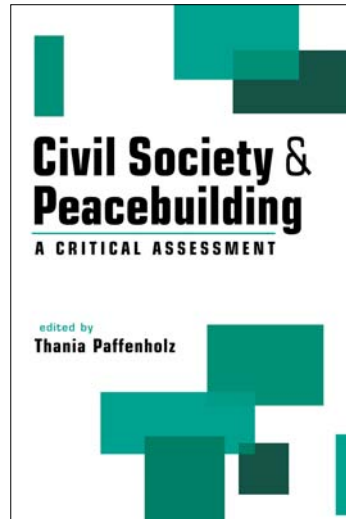


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Peacebuilding:
A Critical Assessment

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1

Understanding Civil Society

Christoph Spurk

Citizen participation in the processes of political decisionmaking is seen as a core requirement of functioning democracies. Civil society is one institution that has gained importance in its perceived ability to facilitate regular and sustained participation by the citizenry, beyond simply voting in general elections. Increasingly, therefore, civil society is viewed by more and more researchers and practitioners as a basic pillar of democracy.

The concept of civil society, however, is diverse and can carry many meanings, necessitating some clarification. This chapter has two main purposes: to depict the diversity of civil society concepts, along with their applications in different contexts; and to elaborate on a new functional model of civil society in order to facilitate a better understanding of civil society's contributions to democratization and other political goals.

In light of these debates, we can identify two models for understanding civil society: *actor-oriented* and *function-oriented*. The benefits and shortcomings of each are explained, and a new extended functional approach is proposed.

History, Philosophical Roots, and Basic Concepts

Civil society is a widely used term in modern scholarship, “the big idea on everyone’s lips” (Edwards 2004, 2). Despite this, there is no commonly agreed-upon definition, beyond the basic idea of civil society being an arena of voluntary, uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes, and values (Merkel and Lauth 1998, 7). A survey of the literature makes it clear that civil society as a concept contains elements that are diverse, complex, and above all, contentious. Some of the literature even questions whether this fuzziness explains the popularity of civil society, in that “it can be all things to all people” (Glasius 2004, 3).

4 Context: What We Already Know

Major European philosophers such as Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant articulated a notion of civil society as being synonymous with the state or political society (Keane 1988, 36). “Civil” was seen as the opposite of the state of “nature” and also of “uncivilized” forms of government, such as despotism. Civil society, according to this conception, expresses the growth of civilization to the point where society has become “civilized” (Kumar 1993, 377).

In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, a major shift in conceptualizing civil society was introduced by writers such as Adam Ferguson and Thomas Paine, among others (Keane 1988). During this period, a concept of civil society was slowly developed that differentiated it from the state, endowing civil society with its own forms and principles. From this time onward, civil society was seen not only as oriented toward the state but also as acting as a limit on (and sometimes even a counter to) state powers. Essentially, then, civil society, as it became defined in a different way, was a means of defense against despotism and other potential abuses by political leaders (Bratton 1994, 53–54).

Under this penumbra, thinkers conceptualized the relationship between civil society and the state in somewhat different ways. John Locke (1632–1704), for example, was the first modern philosopher to stress that civil society should be understood as a body in its own right, separate from the state. Locke argued that people form a community in which their social life develops and in which the state has no say. This sphere is pre- or unpolitical. The first task of civil society, according to Locke, is to protect the individual—specifically individual rights and property—against the state and its arbitrary interventions (Merkel and Lauth 1998, 4; Schade 2002, 10).

Charles de Montesquieu (1689–1755) elaborated on his own model of the separation of powers (*De l'esprit des lois*, 1748), whereby he distinguished, similarly to Locke, between political society (regulating the relations between citizens and government) and civil society (regulating the relations between citizens). Montesquieu, however, presents a far less sharp contrast between the two spheres. Instead, his philosophy stresses a balance between central authority and societal networks (*corps intermediaries*), in which the central authority (monarchy) must be controlled by the rule of law and limited by the countervailing power of independent organizations (networks) that operate inside and outside the political structure (Merkel and Lauth 1998, 5).

G. W. Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) viewed civil society as the historical product of economic modernization (and not as a natural expression of freedom) and the bourgeoisie-driven economy, positioned between the two spheres of family and state (Keane 1988, 50–55). For Hegel, civil society comprised a huge variety of actors, including the market economy, social classes (including the bourgeoisie), corporations, intellectuals, and civil servants—essentially all societal actors not directly dependent on the state apparatus. Hegel emphasized that civil society actors are not always in harmony but rather are in conflict, as the burghers followed mainly selfish interests. Therefore, in Hegel’s view

civil society must be controlled by a strong state that is supposed to act in the “universal interest of the population” (Keane 1988, 53).

Karl Marx (1818–1883) states that “civil society as such develops only with the bourgeoisie,” and he defines the concept as comprising “the entire material interactions among individuals at a particular evolutionary stage of the productive forces” (Marx, quoted in Bobbio 1988, 82). As with Hegel, Marx’s definition accommodates a huge diversity of actors, including the economy and the market. In contrast to Hegel, however, Marx states that civil society is the base of the capitalist domination model, regulating and subordinating the state, which thus becomes an institution of the dominant class (Bobbio 1988, 75–76; Kumar 1993, 377). To put it in Marxist terms, civil society is the structural base, and the state belongs to the superstructure that ensures capitalist domination by force.

The exclusive link between civil society and capitalist development was questioned by John Keane (1988). He emphasizes that the modernization of the idea of civil society, and the separation of civil society from the state, were primarily political developments rather than being economic in nature. This view was driven by the fear of state despotism, something that led political thinkers and many nonentrepreneurial groups to develop civil society as a different counteracting entity. These people and groups were critical as well to capitalist development, and many feared the inequalities caused by the growth of commodity production (Keane 1988, 63–66).

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) placed more emphasis on the role of independent associations as civil society in his two-volume masterwork *De la démocratie en Amérique* (usually translated as *Democracy in America*). He saw associations as schools of democracy in which democratic thinking, attitudes, and behavior are learned by individual citizens, the aim being to protect and defend individual rights against potentially authoritarian regimes and tyrannical majorities within society. Associations are, additionally, a balancing force against a central state inclined to form a power monopoly (Keane 1988, 60). According to de Tocqueville, these associations should be built voluntarily and at all levels (local, regional, national). Thus, civic virtues like tolerance, acceptance, honesty, and trust are actually integrated into the character of civic individuals. They contribute to trust and confidence, or as Putnam later phrased it, social capital (Putnam 2000, 19–26).

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) focused on civil society from a Marxist theoretical angle while reversing the Marxist viewpoint in various ways. In contrast to Marx, Gramsci saw civil society as part of the superstructure in addition to the state, but with a different function: the state served as the arena of force and coercion for capitalist domination, and civil society served as the field through which values and meanings were established, debated, and contested. Civil society thus produces noncoercive consent for the system (Kumar 1993; Bratton 1994, 54–55; Bobbio 1988). According to Gramsci, civil society contains a wide range of organizations and ideologies that both challenge and uphold the

existing order. The political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes and societal consensus is formed within civil society.

Another divergence from Marx is seen in the relationship of civil society to the state. Gramsci argues that initiatives for change could start from this superstructure sphere of civil society, with its values and ideologies. In traditional Marxism, changes can only come from basic structures, such as economic relations (Bobbio 1988, 86–88). This might be one reason why Gramsci's ideas influenced subsequent resistance to totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Lewis 2002).

Jürgen Habermas focused on the role that civil society should play within the communication process in the public sphere. Generally, communication as a social act plays a decisive role according to Habermas's basic "theory of communicative action." This theory states that legitimacy and consensus on political decisions are provided through open communication, that is, by the unbiased debate of social actors. In this understanding, the political system (state, government, and political society) needs the articulation of interests in the public space to put different concerns on the political agenda. Usually, established institutions, such as political parties, would perform this articulation. However, it cannot be left entirely to institutions alone, argues Habermas, as political parties and parliaments need to "get informed public opinion beyond the established power structures" (Habermas 1992, 374). Therefore, the ability to organize as civil society is needed particularly by marginalized groups as a means to articulate their interests.

Habermas's concept of civil society has been contested as highly normative and idealistic. Bent Flyvbjerg (1998) claims that a more realistic approach needs to consider the societal context in which this kind of communication takes place. Based on Michel Foucault's understanding of power in society, one must analyze the different relations among social actors in society and their power imbalances to obtain a realistic picture of civil society's limited potential.

The Structure and Positioning of Civil Society:

A Definition

From this overview, we can see that major shifts in how civil society is conceptualized have taken place over time. This includes the change from equating civil society with the state itself toward viewing the two as opposing forces, as well as the change from a purely economic understanding of civil society to a noneconomic, political understanding. Such variations notwithstanding, we can identify some common ground for understanding the structure and positioning of civil society within society at large.

Civil society is seen as a sector on its own. It consists of a huge variety of mainly voluntary organizations and associations that maintain different objectives, interests, and ideologies. Oftentimes, they compete with one another.

Although not driven purely by private or economic interests, they are nonetheless viewed as autonomously organized, interacting within the public sphere.

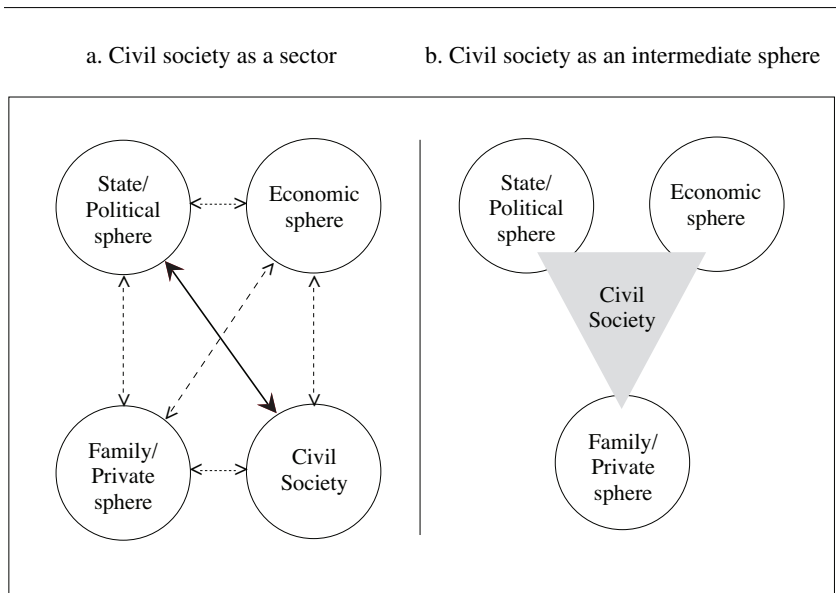
Civil society is seen as *different from both the state* (comprising executive government institutions, bureaucracy, administration, judiciary) *and the political sphere* (legislature, political parties) due to the fact that civil society is making political demands toward the state and others, but is not running—as politicians and parties do—for political office in government. Thus, civil society is formally and legally independent from state/political society, but it is oriented toward and interacts closely with the state, the political sector, and the economic sector.

Civil society is seen as *differentiated from the market and the business sector (economic sphere)* (but see Glasius 2004, 1), as well as from the family/private realm (see Figure 1.1a).

These sectors can also be viewed as partially overlapping in the sense that boundaries are sometimes blurred. Some authors emphasize this reality by considering how some actors can operate in various spheres or sectors simultaneously (Croissant 2003, 240).

Some of the research stresses that specific actors are in general attributed to specific sectors, but occasionally they, too, can also act as civil society. For example, business entrepreneurs (belonging to the business sector) are acting within civil society when they demand tax breaks from the state. This understanding also helps us uncover other actors who may have a role as civil society,

Figure 1.1 The Position of Civil Society



such as traditional groups in Africa (Croissant et al. 2000, 18). In this conception, authors may prefer to characterize civil society *as the space between the sectors* (Merkel and Lauth 1998, 7). Civil society is thus the public realm between state, business, and family (see Figure 1.1b).

To clarify who belongs to civil society, it is helpful to consider the processes of *articulation* and *negotiation* of political interests within society. Typically, various intermediaries act as connectors between the private sphere (ordinary citizens who are only occasionally directly involved in politics) and the political-administrative system (running the country with little or no direct contact with the population). Intermediaries—including political parties, associations, social movements, and the media—establish contact and feedback among these distant spheres. And among these intermediaries, only associations and social movements belong to civil society. Political parties are seen as part of the political society sphere, as their representatives usually compete for running political offices in government. Civil society makes demands to the political society or state, but it does not aspire to assume office. However, civil society often provides staff out of its ranks for political society and its institutions.

The media's role is even more contentious. Some scholars and practitioners see media as part of civil society (van Tongeren et al. 2005; Berger 2002), whereas others see media as executing a different role in society. Christoph Spurk (2007) argues that media do not belong to civil society because the mass media comprise professional organizations and not voluntary ones, thus belonging to the economic sphere. Additionally, the role attributed to the media in a democratic environment requires them—at least ideally—to report comprehensively and impartially without serving specific interests. Thus, a free and pluralistic media have a role on their own (Votmer 2006). Their task is to enable public debate, and they should not represent specific interests that are held by civil society and organizations. Yet, some media might not consider these to be limitations, and they are better viewed as part of the state/political society, like state or party media, or as part of advocacy/communication strategies of specific organizations. In contrast, people working in the media sector (journalists, publishers) can form their own associations, which then act as civil society, similar to any other association. Media fulfilling their public task might support civil society in its endeavor to confront the state, as this usually involves opening further access to the public sphere (Spurk 2007). The media as a whole are generally not considered to be part of civil society.

All of the above considerations can be condensed into the following definition:

Civil society is a sphere of voluntary action that is distinct from the state, political, private, and economic spheres, keeping in mind that in practice the boundaries between these sectors are often complex

and blurred. It consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organizations—competing with each other and oriented to specific interests—that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organized, and interact in the public sphere. Thus, civil society is independent from the state and the political sphere, but it is oriented toward and interacts closely with them.

Civil Society Discourses in Different Contexts

Civil society has been debated in very different contexts. Within political science research, the main focus has been civil society's role in the political transition toward democracy in different regions of the world. Based on this debate, civil society gained importance as well in international cooperation, in terms of practitioners' discourse on development cooperation, as well as in the policy discourse on violent conflict in developing and transition countries. The sections below review the main strands of these debates and examine how civil society concepts have been interpreted in politics and practice in different contexts and geographical regions.

Civil Society in Political Transition and Democratization

As we have alluded to previously, civil society has been an almost purely Western concept, historically tied to the political emancipation of citizens from former feudalistic ties, monarchies, and the state during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Other notions of civil society (i.e., those that might have existed in other regions or at different times) barely surface in the international debate about civil society (Appiagyei-Atua 2002, 2–3; Poulligny 2005, 498). As a result, there is still much debate over whether Western concepts of civil society are transferable to non-Western countries or other historical contexts with different levels of democracy and economic structures (Lewis 2002; Harneit-Sievers 2005).

Western Europe: From exclusiveness to inclusion. In its early phase, civil society in Western Europe (the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) was driven by economic and academic elites who demanded civil and human rights, as well as political participation. In its second phase (the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), civil society widened its areas of activity and potential. New actors entered civil society—for example, the social movements of the working class, farmers, and churches—who not only engaged in social welfare but also articulated political and societal claims. In their view, these new actors were less universal than the earlier elites, focusing instead on specific interests, sometimes stressing societal conflict and deprivation. The third phase of civil society began with the emergence of new social movements in the 1960s, such as women's liberation, in addition to the student, peace, and ecology

movements. These new movements and agendas considerably expanded both the range and scope of civil society activities and, likewise, the reasons for being part of civil society in its many manifestations (Lauth 2003, 229).

The United States and Western Europe: Social capital debate. Starting in the United States, a rich debate emerged in the 1990s regarding the performance of major social institutions, including representative government, and its relation to political culture and civil society. Robert Putnam sees social capital—social networks, a rich associational life, along with the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness—as the core element of civil society. This affirms that the characteristics of civil society and civic life affect the health of democracy and the performance of social institutions (Putnam 1993; Putnam 2002, 14). Putnam’s research argues that there exists a tremendous decline of social capital in the United States. His work has since spurred considerable research on various forms of social capital (Putnam 2000; Putnam 2002, 14–25) and its conduciveness to democracy.

Eastern Europe: Challenges of a threefold transition. Most countries in Eastern Europe faced a threefold transition: the political transformation from dictatorship to democracy, the economic transformation from a state to a market economy, and sometimes the state transformation due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Merkel 1999, 377). Eastern Europe’s transition drew much interest, mainly from European researchers and practitioners. Numerous case studies showed that, in most countries, civil society played a major role, although not the only role, in overcoming authoritarian regimes and establishing democratic structures (Merkel 1999, 397–441).

Research demonstrates that civil society plays different roles in various transition phases. Its success seems contingent on many factors, such as its strength and its capacity to fulfill the right functions at the right time; the incorporation of democratic procedures in its own structure and organization, especially after immediate system change; and the extent of bridging societal divides by inclusive membership as well as the “civility” of its actions. All this must be viewed within the context of other factors and power structures within which civil society interacts (Merkel 2000; Lauth 2003).

Civil society in the South: Is the concept applicable? In Latin America, Africa, and Asia, we find very different debates on the subject, due to different historical, political, and economic developments.

1. Latin America. In Latin America, the concept of civil society gained importance mainly in the fight against military dictatorship at the end of the 1960s. Peter Birlé (2000, 242–261) described a high diversity of civil society groups, based on his analysis of the development of civil society in five Latin

American countries under military dictatorship and in the recovering of democracy. He identified various types of civil society according to the main focus of action. The *antiauthoritarian civil society* consists of groups fostering the protection of human rights and tolerance and facilitated nonviolent resistance to military regimes in Latin America. *Gramscian civil society*, as put forward by other research, renewed the thinking of the traditional leftist groups after the revolutionary armed liberation in Latin America had failed and opened up new spaces of discussion. *Neoliberal groups of civil society* focused on individual freedom and were part of neoliberal deregulation and privatization development strategies. Neoliberalism stressed that private initiatives need to be liberated from all sorts of ties and supports, mainly originating from private business. Other groups, characterized under the general label *new social movements*, were greatly skeptical of established political parties and favored an entirely new egalitarian and participative order. And finally, *social networks* attempted to increase the practical quality of governance, working toward renovating education systems or improving citizen participation in general (Birle 2000, 232–234).

Robert Pinkney (2003, 102–103) sees civil society's role as very limited, stating that civil society in Latin America "extended to greater resistance to authoritarianism" but failed to develop a major role for itself once democracy had been restored. Pinkney presumes that social movements and loose groupings are suitable for resisting dictatorship but less so for the "mundane processes of sustaining democracy." In contrast, Birle highlighted the fact that, despite military dictatorship, a reduced civil society could and did still survive. Hardships under dictatorships provoked the engagement of groups that normally would not engage as civil society. Even after democratic systems were reinstalled, a growing pluralism in civil society developed, countering earlier assumptions that civil society would diminish once democracy was established.

2. Africa. The main question in Africa—as for other regions in the global south—is whether the concept of civil society is applicable in the geographical context. It must be understood that conditions for Western-type civil society (e.g., a self-confident urban citizenship that has already gained some autonomy from state structures) are mostly absent in Africa.

Among the varying positions within the literature, one states that due to colonial rule—fostering a small urban elite in African cities and oppressing a large majority of the population by leaving them as subjects of traditional despotic rulers in rural areas—Africa knows only traditional associations but has no space for a civil society that aims at participatory governance. Because this pattern largely continued in the postcolonial phase, there was no civil society of this type in Africa (Lewis 2002, 567–577; Maina 1998, 135–137). Others argue that the weak development of civil society is partly due to the generally low level of development that hinders societies to further differentiate and to offer opportunities for civil society activities (Schmidt 2000, 301).

This is reflected in skepticism over whether civil society can work in Africa in the way that Western donors expect as they try to foster democracy. Nelson Kasfir (1998) states that some concepts exclude specific “uncivil” organizations, such as ethnic and religious associations, that are important to political struggles in Africa. Moreover, organizations are usually included only if they are deemed to show “civil” behavior, conceived as being autonomous of social interests and not bound into neopatrimonial networks. This way, important elements of the public sphere in Africa become excluded by definition. Additionally, Kasfir doubts whether these kinds of independent organizations can be sustained in Africa without the support of government or foreign donors. He is skeptical as to whether the Western participatory model of competing interests in the public sphere can really be institutionalized in Africa today. He sees politics there as being dominated by neopatrimonial relations in which state officials have no need to respond to citizens’ concerns but distribute resources to their often ethnically organized clients (Kasfir 1998, 130–133).

A second viewpoint sees little problem in applying the concept of civil society to Africa and considers almost all existing nonstate actors as civil society (Harneit-Sievers 2005, 2). For example, Michael Bratton (1994) sees a role (albeit a limited one) for civil society—at least for the transition period from authoritarian to more democratic rule. He identified circumstances that have yielded various configurations of civil society and resulted in different roles in the democratization process, as shown by the cases of Kenya and Zambia in the 1990s. He distinguishes among the material dimension (economic crisis stimulates the founding of self-help groups and popular protests), the organizational dimension (the existence and nature of an organization leading the civil society movement), and the ideological dimension (the goals of civil society). The transition to democratic rule will be successful even when middle-class organizations (teachers, entrepreneurs, state employees, as well as church leaders and lawyers) leave the regime, join protests, and elaborate a shared vision for an alternative regime. Normally, after transition and with new elections, the political actors then take the leading role, and the civil society actors step back.

Bratton emphasizes that civil society exists in Africa under all regimes. In times of authoritarian rule, independent thinkers take refuge within civil society as a sphere beyond the reach of the state. Nevertheless, some politicians soon evacuate civil society and reenter political society, when circumstances permit the formation of parties. Thus, this two-way transfer—from civil to political society and back—is viewed as typical (Bratton 1994, 57; Merkel and Lauth 1998).

A third viewpoint straddles the middle, stressing the need to adapt the concept of civil society to Africa (Lewis 2002, 578–580). Africa’s civil society is seen as different from Western conceptualizations, but also as having executed similar functions (albeit in a rudimentary way). Jean-François Bayart (1986),

for example, defines civil society precisely in Western contexts—in the opposition to authoritarian states. Essentially, it is seen “as the process by which society seeks to ‘breach’ and counteract the simultaneous ‘totalization’ unleashed by the state” (Bayart 1986, 111). It then becomes necessary to look at various organizations (such as traditional associations and male youth groups) that were not acknowledged as civil society but already worked in traditional society as controllers of traditional government. Examples include elders and chiefs (Appiagyei-Atua 2002, 6). Other traditional institutions can equally be seen as cells of civil society (Harnett-Sievers 2005, 5–9).

Kasfir raises the point that some independent organizations behave aggressively and confront the state directly. He doubts whether such civic organizations will always make the state more democratic, as they could also undermine the state’s capacity to reconcile different interests. Only when political institutions are strong might an aggressive civil society serve to strengthen democracy; when weak, they might have the opposite effect (Kasfir 1998, 141).

His claim for including all voluntary organizations, instead of excluding some by definition, is joined by Mahmood Mamdani and Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (1995). They show that, in various case studies, many groups in Africa—traditional, ethnic, and/or religious—take part in or are dominated by political struggle and thus need to be included in research on civil society in order to come closer to reality and to enrich common knowledge. Some authors directly favor including groups with involuntary membership and kinship relations, although such would not be the case for Western conceptions of civil society (Lewis 2002, 578–579).

Many authors assess the impact of Africa’s civil society on democratization as very limited, because it has been fragmented and because links between civil society organizations (social self-help groups, urban intellectuals) and the formal political system are sometimes weak (Pinkney 2003, 104–105; Schmidt 2000, 321–323).

Chris Allen (1997) questions whether NGOs are really contributing to democratization as expected by donors. He seeks to show that NGOs normally have no revolutionary drive and are only able to empower people. According to this viewpoint, civil society aimed at democratization requires organizations that claim direct political reform, something that is not common in Africa.

3. Asia. In Asia, civil society has been far less discussed. This could be due in part to the presence of authoritarian regimes throughout Asian history. Additionally, Asian values are unique, thereby making the Western concept of civil society less applicable in Asia (Alagappa 2004, xii). Civil societies in Asia are highly diverse in their composition, resources, and goals. Although a rise of civil society organizations in Asia became noticeable during the 1980s, a closer look at the history demonstrates that, in many Asian countries, communal networks existed even during precolonial times (Alagappa 2004, xii). Under colonial regimes, civil society organized mostly along lines of ethnicity

and religion—thus the philanthropic engagement by Buddhist groups in Myanmar, Christian groups in the Philippines, and Muslim groups in Indonesia and Malaysia (Guan 2004, 24). The role of the church has remained central to the development of community-based organizations at the local level in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, civil society in Southeast Asia gradually organized in opposition to colonial and repressive regimes. Since then an exposure to democracy and modernity within many Southeast Asian countries penetrated the structures of family, religion, community, cultural association, caste, and class and introduced a model of association based on “rational will” (Dahal 2001a, 7). The effects of this paradigm shift have been diverse throughout Asia. In some cases (Nepal, India, China), the historical asymmetries that accumulated along lines of class, gender, and caste led civil society projects to focus on initiating social dialogue and expressing the grievances of marginalized constituencies (Howell 2004, 121–129; Dahal 2001a, 7; Chandhoke 2007, 32).

In Central Asia and the Caucasus, in contrast, civil society involvement was similar to the Eastern European model. Thus, the emergence of civil society became linked to the empowerment of dissident opposition movements to counter suppressive regimes in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Babajanian et al. 2005, 212). Later, some opposition movements even assumed a political role (Ruffin and Wanhg 1999, 27–31). In addition, civil society organizations based on the communal concept of informal ties (clan, family, neighborhood) or neopatrimonial structures continued to exist. In the case of Georgia and Armenia, the church continues to play an important role in helping nurture those ties (Babajanian et al. 2005, 214). One caution, however, is that religion also has the potential to create more tensions between the state and civil society actors.

A common strand among countries in Asia is that civil society is still not protected, as the state continues to be the central, and often the most repressive, actor in the region. Political and economic interests steered democratization toward a type of social organization that placed state institutions, special interest groups, and economic sectors into a single associated sphere. As the Asian financial crisis unfolded in the late 1990s, hopes were high for a more active civil society involvement in negotiating a distinct atmosphere for organization and discourse. Today the relationships among state, religion, social organization, and communal links in Asia remain tense. Empirical studies, however, tend to show a unique role for civil society organizations and their potential to create synergies between traditional models of association and the Western concept of civic organization.

4. The Middle East. The literature generally identifies the absence or weakness of civil society in this region to counter strong and authoritarian regimes. It also highlights the rejuvenation of NGOs. Intermediate powers and autonomous social groups are dependent on state patronage (Abootalebi 1998) in societies that have been organizing political actions along family and clan

lines for decades. Still, one can glimpse a gradual opening of political space under some authoritarian states due to increasing pressure from citizens (Norton 1995, 4–8).

One peculiarity is that civil society is differentiated between a “modern” part, in the form of human rights organizations, and the “traditional” part, in the form of Islamic movements. After September 2001, Arab human rights organizations redoubled efforts in the quest for democracy and offered, in the view of some scholars, an alternative Arab discourse on governance (Nefissa 2007, 68). Nevertheless, they tend to be elitist and lack a genuine social basis (Nefissa 2007, 70). The social mass basis is the cause celebre of Islamic movements, traditionally active in the areas of social work and charity (Melina et al. 2005), but they are less likely to tackle political issues, at least openly.

5. Global civil society. The 1990s saw an increase in NGO activities worldwide, especially in transnational NGOs and networks that placed important issues on the international agenda, launched international campaigns (e.g., on landmines and blood diamonds), and participated in key international conferences (UN 2003). Thus they advocated for and spoke on behalf of people who were neglected. International NGOs also conducted large and well-organized campaigns on development issues and presented alternative viewpoints to those of official governments and development agencies. Their involvement in the UN system has been acknowledged, and recommendations have been made for continuing relations and interactions into the future (UN 2003, 19–21).

The concept of a global civil society (Kaldor 2003) is debated intensively in the literature. Some see the debate as a reflection of globalization (Cardoso 2003), with the potential to influence the framework of global governance by promoting debate and bridging existing societal divides (Clark 2003). Critics of the global civil society tend to focus on NGOs’ lack of legitimacy, dominance by Western organizations in quantitative and qualitative terms, and (although valuing the expertise and competence of international NGOs) their claim of being “representatives of the world’s peoples” (Anderson and Rieff 2004, 35).

Civil Society in Development Cooperation

Civil society and its actors have gained an important role not only in the debate over political transition but also in the practice of development cooperation, at least from the mid-1980s. This shift is seen in voluntary agencies’ and NGOs’ increased involvement in development cooperation. And it can be attributed to the neoliberal development model (Debiel and Sticht 2005, 9) of the 1980s, which encouraged skepticism toward the state and favored privatization of state welfare and infrastructure services. Thus, NGOs took on new assignments, especially within social sectors, for which the state had theretofore been responsible. They increasingly took over operational tasks, in line

with efforts to reduce the role of the state and when state weakness became pervasive (Abiew and Keating 2004, 100–101).

A series of UN world conferences during the 1990s encouraged the formation of new NGOs and the expansion of existing ones. NGOs were presented as alternative implementers of development assistance when states and governments in partner countries were weak or poorly performing. This ascendance of NGOs was due to their perceived political independence, their flexibility, and their effectiveness in reaching beneficiaries, in contrast to bureaucratic state apparatuses. Funding of official development assistance channeled through NGOs increased from an average of US\$3.1 billion from Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in 1985–1986 to US\$7.2 billion in 2001 (Debiel and Sticht 2005, 10). Other sources mention even higher figures (Schmidt 2000, 302).

The debate regarding developing countries was similar to discourses in the industrialized world about the so-called third sector. The third sector gained considerable attention in the 1990s as it started to operate outside the confines of the state and the market, and by extension, outside government control and beyond the profit motive. Despite some heterogeneity, the entities of the third sector include the same range of nonprofit voluntary institutions as does civil society. With many common features (Salamon and Anheier 1999, 4), they provide services to members and clients (Badelt 1997, 5).

However, there are also differences between the third sector and civil society. As the third sector becomes a significant economic force, the debate centers on the types of services that can be provided and the types of organizations (Salomon and Anheier 1997, 12–19 and 20–25). In contrast, the civil society debate focuses on the political, social, and cultural effects of civil society organizations, especially for democratic development.

Against this background, the shift in funding through NGOs can be identified as strengthening the third sector to become a more efficient alternative for service delivery. This shift did not aim to support the establishment of a vibrant civil society, although such support was often identified and labeled as civil society support.

The political angle of civil society gained momentum at the beginning of the 1990s as a means to improve governance and democratization. As the cold war ended, there arose the opportunity to establish principles of good governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law—priority objectives in development cooperation. Thus, a vibrant civil society was considered an important pillar for establishing democracy, and support for it became an obvious aim of democratization (Schmidt 2000, 312). Almost all international donors mention civil society as an important factor to “influence decisions of the state” (BMZ 2005, 3), also highlighting civil society’s responsibility for a democratic state and its “dynamic role . . . in pushing for social, economic and political change” (DFID 2005a; 2001b) or stressing its role in encouraging open debates on public policy (USAID 2005; Kasfir 1998).

In practice, donors mix third sector and civil society approaches through a combination of service delivery and advocacy. Beyond noting general and positive connotations of civil society, only a few donors undertake specific tasks. The World Bank highlights advocacy, monitoring, and direct service delivery as three main functions of civil society (World Bank 2003a, 3). Other donors justify combining these tasks, given their interconnectedness. The potential of community-based organizations to advocate for the poor is enhanced by the legitimacy provided by the effective delivery of services (DFID 2001a, 5).

NGOs' involvement in development cooperation, and especially in civil society, has been widely acknowledged but also criticized (Debiel and Sticht 2005, 11). Critics point out that funding for civil society has concentrated on NGOs, that NGOs are less independent from governments, and that accountability to local people and communities is weak. A main critique is that support for civil society has been concentrated on international and national NGOs (Stewart 1997, 26) at the expense of other civil society actors that have broader membership. For example, trade unions and other mass organizations could guarantee more participation than NGOs with a very limited membership base (Bliss 2003, 198). NGO performance in democratization can also be questioned, because some NGOs are personally or institutionally tied to the government, thus making it difficult to become a counterweight to existing regimes.

Political scientists also argue that international NGOs are not as independent from donor governments as they often claim. As donors at least partly outsource the implementation of development cooperation, official and non-government aid become closely intertwined (Debiel and Sticht 2005, 12), raising doubts about the actual independence of NGOs.

The legitimacy of NGOs is also questioned, largely due to the prevailing division of labor. Funds are channeled from donor governments to northern NGOs, which then subcontract implementation to southern NGOs (Neubert 2001, 61). It has been observed that southern NGOs are accountable only to their northern counterparts rather than local constituencies. Thus, many NGOs are regarded as consultants or small businesses with purely economic interests (Bliss 2003, 198; Schmidt 2000, 306). The modern southern NGO represents a new type of organization: nonprofit, but acting like a commercial consulting firm (Neubert 2001, 63) financed by external mandates. Some critics fear that commercialization of civil society, especially the commercialization of advocacy or public policy work, discourages more legitimate local actors that are not receiving funds (Poulligny 2005, 499) from participating or becoming more active. Civic engagement is at risk of being dominated by the commercial NGOs, which in the long run weakens the development of a vibrant civil society.

Civil Society and Armed Conflict

Armed conflict has become a major factor in foreign policy and international cooperation. The following section reviews the general aspects of civil society

within situations of armed conflict. Many more details can be found in the case studies (Part 2, Chapters 5–15). Any analysis of civil society’s role must consider that armed conflict dramatically changes the lives of all people at all levels, from individual changes in attitudes and behavior (trust and confidence) over economic and social change to ultimate shifts of power relations in communities, regions, and society. This also changes the enabling environment for civil society (security, the legal situation, and law enforcement). It is virtually self-evident that “civil society . . . tends to shrink in a war situation, as the space for popular, voluntary and independent organizing diminishes” (Orjuela 2004, 59).

Deterioration of an Enabling Environment

Many case studies are available on changes in community structures, groups, and single actors due to war and conflict (Pouligny 2005, 498), although there is still a lack of empirically based research. Generally, case studies are not directly linked to the debate on civil society. Nevertheless, a few common patterns are valid in all or most contexts. The conditions necessary for civil society to develop tend to worsen due to armed conflict: physical infrastructure is destroyed, limiting the propensity for communication and exchange; state structures and institutions to which civil society addresses its activities are weakened or nonresponsive; security is low and the overall situation is characterized by complete or partial lawlessness; basic human rights are suppressed, limiting even basic civil society activities; trust disappears, and social capital beyond family, clan, or ethnic affiliation is destroyed (Stiefel 2001, 265); and free and independent media are not present or are severely restricted, depriving civil society groups of one of their main communication channels to other civil society groups, the general public, as well as government and state structures.

This deterioration of the enabling environment causes a decline of civil society activity and makes recovery after war difficult. Insecurity and fear, induced by years of civil war, hinder people from participating in even local community development, as they tend to carefully observe the new power relations after the conflict (Pearce 2005). This decline is also due to the fact that many civil society actors go into exile in times of conflict, thereby weakening the capacity of the organizations that remain, although in some cases diaspora communities remain active from afar.

“Uncivil” Sides of Civil Society

Actors adapt to the difficult environment and new power relations. Especially when the state is weak, the influence of uncivil, xenophobic, or mafia-like groups tends to become stronger (Belloni 2006, 8–9), limiting the potential influence of civil society groups working for cross-ethnic understanding. This enhances the danger that groups will develop into uncivil actors, due to conflict

and aggravated by economic decline, social stress, ubiquitous violence, and the separation of civil society along ethnic fissures (Schmidt 2003, 323–324). This is likely enhanced by peoples' natural reaction in conflict to strengthen bonds to ethnic and language groups, a protective mechanism when the state is unable or unwilling to guarantee security (Bogner 2004). Arne Strand et al. (2003, 2) confirm that civil society groups at the local level revert to “primary groupings” such as kinship, tribal, religious, and traditional political structures, as well as communities (Poulligny 2005, 498). These groups serve as coping strategies for people in response to state collapse.

Civil society groups might become instrumentalized by political elites on the basis of ethnicism, which in some cases can lead to the “decivilization” of society, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Rüb 2003, 173–201). The decay of state and other institutional structures drove people into ethnic networks that perpetrated violence against other ethnic groups. During conflict and immediately after, civil society tends to be organized along conflict lines, fostering clientelism, reinforcing societal cleavages, and hindering democratization.

Large aid inflows also affect the social fabric and power relations in and after conflict. Mary Anderson (1999, 37–53) analyzed how aid can actually do harm, inciting conflict through unintended consequences, including favoring recipients of one side, fostering intergroup conflict through unfairly distributed benefits, releasing funds for war through aid delivery, and destroying local markets.

Ambivalent Effects of Civil Society Support

There are also concerns that the dominant position of NGOs in humanitarian crises and postconflict settings (Abiew and Keating 2004, 101) will further destabilize and disempower already weak state structures. This situation might inadvertently enhance authoritarian regimes, for “soft” NGOs normally lack the power to exert pressure on regimes. Supporting civil society and rebuilding social capital are difficult under such circumstances (Coletta et al. 2000). Power struggles with conflict entrepreneurs may continue in the aftermath of war. Local authorities may contest the space of civil society (Strand et al. 2003, 20), and illegal practices can become widespread. A report analyzing civil society organizations in three conflict-affected states in Africa states that CSOs were often driven into social service delivery and away from advocacy and governance, which was also attributed to government attitudes that regard advocacy less positively compared to service provision (World Bank 2005, 10). The report also states that CSOs were sometimes exclusionary and even reinforced divisions between groups; sometimes vulnerable groups were not represented, and beneficiary participation was less widespread than commonly assumed (World Bank 2005, 13–16). Accountability of CSOs vis-à-vis local communities was seen as low, as was transparency. Because legal frameworks did not provide accountability mechanisms, some fraudulent CSOs took advantage of

this vacuum to defraud communities (World Bank 2005, 16). Furthermore, they developed higher responsiveness upward to donors rather than downward to beneficiaries (World Bank 2005, 16).

Two Different Research Approaches to Analyze Civil Society

Based on this account of civil society discourse and practice in different contexts, and in light of the relevant literature, two approaches for analyzing civil society can be identified: actor-oriented and functional.

Actor-Oriented Approaches

Actor-oriented approaches concentrate on the performance and features of civil society actors. These research designs have major shortcomings.

They often use only one civil society model (typically, inspired by one of the above-mentioned philosophers) and then examine it. However, there are many civil society models (or functions; see below) that are of equal importance; at the very least, no single approach can be prioritized. Thus, some performances of civil society might remain hidden by actor-oriented research.

Actor-oriented research often also examines only organizations with specific objectives and sometimes even specific “civil” behavior. Other organizations are—more or less arbitrarily—excluded by definition from being considered within the definition of civil society. Thus, important players are either overlooked or given short shrift, and the role of not-so-important players can actually be overestimated (Kasfir 1998, 127). This will conceal rather than explain realities. One example is the case of ethnic groupings or fundamentalist religious organizations that are excluded for reasons not made entirely transparent (Kasfir 1998) or due to the perception that they are “uncivil.” This perception stems from the requirement among some authors that civil society actors must respect the values of nonviolence and mutual tolerance to fit the criteria (Merkel and Lauth 1998, 7). This is also the case for research concentrating only on modern, urban NGOs, thereby inadvertently failing to consider traditional, rural groupings (see, e.g., DAC 2005, equating civil society with NGOs).

To exclude by definition some potential actors, and to systematically neglect functions of civil society actors that might actually play important roles, limit the findings of relevant research.

For empirical research to produce relevant findings on how civil society works within society and for political transformation, a different and much more open approach is necessary. This can be found in the functional approach.

Functional Approaches

In contrast to actor-oriented models, the functional approach concedes that various models or concepts of civil society exist, none of which is prioritized over others. The concepts can be distinguished by the function that civil society

performs. The two main authors who have elaborated functional approaches are summarized below.

Merkel and Lauth's function model. One school of thought, from German political scientists, presents a model of five specific functions of civil society. These functions are identified from research on system transformation in Eastern Europe and enriched by practical case studies on the role of civil society in different contexts (Merkel and Lauth 1998; Merkel 2000; Croissant et al. 2000; Lauth 2003). This model views civil society not as a specific historic form, but as an analytical category. This decoupling from history helps to distill the functions of civil society as they relate to democracy and to analyze different regional or cultural contexts and societal conditions. The five essential functions of civil society are:

1. *Protection.* Civil society is the social sphere beyond the state in which citizens, endowed with rights, are free to organize their lives without state interference. The state has to ensure protection of the private sphere. The task of civil society is to remind the state of this warrant and, if needed, compel the state to honor it.
2. *Intermediation between state and citizens.* Civil society must ensure a balance between central authority and social networks, a precondition for safeguarding the rule of law. This function focuses on the permanent exchange of self-organized associations with the state in order to control, limit, and influence the activities of the state.
3. *Participatory socialization.* This function stresses that civil society and associations are schools of democracy. People learn how to execute their democratic rights, even on a basic level. People will acquire the capacities of being citizens, participating in public life and developing trust, confidence, tolerance, and acceptance. This also supports the decentralization of power and the creation of solidarity among citizens, both of which act as defense mechanisms against possible attacks on freedoms.
4. *Community-building and integration.* Civil society is seen as a catalyst for civil virtues or as an antidote to individualism and retreat to family and statism. Thus, participation in social organizations helps to bridge societal cleavages, to create civil virtues, and to foster social cohesion. It also satisfies the needs of individuals to develop bonds and attachments. One precondition is that the self-organization of civil society does not take place purely under ethnic, religious, or racist premises.
5. *Communication.* Public communication is the core function of civil society in deliberative democracy models. It stresses the importance of a free public sphere, separated from the state and the economy, where people have room for debate, participation, and democratic decisionmaking.

Civil society and its associations—besides political parties and parliaments—have a major role to establish this “democratic public” and to act as watchdog. Actors of spontaneous groups, organizations, and social movements are able to articulate concerns and problems and transfer them from the private sphere to the political agenda.

Comparative empirical research has demonstrated that these five functions are not mutually exclusive but rather tend to complement one another in fostering democracy. Depending on the context, it also suggests that some functions seem to be more basic (e.g., protection), in that they are essential during the immediate phase of democratic system change. Other functions (integration) gain more importance only in the later stages of consolidating democracy (Croissant et al. 2000, 37–41). Further research is needed to see whether the internal organization of civil society groups will determine whether they are able to perform their functions not only in immediate system change but also in a consolidated democratic society. In this phase, community-building and integration usually play important roles that are seemingly difficult to achieve by organizations with undemocratic organizational setups (Lauth 2003, 225–227).

Edwards’s roles model. Michael Edwards made a similar attempt to structure the meanings of civil society. Out of the diversity of concepts offered by multiple actors regarding civil society, and “recognizing that civil society does indeed mean different things to different people” (Edwards 2004, 3), he elaborated three roles.

- Civil society as associational life. Civil society is the world of voluntary associations that act as “gene carriers” for developing values such as tolerance and cooperation. This is the central role that the “neo-Tocquevillian school” ascribes to a rich associational life (Edwards 2004, 18–36).
- Civil society as the good society. The second role sets this rich associational life in context, fostering positive norms and values and emphasizing that activities must be geared toward specific social and political goals (Edwards 2004, 37–53). By this, Edwards, like many others, excludes the “uncivil” side of civil society by definition and highlights the learning of democratic or social behavior.
- Civil society as the public sphere. The third role of civil society is to provide a public sphere wherein citizens can debate the great questions of the day and negotiate a constantly evolving sense of common good and public interest. This role is central for finding proper solutions and decisionmaking in society. It is central for civil society and crucial for

democracy to interact fairly in the public sphere. This means a willingness to cede some territory to others, to develop shared interests, and to deliberate democratically. (Edwards 2004, 54–71)

Edwards's main hypothesis is that each of these roles alone cannot achieve effective social change and other positive outcomes normally attributed to civil society. Thus, he calls for the integration or synthesis of the different roles and to consider them comprehensively when supporting civil society initiatives (Edwards 2004, 10). This will balance the weaknesses of each role with the strengths of the others. Edwards's model concurs with most of those suggested in Merkel and Lauth's model.

Additional Functions in Development Cooperation

Reviewing the models for civil society in development cooperation, we can see that much more emphasis is given to service delivery. Donors assign service delivery a higher priority under the guise of improving living conditions (SIDA 2005). This reflects the fact that the third sector approach is equated with civil society democracy discourse. Even though Edwards highlights the service provision role of NGOs in "deliberate substitution for the state" (2004, 14), democracy theory attributes no role to service delivery, seen as not directly related to democratization (Merkel and Lauth 1998, 10).

In addition, monitoring government activities, holding institutions to account, and fostering transparency and accountability (World Bank 2003a, 3) can be considered as separate functions of civil society that go unmentioned in Merkel and Lauth's model, yet they are closely related to communication and protection functions.

The other functions mentioned in the context of development cooperation can be attributed to civil society functions under Merkel and Lauth's model. Stimulating a dialogue between civil society and government (DFID 2001a, 4–5) can be equated with the intermediation function, whereas advocating on behalf of the poor and channeling the views of the people to the political system (DFID 2001b, 11) clearly belong to Merkel and Lauth's public communication function.

It is important to emphasize that civil society is considered a positive force in the development cooperation discourse. The "dark" or "uncivil" side of civil society does not seem to be considered in analysis or project design.

An Extended Functional Approach: Seven Basic Functions of Civil Society

Combining Merkel and Lauth's five functions, which already encompass those of Edwards's roles model, with two new functions contributed by development cooperation practice, a new model of civil society is achieved. This model is

composed of seven functions and enables an in-depth understanding of civil society's detailed role in political, social, and development processes. The seven functions are:

1. *Protection of citizens.* This basic function of civil society is protecting lives, freedom, and property against attacks and despotism by the state and other authorities. It is based on the work of Locke.
2. *Monitoring for accountability.* This function consists of monitoring the activities of central powers, state apparatuses, and government. This is also a way to control central authorities and hold them to account. Monitoring can refer to human rights, public spending, corruption, and primary school enrollment. The function is based on Montesquieu's separation of powers, but it is enhanced by development cooperation perspectives.
3. *Advocacy and public communication.* An important task of civil society is its ability to articulate interests—especially of marginalized groups—and to create channels of communication in order to bring them to the public agenda, thereby raising public awareness and facilitating debate. In development cooperation, this Habermasian function is described as advocacy.
4. *Socialization.* With its rich associational life, civil society contributes to the formation and practice of democratic attitudes among citizens. People learn to develop tolerance, mutual trust, and the ability to compromise through democratic procedures. Thus, democracy is ensured not only by legal institutions but also by citizens' habits.
5. *Building community.* Engagement and participation in voluntary associations also has the potential to strengthen bonds among citizens, building social capital. In cases where associations include members from other ethnic or social groups, it also bridges societal cleavages and contributes to social cohesion.
6. *Intermediation and facilitation between citizens and state.* Civil society and its organizations fulfill the role of balancing the power of, and negotiating with, the state at different levels (local, regional, national). It establishes diverse relations (communication, negotiation, control) among various interest groups or between independent institutions and the state. This role echoes the work of Montesquieu.
7. *Service delivery.* The direct provision of services to citizens is an important activity of civil society associations, such as self-help groups. Especially in cases where the state is weak, it becomes essential to provide shelter, health, and education. Although organizations executing civil society functions also provide services to members and clients, the functional model centers on *political* functions and objectives—in

contrast to the third sector debate that focuses on services and economic objectives. Thus, service delivery as a *function* is considered an entry point for other civil society functions, but this should be based on a careful assessment of whether the specific service is indeed a good entry point for those objectives.

Comparing the two main approaches, the functional model (more so than the actor-oriented model) is conducive to developing an in-depth analysis and understanding of civil society's influence. The functional approach comprises all potential civil society actors, including nonurban, religious, and ethnic organizations, as well as actors belonging to other sectors (e.g., business) but sometimes playing a civil society role (e.g., the business association making a political demand on the government). Breaking down activities by function takes into account the performance of other actors; it also adds detail and depth of knowledge. And it enables cross-country comparisons due to the fact that functions can be more easily compared than actors in different contexts.

Limitations and Clarifications of the Functional Model

The scope of civil society functions. Constructive civil society functions are not exclusively provided by civil society actors. They are also provided by other actors in society. Protection, for example, should be primarily provided by the state, the judiciary, and law enforcement authorities. Yet, democratic attitudes are also learned in voluntary associations, as well as in the classroom, family, and community. Additionally, public communication is organized by an independent and diverse media, an actor belonging to the economic sector or the state; civil society usually provides only small contributions.

“Uncivil” or bad civil society actors. Although Merkel and Lauth require that civil society needs to be civil—thereby excluding groups that show uncivil behavior—the functional model includes “uncivil” actors and tries to identify constructive as well as destructive performances.

Obviously, many civil society actors might not fulfill one or more of the constructive functions, but instead develop uncivil behaviors, such as preaching hatred against others, being violent, and destroying life and property. Associations and organizations can be destructive, but they can also have integrative and disintegrative potential. On-the-ground knowledge and sound analysis are required to determine the nature of actors and the functions they perform. Roberto Belloni (2006, 8–10) provides a range of examples from Africa, Sri Lanka, and Northern Ireland in which civil society actors focused only on strengthening their bonding ties, based on a sense of belonging and kinship that were later channeled destructively. He presumes that the less bridging ties are

built, the more likely it is that influence is to be detrimental. Although additional research is needed on the conditions under which civil society organizations act positively and negatively, it is important to keep in mind the potential for detrimental effects.

The discussion and emphasis on civility are akin to Putnam's distinction between good (or positive) and bad (or negative) social capital. Good social capital is built when associations develop strong bridging ties—such as including members from other ethnic or social groupings—whereas bad social capital is characterized only by bonding ties or strong inward social capital. Such social capital is usually evident when only members from the same ethnic or social grouping are included. They are more inclined to act violently against others in comparison to associations that have stronger bridging ties (Putnam 2000, 22–23).

The role of civil society toward the state and within society. The constructive civil society functions do not describe the enabling environment in which they operate. However, it is clear that civil society should not replace the state and other actors within political society. Rather, it should improve the interplay of citizens with the state and achieve a greater level of effectiveness and responsiveness for state institutions (Croissant et al. 2000, 17; Merkel and Lauth 1998, 7; Kumar 1993). Thus, especially when the state is fragile or authoritarian, external support may need to focus, at least initially, on improving the enabling environment for civil society. This might encompass capacity-building for state structures and enforcement of the rule of law.

Service delivery as an entry point. The above-mentioned functions aim to improve the interplay between political and economic systems and the people, thus ensuring democratic, participatory decisionmaking in society. Thus, service delivery is only seen as a function in its own right when used as an entry point for political civil society functions, which in any event should be based on a careful assessment of whether the service is indeed a good entry point for wider functions and objectives.

* * *

This chapter summarizes the history of the concept of civil society, as well as the debates on civil society in various contexts, mainly political transition, development cooperation, and violent conflict. It distilled the main approaches for analyzing and understanding civil society. On this basis, the chapter elaborates on an extended functional approach that captures the different meanings of civil society in one model for conducting empirical research on civil society's contribution for different purposes.

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