

**Seminar in Wien : « Citizenship, social involvement and volunteering »
University of Wien, 16th of April, 2007**

Date	Content		Duration
	Morning : theory	Afternoon : practice & research	
Monday 16 th of April 2007	Civil society – Main issues	<p>Two main sources :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is civil society?. Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics (2004-03-01). Source : http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm • Anheier (Helmut), Civil society Measurement, Evaluation, Policy, Civicus, Earthscan, London, 2004 	4 hours

Selected literature in the field of Civil society by Prof Dr Christoph Reinprecht :

Etzioni (Amitai), The good society, The Journal of Political Philosophy, March 1999

Adam Ferguson, “An Essay on the History of Civil Society”, 1767

Pollock, Graham.'Civil Society Theory and Euro-Nationalism' , Studies In Social & Political Thought, Issue 4, March 2001, pp. 31-56

Mann, Michael; 1984; The Autonomous Power of The State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results; European Journal of Sociology 25: pp185-213

1) What is civil society? a definition proposed by the Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics (2004-03-01).

Civil society is a concept located strategically at the cross-section of important strands of intellectual developments in the social sciences.

To take account of the diversity of the concept, the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) adopted an initial working definition that is meant to guide research activities and teaching but should not be interpreted as a rigid statement:

Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group.

What is this sudden interest in civil society all about?

The term was “en vogue” in the 18th and 19th centuries, but had long fallen into disuse, and became a term of interest to historians primarily.

For a long time, social scientists have believed that we lived in a two-sector world :

- the Market or the economy on the one hand,
- and the State or government on the other.

It was quite easy to understand in such a perspective the liberal approach (focussed on market) or a more keynesian approach (focussed on state and particularly public financing).

'Society' was pushed to the sidelines and became a very abstract notion, relegated to the sociological theorising or social philosophy, not fitting the two-sector world view that has dominated the social sciences for the last fifty years (since the second World War).

We have built an “iron curtain” also in our minds. Things seemed more easy to understand in this binary approach.

The idea that a 'third sector' might exist between market and state somehow got lost in the two-sector view of the world. Of course, there were and are many private institutions that serve public purposes-voluntary associations, charities, nonprofits, foundations and non-governmental organisations-that do not fit the state-market dichotomy. Yet, until quite recently, such third-sector institutions were neglected if not ignored by all social sciences.

The concept of civil society helps understanding of how economy and society interact, of which the inability of the social sciences to predict and understand the fall of communism in central and eastern Europe is just one of many examples.

One of the most important events of the 20th century escaped the attention of mainstream social science until after the fact. Looking back, we can see how events in Central and Eastern Europe were indeed instrumental in bringing the topic of civil society to the attention of social scientists in the West.

We could reach similar conclusions for the way in which the social sciences typically approached 'development' in the South. For too long we have held preconceived, prejudiced notions of 'the' market and 'the' state that were seemingly independent of local societies and cultures.

The debate about civil society ultimately is about how culture, market and state relate to each other.

Concern about civil society, however, is not only relevant to Central and Eastern Europe and the developing world. It is very much of interest to the European Union as well.

The Civil Dialogue initiated by the Commission in the 1990s was a first attempt by the EU to give the institutions of society-and not only governments and businesses-a voice at the policy-making tables in Brussels.

The EU, like other international institutions (for instance United Nations Organisation), has a long way to go in trying to accommodate the frequently divergent interests of non-governmental organisations and citizen groups. There is increasing recognition that international and national governments have to open up to civil society institutions.

One could reach a similar conclusion about most of our European countries, where the transition to post-industrial society brings up many important questions about social cohesion and social participation in countries that are becoming increasingly heterogeneous and diverse.

Many questions are raised :

- What role will civil society institutions play ?
- what is the function of charity and philanthropy ?
- what will be the impact of devolution on the voluntary sector?

2) Source : Anheier (Helmut), Civil society Measurement, Evaluation, Policy, Civicus, Earthscan, London, 2004

Civil society remains an “uncharted territory” in a world long dominated by a two sector view of market.

The world’s statistical information systems are designed to privilege data on economy, demographics and politics, leading to a benign neglect of data on civil society due to these basic conceptual deficiencies in social science when it comes to describe phenomena that are neither market nor state related

Following the events of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe and democratization processes in many parts of the world, civil society has become an important concept in the social sciences.

In the United States and Europe or other parts of the world, a “strong and vibrant civil society characterised by a social infrastructure of dense networks of face to face relationships that cross-cut existing social cleavages such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and gender that will underpin strong and responsive democratic government “ (Edwards, Foley and Diani, 2001)

Some examples to revitalize or recognise civil society are :

- civic renewal projects in the US ;
- World Bank ‘s new approach to economic development
- European’s Union encouragement of a Citizens’ Europe
- Nato’s programme to seek ways of constructing a “civil society” in countries torn apart by civil war

Civil society and non-profit sector

In many countries, the discovery of civil society coincided with renewed emphasis on the role of non-profit organisations.

There has been a general increase in the economic importance of non-profit organisations as providers of health, social, educational and cultural services of many kinds.

Non-profit sector accounts for 6% of total employment in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries ; nearly 10% with volunteer work factored.

The basic argument for a greater non-profit role in both developing and developed countries is based on public administration : NGOs are efficient and effective providers of social and other services that governments may find costlier and more ineffectual to offer themselves.

As a result, cooperative relations between governments and non-profits in welfare provision have become a prominent feature in countries such as US, Germany, France or the UK

With the rise of “new public management” the emphasis on non-profits as service providers and instruments of privatization casts non-profit organisations essentially in a neoliberal role

Example : France's unemployment policy of insertion

The non-profit or voluntary sector is seen as the social infrastructure of civil society : it gives a sense of trust and social inclusion that is seen as essential for the functioning of modern societies.

As a conclusion, we must address a new “appropriate balance of state, market and civil society in public life”.

With the end of the Cold War a “global associational revolution” began to gather momentum aided by the expansion of a more confident middle class and the introduction and spread of new information technologies such as Internet.

This is the expression of democracy and citizenship, individual freedom, social participation and responsibility.

But while the individual voices of civil society are part of a democratic social order, they are not necessarily democratic themselves ; the point is that civil society includes a great diversity of views as the sometimes “grey area” between some civil society groups and organised violence demonstrates.

Some authors have spoken about “the cacophony of civil society” (cf Naidoo and Tandon, 1999)

Diversity of civil society also refers to the levels : local , regional, national and increasingly international levels ; it exists neither a common map nor a compass for these different levels.

Civil society and the social sciences

Civil society was a term of interest primarily to those studying the history of ideas of the 18th and 19th centuries rather than those interested on contemporary societies.

Civil society was not “on the agenda”.

As already mentioned (see article by the Centre for Civil Society,CCS) , effects of such a lack of interest for this concept are :

- Inability of the social sciences to predict and understand the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe ;
- Same thing in South Africa or Yugoslavia ;
- Idem for the anti-globalisation protests that have become common at each meeting of the World Trade organization (WTO) since Seattle in 1998

As a conclusion, taking account this civil society notion could have given an explanation or even forecast for :

- Collapse of state socialism (Central and Eastern countries, CEC)
- Rise of micro-nationalisms (ex-Yugoslavia) ;

- Surge in global terrorism (tragedy of 9/11 the twins towers in New-York)

Revival of social indicators happened in the 1990s with publications such as the United Nations Development program (UNDP)'s Human Development report.

Same thing with the System of national Accounts of the United Nations that recognises a separate economic sector of “non profit institutions serving households”

The Civil Society Diamond (CSD) approach encourages data collection, improved coverage and a concern for data quality ; it is first and foremost a method of presenting and interpreting information about civil society in a systematic and structured way

- Purpose : a tool for civil society practitioners, policy makers and researchers
- 2 objects : to assess core facets of civil society (major contours, strengths and weaknesses) and thereby facilitates the identification and development of policy options ; to assess the impact and potential contributions of civil society (with respect to human development indicators) ;
- 4 aims : create a tool for ongoing and systematic dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of civil society at local, regional, national and international levels ; raise awareness across different population groups and stakeholders about civil society ; enhance the transparency and accountability of civil society institutions, organisations and representatives nationally and internationally ; enhance professionalism and raise leadership standards within civil society organisations as well as among corporations and government agencies dealing with civil society institutions

Elements of definition

Modern view : civil society is the sphere located between the state and market, a “buffer zone” strong enough to keep both state and market in check, preventing each from becoming too powerful and dominating (cf Gellner, 1994)

Other definition : “civil society is made of more or less spontaneous created associations, organisations and movements that find, take up, condense and amplify the resonance of social problems in private life, and pass it on to the political realm or public sphere (cf Habermas, 1992)

18th and 19th inheritages till the 20th century :

- Adam Smith : trade and commerce among private citizens created not only wealth but also invisible connections among people ; the so-called “invisible hand” these are the bonds of trust and social capital ;
- John Locke and Alexis de Tocqueville : they emphasized the importance of democratic association in everyday life as a base of a functioning policy ;
- Hegel : state and civil society depend upon each other but he emphasized the need of the state to regulate society
- Civil society associated with notions of civility (Elias, 1994), public sphere (Habermas 1992), social capital (Putnam, 2000), community (Etzioni, 1971).

Various approaches of the concept :

- Systemic view : civil society as a macro-sociological attribute of societies, the way state and society relate to each-other ;
- Individualistic orientation : notions of individual agency, citizenships, values and participation with econometric and social network ;
- Institutional approach : size, scope and structure of organisations and associations and the functions they form.

In the CSD perspective : the sphere of institutions, organisations and individuals located between the family, the state and the market in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests.

Other essential definitions

- Institutions : structural patterns that address and regulate specific areas or tasks ; for instance, an institution for political decision-making would be democracy ; in the case of social inclusion, a central institution would be citizenship ;
- Organisations : voluntary associations, non-governmental organisations, non-profit, foundations, charities, social movements, networks and informal groups that make up the infrastructure of civil society ; they are the forums and the vehicles for social participation ; of particular interest are civil society organisations but also civic actions groups, networks, and other less formal organisations ;
- Individuals : citizens and participants in civil society ; people's activities in civil society such as membership, volunteering, organising events or supporting specific causes ; people's values ; people's skills in terms of governance, management and leadership

What civil society is not :

- Is not synonymous with the more general term of society ;
- Is not identical to the nonprofit sector nor third sector nor voluntary sector ;
- Does not include the market and market firms ;
- Does not include the state and public agencies ;
- Does not include the family.

There is no any positive meaning in the term : civil society doesn't mean good society ; it may be uncivil such as encouraging disrespect of human rights, advocating violence or nurturing ethnic or religious prejudice.

Three main levels of study :

- Macrolevel : countries, societies, regions ; for instance relationship between civil society, the economy and the state ;
- Mesolevel : a particular segment or sub-field such as community development for instance ;
- Microlevel : one organisation or one specific setting .