ENGINEERING CIVIL SOCIETY

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WAS 2011 THE YEAR OF CIVIL SOCIETY?
KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why is civil society important?
   • Theatre of history?
   • Hegemony/counter hegemony
   • Content matters: quality v. quantity

2. A Dialectical Relationship?: civil society and the state
   • Counterbalance
   • State capture

3. Civil society and democracy
   • Civil society 1.0 - Neo-Tocquevillians; Neoliberalising civil society
   • Civil society 2.0 - Associative democracy; a critique of the neoliberal model; are NGOs still relevant?

4. The relationship between civil society 1.0 and 2.0
# Civil Society & Democracy: Some Definitions

## Civil Society
- **Normative definitions**
  - and the critiques of normativism
- **Spatial definitions**
  - "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, and market though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated." (LSE Centre for Civil Society web).

## Democracy
- **Procedural definitions (Schumpeter 1947)**
  - The procedures that are indispensable → elections, free association, access to information.
- **Substantive definitions**
  - Focus is on participation of the citizens in decision-making processes and have had an opportunity to influence the outcomes (I.M. Young 2000).
- **Managed or Virtual democracies**
- **Sovereign democracy**
DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY
(I.M. YOUNG 2000)

- Plural associational activity → participatory and representative
- Limits of civil society
- Need for state and civil society → to deepen democracy
  - Disability rights
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Women’s rights
CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNICATION

- How are the current uprisings and demonstrations movements linked to democracy promotion efforts of the past 20 years?
- Public sphere theories
  - Habermas – space for rational discourse; lifeworld
  - Fraser and Benhabib – subaltern counter publics; democratic iterations
  - Young – associative democracy and spaces; dialectical relationship with state
  - Chandhoke – global civil society?
- Virtual and Physical public spheres - the links between them
- Communication
  - Manuel Castells - “power, counter-power, domination and social change” (M. Castells)
  - Communicative power - “Ability to exert influence over policies that affect them by communication, either individually...or collectively in ways that will pressure those in authority to consider their arguments” (Deane 2007: 144)
CIVIL SOCIETY PROMOTION IN THE POST-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES: DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

- POSITIVE IMPACT - USAID Sustainability Index (2011)
- UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES - much of the literature focuses on the weakening, demobilization and disintegration of civil society (Henderson 2003; Mendelson & Glenn 2002; Ishkanian 2008, Howard 2002)
  - Apathy, anomie, cynicism, paternalism, lack of participation, lack of trust, etc.
- “TRANSACTIONAL ACTIVISM” (PETROVA & TARROW 2007)
- AFTER 20 YEARS OF “TRANSITION” WHERE ARE WE NOW?
  - “we see a richer picture of transactions consisting of coalition formation around single issues, network formation, and negotiation with elites on the part of civic groups in Central and Eastern Europe than would have been predicted from the levels of individual participation that have been observed.” (Petrova and Tarrow 2007: 80).
- Reasons for optimism?
CIVIL SOCIETY : PHASE 1

- End of the Cold War euphoria and triumphalism
- Genetically engineering civil society
  - Exponential growth in NGOs
    - 1994 – 44 NGOs
    - 1996 – 1500 NGOs
    - 2011 – 5000 + NGOs
  - Registered NGOs ≠ number of active organisations
  - NGOs came to be seen as both ‘means’ and ‘end’
  - Normative view of civil society and NGOs
CIVIL SOCIETY: PHASE 2

• 2007 – present
• Introduction and spread of Web 2.0 technologies
  • Facebook
  • YouTube
  • Wikis
  • Blogs
• Physical space shrinks – Virtual space grows
• Potential of virtual public sphere – Liberation Technology?
• Limits of virtual public sphere
CIVIL SOCIETY & DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN THE POST-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

Post-socialist paths: not exhaustive, mutually exclusive or final...
CASE STUDY:

ARMENIA 1991 – 2011
CIVIL SOCIETY IN ARMENIA
RISE OF CIVIC INITIATIVES IN ARMENIA

- 2001
- 2008
- 2011

- Cultural preservation: 36%
- Protection of Rights: 36%
- Ecology: 18%
- Civil Soc.: 7%
- Religion: 3%

12/01/2012
Ishkanian - Europa Universitat
Viadrina
2009 Scores for Armenia

- NGO Sustainability: 4.0
- Legal Environment: 3.9
- Organizational Capacity: 3.9
- Financial Viability: 5.2
- Advocacy: 3.4
- Service Provision: 3.9
- Infrastructure: 3.5
- Public Image: 3.9

Consolidation | Mid-Transition | Early Transition
Life satisfaction is one-half of transition region average

% of respondents who are satisfied with life, all things considered

Limited belief in presence of many basic institutions

% of respondents who believe that the country has the basic democratic institutions

CIVIC INITIATIVES 2008 - PRESENT

• What are they?
  • *Kakhakatsiakan nakhatsemutyun* (Քաղաքացիական նախաձեռնություն)
• Why have they come about?
• How do they differ from NGOs?
• What is the relationship between civic initiatives and NGOs?
• What is important about civic initiatives?
LINKS TO DIASPORA?:

LA
1988
LINKS TO DIASPORA?

Paris 2009

LA 2009

LA 2010

12/01/2012
CIVIC INITIATIVES

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

AND

ECOLOGY
IT TAKES A DEATH...TO CREATE MOVEMENT
Before

The demonstration

The Member of Parliament

12/01/2012

Ishkanian - Europa Universität
Viadrina
TRCHKAN WATERFALL
“We Don’t Believe [the corporation]”
Civic activists call for monitoring to hold Robshin accountable
1. GENERATIONAL CHANGE – the first post-Soviet generation of children have come of age
2. NORMATIVE DIMENSION – the impact of naming & shaming
3. INTERNATIONAL MOMENTUM – the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, etc.
4. THE ELEMENT OF SHOCK & SURPRISE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY 1.0 AND 2.0 (I.E., BETWEEN NGOS AND CIVIC INITIATIVES)

Positive
- Cooperation
- Collaboration
- Information sharing
- Capacity building
- Networking

Negative
- Mistrust
- Suspicion
- Lack of respect
LIMITS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

- Does their influence extend beyond a core group of activists?
- Fragmentation and sustainable impact
- Narrow interests
- Civil society can also be the space for exclusionary and violent groups (fascist, racist, and right wing organisations, etc.)
- Easy to criticise and protest; more difficult to suggest and create
- But that said... civil society is still important!
  - Space for deliberation and debate
  - Citizens working together for collective causes
  - Counterbalance to the state - checks & balances
CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATISATION IN ARMENIA: WHERE TO NEXT?

• The road travelled thus far
  • From Engineering to Growing Democracy and Civil Society?
• Impact on policy dialogue and implementation?
• From ‘residents’ to ‘citizens’ – meaning of citizenship
• Re-thinking the relationship(s) between Armenia civil society and the state
• The global context and Armenia – how are events elsewhere, in Europe, the Middle East and now Russia, being perceived and in turn affecting the situation in Armenia?
REFERENCES

- Fraser, Nancy (1992) ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy’ in C. Calhoun (ed.) Habermas and the Public Sphere, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.