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<sup>4</sup> The views presented above, in large part, reflect a larger discussion in political theory: liberalism versus communitarianism. For an interesting discussion on these contending positions, see the edited volume Waltzer (1995).

#### ***2.4.2 Development and civil society***

Starting from the early 1980s, civil society has begun to occupy a very central place in development discussions. The participation of members of civil society in development efforts came to be seen as very crucial to poverty eradication, as well as to the achievement of a more equitable, participatory and sustainable development within both policy and academic circles (Pasha, 1996; Van Rooy & Robinson, 1998). The ideas expressed by World Bank president James Wolfensohn well illustrates this enthusiasm: "In all its forms, civil society is probably the largest single factor in development, if not in its monetary contribution, then certainly in its human contribution and its experience and its history" (Wolfensohn as cited in Clark, 1999).

What then is the basis of this growing interest in civil society? From the perspective of multilateral donors, it would not be wrong to assert that their primary concern is that of enhancing project success. In this respect, they usually consider the role of civil society largely in economic and instrumental terms based on the observation that when members of civil society, whether they be NGOs or grassroots organizations, are involved in project design and implementation, better results are achieved. Statistical data in the World Bank's Annual Review of Portfolio Performance suggests that projects involving NGOs carry less risk of poor performance than those that do not (Clark, 1999). NGOs improve project performance because they usually work more efficiently than government agencies, their operations are more cost-effective, they typically have access to poor communities (unlike many official bodies) and make sure that they participate in the projects, and they have valuable local and issue-based expertise and information, assets indispensable for project success (Van Rooy & Robinson, 1998). Clark's

observation on civil society-World Bank relations sums up this point quite well in deed: “The Bank has expanded its work with the non-profit sector because it has found that operational partnership and genuine dialogue makes good business sense” (Clark, 1999, para. 20).

Another dimension of this economic outlook is closely related to the notion of “social capital”, and the role played by a strong civil society in the generation of that capital. While the notion of “social capital” is much older in terms of its intellectual origins, its popularization, in policy and academic circles alike, can be traced back to Robert Putnam’s book *Making Democracy Work* (1994) where he tried to explain the economic backwardness of Southern Italy in comparison to the Northern half of the country (Encarnacion, 2002; Van Rooy, 1998)<sup>5</sup>. In very general terms, social capital is used in the literature to denote those values and norms associated with cooperative social behavior such as selflessness, volunteerism, civic spirit, honesty, the keeping of commitments and the like (Van Rooy, 1998). If cooperative norms and values are entrenched in a given society, that is if the social capital is well-developed, this would effect the overall economic performance of that society, not to say the quality of democratic institutions, positively since individuals will be capable of balancing their personal interests with those of the social body as a whole. Besides, social capital significantly reduces transaction costs as it renders redundant many formal mechanisms of monitoring and regulating economic activity by helping individuals internalize cooperative attitudes (Fukuyama, 1999). The principal site where social capital can be generated is the associational life of a society even though other factors such as religion and tradition may be equally

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the intellectual precursors of this notion, see Fine (1999).



important (Fukuyama, 1999). The growing emphasis on strengthening civil society in the donor language is closely related to this instrumental understanding (Van Rooy & Robinson, 1998).

Another important role attached to civil society in the current development debate is their ability to make development more equitable as well as sustainable. They are able to do this because CSOs are channels through which the concerns of impoverished sections of society are brought to the fore, and through which they can participate in and hence “own” developmental projects (Van Rooy & Robinson, 1998). Besides this empowerment capacity, a growing number of NGOs are subcontracted by multilateral donors for projects specifically aimed at poverty reduction particularly in contexts within which much of the poverty can be attributed to diminished state presence in welfare provision. Here, there is yet another, though related, reason for civil societal involvement in development. CSOs are expected to take up social service delivery functions that were previously undertaken by states, and in which there is no private sector interest for reasons of profitability (Pasha, 1996).

#### ***2.4.3 Transformation of norms and values***

The preceding section has focused on two basic themes in the mainstream global governance-civil society debate. The first theme was the democratization of global governance both at the level of states as well as interstate organizations. The second one was the betterment of developmental practice towards a more equitable, sustainable and participatory direction. These two themes overlap both in practice and theory. Participatory development, for instance, has a democratic thrust in it

since that type of development calls for the involvement of all concerned parties in the shaping of their future. These themes also overlap with respect to how they view social change. To put it more succinctly, the views overviewed so far regard civil society as an agent of change in global governance, but the change they envisage takes the form of reform rather than a radical transformation of the structures of global governance. In this respect, they fail to ask questions about where power resides in global governance and what sorts of interests are served through its workings.

Moreover, the focus is kept on institutionalized and formal processes of global governance and how civil society interacts with them despite the references made to the normative aspect of the civil society debate such as the promotion of a democratic culture and the generation of social capital. However, certain scholars reject this tendency to delimit the transformative power of civil societal organizations simply to their ability to influence state or interstate behavior. To quote Scott Turner (1998) on this point:

In essence, governance may derive from governments through the use of coercion, or it may derive from civil society's 'shared goals' and non-violent measures whose effectiveness lies not only in their direct relationship to states and international organizations but also in their influence on global public opinion. (36).

This statement attracts attention to the last aspect of the contribution of civil societal actors to global governance: the generation of private regulatory schemes and common normative frameworks outside of official circles. However, one should also take heed of the fact that the scope and importance of civil societal actors' interaction with state and interstate organizations is dependent upon the particular issue-areas within which they operate. For instance, human rights NGOs, because of the very nature of their issue area, focus their energies mostly on influencing state behavior

through what came to be called the “mobilization of shame” (Baehr, n/d; Turner, 1998). An additional factor is the attitude of civil societal organizations towards state authority. Certain groups may consider states as inherently corrupt and hence seek a policy of total disengagement from them because of the fear of cooptation, an attitude exemplified by certain radical environmental and feminist organizations. And yet this does not mean that their contribution to global governance can be ignored. On the whole, it becomes indispensable to any discussion of civil society’s role in global governance to explore the ways in which civil societal actors take part in the generation of value systems and normative structures. As noted earlier, this exploration covers a spectrum from a reformist reshaping of norms and values that currently guide global governance to a radical critique of the ideologically reproductive role of civil society vis-à-vis current socio-economic and political structures. Following is an examination of the reformist end of this spectrum through the works of Richard Falk, Paul Wapner and Ronnie Lipschutz while the latter position will be put under closer scrutiny in Chapter four.

To begin with, Lipschutz (1997, 1996) constructs his vision of an emerging global civil society in relation to environmental degradation. His central claim is that pressing environmental problems of today cannot be adequately addressed by states nor should they be. Even though environmental problems seem to be unfolding at a global scale, trying to deal with them via international or national measures is useless since before the implementation of these policies there are serious economic and political constraints as well as problems regarding the actual implementation of them. Besides, environmental change is a social process as much as it is a technical issue to be addressed through policy reform, and in this sense it matters a great deal

how we socially construct the norms and values governing our relationship to natural environment. Global civil society, in this respect, “has become a central player in the process of social learning about local *and* global environments” (emphasis in the original, Lipschutz, 1996, 50). CSOs participate in this process by engaging in “ecosystem management and restoration”, by implementing “local environment/development projects”, by undertaking “environmental education”, and by forming “national and transnational networks and alliances” (Lipschutz, 1996, 57-60).

In his book *Global Civil Society and Global Environmental Governance*, Lipschutz (1996) makes quite a number of references to “historical structures” as well as to the material constraints emanating from the mode and relations of production. He directly borrows this terminology from the historical materialist works of Robert Cox and Stephen Gill (Lipschutz, 1996, 54-57), and utilizes it to substantiate his contention that while social structures matter the agency of civil society is not totally powerless vis-à-vis these structures. The locus of this agency is the transformation of dominant meaning systems. In Lipschutz’s (1996) own formulation, “[t]o change the meanings of relationships is to change identities; to change identities is to change political economy; to change political economy is to change society” (64).

Lipschutz’s main point here is to counter economic determinism as expressed in the well-known Marxist formula “economic base determines political and ideological superstructure”. According to him, political economy should be considered only as a constraining force. Yet, this is a discussion that he conducts in the abstract as evident in the fact that one neither encounters an account of

environmental problems in relation to class relations of global capitalism nor the various ways in which global civil society is implicated in these relations, except in a passing remark that he mentions the sources of funding for NGOs and “the ‘revolving door’ between government, industry and NGOs” (Lipschutz, 1996, 51). Put more clearly, we are not even given a satisfactory answer to the simple question how these historical structures “constrain” the possibilities for the transformation of dominant normative structures through civic activism. While relating the emergence of global civil society to the political economy of the Cold War period (53-54), Lipschutz (1996) contends that the small ecological trinket that his children may find in a McDonald’s ‘Happy Meal’ enhances their environmental consciousness, of course not to the point of refusing to eat at McDonald’s (72). On the whole, Lipschutz remains firmly in the reformist camp by equating the discussion of historical structures to that of political economy cast in neo-classical economic terms.

Richard Falk (2000) contributes to the discussion of global civil society from a similar point of view. His argument is as follows: Economic globalization has brought about important changes in the global economy such as greater economic interdependence among national economies through trade liberalization, the triumph of free markets around the world, the retreat of the welfare state and the increased influence of multinational companies over global economic governance. He calls these phenomena “globalization-from-above”. “Globalization-from-above” has certainly benefited certain sections of the world population, but so far there have been significant differences in the distribution of these benefits both among states and within them. The number of impoverished people is on the rise, and income

disparity, both nationally and globally, is growing. Besides, environmental degradation has reached unprecedented levels around the globe. What Falk expects from global civil society is to address these adverse effects of “globalization-from-above”; in his own words, “to reconcile global market operations with the well-being of peoples and with the carrying capacity of the earth” (Falk, 2000, 136).

Falk (1998) does not expect global civil society to reverse the process of globalization but initiate an alternative globalization, which he calls “globalization-from-below”. The first step in countering economic globalization through “globalization-from-below” is to counter the neo-liberal ideology which underpins “globalization-from-above”. This can be done if an alternative and unifying worldview is articulated and advanced by global civil society (Falk, 1998). This alternative worldview appears as “politically engaged spirituality” (1993), “world order values” (2000) and “normative democracy” (1998) in Falk’s different writings, and is said to reflect an already existing consensus in global civil society. Its components are values such as the consent of the citizenry, rule of law, human rights, participation, accountability, transparency, concern for public goods, upholding of environmental quality, social and political justice and non-violence (Falk, 1998, 2000). On the whole, for Falk, civil society’s greatest contribution to global governance lies in its being a site to nurture and promote alternative worldviews urgently needed to humanize, if not to reverse, economic globalization.

Another scholar who discusses civil societal actors’ transformative power with respect to the non-governmental and normative dimension of governance is Paul Wapner. In his examination of the role of transnational environmental organizations in world politics, he points to two different areas within which civil societal groups

engage in politically relevant activities. The first one is the realm of the state, within which NGOs work to transform state behavior. The second one is the global civil society itself where different sources of power, different than the state, are identified and targeted by NGOs. In relation to this second aspect, Wapner (1995) contends that:

The predominant way to think about NGOs in world affairs is as transnational interest groups. They are politically relevant in so far as they affect state policies and interstate behavior. ...[transnational environmental groups], a particular type of NGO, have political relevance beyond this. They work to shape the way vast numbers of people throughout the world act toward the environment using modes of governance that are part of global civil society. (336).

Wapner (1995) calls these society-oriented political activities of activists “world civic politics” (312). In this respect, when environmental NGOs raise environmental consciousness they trigger change in the ideas people hold. When they pressure multinationals to alter their environmentally unfriendly practices, they do so by evoking alternative understandings of economy-environment relationship. When they work to empower local communities to take the developmental issues into their own hands, their efforts undermine the common development thinking as well as practice. In all of this, they do not rely on state power to impose their particular worldview but on the consent of concerned parties, and all their efforts are part of the world civic politics (Wapner, 1995). Again, as was the case with Falk, Wapner counts on transnational civic activism to transform the governing ideas that regulate societies within and across borders.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter tried first to clarify the meaning of ‘global governance’ by way of contrasting it with ‘government’, and highlighting the reasons for the use of this

concept to refer to global regulatory mechanisms. Second, it tried to provide a descriptive account of the ways through which civil societal groups currently participate in the processes of global governance as implementers of official policies, as consultative partners in official decision-making and as initiators of unofficial regulatory mechanisms. This descriptive account was followed by an assessment of the expectations attached to civil society participation in global governance. Two major themes can be identified with respect to these expectations: democratization and development. After examining each one of these themes, the arguments of three prominent scholars of global civil society, that put emphasis on the civil society's normative function on the world stage, were outlined.

The common denominator among all these expectations is the assumption that there is nothing fundamentally problematic about the current configuration of social forces shaping global governance. This general blindness to global power relations in return results in a view of civil society as a “problem-solving” agent hoped to ensure the smooth functioning of the system through reforming various aspects of global governance (from its most institutionalized manifestations to its less tangible normative underpinnings). The transformative power of civil society is theoretically justified by juxtaposing it to the realm of states and economy, and by arguing the autonomy of the former from the latter. In this distinctly liberal reading with its roots in Tocqueville's political thinking, civil society appears as the sphere of uncoerced human association in which individuals come together to advance common goals free from the entanglements of both capitalism and the state system<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville defined civil society as the associational life of a community distinct from both the state and the economy. He assigned two main roles to a vibrant public life in modern societies. First, Tocqueville saw in democracy a potential for the state to encroach upon the individual



The perspectives to be covered in the ensuing chapter, on the other hand, approach the civil society-global governance *problematique* by locating it in the broader context of dominant power relations in society that encompass both the members of civil society as well as the mechanisms of global governance.

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liberty of its citizens under the democratic pressure to extend equality to all members of society. Only a vibrant and pluralistic associational life, in this respect, could check and balance the excessive centralization of power in the hands of the state. To put it more succinctly, civic associations were accorded the social function of keeping tyrannical tendencies of states at bay by diffusing social power. This is a recurrent theme in the mainstream discussions of the indispensability of a robust civil society to a healthy democracy. Second, Tocqueville, while uncritical of the capitalist economy, nevertheless maintained that the atomization and individualization entailed by modern economy should be countered by generating a sense of solidarity and community among the populace. Civic associations were exactly where this sense could be generated. In other words, they were “open schools” where individuals could be educated in civic values. Again, the parallels between the “social capital” literature and Tocqueville’s conceptualization of civil society are immediately obvious (Axtman, 1996; Encarnacion, 2002; Keane, 1988b).

## CHAPTER III

### **CIVIL SOCIETY-GLOBAL GOVERNANCE *PROBLEMATIQUE*: RADICAL APPROACHES**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter two tried to examine liberal-reformist perspectives that looked at the increased activity of social movements, issue networks, grassroots and community organizations as well as NGOs on the world stage. Chapter three, in contrast, will focus on those approaches that are sensitive towards social structures underlying human action.

At this point, it is necessary to stress that approaches that take heed of the unequal distribution of power in society, and hence are able to frame issues beyond the parameters of problem-solving theory are not a unified whole in terms of their attitude towards the power of civil society to transform social structures. In this respect, a determinist understanding of social structures usually ends up suffocating social agency altogether by reifying the very structures it tries to highlight. In other words, social actors can do nothing but obey the dictates of static social structures that are ultimately beyond their reach. An alternative position would be to consider social structures as historical entities that transform over time, and to define the

relationship between these structures and human action in reciprocal terms instead of unilinear determination.

The focal point of Chapter three is the former set of approaches. Their definition of social change amounts to nothing less than a radical alteration of power relations in society. Yet, from their point of view civil society is not the right place to search for the roots of such fundamental restructuring of social relations. In this respect, the criticisms directed towards the progressive potential of civil society first by world-system theory, second by Political Marxism, and finally by Foucauldian social theory will be examined.

### **3.2 WORLD-SYSTEM THEORY AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

World-system theory is one of the major Marxist-inspired strands of thought within International Relations theory along with Gramscianism, Political Marxism and critical theory with its theoretical roots in the Frankfurt School (Hobden & Jones, 2001). It posits that international relations can only be understood properly when the capitalist world economy as the overarching background of international affairs as well as the social relations it engenders are taken into consideration (Viotti & Kauppi, 1999). The historical predecessors to the world-system theory are both the works of Lenin and his theory of imperialism as well as the writings of the Dependency School. The basis of this historical connection is a particular understanding of international politics based on unequal relations between states. The capitalist world economy functions such that it drains economic resources from poorer parts of the world, and transfers them to its affluent sections. To put it more clearly, there is an exploitative relationship between the “core”, composed of rich

industrialized countries, and the “periphery”, the poor underdeveloped countries. The prosperity of the former “depends” on the destitution of the latter (Hobden & Jones, 2001; Viotti & Kauppi, 1999). Immanuel Wallerstein, the theoretical pioneer of the world-system theory, added to this two-fold classification a third category: the “semi-periphery”, which is characterized by hybrid productive and labor relations (Hobden & Jones, 2001; Wallerstein, 1996b).

While the core, the periphery and the semi-periphery relates to the spatial dimension of the world-system theory, its temporal dimension is of greater concern here for it sheds light upon the theorization of social change in this particular perspective. According to Wallerstein, the modern world system is the capitalist “world-economy” in contrast to the other possible type of a world system, namely, the “world-empire”<sup>1</sup>. The origins of the capitalist world economy can be traced back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe where it emerged, and gradually spread to all corners of the globe. At the core of this expansion has been the process of capital accumulation<sup>2</sup>. On the temporal side, the global accumulation of capital has not been a static process. First, there are cyclical rhythms, which refer to periodical expansions and contractions of the world economy. At the end of each such cycle, the situation of the economy is different from where it departed, and Wallerstein

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<sup>1</sup> The difference between a “world-empire” and a “world-economy” is the mechanism through which the economic surplus from the core is transferred to the periphery. In the case of the former, this transfer is achieved through centralized authority, and hence the distribution of surplus takes place through political mechanisms. In the case of the latter, the market is the main mechanism that determines the allocation of resources on a global scale (Hobden & Jones, 2001; Skocpol, 1977). Not every proponent of a world-systemic approach, however, adheres to this distinction. For more information, see Gills (1996).

<sup>2</sup> There is disagreement among students of world-system theory on the historical development of the modern world economy. For instance, Barry K. Gills and Andre Gunder Frank give support to the thesis that the origins of the modern world-system dates back to at least 5000 years ago. “Ceaseless accumulation of capital”, for Gills and Frank, is not specific to the modern period. They contend that it also existed in pre-modern times, where people engaged in international trade, and exchanged surplus between different geographies under the pressure of economic competition. For a detailed discussion of this position, see Gills (1996).

calls these transformations the “secular trends”. Finally, the structure of the capitalist world economy tends to give rise to contradictions through its very natural processes such as the crisis of underconsumption. A “crisis” occurs when these three temporal factors bring the system to a point beyond which it cannot indeterminately reproduce itself (Wallerstein, 1996a). A crisis, in this respect, appears as a very critical term in Wallerstein’s works, a concept that should be used sparingly, since, unlike contradictions, its occurrence is regarded as the death knell of a particular world system (Hobden & Jones, 2001).

It is precisely in this crisis situation that the agency of civil society acquires sufficient power to undermine the current configuration of global power relations according to Wallerstein. He contends that the current capitalist world economy is in such a structural crisis (Wallerstein, 1996a, 1996b). The crisis means that the dominant economic structure is going to give way to a new world order sooner or later as the historical record on the rise and eventual fall of similar world systems suggests<sup>3</sup>. However, the shape of the new world order which will replace the current one is indeterminate. In this environment of indeterminacy, social actors, if they can organize and design appropriate strategies for change, might command sufficient power to construct a more just and equitable system. But the important thing to remember is that this is by no means a certainty but a possibility (Wallerstein, 1996a).

The views of some other world-system theorists, such as Andre Gunder Frank and Barry Gills, on civil society appear to be a little more deterministic than Wallerstein. Their version of the world-system theory is based on the “continuity

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<sup>3</sup> Wallerstein (1996a) predicts that we have got around 50 years for the disintegration of global capitalism and for its replacement with a new world-system.

thesis”, which states that the accumulation of capital have been the structural characteristic of world system development for at least 5000 years, and that this renders an analysis of the changes in the mode of production insignificant (Gills, 1994). In contrast to Wallerstein, the crises of the world-system do not herald its demise. What they signify in deed is a shift in “the locus of accumulation” which result from the incessant competition between multiple cores in the system. Therefore, after every crisis, the existing world system is not replaced by a new one. Only a restructuring of accumulation occurs. Moreover, the structural-temporal rhythms of the world system “bring in its train systemic political, social, ideological, cultural, and even religious rhythms as well” (Gills, 1996, 236). Not very surprisingly, the rise and fall of civil societal movements is also explained with reference to these systemic rhythms. Frank and Fuentes, for instance, contend that the rise and fall of anti-systemic movements have a cyclical pattern, and this pattern, most of the time, coincides with the cyclical rhythms of the world economy (as cited in Huizer, 1996).

Despite the differences between various students of the world-system theory, it would not be wrong to assert that there is an apparent tendency in this approach to prioritize structural determinants over voluntary action as well as continuity over change. The world-system theory, particularly as it appears in the early works of Wallerstein, adheres to a very static understanding of socio-economic structures. Theoretically, it shows much more strength in explaining the persistence and expansion of the world capitalist system than the dynamics behind its transformation. In this regard, it is possible to talk about an inherent “system-maintenance bias” with respect to the world-system theory (Cox, 1996b; Skocpol, 1977). When social

change is conceptualized, this possibility is born out of the structural dynamics of the world-system; it is not induced by social actors. What the social movements can do at best is to influence the direction of structural change. Methodologically speaking, historical evidence is typically used to gather support for a preconceived theoretical model, as well as the accompanying concepts, and to justify its claims to universality. When contradictory data is encountered, it is simply overlooked or explained in an *ad hoc* manner (Skocpol, 1977). As a consequence, world-system theory, despite its use of rich historical data, remains an ahistorical perspective.

Other world system theorists, such as Frank and Gills, subscribe to a much more static view of economic structures, as evident in their continuity thesis. The only change conceived possible is a reconfiguration of capital accumulation, and this reconfiguration manifests itself in changing modes of production and shifting geographical locations. The primary reason for this restructuring is continuous global competition for surplus extraction and capital accumulation. Again, world-level structures are beyond the reach of civil societal action. Their development is a self-contained process that unilaterally determines other aspects of social phenomena including civil societal movements. As with Wallerstein, this version of world-system theory subscribes to an ahistorical methodology since the only thing history happens to reveal is the persistence of capital accumulation as the driving force of world historical development even in periods before the advent of capitalism in its modern form (Gills, 1994).

### 3.3 POLITICAL MARXISM AND CIVIL SOCIETY

A second strand of thought with strong dislike for the unqualified celebration of civil society's progressive potential is "Political" or "New Marxism". The basic tenet of this relatively new version of Marxism is its adherence to original Marxist principles as they appear in the writings of Marx. In this respect, Political Marxists distance themselves from other Marxist-inspired theories that combine Marxist insights with other schools of thought (Cox, 1999; Hobden & Jones, 2001).

This position has a direct bearing on how Political Marxists approach the civil society *problematique*, and the writings of Ellen Meiksins Wood (1995) are quite illustrative in this regard. According to Wood (1995), any understanding of the current situation of CSOs should take into account the original Marxist equation of civil society with the realm of particular interests, and hence with that of bourgeoisie<sup>4</sup>. Capitalism, as a distinct set of social relations driven by the private ownership of the means of production, is the larger context within which all civil societal struggles take place. Therefore, from this perspective, the possibility of

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<sup>4</sup> It is necessary at this point to examine at least briefly the Hegelian aspect of Marx's work since this is of great value in understanding the differences between the Marx's and Gramsci's approaches to civil society which will be covered in Chapter four. Marx inherited his notion of civil society from Hegel; yet he gave a major twist to the Hegelian conceptualization (Bobbio, 1988). Hegel established a dichotomous relation between the state and the civil society. Civil society was where free individuals pursued their particularistic interests. As a mediating sphere between the family and the state, it also encompassed judicial authority and corporations. Then the major question confronted by Hegel was how these particular interests could be translated into a common good. For Hegel, the answer was the state. The state presented a transcendence of the particularism of civil society as a universalizing force through the impersonal rule of law. Marx, on the contrary, excluded the public authority and corporations from the Hegelian definition of civil society, and equated civil society solely with the realm of economic relations (Axtman, 1996; Cox, 1999). In addition, he did not consider the state as a universalizing force. He emphasized that the state did not represent an ethical state over and above civil society. On the contrary, the state was involved in the business of maintaining the dominance of particularistic interests in civil society. In other words, for Marx, civil society was the determining economic base upon which the superstructure of state was built (Bobbio, 1988; Wood, 1995).



practically and theoretically divorcing civil society from economic relations of domination is simply non-existent.

Wood approaches the current revival of the concept of “civil society” both on the political left and right, but particularly on the left, with a lot of skepticism. Her main argument is that the concept has proved to be valuable in highlighting the dangers of excessive state oppression and in increasing the sensitivity towards dimensions of human experience, such as race and gender, other than the class. But, at the same time, an over-reliance on civil society and its emancipatory powers runs the risk of veiling the real locus of power in modern societies, namely capitalism, and the social relations it engenders.

According to Wood (1995), the distinguished feature of capitalism has been, in comparison to earlier social formations, the gradual separation of “politics” from “economics”. To put it more clearly, unlike earlier modes of production, capitalism is not dependent on extra-economic privileges to sustain economic appropriation. It is precisely through this dynamic that capitalism was able to tolerate the expansion of civic rights and liberties to all sectors of society in the form of liberal/formal democracy, as well as to achieve the separation of civil society from the state. In other words, formal equality has never constituted a barrier before substantive inequality in the economic sphere. In this respect, conceptualizing “civil society” as a sphere of freedom against the state as a sphere of coercion, while awakening one to the dangers of state oppression, conceals the types of socio-economic coercion capitalism maintains in civil society.

Wood (1995) evaluates the current identity-based struggles in civil society in this light as well. For her, the main fallacy of “identity politics”, which calls for the

overcoming of various sorts of social domination based on identities such as gender, race, and ethnicity, and at the same time the preservation of the social pluralism and diversity they present by invoking the category of civil society, is to treat class just as another identity. Liberal democracy, in contrast to socialism, appears as the best framework to wage struggles against these dominations and advance social pluralism. Underlying this argument is the denial of the totalizing force of capitalism and class relations constitutive of other dimensions of social life. To counter these claims, Wood claims that “class” cannot be considered as an identity on equal par with ethnic, racial or gender identities. While the politics of identity tries to preserve these identities in their plurality and at the same time to strip them off relations of domination/subordination through political/legal guarantees in the form of formal democracy, is the preservation of class identities equally desirable? On the whole, Wood (1995) claims that identity-based emancipatory struggles more often than not end up reproducing class domination by leaving

intact the liberal accommodation with capitalism, if only by evading the issue; for at the very heart of the new pluralism is a failure to confront (and often an explicit denial of) the overarching totality of capitalism as a social system, which is constituted by class exploitation but which shapes *all* ‘identities’ and social relations. (emphasis in the original, 260).

As it has become sufficiently clear from the above discussion, for Political Marxism, social change refers to the transformation of the capitalist economic structure. This transformation can only be achieved through class struggle explicitly aiming at the overhauling of capitalism. In other words, the agency of civil society should not be counted on to bring a better world since it is the very sphere where capitalism is rooted.

### 3.4 FOUCAULDIAN SOCIAL THEORY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Among radical critiques of modern civil society, Foucault deserves some attention. In contrast to perspectives examined above, his lack of trust in the agency of civil society to bring about radical social change has not so much to do with his being a structuralist theoretician as will be clarified in the following pages.

To begin with, Foucault contends that the struggles waged by civic associations in the name of liberal normative goals such as individual rights, autonomy, plurality and publicity, issues emphasized mainly by liberals and certain Marxist-inspired scholars, are doomed to failure with respect to undermining power relations in society. He concludes as such mainly because his notion of power is radically different from both the liberals as well as the Marxists. Contra liberals, he claims that power is not “visible, localizable in one place, and to be exercised in accordance with a fundamental lawfulness” (Cohen & Arato, 1992, 261). It is the “juridical” notion of power, which is a remnant of the era of absolute monarchies, and which still dominates our thinking, that creates this illusion<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, while Foucault seems to concur with the original Marxist critique of legal equality and rights as the cover for an inherently inegalitarian set of social relations, he refuses to consider economic relations as the locus of power in modern societies.

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<sup>5</sup> “Juridical” model of power is used by Foucault to denote those relations of power which concern the relation between a sovereign and a subject, and the legitimacy of which is established by law and rights. He traces its origins back to the time of absolute monarchies where the absolute power of the monarch over its subjects was legitimated as the right of the king. Sovereignty may have changed hands in the centuries to come. But the problem of power continued to be posed in juridical terms, as the negative power to prevent others from doing certain things. In this sense, it is repressive and its effect is obedience. Besides, it is possible to restrict it through laws and rights. While the juridical notion of power has constituted the backbone of many modern discussions on power, it particularly dominates the liberal thinking. See, for a more detailed examination of the concept of juridical power, Cohen & Arato (1992) and Foucault (1980).

According to Foucault, a new form of power, namely “disciplinary” power, characterizes the modern era. Unlike juridical power, the operation of disciplinary power “is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but normalization, not by punishment but by control” (Cohen & Arato, 1992, 266). In this sense, acquiring knowledge through the use of reason is not the key to progress nor is it an antidote to power relations. On the contrary, power relations emanate from the very act of constructing knowledges and truth claims about the world we inhabit either in the form of objectifying knowledge through social sciences or subjectifying knowledge about ourselves. In this respect, behind the diverse worldviews, which involve a certain claim to represent the truth, and norms, which originate in these worldviews and mobilized to undermine existing power relations, are a new set of power relations. As a result, civic organizations rallying around such liberal notions as rights, democracy, solidarity and equality do nothing but reproduce modern forms of domination in that the target of their resistance is juridical power. Juridical power, in return, is an accomplice to disciplinary power in modern societies. First, the discourse of rights conceals and concomitantly diverts attention from the operation of disciplinary power. Second, juridical power takes part in the constitution of modern disciplines since the discourse of legality and rights is deeply penetrated by disciplinary discourses. Third, juridical power, by creating social spaces where individuals consider themselves free and hence rendering invisible a good deal of power relations, serves a socio-psychological function by making power “tolerable” (Cohen & Arato, 1992).

On the whole, Foucault is deeply pessimistic about the progressive potential of movements within civil society that try to advance normative categories of civil

society. It is of course a possibility that certain movements identify subtler forms of domination/subjugation in the Foucauldian sense and resist those. But, due to the relativism inherent in the Foucauldian approach, what they can achieve at best is the replacement of one regime of truth with another (Cohen & Arato, 1992).

It is quite useful at this point to have a brief look at an instance of how these insights are carried to the work of transnational civil actors in the development field. In the previous chapter, the recent global shift in the development project towards less state-centered strategies was touched upon with the purpose of highlighting the expectations tied to civic associations in the field of poverty eradication as well as with respect to the longer term goal of development. Microcredit movement, which originated in Bangladesh with the work of Grameen Bank, has been recognized as one of the most innovative responses from within civil society to the failures of traditional macro-scale, growth-oriented and centrally-directed development projects. In very brief terms, microcredit refers to the granting of small amounts of collateral-free credit to jointly liable people that are not otherwise eligible for commercial lending. Its purpose is income generation and self-employment through the “empowerment” of ordinary people (Brigg, 2001).

While cognizant of the success of microcredit movement in the eradication of poverty in the Third World, Morgan Brigg (2001) is more skeptical about its ability to truly go beyond earlier development practices. On a more general level, he has doubts as to whether the rise of NGOs in the Third World should be regarded emancipatory. According to Brigg (2001), the mechanism of microcredit represents exactly a new technique of power, in the Foucauldian sense, which aims at inserting the liberal free subject, “the self-regulating and self-producing subject of liberalism”

(240), into the Third World social body under the cloak of “empowerment”. Empowerment means, in the context of microcredit, the generation of the belief in participants that they are the authors of their own life, that they are responsible both for their misery and prosperity, and that it is in their hands to become entrepreneurs to overcome poverty with a little bit of credit. While this discourse is seriously problematic due to the inherent individualization of poverty, a more dangerous aspect of it lies in the penetration of the entrepreneur subject into these societies at the expense of indigenous non-Western subjective modalities. If one remembers the earlier modernization theories and the emphasis they placed on traditional cultures as barriers before the unfolding of the development process, the continuities of microcredit with these theories become more evident. The subjective modality it promotes is the death-knell of those traditional cultures that so long bothered development theorists. In all these respects, microcredit, rather than representing a radical break with the earlier development discourse, represents the reinvention of it in the larger neoliberal context of shrinking states and expanding markets. Taking this analysis a step further, Brigg (2001) considers the increased NGO activity in the Third World as “a basis for the emergence of initiatives and practices that increase the penetration of power into the social body of the Third World” (234).

On the whole, it is possible to deduce that the Foucauldian social theory adheres to a very pessimistic account of the potential of civil society to transform global power relations. Micro processes of power that penetrate every aspect of social relations originate neither in the individuals’ relation to political authority nor in their structural location in the economy. Rather, disciplinary power emanates from the very act of producing knowledge. In this respect, the activities of CSOs can do

nothing but generate new relationship of domination/subordination, as they have to frame these practices within new discourses.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

Radical approaches to the progressive role of civil society in global governance were the subject matter of this chapter. The three approaches examined under the heading of radical approaches were the world-system theory, Political Marxism and Foucauldian social theory.

These perspectives focused their analysis on the ways through which social relations of domination/subordination circumscribed civil society's progressive potential in global governance. For both world-system theory and Political Marxism, the major constraining force on the activities of CSOs is the mode and relations of production in general, and capitalism in particular. In the case of the former, the global political and normative structures as well as social movements are explained with reference to the development of the world capitalist economy. This line of determinist thinking does not leave much room for the conceptualization of the agency of civil society as an autonomous force on the world stage. The latter approach, on the other hand, considers the efforts of civil societal actors as misplaced. Political Marxism emphasizes the rootedness of all forms of social domination in class relations, and downplays the importance of identity-based struggles waged from within civil society on the grounds that they distract attention from the real locus of power in capitalist societies and hence reinforce class domination.

Foucauldian social theory's distrust in the agency of civil society originates in a totally different understanding of power relations in modern societies. Power, from a Foucauldian perspective, is an outcome of the very practice of construction of knowledge about the world we live in as well as about ourselves. This form of power is called by Foucault as "disciplinary" power. Since the ideals promoted by CSOs are inevitably based on such truth claims, which themselves are the source of power relations, they have no chance of eliminating "disciplinary power" altogether.



## **CHAPTER IV**

# **CIVIL SOCIETAL INVOLVEMENT IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: A GRAMSCIAN REINTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is dedicated to an in depth analysis of the Gramscian understanding of civil society, international institutions and the interaction between the two. The purpose is to present the reader a different reading of the role of civil society in global governance from the perspectives covered in the previous two chapters. Here, the contention is that this is a reading which has the potential to overcome the weaknesses of both reformist approaches covered in Chapter two as well as radical perspectives examined in the third.

In this respect, first, the Gramscian notion of civil society in terms of its similarities to and differences from other major theoretical approaches will be examined. Then, an exploration of the place of international institutions in Gramscian IR theory will follow. Again the purpose here is to compare and contrast it with mainstream approaches as well as to set the theoretical stage for a detailed examination of the interaction between international institutions and civic organizations from the vantage point of hegemony.

The final section focuses on the processes at work in the participation of civil societal actors in mechanisms of global governance. This participation is examined under two headings: participation in official policymaking and implementation of official policies. The arguments in this last section substantiate the Gramscian position on the relationship between civil society and international institutions. Many aspects of this relationship shed serious doubt upon the ability of transnational civic actors to realize the hopes that are tied to them both in terms of development and democratization. From a Gramscian perspective, it is not possible to consider international institutions and civil societal organizations in isolation from the particular historical structures they are imbedded in. When such structures are brought into the picture by way of invoking the Gramscian notion of “hegemony”, civil societal participation in mechanisms of global governance becomes less of a positive development. More clearly, international institutions currently absorb whatever progressive potential civil societal actors might have on the world stage through a strategy of “transformism”. Consequently, CSOs, in this particular historical conjuncture, seem to reproduce the global status quo more than they transform it.

## **4.2 GRAMSCI AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

The notion of civil society has a long history. Such prominent political thinkers as Aristotle, Cicero, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Adam Ferguson, Hegel, Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci all made use of this notion, and hence took part in the gradual transformation of the meaning of the term over the centuries. In the half a century after Gramsci, the concept somehow fell out of scholarly fashion

until it made a forceful comeback in the 1980s (Cohen & Arato, 1992; Van Rooy, 1998). Arguably, the major turning point in the history of civil society was the gradual abolishment of the classical equation of civil society with political society or the state in the works of Enlightenment thinkers by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Axtman, 1996; Keane, 1988b). Therefore, the readings of civil society that developed and proliferated henceforth, despite significant differences among them, can be safely assumed to constitute the modern epoch in the conceptual transformation of the term.

“Largely the consequence of [this] long and tortured history, the concept of civil society is currently adrift in a sea of definitional confusion” (Encarnacion, 2002, 120). Yet, underneath the diversity of approaches that can be identified today, there are three distinct modern readings of civil society. The first one belongs to Tocqueville, and it is his particular reading of civil society that primarily informs current debates on civil society in the liberal camp as discussed in Chapter two. The second one belongs to Marx, and a general sketch of his views was also given in Chapter three while examining “Political Marxism”. The last alternative reading is that of Antonio Gramsci.

Antonio Gramsci was a Marxist political thinker who lived in Turin, Italy, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was not only a thinker but also a political activist, and he spent most of his life, particularly the years after he was imprisoned by the fascists, trying to understand the rise of fascism in Italy, and the reasons why a worker’s revolution did not take place in Italy (Cox, 1999; Van Rooy, 1998). In this regard, he was interested both in analyzing the factors that reproduced the established order, and in devising strategies to transform it towards a more just and equitable direction

(Cox, 1996a). Gramsci's unique response to the *problematique* of system reproduction as well as its transformation was the notion of "hegemony", which in very crude terms refers to "the ideological predominance of the dominant classes in civil society over the subordinate" (Carnoy, 1984, 68). Hegemony, in this respect, constitutes the consensual aspect of class domination. Accordingly, the realm of civil society appears as "an agent of stabilization and reproduction, and a potential agent of transformation" in Gramscian political thinking (Cox, 1999, 5).

For his particular conception of civil society, Gramsci is strongly indebted to both Hegel and Marx. In fact, the Gramscian understanding of civil society may be considered a combination of both. Yet, at the same time, he goes beyond these thinkers in significant respects. To understand better what civil society meant for Gramsci, it may be useful at this point to briefly remember Hegel's and Marx's ideas on civil society.

The Enlightenment thinkers before Hegel, such as Ferguson, Hobbes and Locke, while showing preliminary signs of an eventual divorce, nonetheless remained in the classical tradition that asserted the essential unity between the state and the civil society<sup>1</sup>. Their views were discontinuous with the classical tradition in that they juxtaposed a hypothetical state of nature, characterized by perfect freedom and unfettered pursuit for power, with civil society, created through the consent of individuals to forgo their natural rights and establish a political order (Axtman,

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<sup>1</sup> This generalization should be kept limited to the European political thought in that certain American political thinkers such as Thomas Paine had already asserted the distinctness of civil society from the state in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century decades before Hegel. Paine considered the state as a necessary evil, which should be established through the explicit consent of the citizenry, and given minimal powers and authority to complement an essentially self-regulating civil society. He viewed the relationship between the state and the civil society in antagonistic terms. The main reason why it took American political thought much less time to break the classical unity was probably the significantly different

1996). In contrast, for classical thinkers, humans were essentially social and political beings. Therefore, civil society also meant natural society. However, the early Enlightenment usage, by asserting the primacy of individual before society and shifting the natural to the pre-political stage, turned civil society into an artificial entity. Nevertheless, the rupture from the classical definition was incomplete since the artificially created civil society was also the political society and hence the state (Bobbio, 1988; Carnoy, 1984).

Arguably, it was Hegel who decisively broke with the classical notion of civil society. What the Enlightenment thinkers before Hegel called the natural society/state of nature became civil society in the Hegelian conception (Bobbio, 1988). Besides, according to Hegel, civil society, or more accurately the relations embodied within it, was an artificial and historically conditioned entity, “the achievement of the modern world” in his own words (Hegel as cited in Keane, 1988, 50). Civil society, not the state of nature, was exactly where free individuals pursued their particular interests. Hegel viewed the outcome of such unfettered pursuit of private gains as conflictual as opposed to harmonious and capable of self-regulating. In this respect, civil society was prone to undermine itself, and hence there was a strong need for the state in modern civil societies (Keane, 1988)<sup>2</sup>. Put another way, the state represented a transcendence of the particularities of civil society as a universalizing force. Through this dichotomy between the particular and universal,

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way the American political system evolved from its European counterparts. For a more detailed discussion, see Keane (1988).

<sup>2</sup> An alternative resolution of the same question can be found in the works of Adam Smith. Smith believed that when individuals selfishly worked to maximize their private gains at the expense of each other, this would naturally benefit the society as a whole. The conflicting interests in the market, in his view, were harmonized by a metaphysical force called the “invisible hand”, and in this sense there was no need for state intervention (Axtman, 1996; Cox, 1999).

Hegel was able to completely separate the state and civil society (Bobbio, 1988; Carnoy, 1984).

Marx inherited from Hegel the definition of civil society as the sphere of particular interests, and at the same time went beyond it when he accorded it a historically and theoretically privileged status vis-à-vis all other aspects of social reality. This led Marx to approach the state not as the disinterested and ethically superior unifier of the particularities of civil society but their expression in the political domain.

For Marx, as with Hegel, civil society was a historical entity. Equally important, it was coterminous with the realm of the bourgeoisie or the economic base. In that sense, civil society was bereft with relations of economic domination and subordination and class conflict. Therefore, in the Marxist formulation, the main dichotomy was between the civil society=economic base and the state=superstructure. In contrast to Hegel, however, Marx considered the state to be subordinate to civil society (Bobbio, 1988). In other words, the economic structure of a society was the foundation upon which political forms, juridical systems, and ideological and cultural practices were erected. The latter superstructural phenomena acted in ways to reinforce particular class interests and social domination. Civic rights and liberties, and the idea of formal equality were no exception to this. According to Marx, their function was to paper over the deeper social inequalities characterizing capitalist social formations. Therefore, struggles to extend these rights against state authority and to all members of society were simply misplaced, and had no chance of undermining the real locus of power in capitalist societies. In the same vein, the struggles waged at the level of ideas had no importance in terms of social

change even when they were successful since ideas were structurally subordinate to the economic base (Wood, 1995).

Here, it is important to stress that, for Hegel, civil society did not simply consist of economic relations. It also included corporations and administrative and judicial structures (Bobbio, 1988; Keane, 1988). Therefore, Marx was openly selective when he adopted the Hegelian notion of civil society by leaving out these latter phenomena (Axtman, 1996). What Marx left out was taken up by Gramsci. This is exactly where the theoretical origins of the difference between Marx's and Gramsci's approaches to civil society lies.

As noted earlier, for Marx, civil society belonged to the structural sphere. Gramsci, in contrast, argued that the civil society along with the political society or the state was part of the superstructure. More clearly, civil society appears as the realm of ideological-cultural forces not the productive ones in Gramscian political thought. Gramsci was able to come up with such a radically different vision of civil society than Marx because "Hegel's civil society which Gramsci has in mind is not the system of needs – that is, of economic relations – which was Marx's starting point, but the institutions which regulate them, the corporations" (Bobbio, 1988, 84).

The superstructural moment in the Gramscian usage consists of both the state and the civil society. While the former's primary function in society is to consolidate class rule through legal-coercive means, the institutions of the latter help the dominant class acquire the consent of subordinate classes. Therefore, for Gramsci the power of the dominant classes, and social power in general, has two dimensions:

coercion and consent<sup>3</sup>. Consent, most of the time, was a much more efficient tool than brute force to ensure conformity to a given social order. Coercion was to be applied only in extreme cases (Cox, 1996a).

In order to denote the consensual aspect of class rule, Gramsci used the concept of hegemony. As noted earlier, the primary site where hegemony is established is civil society, even though the state also performs hegemonic functions through public institutions such as the school and the press<sup>4</sup>. Hegemony originates in

the acceptance by the ruled of a “conception of the world” which belongs to the rulers. The philosophy of the ruling class passes through a whole tissue of complex vulgarizations to emerge as “common sense”: that is, the philosophy of the masses, who accept the morality, the customs, the institutionalized behavior of the society they live in. (Fiori as cited in Carnoy, 1984, 68).

For both Marx and Gramsci, it is possible to argue that the active element in historical development was civil society. However, in the case of Marx, this statement means that it is the economic base that is the prime mover of social change whereas for Gramsci the superstructure, the ideological and ethical dimension of social reality, is where historical change originates (Bobbio, 1988). Through this inversion Gramsci is able to escape the economic determinism inherent in Marx’s approach to civil society. Gramsci, in this respect, restores man/woman as the active

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<sup>3</sup> Gramsci borrowed this two dimensional understanding of power from Machiavelli who used the metaphor of a centaur, the half-beast, half-human mythological character, to show that effective political power required something more than brute force (Augelli & Murphy, 1993; Cox, 1996a).

<sup>4</sup> Gramsci is ambiguous on this point. At certain times, he introduces a strict separation between the state and civil society, and assigns the role of expanding dominant class hegemony to the latter. At others, he subsumes civil society under the state, and hence considers hegemony as a mixture of both consent and coercion. In this case, the state also becomes a perpetuator of hegemony. Finally, he has another definition of the state as coterminous with the civil society. This time, all state organs turn into hegemonic apparatuses. In line with Carnoy’s (1984) argument, the second position is preferred over the other two in this thesis, since the consent of the subordinate elements in modern capitalist societies is not only acquired through private institutions in civil society but also through public institution which actively take part in the presentation of particular power-ridden worldviews as universal truths. It is this definition that allows the examination of international institutions as potential consolidators of hegemony in global politics in the following pages. The WTO, for instance, justifies its promotion of trade liberalization in terms of the general welfare of all the humanity, poor and wealthy alike. Yet, at the same time, it backs up the consensual element with an extensive body of



agent of history, and places consciousness to a central place in historical analysis. He does this, however, within the Marxist dialectical framework in the sense that the options for social action are constrained by the socio-economic conditions of a particular historical period (Carnoy, 1984). Man/woman can only make history by acquiring knowledge of these conditions<sup>5</sup>. Hegemony is precisely about this historical knowledge in the sense that it prevents the development of an independent consciousness on the part of subordinate elements in society of their class position and the resulting relations of domination. Herein lies the importance of ethical-political institutions; of superstructure (Bobbio, 1988; Carnoy, 1984).

Finally, it is also worth noting that Tocqueville's and Gramsci's conceptualizations of the relationship between the state, economy and civil society bear certain resemblances. Both of them conceptually separated the state, economy and civil society, and argued for their autonomy with respect to each other (Cohen & Arato, 1992). However, Tocqueville in his analysis of civil society, took capitalist relations of production for granted, and it was arguably this assumption which enabled him, as well as his followers in the current mainstream literature, to talk

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international legal instruments which punishes deviant behavior (Scholte with O'Brian and Williams, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Gramsci differentiated between three levels of consciousness. The "economico-corporative" consciousness meant that the group in question knew that it had particular interests. At the second level, namely at the level of "class" consciousness, the threads between particular interests and the class identity are woven. At the final "hegemonic" level, the consciousness starts expressing the underlying awareness of particular interests in universalist terms to include the interests of other social classes. The passage from earlier levels of consciousness to the hegemonic level is not an automatic process. It requires the active work of intellectuals that are organically tied to certain classes. These organic intellectuals take on the responsibility of analyzing the existing social order and its inherent contradictions. More importantly, however, they engage in articulating holistic views of an alternative social order (Augelli & Murphy, 1993; Cox, 1996a). The contradictions of an existing social order become more visible when the dominant historical bloc is experiencing a hegemonic decline. This manifests itself in the form a growing sense of crisis in the populace since there "appears a disjuncture between problems and hitherto accepted mental constructs," and this is the most fertile ground for the birth of a counter-hegemonic movement (Cox, 1992, 138).

about the free associational realm in such progressive terms contra the state and the market (Axtman, 1996). On the other hand, for Gramsci, behind the conceptual separation of the state, civil society and economy is a deeper penetration of these realms based on the particular mode and relations of production in a given historical era.

In line with one of the main themes of this thesis, it is possible to conclude that Gramsci places civil society at the center of his analysis of capitalism as a social structure. However, the particular way he does this is founded upon the premise that social structures are historical entities. They transform over time and the roots of this transformation should be sought in civil society. Civil society is where the hegemonic ideas of a particular time, which in the final analysis legitimate and sustain the inegalitarian distribution of social power, are both reproduced and challenged. This is a view, unlike the mainly liberal-reformist approaches covered in Chapter two, which does not assign any essentially progressive quality to civic associations. On the other hand, unlike the structuralist approaches covered in Chapter three, the Gramscian understanding of civil society can remain attentive to social structures while leaving room for social action with the capacity to transform these very structures (Birchfield, 1999).

### **4.3 GRAMSCIAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

The previous section examined the Gramscian notion of civil society at an abstract level in terms of its theoretical origins as well as its similarities to and differences from alternative currents of thought in the history of civil society. Two conclusions,

which are of importance to our discussion, can be drawn from this examination. First, the realm of civil society lies at the crux of the reproduction of status quo. It is exactly where the ideological hegemony of dominant socio-economic forces in society is established, and consent to the existing unequal power relations is assured in a given historical period. Second and equally important, civil society is where forces against the established order, namely the counter-hegemonic forces, originate if the operations of civil societal actors consciously and explicitly target the hegemony of dominant forces over subordinate ones. Therefore, from a Gramscian perspective, it is both theoretically as well as practically impossible to see the work of CSOs either in essentially progressive terms, as most liberal students of the phenomenon do, or in regressive terms, as certain other Marxist scholars tend to do<sup>6</sup>. Progressiveness or regressiveness, in this respect, may only be decided through a careful assessment of historical structures, the hegemonic forces they give rise to and how the members of civil society are implicated in the power relations that these structures engender.

Then, what exactly are these historical structures operative at the international level from a Gramscian perspective? Historical structures are “frameworks for action” that combine “thought patterns, material conditions, and human institutions which has a certain coherence among its elements” in a given historical period (Cox, 1996b, 97). These structures do not directly determine social action. Rather, they are “frameworks” which impose certain “pressures and constraints” on the range of possible social action (Cox, 1996b, 98). These frameworks constitute the “synchronic” dimension of social structures, and hence they may be considered as “a

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<sup>6</sup> On the liberal position see Lipschutz (1996), Shaw (1994), and Wapner (1996). For Marxist critics,

picture of a particular configuration of forces” (Cox, 1996b, 98). However, social structures also have a “diachronic” dimension which refers to the fact that these structures are not static entities. They can and do change over time, and this change can only be conceived through a historicist method (Cox, 1976). The transformatory potential is an intrinsic part of any social structure. Each and every historically conceived structure is bereft with internal contradictions that may lead to its eventual dissolution.

With regards to its synchronic dimension, it is possible to identify three different forces operating within historical structures: material capabilities, ideas and institutions. Material capabilities consist of both productive and military assets. Britain’s superior naval power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its economic dominance partly backed up by this military superiority well illustrate the material dimension of historical structures. The second force, ideas, can be further broken down into two categories: intersubjective meanings and collective images. Intersubjective meanings refer to the widely shared assumptions, or the common “definitions of the situation”, about the social world. In this sense, these meanings render social interaction possible, and are rarely challenged. Collective images, on the other hand are comprehensive views about what is and what should be. They include answers to such questions as what constitutes good, and what is the nature of justice (Cox, 1996b).

The third dimension of historical structures, institutions, represent the point where material conditions and collective images are given a concrete form with the ability to legitimate and hence stabilize a given historical structure and the power

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see Pasha (1996), Pasha & Blaney (1998,1993), and Wood (1995).

relations it entails. Institutions can present particular collective images of the world as in the interest of all, and give them a universal quality. Accordingly, they spring from particular power relations, and are the primary means through which consent to a given configuration of social power is secured, and hence the need for the use of force is diminished. This does not mean that the emergence, form and operations of an international institution can be reduced to the socio-historical conditions, or material and normative structures, it sprang from. On the contrary, these institutions, in time, may acquire a certain level of autonomy, and become forums within which oppositional forces can express themselves. In other words, there is no one-way relationship between material capabilities, ideas and institutions. They all influence and are influenced by each other (Cox, 1996b, 1977; Wade, 2002).

At the international level, as is the case at the domestic level, historical structures may correspond to both hegemonic as well as non-hegemonic world orders (Cox, 1996b, 1980). A hegemonic world order, in this case, refers to

a coherent conjunction or a fit between a configuration of material power, the prevalent collective image of world order (including certain norms) and a set of institutions which administer the order with a certain semblance of universality (that is, not just as the overt instruments of a particular state's dominance). (Cox, 1996b, 103).

The *pax britannica* of the middle of the nineteenth century and the *pax americana* of the approximately thirty years after the World War II are examples of hegemonic world orders (Cox, 1996a; Gill & Law, 1993)<sup>7</sup>. In the case of the former, Britain, thanks to its superior naval power and economic supremacy, was the dominant power in world politics. It backed up this dominant position by a widely shared belief in the principles of economic liberalism such as free trade, free capital movements and the

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<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Arrighi (1993) identifies a third hegemonic world order that preceded *pax britannica*: the Dutch hegemony established by the United Provinces in the seventeenth century.

gold standard. In the absence of formal international institutions, the city of London functioned as the regulator and enforcer of liberal norms. In the case of the latter, the hegemonic power was the United States which held sufficient productive and destructive forces to enjoy a position of superiority in the post-war international context. The most striking intersubjective meanings of this period were that the state was what international affairs was all about and that states interacted in ways to promote national interests. On the side of dominant collective images, one finds a new liberal internationalism, committed to free markets and trade, and liberal democracy as keys to development and human prosperity. The novelty was the new liberalism's accommodation of societal interests other than the business in the form of corporatist arrangements between government, business and labor, increased welfare functions and protectionist trade policies; a combination of policies which Ruggie (1983) aptly described as "embedded liberalism". These constituted the type of concessions made to potentially disturbing social forces to acquire their consent necessary for the longer-term viability of the liberal order (Cox, 1996b; Gale, 1998a).

The *pax americana* period gave rise to an impressive number of formal international institutions which removed the burden of enforcing the norms of the new world order from the shoulders of the United States even though the need to resort to force was never fully eliminated. One should only remember the industrious American efforts in Latin America to contain communism and to promote the interests of its companies (Macdonald, 1997). The birth of the Bretton Woods institutions can be seen in this light as well. The IMF was established to support the fixed exchange rate system based on the gold standard, and prevent currency devaluation by providing loans to countries with balance-of-payments deficits. The

World Bank, on the other hand, was responsible for the reconstruction of weak post-war economies through financial assistance (Ritchie, 1999). Both institutions, in this sense, were designed to support the smooth running of the post-war liberal international economy by assisting those countries that were in trouble, and that had demonstrated their commitment to its norms (Cox, 1996b).

On the whole, international institutions are an integral part of the Gramscian analysis of world politics. Institutions matter because

(1) [they] embody the rules which facilitate the expansion of hegemonic world orders; (2) they are themselves the product of the hegemonic world order; (3) they ideologically legitimate the norms of the world order; (4) they co-opt the elites from peripheral countries; and (5) they absorb counterhegemonic ideas. (Cox, 1996a, 138).

The last hegemonic function of international institutions, the absorption of counterhegemonic ideas, is crucial to understanding the terms of involvement of CSOs in global governance. More precisely, it tells a great deal about the particular way international organizations incorporate civil societal elements into their institutional structures, policies and operations. However, before elaborating further on this point, it is necessary to look at alternative interpretations of the role of international institutions in world politics.

#### **4.4 INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: A GENERAL OVERVIEW**

International institutions, the dynamics of their establishment, maintenance and breakdown, and their role in international relations has been subject to many different interpretations within the discipline of International Relations<sup>8</sup>. In this respect, the two paradigmatic traditions in IR, namely realism and liberalism, had differing views on the function of international institutions in international relations.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to dwell into the intricacies of this debate, it is nevertheless necessary to delineate its contours to gain a better understanding of the place international institutions occupy in Gramscian IR theory.

Realism considers international institutions of trivial importance to the conduct of foreign affairs. In this respect, from a realist perspective, international institutions are not autonomous actors in international relations with independent powers to shape state behavior (Mearsheimer, 1995). They “serve primarily national rather than international interests” (Waltz, 2000, 21). The anarchic structure of international politics is thought to be inherently inhospitable to cooperation in that it forces each and every state to self-help behavior to ensure its own survival, and self-help necessarily results in conflictual relations between states rather than cooperative arrangements as well as a concern for relative gains at the expense of absolute ones (Grieco, 1988). The only recognized form of cooperation is military-strategic alliances, and these reflect the convergence of national interests for brief periods of time rather than a genuine desire on the part of participants to cooperate. By the same token, the existence of longer-term cooperation in the form of international institutions is explained away with reference to its utility for the maximization of certain states’ interests, usually those of great powers (Mearsheimer, 1995). In the final analysis, for realists, “international institutions affect the prospects for cooperation only marginally” (Grieco, 1988, 488). This position, at a more general level, is a reflection of the pessimism inherent in realist thinking that does not consider “progress”, including genuine cooperation between states, a possibility in

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<sup>8</sup> For an overview of the literature on international institutions see, Cox (1996b), Gale (1998a), Haggard & Simmons (1987), and Little (2001).



international politics, which is thought to be essentially conflict-ridden and inhospitable to the accommodation of any human ideals into its workings.

Neo-realism, realism's structural variant, may be considered to have been more attentive to the theoretical questions posed by the existence of international institutions than earlier forms of realism. In this respect, neo-realists developed the "hegemonic stability" theory to account for the international regime phenomenon<sup>9</sup>. The basic tenet of this theory is that the relatively permanent cooperation embodied in regimes is conditional upon the existence of a hegemonic power in the international arena. The hegemonic power, which enjoys a dominant position and exercises leadership among other states because of its military, economic and technological resources, carries all the burdens of maintaining an international regime. It does so in order to retain its hegemonic status among other states through the provision of global public goods. The logical outcome of this line of thinking is that when such a power is absent the chances for international cooperation in the form of international regimes is rather weak (Gale, 1998a; Haggard & Simmons, 1997; Little, 2001).

In contrast to their secondary status in realist thought, analysis of international institutions has always been one of the central pillars of liberal theories of IR, particularly the idealist and institutionalist variants. For inter-war idealists, who had overwhelmingly preoccupied themselves with questions of peace and war,

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<sup>9</sup> Starting from the early 1970s, "regime theory" became the main theoretical ground for debates on international cooperation in particular and the existence of rule-governed behavior in the international area in general. On the two different poles of the debate were neo-realists and neo-liberals. Despite the absence of a common definition of what constitutes an international regime among regime theorists, an international regime may be said to involve, on the formal side, international agreements, international law and international organizations as the most institutionalized elements of it. On the informal side, regimes may depend on unwritten yet mutually observed norms and principles. The

the key to international peace was the establishment of international institutions to preserve it through collective action. The League of Nations, by and large, reflected this idealist belief in the possibility of overcoming international conflicts through institutionalized cooperation among states<sup>10</sup>. While the unfortunate fate of the League discarded idealist hopes tied to international institutions in the discipline, rightly or wrongly, the analysis of international cooperation reinvigorated itself through the works of liberal institutionalists. This version of liberalism, sometimes called “functionalism”, contended that international cooperation was necessary to cope with common problems facing all states. Moreover, once cooperation was achieved in one issue area, it would spill over into other areas thanks to the mutual benefits gained from cooperation (Cox, 1996c; Dunne, 2001).

Neo-liberalism, while largely in agreement with its neo-realist contender on the privileged status of states in international relations and the constraints imposed by the anarchical condition on cooperation, stays in the liberal track in that it does not so readily accept the conflict-ridden picture of international relations (Grieco, 1988). Inter-state cooperation is both possible and desirable because states are primarily concerned with maximizing utility instead of power. Neo-liberals, contra neo-realists, reject the characterization of international politics as a zero-sum game. This rejection, in return, increases the importance of absolute gains, which is likely

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crucial point is that the constituent parts of a regime all contribute to orderly and rule governed behavior in the international arena (Little, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> The label “Idealist” originated in the so-called “Great Debate” which supposedly took place in the inter-war period between two groups of antagonistic scholars on the issue of war. The mainstream accounts describe the debate as a clash between idealist and realist students of international relations, and the victorious party as the realists. Leaving aside the question whether such a debate really took place, a subject open to much discussion, the scholars posthumously lumped together as “idealists” never called themselves “idealists”, and hence it is not a part of their self-image. The label was attached to them, somehow in a pejorative manner, later on by realist critics of inter-war period IR

to result from cooperative behavior, for states. Neo-liberal regime theory applies game theoretic models to understand regime formation and maintenance. That means the rational calculation on the part of states to maximize expected utility determines their decision to enter into cooperation with others. The effect of anarchy on this rational calculation process is that it may prevent the potential of cooperation to be realized in certain cases since the states' utmost fear is defection in the absence of a central authority to enforce compliance. International regimes facilitate cooperative behavior since they ensure a certain level of predictability and mitigate the fear of defection (Gale, 1998a; Little, 2001).

The neo-realist and neo-liberal approaches to institutionalized behavior in the international realm may be subjected to a number of common criticisms. First, both perspectives adhere to a statist ontology and a positivistic epistemology (Cox, 1996c; Gale, 1998a)<sup>11</sup>. In contrast, the historicist method is the cornerstone of Gramscian IR theory. The historicist method diverges significantly from positivism which preoccupies itself with discovering law-like regularities in the social world by strictly focusing on sense observation and empirical testing (Sinclair, 1996). Positivist methodology examines history in search for "data", unspoiled by human subjectivity, and in search for more evidence of the universal laws of social motion. Therefore, it is essentially an ahistorical method (Cox, 1976). Positivism can recognize changes

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thinking. For a more detailed discussion of the Great Debate see, Ashworth (2002), Schmidt (2002), and Wilson (1998).

<sup>11</sup> Gale (1998a) qualifies this observation by referring to some early regime theorists, particularly John Ruggie, with a strong institutionalist orientation. Contra neo-liberals and neo-realists, this group rejected the ontological priority of both the anarchic international system and the egoistic calculating states in favor of institutions which stand in between those. Moreover, they viewed international institutions as intersubjective phenomenon, and contended that they did not simply reflect the interplay of pre-given interests. In place of positivist epistemology, they argued that regimes may be best studied through interpretive techniques. For a more detailed account of this current of regime theory see, Kratochwil & Ruggie (1986) and Gale (1998a).

only within the framework of short time periods, what Fernand Braudel calls “events-time”, and is unable to account for structural change which spans over maybe decades or more, Braudel’s *longue duree* (Gill, 1997; Sinclair, 1996). It is nevertheless incorporated by Cox in his theory as a useful tool to analyze social regularities within “defined historical limits” (Sinclair, 1996, 7).

Second, and in accordance with their positivistic attitude, both approaches create the false impression that analysis of regimes is all about the examination of inter-governmental negotiations, and resulting rules and agreements. In the process, the power relations underlying the process of institutionalization is left unaccounted for. Particularly, analysis of international institutions along the liberal track tend to portray international institutions as reflections of common interests in the international arena, and their operations beneficial to all, for they overlook deeper divergences of interest which underwrite the establishment and operations of these institutions (Haggard & Simmons, 1987). Neo-realists, on the other hand, while centralizing power and conflict in their analysis, suffer from a limited, indeed reductionist, understanding of social power and interest since they tend to overlook the power relations emanating from productive relations (Cox, 1996b).

Third, most of the time, both neo-realists and neo-liberals see international regimes in a positive light. In other words, they embrace the order established through these regimes without asking for what purposes this order is established and in whose interests (Strange, 1982). In fact, this tendency may also be observed in some of the current literature on global governance. One generally confronts in these works the assumption that the more the number of the international regulatory frameworks, the better the world we live in gets (Rosenau, 1995, 1992). This is

precisely where the Gramscian approach to international institutions corrects the many fallacies of the approaches covered above. While the Gramscian approach considers international institutions and the normative order they sustain of sufficient theoretical and practical value, it, at the same time, distances itself from them in an effort to reveal their connections to historical structures and power relations.

All of these criticisms point to a broader deficiency in the neo-realist and neo-liberal accounts of international institutions. They are more interested in the “mechanics” of the process of institutionalization at the world stage than in the socio-historical context within which such a process takes place. In accordance with their problem-solving orientation, they take the present world order as given, and consequently participate in the legitimization of the unequal distribution of power within that order by overlooking the relationship between international institutions and dominant interests on the world stage (Cox, 1996c; Gale, 1998a).

#### **4.5 THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE**

In Chapter two, three categories of civil societal participation in global governance were outlined. The first one was the increasing role civic actors play in the global decision-making processes. The second type of participation involved the implementation of official projects designed and funded by intergovernmental organizations. The third one was the formulation of unofficial regulatory schemes.

The following section concentrates on the first two categories since its primary concern is to make sense of the interaction between international institutions and CSOs from a Gramscian perspective. Before doing this, however, it is necessary

to take a look at the historical structures that underpin the current era of global regulation.

For one thing, the corporatist consensus of the *pax americana* era has nearly disappeared in the last couple of decades as a result of the changes in the structure of domestic and international production as well as changes in the form of civil society-state relations across the world. Under the pressure of the forces of economic globalization, the state has to withdraw from many of the areas it had previously controlled. Its independent policy-making power is significantly diminished in the face of the globally integrated markets. Internationalization of production and finance has reshaped the global class structure. At the top of the global social hierarchy now stands a transnational managerial class, which consists of transnational corporate forces, their supporters in government, such as the officials in national finance and trade authorities or intergovernmental organizations, and sympathetic intellectuals in think tanks and research institutes (Gill, 1995). The working class has also been divided into new categories. The “integrated” workers are those working in multinational enterprises and their local affiliates, and therefore they represent the portion of workers that benefit from economic globalization the most. The “precarious” workers, on the other hand, dwell at the dirtiest parts of transnational production. They are less qualified, possess lesser skills, and are forced to work for minimum wages with no social protection under appalling conditions. The last group consists of people who are virtually “excluded” from transnational production. They consist of the marginalized people of the Third World and the unemployed (Cox, 1999, 9).

Corresponding to this new configuration of social forces is a rising global “historical bloc” comprised of the transnational managerial class, integrated workers and small businesses that through a variety of means support the transnational production process<sup>12</sup>. However, this new historical bloc has not reached hegemonic status yet; it is simply dominant as evident in the pervading sense of crisis across the world (Gill, 1995). The collective image that this nascent historical bloc promotes is neo-liberalism; that is, classical liberalism resurrected full force in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is characterized by a belief in the free market as the most appropriate form to organize human affairs, and a strong aversion for the state which supposedly distorts its healthy functioning. Its policy implications are trade liberalization as well as liberalization of capital and service flows, privatization of state-owned enterprises, cutting down of public expenditures and welfare services, floating exchange rates and anti-inflationary monetary policies (Gill, 1995; Pasha, 1996).

Organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, the WTO, the OECD and multilateral agreements such as the Free Trade Agreement between the US and Canada and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are the institutional expression of this neo-liberal collective image of the world. They altogether work to establish a “new constitutional” framework at the global level in an effort to “discipline” discreet states and societies under the prerogatives of neo-liberalism by using such instruments as structural adjustment programs (Arrighi,

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<sup>12</sup> The “historical bloc” (blocco storico) is a concept developed by Gramsci to denote a coalition of classes centered around a hegemonic class. The hegemonic class exercises political and ethical leadership over allied classes forming the historical bloc. Its relationship to those social groups falling outside the bloc is usually one of domination (Augelli & Murphy, 1993). In this respect, it is a concept which brings together the objective and subjective dimensions of social domination, the base and

1993; Gill, 1995). Renato Ruggiero, who was the director-general of the WTO between 1995 and 1999, gave this a literal expression when he said, “we are no longer writing the rules of interaction among separate national economies. We are writing the constitution of a single world economy” (Ruggiero as cited in Tabb, 2000, para.13).

The emerging world order, however, has many internal contradictions, as is the case with all historical structures. First and foremost, there is the growth in income equality and human destitution across the world both within and among countries. The number of people living in abject poverty (on less than one USD a day) around the world has increased by two hundred millions from 1987 to 1999. The combined wealth of the top three billionaires of the world is greater than the total gross domestic product (GDP) of the poorest 48 countries. In fifty-nine countries, mainly in the sub-Saharan Africa and former Eastern bloc, the GDP per capita actually declined in the period between 1980 and 1996 (Borosage, 1999). Environmental degradation has reached unprecedented levels, and now threatens the very existence of humankind as a species. The damage given to the ecological balance of the world is such that not a single month passes without major natural disasters devastating the lives of thousands of people overnight. The natural resources are depleted at a high pace as private companies face ever lower legal barriers in an era of rapid deregulation in their quest for greater profits, and as impoverished people are forced to extract the most out of their natural environments. The developing world is bereft with political instability and civil wars. The number of civil conflict situations around the world has increased considerably since the

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superstructure in other words. For more on the concept of “historical bloc”, see Carnoy (1984), and



1960s, particularly in the last decade following the end of Cold War. Sudan, Somalia, Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo (Kinshasa), East Timor, Kosovo and Sierra Leone are only a few recent examples that attracted sizeable public attention. In addition to the increase in the number of civil conflicts worldwide, it is possible to talk about a parallel change in their form. Today, civil conflict denotes something more than armed struggle between rival groups. It involves the breakdown of national governments, famine, and displacement of large sections of populations as evident in the use of the term “complex emergency” since the early 1990s to refer to such situations (Slim & Penrose, 1994).

It is precisely these contradictions, in fact, that transnational civic actors try to highlight and insert into the agenda of multilateral organizations. However, the way multilateral organizations respond to these pressures can aptly be described as a strategy of “passive revolution”:

Faced by potential masses, then, the State institutes passive revolution as a technique that the bourgeoisie attempts to adopt when its hegemony is weakened in any way. The “passive” aspect consists in “preventing the development of a revolutionary adversary by ‘decapitating’ its revolutionary potential”. (Carnoy, 1984, 76-77).

Passive revolution takes two forms: Caesarism and transformism (*trasformismo*). The former refers to a case where there is a balance of power between rival dominant classes, and a powerful figure intervenes to manage this stalemate. The latter, which is of more interest to our discussion, involves “the ‘formation of an ever-more extensive ruling class’ through incorporation and absorption of rival elites” (Gill, 1995, 401). *Trasformismo*, in this respect, consists of an attempt to “absorb counterhegemonic ideas and make these ideas consistent with hegemonic doctrine” (Cox, 1996a, 139). As will be illustrated in the following section, the way

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Cox (1996a).

multilateral organizations interact with civic organizations fits quite well into this definition of *trasformismo* in that it usually results in their incorporation into the neo-liberal hegemonic project, and consequent curbing of their transformative potential vis-à-vis neo-liberal historical structures.

#### ***4.5.1 Participation in official policy-making***

##### *4.5.1.1 The United Nations*

The UN, as Chapter two argued, among other international organizations, has one of the oldest and well-developed mechanisms for integrating the work of civil societal organizations into its operations. However, the role of NGOs in UN decision-making processes so far has not gone beyond “consultations” despite all the public statements made by the Secretariat and other prominent UN officials on the necessity and benefits of improved NGO access to the UN, and despite all NGO criticisms. In other words, there is a clear discrepancy between the official discourse and actual practice. The problem with “consultative” arrangements is that the UN can get advice from the NGOs but does not necessarily have to listen. This is the best way to keep the NGOs at arm’s length, neither fully excluded, nor fully included, while keeping up a high public profile as an institution open to civil society input. More importantly, this gives the UN a more universal outlook in the sense that it becomes a forum for both states and non-state actors.

In order to understand whether there was genuine interest on the part of the UN and member states in improving the status of NGOs at the UN, one can examine the UN-NGO community relations since the 1992 Rio Conference. Following the Rio Conference, the ECOSOC started a process of intergovernmental negotiations in

order to give NGOs better access to the UN decision-making. The negotiations lasted for about three years mainly because the member governments were not very keen on seeing more NGOs interfering with their business. Those from the South particularly disliked the human rights NGOs, which they thought were “poking their noses” into highly contentious domestic matters, while the governments from the North were cautious about NGOs that pressed for economic justice, disarmament and global democracy. The Southern governments, besides, wanted more national NGOs to be represented at the UN in the face of international NGO opposition, which considered national NGOs prone to government influence and not representative enough due to their smaller constituencies. The final ECOSOC resolution was a compromise between all these points of view, and was viewed as a success at the time by the NGO community (Paul, 1999).

Then, the NGO community started pressing the UN for access to the General Assembly. The negotiations on this issue came to a halt with no concrete results over the divergences between member states. This was followed by another blow to the NGO access to the UN from the Secretariat, despite its NGO-friendly public posture. Using the UN financial crisis as an excuse, the Secretariat started charging the NGOs for access to the new Optical Disk System with valuable official information. The fee made the service inaccessible to many poor Southern NGOs. “In spite of the rhetoric of ‘partnership,’ the Secretariat never consulted NGOs about their information needs or even asked for their opinions as ‘consumers’ of this new service” (Paul, 1999, para.35).

Another repercussion of the UN financial crisis for the NGOs was the Secretariat’s bowing down to US pressure to cancel the convening of any further

global conferences. The US considered these conferences, events with strong NGO presence and influence, a waste of money, and made her financial assistance to the UN conditional upon their abandonment. In addition to the conferences, the US directed attention to the general cost of NGOs to the UN, from the use of meeting rooms to the library access, and further pressured the Secretariat to introduce fees for these services.

In the meantime, NGO access to the UN was further restricted on security grounds. The few incidents that led to this situation involved unwelcome encounters between government delegates and NGO members belonging to dissident groups in their countries of origin. This was a clear indication of the tolerable limits of NGO contribution to the democratization of the UN decision-making processes.

The UN world conferences are usually given as glaring examples of growing civil societal participation in global governance. They are sites where an emerging global civil society can be seen in concrete form. Over the years, these conferences have become major points of contact between members of civil society, governments and UN officials on issues of global concern. Yet, these conferences also point to the fact that the transnational civic actors are firmly mired in capitalist relations of domination/subordination. The NGOs that can exert the highest influence over conference proceeding are those based in OECD countries, commanding large operational budgets and organizational skills, as well as advancing less ambitious agendas (Clark, Friedman, & Hochstetler, 1998; Colas, 2002). The Southern NGOs, on the other hand, have more “political” agendas. At Rio, for instance, while Northern environmental NGOs focused on issues of environmental preservation and pollution, their Southern counterparts preferred to talk about the impact of debt

services and multinational corporations on environmental degradation (Clark et al., 1998).

The shape of the conference final documents also well illustrates what sort of civil society input the UN prefers. For example, during one of the most celebrated examples of UN-NGO cooperation on global issues, namely the 1995 UN Beijing Conference on Women, the DAWN's (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, an international network mostly composed of women from developing countries) calls for the need to address global capitalist structure as a source of gender inequalities were totally swept under the carpet; that is, they do not appear in any of the resolutions which came out of the conference (Mingst, 1999).

The very recent World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the first phase of which took place in Geneva in December 2003, also identified civil society as one of the "key stakeholders" in the debate concerning the global development and use of information and telecommunications technologies along with governments, business representatives and UN specialized agencies with the purpose of "*fully* representing all the different interests at stake" (italics added, World Summit on the Information Society, n/d). However, the actual record of civil societal contribution to the WSIS failed to live up to this declared objective for a number reasons. First, dissident voices within civil society were silenced at different stages of the WSIS. A human rights group from China as well as Reporters without Borders (an international NGO working for the release of imprisoned journalists worldwide and the freedom of press) was denied accreditation for the conference (Stallman,

2003)<sup>13</sup>. During the Summit, the security guards prevented the distribution of printed material by activists, critical of the WSIS and the information technology monopolies, at the Summit venue (“Civil Society,” 2003). The Summit Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General, Nitin Desai, preferred to depict the censorship claims of these activists as lies (Panganiban & Bendrath, 2003). In the same vein, the WSIS organizers arbitrarily dropped names from the civil society speaker list presented to them by NGOs. The WSIS secretariat even tried to insert specific sentences into the speech given by the World Blind Union representative (a name picked up by the Secretariat) during the Opening Ceremony in violation of the official summit rules (Panganiban & Bendrath, 2003). Moreover, the Swiss riot police made every effort to prevent the convening of a parallel counter-summit organized mainly by CSOs, and cracked down on a peaceful demonstration by 50 people again critical of the summit and the corporate agenda (“Civil Society,” 2003; Panganiban & Bendrath, 2003). NGO critiques also expressed their frustration over the final declaration that paid scant attention to civil society recommendations such as the recognition of the “right to communicate” as a basic human right (Stallman, 2003).

#### *4.5.1.2 The World Bank*

The World Bank, as one of the major pillars of global economic governance, has developed, particularly in the last two decades, elaborate mechanisms to improve its dialogue with members of civil society. The success of CSOs in influencing the Bank policies, however, has not been uniform. The Bank has been quite selective towards

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<sup>13</sup> It is also worth noting that the Reporters without Borders was suspended for a year from the UN commission on human rights earlier in the year 2003 following its protest against the choice of a Libyan representative as the commission’s chairperson (Reporters without Borders. 2003).

the demands of NGOs it interacted with. While it showed a high level of responsiveness to the demands of its environmental and anti-poverty critiques, it has been more reluctant to initiate reforms along the lines demanded by the NGO opponents of structural adjustment programs (Nelson, 1996).

All three groups of NGO networks, namely environmental, anti-poverty, and structural adjustment advocates, unanimously pressured the Bank for increased “participation” in its policies and practices. However, the meaning of “participation” differed widely from one issue area to the other. For environmentalists, it implied a strategy of bringing national problems to the international stage, and mobilizing international pressure on national governments to alter their environmental and infrastructure practices. It also included a desire to integrate local communities to the Bank policies and projects that affected their lives. For anti-poverty campaigners, participation agenda referred to the need to listen to the voices of the poor, the so-called “stakeholders”, and reshape the Bank’s poverty reduction focus towards a more community-based development direction. For structural adjustment campaigners who were extremely critical of the negative consequences of adjustment programs for national communities, on the other hand, participation meant that the Bank should take its hands off the national economic planning in favor of more citizen participation. This line of critique towards the Bank, unlike the former two, questioned the very neo-liberal framework of Bank’s policies epitomized in structural adjustment programs (Nelson, 1996).

The Bank was relatively quick to attach environmental “conditionalities” to its lending practices. It also had no difficulty in integrating the “local participation” discourse to its development and poverty reduction strategies. In contrast, it was

much less responsive to the citizen participation agenda of the structural adjustment campaigners. The general pattern of institutional responsiveness suggests that the Bank absorbed criticisms that promised it an expanded role in national policy-making. While opening itself new areas of influence, the Bank at the same time accrued further benefits by turning its environmental and anti-poverty critics into allies. New environmental and anti-poverty measures implied no major alterations in the Bank's neoliberal policy core. In fact, the Bank, along with other major international donors, has always claimed that its major objective is poverty reduction. The new "participatory development" and "ownership" agenda provided increased legitimacy to its lending practices even though the level of local participation remained limited to consultation and the implementation of pre-designed projects. Besides, working with NGOs made "good business sense". The inclusion of NGOs in Bank-financed projects was more than welcome because they ensured improved project success by diluting potential political controversies surrounding projects through "ownership", and by working much more efficiently and cost-effective than governmental agencies. So, the Bank adopted a largely instrumental understanding of civil society participation (Clark, 1999).

Here it should not be forgotten that the World Bank also responded in some measure to the rising criticism of its structural adjustment programs. Yet, the response was not increased citizen participation since "[t]he Bank, and most of its borrowers, prefer that economic policy remain a matter of apolitical technical expertise, rather than of participatory politics" (Nelson, 1996, 630). The way the World Bank president James Wolfensohn reacted to criticisms regarding the Bank's



unresponsiveness to NGO concerns on insufficient civil societal participation in poverty reduction strategies is also quite telling:

In the end, I'll tell you precisely, what the politicians say to us and the leaders of governments say. They say 'we were elected to do this. We are the people that you should deal with. It is not the people who are not elected and who are not accountable (civil society groups) that you have to take into account'...More and more leaders in democratic countries are saying to us 'look, we like this idea of consultation. But on the questions of macro policies and budgets, who are they (activists)? Let them do it within the context of the domestic political system. (Mekay, 2002, para. 5-6).

Ironically, when anti-structural adjustment campaigners pointed out the correlation between the Bank-imposed adjustment programs and rising poverty levels, the World Bank claimed that the main objective of structural adjustment programs is precisely that: poverty reduction. If the poverty levels were not in decline, this was because of government ineptitude to implement reforms fully and quickly, not because of inherent flows in the adjustment package. In accordance with this understanding of the problem, the Bank adopted a new discourse of “good governance” which targeted government transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and participation as keys to successful economic reform, and started actively promoting this agenda in borrowing countries (Nelson, 1996; Smouts, 1998). The rather sudden popularity the term “good governance” achieved in international financial circles, in a way, reflected a growing understanding on the part of these institutions that economic issues were not that independent from their political context as their economic and technocratic outlook suggested. More importantly,

[b]y talking about 'governance' - rather than 'state reform' or 'social and political change' -multilateral banks and agencies within the development establishment were able to address sensitive questions that could be lumped together under a relatively inoffensive heading and usually couched in technical terms, thus avoiding any implication that these institutions were exceeding their statutory authority by intervening in the internal political affairs of sovereign states. (De Alcantara, 1998, 107).

On the whole, the good governance discourse opened up new channels of influence for the World Bank by increasing borrower accountability to the lender (Nelson, 1996). The emphasis on domestic factors is also illustrated by the fact that the World Bank officials at times preferred to blame the governments of developed countries that stick to agricultural subsidies, rather than the Bank itself, for increased income inequality (Khan, 2002). Ian Johnson, Senior Vice President for the Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network at the World Bank, for instance, in a meeting of the Georgetown Human Rights Forum, “said he favored economic growth, but also conceded that economic inequality is growing. This, he said, was outside the Bank’s control. He cited contributing factors like the ‘scandalous’ OECD agricultural subsidies, which currently amount to about a billion dollars a day - equal to the combined GDP of Sub-Saharan Africa” (Advocacy Project, 2002, para.14).

The resistance of the Bank to open the neo-liberal core of its macroeconomic policies to criticism is also evident in the way the World Bank handled the pilot studies of the Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA). The Bank and the IMF, under pressure from some NGOs and governments, introduced the PSIA as a systematic analysis of the likely impacts of adjustment policies on poverty levels. The pilot studies, however, fell short of discussing alternative macroeconomic strategies. All they did was to take up pre-determined and ongoing elements of adjustment programs, and focus on issues of sequencing and mitigation. For instance, the Chad PSIA pilot study, rather than questioning whether privatization, in the first place, is beneficial to vulnerable groups in society, largely concentrated on alternative privatization schemes (Bretton Woods Project, 2002).

The World Bank, along with the adoption of the good governance agenda, now stipulates that information should be disseminated to the public about the planned reforms. While this move gives the impression of a concern for increased transparency, the Bank in fact has a very strategic interest that it does not hesitate to express publicly “to minimize [the] vulnerability [of adjustment programs] to derailment by those who stand to lose from the reforms’, and to encourage an ‘increase in power of the interest groups that will benefit from reforms in the course of adjustment’” (World Bank as cited in Nelson, 1996, 630).

The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) of the World Bank is also worth noting here. SAPRI, which has the mandate of independently reviewing the impact of adjustment programs around the world, was established in 1996 with World Bank funding. It consisted of a large network of NGOs, mostly from the South, and was headed by the Washington-based Development Group for Alternative Policies (D-GAP), one of the staunchest NGO critiques of Bank policies. At a first glance, this initiative could be taken as a sign of Bank’s good intentions to improve its accountability and transparency. Yet, it did not take long before SAPRI members started growing frustrated over the fact that the Bank did not really care about their findings, and that they had no influence on how the Bank handled adjustment-related issues (Bretton Woods Project, 2002; Paul, 1996). D-GAP Communications Director Tony Avirgan expressed his resentment in the following way:

It is not lost on anyone that, while the Bank uses SAPRI to demonstrate that it is doing something on the adjustment issue with its critics and civil society generally, it is considering *tightening* the adjustment noose around the necks of borrower governments. (emphasis in the original, Paul, 1996, para.11).

Another way through which NGO pressure on the World Bank resulted in more power over national jurisdictions is the Bank's interest in and support for more enabling national legal and political environments for CSOs. In this respect, the Bank has commissioned a detailed study of appropriate legal and political frameworks for a healthy non-profit sector, and now recommends these to borrowing countries. The World Bank considers freedom of speech and expression as preconditions for meaningful consultation and participation with civil society. It even sees it legitimate, "in extreme cases", to deny loans to countries where such an enabling environment is non-existent (Clark, 1999).

The politics of top-level personnel recruitment within the World Bank also reveals the extent to which the Bank is an integral part of the reproduction of the neo-liberal hegemony, as well as the limits such a function sets for the promotion of civil society agenda within the organization itself. The firing of the chief economist Joseph Stiglitz, and the resignation of the director of the *World Development Report* 2000, Ravi Kanbur, quite well illustrates this point.

Joseph Stiglitz was appointed by President James Wolfensohn in 1996 as the chief economist of the World Bank. During his term, he became openly critical about the World Bank and IMF policies, particularly the way both organizations handled the 1997 Asian crisis<sup>14</sup>. He even advised the Ethiopian government on how to resist IMF demands to liberalize its financial system. Then US Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, totally upset by these developments, pressured Wolfensohn not to renew Stiglitz's term, and made it clear that Wolfensohn would have no chance of

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<sup>14</sup> Fine (1999) goes as far as to suggest that Stiglitz's remarks during his term signified the dawn of a post-Washington consensus that helped the interventionist state regain its legitimacy as a corrective to market imperfections.

being reelected if he did otherwise. Stiglitz resigned a month before the expiration of his term in late 1999, and was given a special position as the “special adviser to the president”. In April 2000, an article by Stiglitz was published in the *New Republic*, just a week before the IMF meeting in Washington. In this article, Stiglitz displayed open sympathy towards the concerns of the anti-IMF protestors likely to turn up for the following week’s meeting in Washington. Following the article, Summers called Wolfensohn, and in effect ordered him to fire Stiglitz. Since firing after a critical opinion piece might prove to be a bad public relations move, the World Bank announced that Stiglitz’s post was simply “abolished” (Wade, 2002).

This was followed by the resignation of Ravi Kanbur who was appointed by Stiglitz as the director for the preparation of the *World Development Report 2000* (WDR 2000) with the theme “Attacking poverty”. WDRs have always been one of the World Bank’s most prestigious publications as a piece of research summarizing the Bank’s views on issues of major concern with a high reputation for independency. The first draft prepared by the 2000 team headed by Kanbur started with the argument that economic growth is the best solution to poverty, which is the Bank’s dominant line of thought on the issue. Then, however, it qualified this position with data suggesting an imperfect correlation between economic growth and poverty reduction, and highlighted other factors such as empowerment of the poor through democratization, security and opportunity. The draft also talked about growing income inequality, and argued that liberalization may prove to be disastrous for large sections of society if effective social safeguards are not established beforehand (Wade, 2002).

This first draft aroused a lot of criticism within the World Bank on the grounds that it downgraded the importance of economic growth for poverty reduction in favor of more civil society-oriented arguments. Kanbur faced considerable pressure from both the prominent World Bank economists and the US Treasury to revise the WDR 2000 towards a more orthodox assertion of the growth-first position. Instead of yielding in to this pressure, Kanbur preferred to resign in May 2000.

What is striking here is that the civil society-friendly posture of the Kanbur's draft reflected the findings of the "Consultations with the Poor" program of the World Bank as much as the personal convictions of Kanbur himself. As a part of this program, more than 60,000 people in 80 countries were consulted on-line as well as in person by Kanbur himself on the WDR draft. The Bank was extensively praised for this participatory exercise the results of which were, by and large, excluded from the WDR 2000 (Wade, 2002).

As the above examples suggest, the World Bank has showed considerable skill to absorb NGO criticisms towards its operations. To counter criticisms of the lack of transparency, accountability and participation, it has developed quite a number of institutional mechanisms to improve its dialogue with CSOs. However, the dialogue it envisaged has so far been limited to that of "consultations", which gives the Bank enough room to maneuver when the consultations yield results which run counter to its neo-liberal outlook. In the same vein, "[j]udging from the NGOs it chooses to have a "dialogue" with, [the World Bank] prefers environmental NGOs to trade unions, docile outfits to truly grassroots groups, libertarian NGOs to socialist or communitarian ones" (Paul, 1996, para.3). Therefore, behind the Bank's civil society-friendly public discourse lies a very selective attitude with respect to the type

of NGOs it likes to listen to. The way the World Bank managed to integrate the concerns of environmental and anti-poverty campaigners into its discourse and operations with minimal harm to its central neo-liberal macroeconomic mandate is also illustrative of this point. The Bank was even able to turn these criticisms to its advantage by expanding the scope of its influence over national jurisdiction such that “[o]ne is hardly tempted to refer to the practice of ‘disciplinary’ environmentalism at the Bank, or a ‘disciplinary’ role in promoting participation” (Nelson, 1996, 631-632). The irony here is that the task of disciplining the governments, in the form of “promotion, monitoring, and oversight” is undertaken mostly by the NGOs (Nelson, 1996).

On a more skeptic reading, the activities of international NGOs and their local affiliates made be said to advance a new form of interventionism in the Third World context by thwarting the autonomous socio-political development of these countries. They acquiesce in the consolidation of a neo-liberal developmental outlook at the expense of indigenous solutions to the problems of underdevelopment (Young, 1995; Pasha, 1996).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> There is also another line of criticism directed at this new interventionism. It, by and large, consists of a reassertion of state sovereignty against an ensemble of “busybodies, preachers, critics, do-gooders, and professional altruists” which capitalize on the “[t]he encroachment on state sovereignty of international law - enshrined in numerous treaties and conventions –“, “to get involved in hitherto strictly domestic affairs like corruption, civil rights, the composition of the media, the penal and civil codes, environmental policies, or the allocation of economic resources and of natural endowments, such as land and water”. This conservative perspective blames NGOs not for promoting economic globalization in the South but for not letting it fully take hold in developing countries through their fight against child labor, and sweatshop production as well as promotion of fair trade practices. They are viewed as promoting “trade protectionism” by not letting developing countries take advantage of their cheap labor and low environmental standards in an increasingly competitive global economy. For a vivid illustration of this perspective, see Vaknin (2002).

#### *4.5.1.3 The International Monetary Fund*

The World Bank was not alone to change its official discourse towards a more civil society-friendly direction. The IMF also transformed its language in response to sustained NGO criticism, and its officials now increasingly talk about the importance of "ownership," "transparency," "good governance" and "stakeholders" in development (Scholte, 1998). However, as was the case with the World Bank, the IMF made no compromises on its market-driven, economic growth-oriented development thinking, and strongly believes that “the best solution to poverty, and the only lasting solution, is through economic growth” (Camdessus, 2000, para.9):

I know that too often people are disappointed by the results of their countries' initial stabilization and reform efforts. They see that the balance of payments is stronger and that inflation has declined, but they don't see that their own living standards and opportunities have increased. And often, they are right. The problem is that many of the obstacles to private sector initiative, job creation, and foreign investment have been left in place. The solution is broader, deeper structural reforms. (Camdessus, 2000, para.17).

The IMF’s approach to civil society reflects this policy orthodoxy as well. As noted earlier in Chapter two, the IMF introduced new institutional arrangements to improve its dialogue with civil society. It is rather striking that among the things it expects from civil society at the international level is to push for “sound macroeconomic and structural policies”, and at the grassroots level, “to monitor government programs to ensure they remain on track” (Camdessus, 2000, para.17). So the benefits of civil society engagement, parallel to the Bank, is expressed in instrumental terms — instrumental to the further strengthening of the neo-liberal policy consensus.

Furthermore, the record of civil society access to the IMF is bereft with democratic problems similar to that of the UN. It is mostly Northern-based and urban CSOs that take advantage of the IMF’s civil society initiatives. Inequalities are also present with respect to the issue area. While business organizations and academic



institutions have the strongest ties to the Fund, smallholder associations and women's movements have virtually no dialogue with the institution (Scholte, 1998).

#### *4.5.1.4 The World Trade Organization*

The experience of civic associations with the WTO to date has not been any different. While the WTO has joined in the chorus of international institutions that recognize the positive role of civil society in global governance, it has been equally selective in what sorts of civic associations it likes to engage in dialogue with. In this respect, three broad categories of civic associations, in terms of their attitude towards the WTO, can be identified. The first category, the “conformers”, consists mainly of business associations, commercial farmers’ unions and economic research institutes, which typically show a complacent attitude towards the trade liberalization agenda, and which approve of the WTO’s current role in its promotion. The second group, the “reformers”, usually concedes that there is a need for a global trade regulation body like the WTO, but claims that the WTO should pay more attention to questions of labor and environmental standards, and human rights consequences of the trade liberalization process. They also call for the democratization of the WTO’s institutional structure. Finally, the “radicals” disagree with the fundamentals of the free trade discourse, and claim that what is needed is no less than the abolishment of the WTO altogether (Scholte with O’Brien and Williams, 1998).

Among these civic associations, the WTO has so far been most open to the demands of the conformers in terms of policy changes in comparison to that of reformers and radicals. Business lobbies had played a considerable role in the expansion of the free trade agenda to include such issues as intellectual property rights and services. It was in fact a prominent business association, the World

Economic Forum, which spearheaded the transformation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to the WTO (Scholte with O'Brien and Williams, 1998). In contrast, the dialogue of the WTO with reformer and radical civic associations has resulted in much more trivial policy changes. The lack of satisfaction with the reforms is evident in Lori Wallach's comments:

When the WTO was established, many environmentalists pushed for an environmental working group in the WTO. They got one, and after five years, many of its most energetic proponents are now saying that this working group has turned into a trade-dominated entity where environmental laws are studied not to safeguard them but rather to figure out how to get rid of them. We don't want to put the environment in the hands of an organization whose charge and world view is commercial ... Global labor movements now have all the enthusiasm the environmentalists did five years ago about putting standards into the WTO. I personally am very skeptical. (as cited in Tabb, 2000, para.19).

Moreover, the attendance of the NGOs to the ministerial meetings have been heavily skewed in favor of business associations, which accounted for 65 % of all accredited NGOs in Singapore. Besides, the NGO representatives present in these meetings were overwhelmingly from the North, and white, male, upper class, educated and computer literate people (Scholte with O'Brien and Williams, 1998).

This final point is a general feature of the interaction between CSOs and international organizations examined above, and has serious implications for the democratic potential of civil society. Not all interests are equally present and strongly represented within the transnational associational realm since CSOs are enmeshed in the existing forms of domination as much as international institutions. In other words, contrary to its name, global civil society is not truly global. First of all, only a small portion of the world's people is involved in global social movements. The vast majority of humankind lacks the funds, organizational skills and, more importantly, access to the Internet to participate in the activities of the global civic club (Scholte, 1999). For example, fewer than 15% of the NGOs that were given observer status by

the UN are based in the countries of the South. Even though there has been a considerable increase in the number of Southern-based ones, NGOs located in Western Europe, North America and Japan still constitute the majority (“Our Global,” 1995, 33). In support of this point, in their assessment of the global campaign against the HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), Christer Jöhnson and Peter Söderholm (1995) highlight some quite discomfoting facts about the movement in terms of representation. The first point they raise is the cost of network building between the NGOs which simply leaves out the small and poor NGOs, mostly located in the South, from the process since they cannot simply afford to be at international gatherings or need funding from Northern NGOs or IGOs to do so. Second, organizational/managerial capabilities, which enable HIV-affected groups to put pressure on governments and international organizations, are also concentrated in the countries of the North. In this respect, Western gay communities, due to their previous experiences of organization building and campaigning, and their access to resources such as an office space fully equipped with the latest technology, can virtually dominate the movement while the majority of HIV victims, heterosexual members of developing countries, are marginalized in the process. “Even when it comes to addressing AIDS problems in the Third World,” Jöhnson and Söderholm (1995) add, “some of the most influential organizations are located in the industrialized world, such as the UK NGO Consortium for the Third World in London, and the National Council for the International Health in Washington” (26).

Besides this North-South dividing line, civil societal organizations, both in the industrialized and developing world alike, are usually formed by middle or

upper-middle class members of these societies (Pasha & Blaney, 1998; Scholte, 1999). What that means in the Southern context is that only a handful of affluent people enjoy the feelings of democratic empowerment and global citizenship as a result of global civic activism while the masses are marginalized. Schattsneider's observation about civil society in developed countries can be safely extended to the developing world: "The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent" (as cited in Sabatini, 2002, 13).

#### ***4.5.2 Implementation of official policies***

Another point of contact between IGOs and CSOs in global governance is the implementation of official policies of IGOs. This type of collaboration has evolved from the delivery of basic services, such as sanitation, health and education, in the early 1980s towards more comprehensive developmental themes such as projects specifically aimed at poverty reduction, environmental degradation, resettlement issues and gender equality (Clark, 1999). To say the least, NGOs have displayed outstanding success in achieving project goals if not in significantly influencing the shape of the projects. This success is increasingly recognized by international donors, and most of the time it forms the basis of their arguments for the necessity of more civil societal involvement in their developmental programs (Van Rooy & Robinson, 1998). Not only IGOs, but also sympathetic students of transnational associational life, which were covered to a certain extent in Chapter two, put a lot of trust in civil society to help the Third World break the chains of underdevelopment (Pasha, 1996). In justice to these commentators, the success of civic associations in transforming the dominant development language can hardly be disputed. Put another way, the word

“development” is not spelled out nowadays without qualifiers such as “sustainable”, “community-based” and “participatory” (Patomaki, 1999).

There are a couple of questions, however, which needs to be asked here before too hastily attaching a progressive meaning to the impact of CSOs in both development discourse and practice. The first question concerns the extent to which changes in the development discourse represents a real breakthrough with respect to earlier theories of development. The second, though related, question is what type of a relationship exists between the advocacy of civil society in development and neo-liberal economics.

With respect to the first question, the new development practice proscribed by international donors may be said to display more continuities than ruptures with the earlier development thinking. Regardless of increased concerns for poverty, the environment and other social issues, it is still a particular form of development, namely “capitalist”, which is being promoted by IGOs. The failure of state capitalism in the Third World as well as the collapse of state socialism in the Second World all the more consolidated the idea that there are no viable alternatives to the capitalist path of development (Patomaki, 1999). Parallel to the early modernization theories, the defense of capitalist development takes a teleological form: if the country patiently and resolutely goes through all the steps of structural adjustment, the end state is the prosperity of the Western world. The only recognizable change, in this respect, is at the level of appropriate actors and strategies. The 1980s, in this regard, witnessed the gradual demise of the “developmental state”, as the once legitimate promoter of development, as well as the associated strategies such as import substitution and protectionism (de Senarchlens, 1998; Tae, 1999). In the new

development thinking, states have become “impediments to prosperity” (Augelli & Murphy, 1993, 136) as a reflection of the neo-liberal premise that the only viable road to development is unfettered market forces, and that the state should no longer interfere with the unhealthy functioning of the market (Pasha, 1996).

It is precisely here that the advocacy of civil society as a developmental actor and the teachings of neo-liberalism on development coincide. CSOs are increasingly assigned to welfare roles, which had to be abandoned by states under the assault of neo-liberal policies such as cuts in public expenditures, privatization, deregulation of financial markets and trade liberalization<sup>16</sup>. The private sector is quite reluctant to fill this void of welfare provision, as it has historically been, for reasons of profitability. Yet, at the same time, the free market cannot dispense with them altogether because somebody has to build the roads and bridges to provide the necessary infrastructure for capitalist development, and the hospitals and schools to reproduce the workforce (Axtman, 1996). In this respect, from the perspective of those locals volunteering for neighborhood organizations, non-profit health clinics or soup kitchens, those local initiatives that international donors lend financial support in the name of “strengthening civil society” in developing countries, civic activism arises out of dire necessity (De Alcantara, 1998). Therefore, the reality of a robust associational life does not necessarily match the liberal image: an assertion of “concern for personal

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<sup>16</sup> This observation holds true for the industrialized world as much as it characterizes the situation in much of the developing world in the post-1980 period (Salamon & Anheier, 1997). In the case of the industrialized countries, there happened to be a paradoxical convergence between the anti-statist sentiments of the new social movements and those of the New Right. The former’s critique was based on a view of the welfare state as an overbearing and malign entity which encroached increasingly upon individual autonomy and contributed to the prolongation of inequalities, such as economic, gender and racial, in society. The latter advanced its attack on behalf of free and efficient markets as well as conservative social values. Therefore, the welfare state had become a total scapegoat for being both too much and at the same time insufficiently egalitarian, for being too permissive and too constraining of moral freedom. More on this point, see Axtman (1996).

autonomy, self-organization, private space” against an intrusive state (Kaldor, 2003, 4). In Foster and Anand’s (1999) words, the emerging “global civil society” is “organized around ‘taking care’ of itself and the globe” (2).

In addition to meeting the minimum “social requirements of capitalism” (Axtman, 1996, 43), civic organizations prevent social unrest likely to result from decreased social services, consequent poverty and social inequality by filling in the void left by a contracted public sector (Cox, 1999). More often than not, World Bank sponsored NGOs find themselves implementing environmental projects in countries where, for example, a major dam project financed by the same Bank caused irreparable ecological damage. In the same vein, NGOs financed by international donors worked industriously to deliver humanitarian relief during a famine in Mali, while many critics pointed out that the root cause of the famine was the lifting of price controls and food subsidies under the structural adjustment program imposed by the IMF (Advocacy Project, 2002). The same NGOs are also mobilized for poverty eradication projects or for the construction of “safety nets” as a part of liberalization moves in countries where structural adjustment programs have taken their toll in the form of widespread impoverishment (Pasha, 1996; Hudock, 1999). In other words, NGOs help consolidate the false idea that market-driven development is to the benefit of all, not only the dominant classes, by ameliorating the socially malign consequences of neo-liberal policies. Hence they are instrumental in the creation of public consent to the neo-liberal policy reforms.

The purpose here is, by no means, to downgrade the humanitarian/developmental efforts of countless CSOs that have quite impressively relieved human suffering in distant corners of the earth. Rather, the argument is that

simple “charity” work, if not accompanied by an awareness of the structural causes of human destitution and suffering, and a willingness to act upon these causes, may prove to be more harmful than beneficial. Unfortunately, the dominant approach to poverty today, as promoted by multilateral agencies and carried out by their civic associates, is based on this “discourse of charity” (Amin, 2003). De Senarchlens (1998) aptly observed, in this respect:

The current humanitarian undertakings, the small development projects carried out thanks to the support of the NGOs, are not unlike the charitable and benevolent works of the nineteenth century, before the trade union and political movements forced governments to develop public policies for improving the situation of the working classes. In many respects this is a step backwards, just as if the failures of the welfare state and of the modernizing state in the developing countries, or the public aid policies of the intergovernmental institutions demanded a return to the former practices dictated by the imperatives of morals and religion. (98).

There is also another major point of convergence between the arguments of neo-liberal globalists and transnational civic organizations: anti-statism. Both groups, admittedly starting from rather different points, celebrate the dawn of a borderless world and the erosion of state sovereignty as a result of globalization. Laura Macdonald (1994) considers the emphasis that multilateral donors put on civil society development in Third World countries as a reflection of a neo-conservative attitude. This neo-conservative attitude is grounded on the alleged autonomy of the civil society from the state as well as its moral superiority in relation to it. Accordingly, the neo-conservative attack on the state is carried out on behalf of free enterprise to ensure that the state do not interfere in the dealings of civil society. Neo-conservative discussion of civil society in the Third World, in this respect, focuses on the power of free enterprise, freedom of choice, private property and hard work as well as other conservative social arrangements. Therefore, the development



of a strong civil society with strong aversion to state bureaucracies becomes the policy twin of adjustment programs (Macdonald, 1994).

As noted earlier, in the transformation of the dominant development thinking towards a more participatory, democratic, and environmentally conscious direction, civil societal pressure played an undeniable role. Yet, this transformation came at a price in the sense that these terms were incorporated into the development discourse only after their radical connotations were hollowed out. The concept of “sustainability” is a glaring example in this respect. When environmentalists first started using the term in the early 1970s, “sustainable” referred to the necessity of living in harmony with nature and a true respect for the ecological balance of the earth. It had a radical meaning in the sense that it highlighted the incompatibility between environmental protection and continuous economic growth. In contrast, now the term “sustainable development” is used within both the policy and environmental circles in order to point out the possibility of reconciling economic growth with ecological concerns through market mechanisms. This interest in the environment is based on the assumption that the environment is an economic input pretty much like land and labor, and it therefore subordinates ecological concerns to economic thinking (Beder, 1994; Gill, 1995).

Finally, it is possible to problematize the progressive agency of civil society in global governance with respect to its funding patterns. A growing number of NGOs receive a substantial part of their funding from governments and/or intergovernmental organizations as they are given grants for various projects or subcontracted for specific aspects of broader social programs. This financial link does not automatically turn NGOs into servants of official policies. However, it

severely constrains NGOs' range of action towards a less controversial and more system-friendly direction (Cox, 1999). The increasing dependence on government support has its roots both in the unprecedented proliferation of NGOs on the world stage in recent decades as well as in the growing institutionalization and professionalisation of existing NGOs. A brief look at the world of humanitarian NGOs may well illustrate this point.

Recently, it has become common practice to call the NGO realm the "Third Sector" both in popular and scholarly circles (Hudock, 1999). The first sector is the state sector, and the second one is the market, as we know it. In fact it is not a misnomer particularly if one thinks about the NGOs working under humanitarian mandates. In the post-Cold War international arena, both the number of humanitarian NGOs and the size of these organizations, both in terms of budgets and staff, have grown considerably, a development justifying the use of term "sector". What this implies first is that as the NGOs grew in organizational terms their need for funding reached unprecedented levels. In the year 1996, for example, Northern-based NGOs spent USD 9 billion on relief and sustainable development projects in the Third World (Natsios, 1999). Even when NGOs try to obtain the majority of their funding from private donors, the budgets have grown so large that even the loss of a minor percentage coming from state sources has become an issue of great concern (Rieff, 2000). As a consequence, major NGOs generally prefer either to support government policies when it comes to humanitarian emergencies or at least they refrain from publicly condemning them.

In this respect, the fact that certain credible NGOs became outspoken advocates of military intervention in complex emergencies on humanitarian grounds

when the relief efforts are blocked deserves some attention (Rieff, 2000). The support given to the uneasy mix of humanitarianism and military intervention can be very easily explained away by referring to the pressures springing from humanitarian ideals. To put it differently, if the relief cannot be delivered under normal circumstances, anything must be done to get it through. However, a more skeptical reading of the incidence would force one to have a look at what sort of institutional interest is involved in this story. For example, US-based humanitarian organization Cooperation for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) put enormous pressure on the US government to intervene in Somalia back in 1992. The senior officials of CARE lobbied the State department extensively. The day after the UN decided to send troops to Somalia, the Interaction group of US relief agencies, including CARE, held a press conference, and said that they would withdraw from Somalia unless military intervention took place (De Waal, 1994). This entire NGO drumbeat for intervention arouses suspicion particularly if one thinks of the fact that the humanitarian situation, for the most part, had started to recover in Somalia by the time these calls were made (De Waal, 1994). In cases where such intervention takes place, such as Somalia, Kosovo and now Afghanistan, humanitarian NGOs immediately become sub-contractors to interstate agencies such as the UN or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Whenever there is a new emergency, NGOs rush in to participate in the relief efforts in ever growing numbers because there is fierce competition in the humanitarianism "business". Having greater number of emergencies involved is one way of making sure that the NGO in question would have better access to governmental funding the next time the opportunity arises.

## 4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter sought to highlight the structural barriers before the transformatory potential of transnational civic actors with respect to global regulatory mechanisms from the perspective of Gramscian International Relations theory. It started out with a detailed analysis of the Gramscian notion of civil society and hegemony. According to Gramsci, civil society is the exact place where the hegemony of the dominant classes, which refers to a situation where the consent of the subordinate classes to the social order promoted by dominant ones is acquired by way of concessions, is established and sustained. It is also the place where this hegemony can be challenged through the rise of a counter-hegemonic movement.

When these insights are carried to the international realm, international institutions appear as important pillars of global hegemony along with material capabilities and ideas. These institutions minimize the need to resort to coercion on the part of dominant social forces by disseminating their particular worldview and by giving it a universalist character. In conjunction with this point, international institutions are also venues for the effective cooptation of opposition to the established order. Consequently, their interaction with CSOs representing such a potential, if not actual, source of opposition should be seen in this light.

The final section of this chapter tried to substantiate the argument that international organizations are pursuing a strategy of “transformism” towards CSOs by examining the evolving interaction between CSOs and four major institutions of global governance, including the UN, the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO. There are certain features of this interaction that can be generalized to all these institutions. First, the policy dialogue with civil society almost always is kept at the level of

“consultations”. That is, civic organizations are never given full decision-making powers. Civil societal influence is further curbed by the preference for mostly pro-status quo and reformist CSOs as participants in this limited policy dialogue. Behind its pro-civil society public façade, no effort is saved to prevent the entrenchment of a civil society-friendly outlook within the international organization. On the other side of the coin, geographical, class, racial and gender origins of civic activists, to a great extent, determine who can make themselves heard on the international arena.

Furthermore, as the case of the World Bank particularly well illustrates, the differential levels of responsiveness to civil societal demands lend credibility to the claim that international institutions approach civil society largely in strategic terms. That is, mainly those demands that are likely to expand the area of influence of the organization in question are taken heed of. On the whole, the costs of having “a place at the table” far outweigh the benefits of participation on the part of CSOs.

At a broader level, CSOs may be said to contribute to the consolidation of the neo-liberal status quo by implementing the official policies of international organizations. They do this by undertaking welfare roles abandoned by governments, and mitigating the socially malign consequences of neo-liberal policies. They also distract attention from the structural roots of developmental problems such as widespread poverty and environmental destruction by buying into the “definitions of situations” promoted by institutions of global governance on such issues as what constitutes development, and what are its preconditions. In effect, CSOs are increasingly mobilized to put a cap on the internal contradictions of the established order, and hence render them less visible to subordinate classes. Additionally, growing participation in the implementation of projects points to a parallel

development in the funding patterns of CSOs: increased dependence on governmental sources of income. This, again, seriously delimits the possible range of action on the part of CSOs towards a more pro-status quo direction.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

The transnational associational life is a realm that forcefully resists any simple definitions and quick categorizations. Civil societal organizations come in many different institutional shapes and sizes. Not only in terms of institutional forms, but also in terms of the attitude towards the established order, the transnational civil society is not a unified whole. Some associations are totally content with the current state of affairs, and hence openly dedicate their energy to the entrenchment and prolongation of the neo-liberal status quo. Following Scholte, O'Brian and Williams (1998), this group can be usefully called as "conformers". A second category of civic associations, the "reformers", are relatively more critical of the way economic globalization are contributing to growing human misery in the form of dire poverty, civil wars, environmental destruction, gender and racial inequality. In terms of solutions, they support a strategy of reform of the structures of global governance towards a more democratic and humane direction. Finally, there are the "radical" civic associations which call for the overhauling of the neo-liberal status-quo all together, and its replacement with an alternative just and egalitarian order. These

groups, while more or less sharing the concerns of reformers, do not subscribe to the idea that global regulatory mechanisms can be “rehabilitated” through “reform”<sup>1</sup>.

The above mentioned positions also determine the pattern of interaction between the CSOs and international institutions. International institutions have little difficulty in engaging in dialogue with “conformers” with which they are basically in agreement on the core principles of global economic and political management. In contrast, they almost totally ignore the criticisms of radicals as “irrational” demands<sup>2</sup>.

International institutions in general pursue a strategy of cooptation, or *trasformismo* in the Gramscian terminology, in their dealings with the second group, the reformers. They open up their doors to civic organizations, but only in the form of consultations. Consultative arrangements are a convenient way of making sure that only those civil societal concerns that do not run counter to the dominant interests promoted by international institutions are taken heed of. In this respect, international organizations are responsive to civil societal demands only when those demands do not significantly challenge the neo-liberal policy consensus (or else the interests of member countries), and are likely to bring further strategic benefits such as a good public posture and the expansion of the organizations’ area of influence. Moreover, these institutions enrich their official discourse with concepts borrowed

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<sup>1</sup> In every issue area, from gender to environment, from human rights to development, one can find civil societal organizations that adopt a conformist, reformist or radical attitude towards global problems. For a similar categorization of CSOs in the field of toxic waste dumping, see Ford (2003), and in the field of tropical timber trade, Gale (1998b).

<sup>2</sup> “Irrationality” here refers to an inability to understand and appreciate the achievements of free markets in terms of bringing prosperity to humankind. The reaction of the financial press to the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in late 1999 well illustrates this outlook. For instance, Thomas Friedman, in his *New York Times* column, called the protesters “flat-earth advocates”, who want to “impose [their] labor and environmental standards on everyone else” (Friedman as cited in Tabb, 2000). Similarly, George Melloan, in his *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece, wrote: “Given the virulence of their protests against the achievements of private capitalism, one can only assume that finally we have assembled in one place a representative collection of people who ‘can’t stand prosperity.’” (Melloan as cited in Tabb, 2000).



from civic movements such as “participation”, and “sustainability”. Yet, in the process, they “tame” these concepts in such a way that there is not much left from their radical and possibly counter-hegemonic connotations. One should also take heed of the fact that, the voices of those official figures who are sympathetic to the cause of civic activists within international institutions are effectively silenced through a mixture of institutional pressure and blackmailing techniques.

The current interaction between civic associations and international organization at the decision-making level also casts serious doubts upon the ability of global civil society to democratize these institutions by holding them accountable, and by rendering them more participatory and transparent. Here, the purpose is not to direct attention to the insufficient level of democratic reforms undertaken by these organizations to date by the standards of liberal democracy, as this would be a criticism advanced from within a problem-solving perspective. There is a much deeper issue at stake, and it is about the very idea of liberal democracy that is typically blind to power relations in society. For one thing, liberals tend to portray the transnational associational realm as a sphere of freedom independent from the entanglements of both the state system and capitalism. Global civil society, however, is an arena within which social inequalities of all sorts, from the North-South division to class domination, from gender to racial inequalities, are forcefully present and actively reproduced. These differences have a direct bearing on who gets access to the international organizations as representatives of civil society, and what sorts of civil societal demands make themselves heard in the international arena. In this respect, civic participation in global governance is heavily skewed towards Northern, middle-class, white and male activists which command sufficient organizational

skills and financial resources for communications, air travel and office costs. Liberals also consider international institutions as neutral arbiters between competing interests pretty much like the way classical pluralists approached domestic governments. Far from being disinterested mediators, international organizations reflect the global power configuration as much as global civil society does. The way they process civil societal input, and the level of democratization they can tolerate is largely determined by these structures.

The striking ability of international donors to integrate civil societal organizations into the implementation of their official policies in the last couple of decades is as much telling as the specific way they are allowed to participate in official decision-making processes. The lifting of civil society to a central place in democratization and development efforts particularly in the South, and the delivery of social services all around the world, including the industrialized countries, has taken place in the neo-liberal context of public sector contraction due to wide-ranging privatization schemes in the post-1980 period. This process heralded the end of the welfare state, and consequently of the corporatist social consensus of the *pax americana* period. In the South, the “developmental state”, which was once the main actor of modernization efforts, has become a thing of the past to be replaced by market-driven approaches to social welfare. In this anti-statist ideological environment, civil society empowerment has become the policy twin of neo-liberal restructuring of polities as evident in the growing percentage of official aid flowing to NGOs. As neo-liberal policies impoverish large sections of society (particularly underprivileged groups such as women and minorities), accentuate economic equality within and among nations, and despoil natural eco-systems, CSOs are

mobilized to clear up this “mess” in the absence of effective state structures. Hence, by creating the false image that neo-liberal reforms benefit not only the dominant classes but also the subordinate ones, and averting the social unrest likely to grow as a reaction to the negative social consequences of these reforms, civil societal organizations, as they implement various developmental and democratization projects of international organizations in good faith, aid the neo-liberal assault on states on behalf of free markets. To put it differently, as a result of incorrect diagnosis, CSOs have unintentionally become a part of the problem rather than its solution. There is also the additional cost of growing reliance on governmental funding in the NGO world, as they turn into “implementing partners” of international organizations and governments, in the form of decreased autonomy to pursue alternative, and possibly controversial, agendas.

This is a picture of civil societal participation in global governance that openly contradicts the picture drawn by liberal-pluralist students of the phenomena looked at in Chapter two. The liberal-pluralist reading considers global civil society as a site where human agency re-enters into the shaping of international politics in defiance of the power of states and corporations (Macdonald, 1994; Pasha, 1996). In this regard, they put a lot of trust in the power of CSOs to right the wrongs of global governance that is currently dominated by state and corporate interests. Chapter two examined two major areas, namely democratization and development, within which the expectations of liberals from a robust civil society are the most visible. The positive contribution of civil society to global governance in these areas is conceptualized in terms of their ability both to reform official regulatory mechanisms and to transform the normative structures that govern global politics.

Contra liberals, it is possible to argue that institutional autonomy from the state and the market is no assurance that global civil society can act as a progressive force on the world stage, and remedy the social ills of today's societies. Behind the overly romantic and optimistic vision shared mostly by liberals lies an inability to attend to the deeper structural linkages between the civil society, the state and the economy. When the broader power relations in society are brought into the picture, the idyllic representation of global civil society as a wellspring of progressive forces starts to fall apart. In the literature, one can find a variety of theoretical positions that problematize the liberal optimism by highlighting structural factors and power relations in their discussion of transnational activism. With regards to their attitude towards the agency of civil society, it is possible to differentiate between those approaches that reach the rather pessimistic conclusion that civil society is not the site where global status-quo can be challenged, and those, while cognizant of structural constraints, nevertheless maintain that civil society can become an agent of structural transformation under particular historical circumstances.

As examples of the former, Chapter three examined world-system theory, Political Marxism and Foucauldian social theory. World-system theory, in its most determinist form, subordinates the rise and fall of social movements to the cyclical rhythms of capitalist world economy. One can also find a slightly different argument within this school that assigns civic activism the role of influencing the direction of change, not for certain though, when the world economy enters into a period of crisis, and is on the brink of replacement by another world system. Again, social change here comes as an outcome of structural dynamics not one of human agency. In fact, world-system theory, with its strong emphasis on the historical continuity of

the process of accumulation, may be said to have a pro-status quo bias. Second, Political Marxism, by invoking the classical Marxist equation of civil society with the realm of the bourgeoisie, actually regards various emancipatory struggles waged within the civil society as a barrier to structural transformation. Such struggles, Political Marxism claims, are based on a denial of capitalism as the primary locus of domination in modern societies, and in that sense divert attention from the real “enemy”, namely class domination, which is at the root of other inequalities in society. By excessively focusing on the state as a coercive force, proponents of civil society overlook the very coercion exercised within civil society thanks to the differential position of individuals vis-à-vis means of production. As a result, Political Marxism contends that civil societal organizations contribute to the reproduction of status quo, rather than its transformation. A third radical critique of modern civil society is provided by Foucauldian social theory. Foucault differentiates between two forms of power: juridical and disciplinary. The latter, he contends, is the predominant form of power in modern societies, and results from the very act of producing knowledge about the world we live in as well as about ourselves. He does not see civil society as an emancipatory force because, in Foucault’s view, civic activism, by and large, targets judicial power while the real source of domination in modern societies is that of disciplinary power. Even in cases where disciplinary power is problematized, the best one can achieve is the replacement of one regime of truth with another thereby engendering new forms of disciplinary power.

In Chapter four, the views of Gramscian International Relations on the civil society-global governance *problematique* were examined. At the center of Gramscian analysis is the notion of “hegemony” which, in very general terms, refers

to the consensual aspect of social domination. Civil society is the primary site where the ideological hegemony of dominant classes is reproduced as well as possibly challenged through counter-hegemonic forces. From a Gramscian perspective, the liberal-pluralist approaches covered in Chapter two can be characterized as instances of “problem-solving” theory. This is quite evident in their discussion of the progressive role of civil society in that civic activism is accorded the role of “fine-tuning” the processes of global governance without ever problematizing the general framework of neo-liberal hegemony within which such activism takes place.

In contrast to the radical approaches examined in Chapter three, Gramscian analysis does not totally derogate the potential of civil society to transform deeper social structures and power relations underlying global governance. On the contrary, civil society is considered to be the main source of historical change within the Gramscian perspective. In this respect, some commentators point out that we are living in an era in which the identification between the people and their institutions is weakening. This is evident in a pervading sense of “crisis” among the populace (Cox, 1999; Gill, 2000). Therefore, they argue, this is a historical conjuncture particularly favorable to the rise of a counter-hegemonic movement and the formation of a new historical bloc promising the birth of an alternative world order<sup>3</sup>.

In general, critical thinking tends to produce not too optimistic an analysis of the current state of affairs as a result of its head-on confrontation with the power relations in society. On the other hand, it has the great merit of combining “the pessimism of the intellect” with “the optimism of the will” by conceptualizing the relationship between the human agency and historical structures in reciprocal terms

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<sup>3</sup> On the potential for the rise of a counter-hegemonic movement within transnational civil society, see Gill (2000), Ford (2003), and Cox (1999).

(Cox, 1996d, 527). In the final analysis, the ultimate purpose of challenging the boundaries of the “dominant framework of action” is to open the way for imagining better and alternative world orders.

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