IN SEARCH OF GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY: A CRITICAL EXPLORATION

by

Maliha Chishti

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Adult Education, Community Development,
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Ontario Institute for the Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

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Degree of Master of Arts, 2000
Maliha Chishti
Department of Adult Education, Community Development, and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for the Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

This study explores and critically examines the global civil society construct. In this period of economic globalization, there is tremendous optimism that non-state actors, such as transnational social movements, can take a leading role in representing the world's poor and marginalized to challenge the existing structures of oppression and exploitation. This study explores the diverse and contending meanings of global civil society, and argues against any attempts to advance a simplistic, uncritical adoption of the term. In contrast, this study contends that the global civil society construct is fraught with ambiguity, contradictions, biases, gaps and euro-centric assumptions. Hence, although there is a need to make sense of the changing landscape of international politics, this study reveals that global civil society is a more problematic, than useful construct to employ, in order to explain and explore the processes of international activism and resistance to globalization.
# IN SEARCH OF GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY: A CRITICAL EXPLORATION

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INTRODUCTION

"Seattle will be remembered for a lot of things....My hope is that it will also be remembered as a watershed event - a time and place where "we the people" confronted dysfunctional and oppressive global institutions with new ideas and new energy. I hope I will be able to look back someday soon and be able to say that this battle in Seattle helped jolt the world onto a new path, one leading towards a just and truly sustainable system of global governance and world peace" Mark Ritchie

On the morning of November 30 1999, as government officials from 135 nations attempted to meet at the largest gathering ever of corporate executives .... they had difficulty getting to the front door. Between 50-100,000 demonstrators from across North America and parts of the Third World assembled on the streets of Seattle, Washington to disrupt the exclusive millennium trade talks of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Ritchie, 1999). Considered the most aggressive and anti-democratic of intergovernmental organizations to ever emerge in recent history (Schechter, 1999), many activists were not surprised that it single-handedly provoked the most impressive demonstration in the U.S in well over thirty years. The WTO is one of the leading forces behind economic globalization, exercising power over elected governments by ruling as “illegal” any law that violates the global capitalist agenda. Their rulings are diligently enforced, as “disobedient” governments are punished with fines (hundreds of millions of dollars) and by severe trade sanctions. On the agenda of this Third Ministerial meeting was the expansion of corporate control over public services (health, transportation, education etc), "intellectual property", the world's forests and native use of medicinal plants. It is no secret that the negotiation process is undemocratic both "inside" the organization, as Third

1 This is taken from an article by Mark Ritchie (1999) “Beyond Seattle” taken from WTO in Action at
World governments are repeatedly peripheralized, and "outside" as citizen groups and other
non-governmental groups are excluded from participation, even as observers. Nevertheless,
a spectrum of groups and individuals - unionists and environmentalists, human rights
activists and religious groups, concerned citizens, farmers and industrial workers -
congregated outside the conference venue determined to oppose, curtail, or better yet, close
down the new round of international trade rules by the WTO. The demonstrations in Seattle
were paralleled with protests in many other parts of the world: India, Chile, Guatemala,
Philippines, Malaysia, Brazil, France and England. People expressed their anger and
frustration towards the WTO - accused of building a corporate empire, and derailing
democracy, social justice and peace in the process (Ritchie, 1999).

It is the impetus behind the protests in Seattle, resistance to the forces of economic
globalization, that serves as the catalyst for this study. Every region in the world is
currently locked in the path of neo-liberal capitalist economic growth, and the concomitant
social, environmental and political realities that exist as a result (Power, 1997). The
increasing levels of social and economic polarization continue to perpetuate the tremendous
schism in the human community, as extremes of affluence, over-consumption and over-
production are paralleled by concentrations of poverty, and scarcity in the majority world.
The race to integrate national economies into a "global village" further despoils the
environment, reinforces the inequities along gender, race, caste and class lines. Further,
globalization forges an imbalance among different human needs by privileging the
acquisition of material wealth over human and spiritual values (Sen, 1997)

http://www.wtowatch.org
In the wake of globalization, I am interested in the paths and forms of resistance that will disrupt, if not completely dismantle, the ensuing agenda of neo-liberalism. What is needed to challenge this violent and powerfully pervasive force that systematically penetrates and denigrates the people, cultures and environments that come in its way? Many considered the WTO protests as opening a new chapter in democratic global governance, while others point out the marginal impact of social movements since they are ultimately excluded from the critical decision-making process. Irrespective of what many conclude, there is an acknowledgment that the events at Seattle signify the growing presence and activism of international social movements, unprecedented in world history. Increasingly, the discussions to explore and make sense of these interactions are being framed from the context of global civil society. The construct claims the potential ascendancy of these transnational social movements, to re-map and re-configure the global political process by broadening the channels of participation for non-state intervention in global decision-making.

My interest in centering a discussion on global civil society is therefore rooted in the notion that what is happening in the world today is so tightly controlled, structured and pervasive, that perhaps only a truly global counter hegemonic force made up of diverse social actors from around the world - with strong interconnecting local, national and international links - can serve to disrupt it. I am interested in the possibilities, opportunities and spaces that can exist and be created for global transformative change. Increasingly the role of non-state actors organizing for political, social and economic changes in the landscape of international politics is seen as promising. In fact, just as nation states emerged as the central actors of the twentieth century, it has been stated that these international
social movement organizations with their increased visibility, activity and advocacy will stir what Salamon (1993) refers to as an “associational revolution”\(^2\) (pg.1). These large, formal and structured movements claim a global constituency, and routinely intervene at the national, intergovernmental and transgovernmental level seeking to challenge and influence policies and procedures. Ronnie Lipshutz (1992), a leading advocate for global civil society, insists that they are a force, “to be reckoned with in a way that has not been the case since the medieval period”. There is tremendous optimism in the embrace of global civil society, seen as a viable and potent force that can aggregate the concerns of people from around the world, and in this process democratize world polity, so that it is ultimately responsive and reflective of the needs of the poor and marginalized. In this pursuit, Laura Macdonald (1994) insists the construct of global civil society is an important innovation in this period of history, because it opens up theoretical space for addressing the “democratic deficit” within the current world order.

Yet the theoretical elaboration of what constitutes a global civil society has not been the focus of much scholarly intrigue and investigation. Although both the disciplines of international relations and sociology make valuable contributions to the theoretical understanding of non-state actors in international politics, they correspondingly, each suffer limitations. Scholars of international relations consider the activities of transnational social movements as a mere sideshow of international politics, whereas a more determined emphasis remains on the role and actions of nation-states. As Scott Turner (1998) admits, this persistent state-centric focus has lead to the dearth of adequate theoretical analysis of the international processes and exchanges that make up a global civil society. A similar

\(^2\) Taken from Edwards & Hulme (1997) pg.275
neglect can be found in sociology, as the behaviour of social movements are predominantly studied within specific countries and societies, not transnationally (Smith et al, 1997).

Therefore, by employing the concept of global civil society, scholars insist it allows for a demanding standard to be set to conceptualize transnational political processes, particularly against the dominant realist view of the (un-theorized) nation-state as the primary actor in international politics. As Scott Turner (1998:29) clarifies:

"the emergence of global civil society demands not only the re-evaluation and possible revision of realism’s empirical claims; more fundamentally, it challenges the paradigm’s ideological underpinnings that often masquerade as objective truth...(the concept) suggests the need for a revised theory of governance that is more sensitive to the dynamics of contemporary globalization". (1998:28-29)

I argue that the current phenomena of non-state international operations and the recent embrace of the global civil society construct warrants closer examination. This study does not intend to infer that a global civil society is desirable, that it already exists and is fully functional, or even to suggest that based on the current organization of the international state system, a politically effective global civil society is even possible. I do contend that by situating this concept within an appropriate and much needed theoretical framework, it allows for the critique, evaluation and analysis of the term and the nuances associated with it. Although I am in support of the opportunities and spaces that can exist and be created by global civic engagement for systemic change; I believe that an uncritical acceptance and endorsement of the global civil society construct is problematic. This study will reveal that the term is fraught with ambiguity, contradictions, biases, gaps and euro-centric assumptions, that are rarely taken up by scholars. Hence, my critique of global civil society stems from various questions: What are the various motives and intentions behind
the sudden embrace of global civil society? Who is defining the construct? How does the historical location of the term effect its global relevance and applicability? Which groups are included and excluded? What are the biases, gaps and assumptions behind the construct? Whose agenda is served, what issues are prioritized? What is the political infrastructure required to sustain global civic participation? How is global civil society supposed to function in a state-centric environment? What is the role of multilateral institutions? Does global civil society truly represent the interests of both the North and South, in other words how global is global civil society? How does the construct address the issue of power and issues of global inequities and access to resources? What are the tensions and contradictions amongst actors in global civil society? Is there legitimacy for these movements at the grassroots? How relevant is international activism to local needs and priorities?

There is a tendency among many theorists to deny the significance of these issues, and blindly submit to the “universal altruistic” project of global civil society instead. This romanticized image of the construct as a people empowered panacea to globalization, is reinforced by sweeping assumptions of the term’s emancipatory potential, and only token inclusion of any discrepancies, gaps and contradictions (see Liphshutz 1992, Falk 1999, Clarke et al 1998). Hence, engaging in a project to critique and challenge global civil society is resisted by liberals, considering it as counter-productive or an attack on “well-intentioned” efforts. This study makes a case against the premature celebration of global solidarity and any attempts to advance a simplistic, haphazard adoption of the global civil society construct. It stresses the importance of incorporating concrete and critical analysis, particularly since the term silences other alternative and competing perspectives to explain
resistance and transformative change (see Mamdani 1995, Tripp 1994). This study will project an integrative critical approach to understanding global civil society. In doing so, my objective is to reveal that global civil society is a more problematic than useful construct to explain and explore the processes of international activism and resistance to globalization. This standpoint will be supported by four salient themes advanced in this study: First, the theoretical assumptions and underpinnings of global civil society emanates from the parochial euro-centric understanding of domestic civil society. Within classical political theory, civil society is understood as a tenuous, ambiguous and contradictory concept, only to be replicated in a global context (see Diamond 1994, Woods 1990). Further, by situating the term within its historical location, it is possible to then unmask some of the implicit and other explicit biases and meanings. For example, civil society within western liberal understanding only refers to the activities of formal organized actors that overtly seek to mend/influence state power. Hence, informal, sporadic and localized efforts and networks - that generally characterize the types of associational activity prevalent in the Third World - are assumed to be traditional, “non-strategic activities” that fall outside the scope of theoretical interest and investigation (see Tripp 1994). By incorporating an anti-colonial critique, the implications for transposing this euro-centric term to explain resistance efforts in non-western societies will be examined.

Secondly, I consider global civil society to have a “schizophrenic” character, whereby there are two simultaneous - yet antagonistic - agendas of the construct. From a domestic context, Antonio Gramsci clarifies it as the double meaning of civil society: one that sustains the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, and the other as an emancipatory struggle to resist it. That is to say, civil society is a pluralistic arena for all non-state actors to advance
their agendas; transnational corporations aiming to monopolize and exploit world resources are not differentiated from social movements challenging their activities (see Cox 1999). From this context, although liberal and post-Marxist endorsements of global civil society often focus on its emancipatory potential as a counter-hegemonic force, I echo Mustapha Kamal Pasha’s (1996) thoughts that the idea of global civil society was born as a liberal recasting of world politics and actually facilitates the process of globalization, more so, then as a counter hegemonic force to resist it. To substantiate this position, I draw on examples of the effective political leverage transnational corporations exert in global politics (with the WTO, and UN for example), relative to social movements.

Thirdly, following the former contention, I argue that the liberal perspective on the role and activities of global civic actors vis-a-vis nation states further lends support to the international capitalist agenda. Neo-liberal economic policies deliberately weaken the Third World state’s ability to meet even the basic survival needs of its citizens (health, education, shelter etc). Therefore, the increasing gap-filling agenda of international NGOs, in particular, is encouraged and promoted by liberals to overcome state “ incompetence” and “inefficiency” and consequently “soften” the impact of neo-liberal directives (see Schmitz & Hutchful 1992, Pasha 1996, Mkandawire & Olukoshi 1995). International non-state actors offer a safety cushion to mollify social unrest, hence ensuring the continuity of these economic policies with little disturbance.

And finally, the activities of transnational social movements, as lead actors of global civil society, illustrates the pragmatic shortcomings of the global civil society ideal. By not prioritizing issues of power imbalances, resource inequities and North-South ideological and political tensions, the “globality” of global civil society and transnational activism is
questioned. It will become evident that the agendas and issues prioritized on the international agenda mirror the interests of the North, despite the rhetoric of global solidarity. Further, Northern movements due to having greater access to funding are able to create transnational links as opposed to Southern movements, and hence, more readily meet the minimal requirements to formally engage multilateral institutions like the UN (see Clarke et al 1998, Keck & Sikkink 1998).

To develop this argument this study will be organized in the following manner: Chapter one sets out to establish a historical and conceptual anchor to the term civil society, by overviewing the dominant strand of liberal theorizing. A post-Marxist critique exposing the capitalist project of civil society will be highlighted, juxtaposed to Antonio Gramsci’s support of its counter-hegemonic potential. In order to expose the euro-centric assumptions, biases and shortcomings, an anti-colonial framework will be advanced emphasizing the difficulties and inadequacies involved in the use of the term to discuss the realm of resistance efforts in non-western contexts; Chapter two overviews the impact and effects of globalization in the world, focusing on the social and political implications of the “weakened” state. This discussion contextualizes the popular revival of (global) civil society within this period of neo-liberal hegemony, examining the interplay between states and non-state actors; Chapter three proceeds to construct a theoretical framework for global civil society within the new multilateralist perspective in international relations theory. New multilateralism offers theoretical space to re-conceptualize non-state political participation in global governance, re-casting the pivotal role of multilateral institutions like the UN to strengthen civic participation. Critical perspectives introduced in the first two chapters will be extended to interrogate the global civil society construct, surfacing the constraints and
limitations of the term; Lastly, chapter four will focus on transnational social movement operations, as lead actors in global civil society. This discussion will incorporate conceptual tools of social movement theory to contextualize and evaluate movement behaviours. The claim to global representation will be questioned, pointing to the salience of North-South tensions, power imbalances and resource inequities. Finally, the conclusion of this study will revisit the salient issues and themes surfaced throughout the study, with concluding remarks for future theorizing on global civil society, and the political project for transformative change in this period of neo-liberal transnational hegemony.
CHAPTER 1
CIVIL SOCIETY: HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION

"Political concepts are historical artifacts constantly shaped and reshaped in the course of political controversy. There is no way to extract a single core meaning out of the different historical and polemical contexts in which the concept of civil society has been employed" (Schmitt 1996, pg. 21)

The term civil society remains a highly elusive and evolving concept that has consistently undergone theoretical revisions, elaboration's and modifications over time (Lewis, 1992). It is for the most part an ambiguous and fluid construct, that has been taken up and molded into the ideological constructions of both the left and right. The term civil society is as contested and nebulous as the social and political institutions it purports to describe. While there is agreement that the sphere of civil society resides somewhere in between the individual and the state, there is no consensus as to what the proper role of civil society is or ought to be, who is included and excluded, the roles and responsibilities of its members, and their interactions with both the state and market (Woods, 1990). Civil society is indeed a term fraught with complexity and ambiguity, yet it continues to be popularly embraced in academic and activist circles, with its most recent revival attached to a global perspective. The first part of this chapter will explore the predominant strand of theorizing on civil society, situated in a liberal-pluralist framework. This most prevalent approach strongly emphasizes the democracy project of civil society, outlining the importance of autonomy from state, advocacy roles and plurality in presence and opinions. As will be outlined, this approach, however, is contentiously linked to market interests and associated as the realm of the bourgeoisie. The next section will explore the post-Marxist endorsement
of civil society, as a sphere for resistance and transformative change. Although post-Marxists the capitalist project embedded in the fabric of civil society, they do not entirely reject the use of the construct. It is here where the “schizophrenic” character of civil society will be introduced, drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s understanding of civil society as sustaining capitalist hegemony, and also resisting it. By presenting this perspective, post-Marxists have instigated some of the growing popularity of global civil society from leftist circles. Discussions are framed in exploring the potential for a counter-hegemonic social force to emerge, capable of transformation and the attainment of alternative, more equitable and just forms of social order (Cox, 1999). The final section will move to an anti-colonial perspective questioning the appropriateness and relevance of using this Euro-centric term to describe the realm of resistance efforts in non-western societies. This section will be complemented with a brief inclusion of the myriad forms of “other” resistance and political struggle occurring in societies, that are typically excluded from the dictates of civil society discourse.

1.1 LIBERAL-PLURALIST PERSPECTIVE ON CIVIL SOCIETY

In order to explore recent theorizing of civil society from a liberal-pluralist perspective, a brief overview of the historical emergence of the term proves necessary. The term civil society needs to be situated in Euro-American political thought, as it entered western use in the Latin translation for Aristotle’s politike koinonia. Civil society has a vast history in western political writings and can be traced to classical antiquity among the ancient Romans and Greeks (Foley and Edwards, 1998). These early notions, however, understood civil society as synonymous with the state or political society. Civil society
referred to a community of citizens who regulated their relationships and settled disputes according to a system of law. As Paul Wapner (1997) more specifically explains:

“the idea of civil society originated in an attempt to articulate the experience of living as a citizen in a well-ordered community. Civil society denoted lawfulness, in both the legal and social senses, in contrast to the capriciousness of human communal life at large” (pg.68)

It is possible, nonetheless, even from this earlier understanding of the term to detect the beginnings of a conceptual separation between state and civil society. In Roman law, for example, Woods (1990) noted that a terrain of human association was increasingly accepted as distinct and independent of the states’ authority. But it was not until the eighteenth century - the period of European Enlightenment - that civil society was more clearly distinguished from the state and discussions on its role and functions were gaining momentum. Hegel’s definitional contributions in this period were of particular significance, signaling a clear point of departure from earlier understandings. He was the first to articulate the character of civil society in dialectical relation to the state, consolidating an analytical distinction between the two separate spheres of state and civil society (Wapner, 1997). For Hegel then, civil society was demarcated as a realm where people pursued multiple, private and particular interests that were often competing and divisive. The state, in contrast, had to organize these diverse energies and interests of civil society in order to promote the general good. That is to say, Hegel envisioned common good to arise in society (at large) by the interactions between state and society, as the state, being the embodiment of “universal” interests, would keep the “particular” and often competing interests of social groups in check (Mamdani 1995, Wapner 1997 and Cox 1999).
It was Hegel’s basic analytical separation between state and civil society, that was cemented in subsequent writings, although the details in content assumed different emphases over time. In fact, as political discussions over the term entered the twentieth century, a rich spectrum of ideas and debates surfaced from all parts of the world. Theorists began to employ diverse, competing and even contradictory understandings to the term (Macdonald, 1999). The broadest definition in recent writings reflects a liberal-pluralist understanding as a network of organized groups and institutions through which people in general represent their needs, demands and interests both to each other, as well as to the state (Shaw, 1994). With little more specificity, Larry Diamond (1994) proposes a more popular definition of civil society as:

“the realm of organized social life that is ... self-generating, self supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules...It is distinct from society in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, and ideas exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state....”(pg.5)

Supporting this popular definition, Michael Bratton (1994) stresses the “public” realm of civil society, as situated between the state and the family, whereby the intentions of individuals are to join with others to pursue shared goals in institutional “commons” outside the boundaries of their households. A wide range of social actors are thus included within the realm of civil society, such as cultural and religious institutions (e.g. churches), educative groups, interest based groups (e.g. professional societies), development organizations, issue oriented movements (e.g. women’s rights groups, environmental movements), civic organizations and hospitals etc. In the dominant liberal-pluralist perspective, then, civil society is explicitly distinguished as an autonomous arena outside
the state, whereby individual citizens engage in political participation with their involvement in a spectrum of these diverse associations (Wapner, 1997). This liberal-pluralist understanding encourages pluralism and diversity of social actors, so long as they maintain a healthy distance from the “protruding hands” of the state and operate to structurally obstruct its domineering authority (Diamond, 1994).

Following Hegel, the dichotomy established by liberal-pluralists between state and civil society marks the latter as the “benevolent” and “altruistic” force needed to check state oppression, procure greater accountability as well as to actively influence and reform the state in the interests of their members (Diamond, 1994). Opposition and confrontation to the state, therefore, are the key defining characteristics of a civil society in liberal-pluralists theory. This is largely due to the primacy accorded to the democracy project of civil society. In liberal democratic theory, the competing interests of civil actors is construed as one of the key guarantors to achieve a healthy democracy, alongside their work to monitor and restrain the exercise and power of states, and deepen policy accountability. The presence and interactions of these multiple social actors in the institutional environment, in the end provides an alternative structure to the monopolies of the state (Bratton, 1990).

This democratization project of civil society is linked to the influential writings of Alexis de Tocqueville in the 19th century, and his observations of the rich associational life flourishing in American society. Tocqueville observed how various associations spontaneously formed by people were not only for the achievement of common purposes, but simultaneously functioned to constrain the arbitrary and intrusive powers of the state (Cox, 1999). Tocqueville extolled the merits of the “habit of associations”, and was among the leading theorists to make popular the spirit of voluntary movements as democratizing
agents in society. In neo-Tocquevillian writings, therefore, organizations within civil society are considered “schools of democracy” who must seek to promote and strengthen democratic mores, by “giving voice to and acting on people’s concerns...(in order to) destabilize political and governmental authority “(Foley & Edwards 1996, pg.12).

According to Harry Blair (1992) actors in civil society must directly support this agenda for democracy by widening participation in two ways: facilitating a constant flow of citizen inputs to the state (responsible for gathering the needs and wants of people and directing them to the state’s attention); and fostering pluralist competition by encouraging all groups to press their agendas on the state for reform and change. In this context, Bayart (1986) insists that civil society, therefore, must exist in relation to the state in so far as it is always in confrontation with it.

Stephen Ndegwa (1994) identifies the preceding relationship as the “satanic” state - “angelic” civil society binary, prevalent in liberal-pluralist thinking. He traces the revival of this understanding to the writings of political theorists in the 1970s and 80s in response to communism in East Europe and the military and authoritarian regimes resisted by citizen based groups in Latin America. Within this context, civil society intrinsically operates against and contrary to the state, as their alignment with the poor and oppressed warrants it. Foley and Edwards (1996) add “not just to perform vital public functions autonomous of the state but to defend social autonomy and promote policy change ....resist... and in extreme cases ....promote regime change”(pg.14). Social movement organizations and development NGOs are identified as the vanguard of this democratic struggle. David Cohen (1994) stresses the three principle roles of education, watchdog and advocacy of these essential organizations to maximize their roles in civil society. It is suggested that they need
to be oriented in such a way in order to: freely lobby legislators, expose illegal activities and human rights abuses, pursue class action in the courts, stage demonstrations and promote letter writing campaigns (Quizon, 1995). By engaging in these overtly political activities, social movement organizations are able to create power centers outside of the state which can pressure for structural change and the eventual democratization of the political system.

Not surprisingly this liberal project to spread democracy is largely financed and supported by donors and international financial agencies. As Hutchful (1995) points out, promoting democracy abroad has been a strategic and ideological foreign policy imperative for some time by the US, UK and Canada. Canada has joined other donors in affirming the importance of democratic values in civil society, indicating political conditionality will apply to aid relationships. NGOs, for example, are now persuaded to expand their traditional role of service provision by inculcating the ideals of “civic empowerment”, “democratic culture” and “promoting good governance” into their practice (Cohen 1994, pg.5). In this way, the liberal-pluralist agenda for civil society, widely absorbed in international policy, stresses a distance to remain between civil society and the state in order to facilitate the important functions of promoting accountability, citizen empowerment, institutional development, policy advocacy, and developing strong democratic institutions that serve to check the powers of the state (Riker, 1995). With this strengthening, liberal-pluralists are confident that civil society can eventually become an active and independent force for social and political change within their domestic countries.

This liberal-pluralists understanding of state-civil society relations remains the dominant paradigm adopted in international policy directives, and similarly occupies
considerable discursive space in academic writing about civil society. However, this predominant perspective (advanced by scholars such as Bratton 1990, Chazan 1992, Diamond 1994, Bayart 1986) contains contradictions and discrepancies that are generally overlooked, with even more questions consistently left unanswered. For example, liberal theorists rarely take up the discussion of internal power dynamics, contentions and conflicts within civil society. Is it assumed that civil society is a politically unitary entity? Do not the differences within pose problems in achieving the “common” good advanced by Hegel? Which voices are advanced to promote reform and structural change, and which voices are silenced? More intriguing, but equally ambiguous, is the correlation of civil society as “naturally” promoting a healthy democracy by its mere presence. What does a healthy democracy look like? What kind of democracy is promoted? And can Third World civil societies really promote democracy within their countries that operate in an undemocratic and hierarchical world order? What about a discussion on power? How and where does the power to resist and change the regime come from? Do domestic civil societies really have that capacity to challenge/democratize the state in the absence of foreign (financial and political) approbation? What are the conditions and mechanisms that allow civil society to actually hold the state accountable and check its power? And can all social movements really do this, or want to do this? Is it always the function of these groups to work in confrontation to the state? Does there not have to be a favourable climate (absence of war, authoritarianism) to even engage the state? Does not civil society require political agency and is the state not an indispensable agent in this process?

Some of these issues are raised by a handful of scholars. Mustapha Kamal Pasha (1996), for example, argues that civil society itself is the site of the reproduction of statist
projects, and despite its analytical separation, the construct shows the imprints of the historical constitution of the state. He adds, “as a moment of the modern state, with its complex structures and practices, civil society is fully implicated in how the state constructs the social world” (pg.639). Pasha (1996) explicates Gramsci’s views on state power, as maintained not just through the formal organizations of the “political society” (that is, government, political parties, military), but also through the many institutions of civil society. Civil society is viewed as a sphere of indirect domination by the dominant class claiming to represent “universal” interests, or in Gramsci’s words, “hegemony protected by the armor of coercion” (Macdonald 1997, pg.284). Likewise, Post-Marxists also share this critical perspective of civil society, questioning the hint of “moral superiority” attached to the operations of civil society. They contend, civil society is a terrain for potential exploitation, discrimination and oppression, and in many instances, construe it as stifling - not advancing the democratic process. Macdonald (1997) lends to this point, by mentioning the situation of civil society in Guatemala as a site for the elite to influence the state and preclude measures such as land reform, and the redistribution of resources from the rich to the poor. The Central American Monitoring Groups, for example, in their study of civil society actors in Guatemala conclude:

“In the Guatemalan context...it becomes clear that there is nothing intrinsically pro-democratic in “strengthening civil society” as a whole. Most Guatemalans are either outside civil society, or tenaciously on its margins, their more active participation deterred by structural...barriers. Moreover, many elements of civil society are opposed to the democratic participation of all sectors, and some continue to actively impede such participation of all sectors”

(Macdonald, 1997, pg.20)
Similarly, challenges to the liberal-pluralist orthodoxy are put forth by Stephen Ndegwa (1994) in his insistence that civil society is not necessarily predisposed to challenging the state nor to democratizing it. He cites the example of many indigenous social movements and NGOs in Africa seeking collaborative alliances with the state in order to collectively address the overwhelming issues confronting the continent in the wake of global neo-liberalist economic policies. Bratton (1989) too acknowledges that many civil society actors often work in collaboration with the government, opting to coexist peacefully with the state by making special efforts to declare loyalty to the nation by drawing attention to the congruence between public and voluntary sector goals. This contention does not consider it a weakening of civil society if social actors take on this supportive and at times complementary role vis-à-vis government, but as Ndegwa (1994) suggests, offers another perspective to the dominant liberal state-civil society thesis. By addressing these variants, this is not to skirt the democracy agenda of civil society, but rather, to counter-pose the argument that the promotion of democracy only occurs when civil actors are at a distance and in conflict with the state. In contrast, it is argued that by insisting on the strategic role of supporting the state, civil society can seek new and different ways to democratize the political structures and institutions. As a latter discussion on globalization will show, civil societies in the South are increasingly aiming to strengthen the Third World state in the face of economic liberalization, claiming a strong state is needed for sustaining their activities and promoting justice and equity within their territories. It is important to note, this is not to suggest that civil society must therefore become close allies of the state either, as issues of coercion and corruption are warranted. Similarly, one must question whether the state is really interested in cooperating and being attentive to the needs or demands of civil society.
actors; Third World states are increasing their efforts to have access/influence on funding, as well as to monitor and regulate NGO activities (Cohen, 1994). Nevertheless, what should be stressed is the parochial tendency in liberal understanding to preclude a wider spectrum of understanding and conceptualizing state-civil society relations.

Undoubtedly, a major oversight in liberal writings is the ambiguous presence of the market in civil society. As mentioned earlier, within the non-state sphere of civil society, ostensibly wired to promote the “good” society, everything from NGOs, to community voluntary associations and even the economic system of capitalism is conveniently attached. As Woods (1990) mentions, “civil society can serve as a code word or cover for capitalism, and the market can be lumped together with other less ambiguous goods like political and intellectual liberties as an unequivocally desirable goal” (pg. 65). Gordon Christenson (1997), emphatically defends the inclusion of private market exchanges within the domain of civil society, insisting they are in constant tension with government, and are better able to check excesses of each other in civil society and the government. Moreover, he adds that by linking the market with the state and not civil society, we are returning to a, “preindustrial, prepolitical, agrarian communitarian view of life….Post industrial technological advance is our destiny” (pg. 730).

In fact as Mahmood Mamdani (1995) indicates, historically the birth of civil society was itself the product of a transition to capitalism. Both Hegel and Adam Smith equated civil society almost exclusively with bourgeois society: Hegel often used the two terms interchangeably (see Cox 1999, Ellen Meiksins Woods 1990). It was framed as embodying a space in between the public and private; comprised as a network of distinctively economic relations, or as Wood (1990) remarks, “the space of the market
place, the arena of production, distribution and exchange” (pg.61). As will be discussed shortly, this perspective is important in discussing the current neo-liberal embrace of global civil society. The early usages of the term civil society rests in the birthplace of capitalist endeavors, whereby there was a confluence of civil society and the state representing the subordination of the state to the community of private-property holders. In Hegel’s writing on civil society, the modern “economy” was its essential condition. Woods (1990) expands on this point,

“For Hegel, the possibility of preserving both individual freedom and the ‘universality’ of the state, instead of subordinating one to the other as earlier societies had done, rested on the emergence of a new class and a whole new sphere of social existence: a distinct and autonomous economy. It was in this new sphere that private and public, particular and universal, could meet through the interaction of private interests, on a terrain which was neither household nor state but a mediation between the two (pg.62)

As mentioned earlier, Hegel envisioned the state to organize the diverse interests of civil society in order to reach the common good to benefit everyone. This idealism was precisely what Karl Marx harshly criticized (Mamdani 1995, Cox 1999). For Marx, the capitalist state has no interest in juggling the diverse interests within civil society because it selectively reinforces certain interests and undermines others - ultimately cementing the power of the ruling class (Hann, 1996). Marx perceived civil society as the ensemble of contractual relations embedded in the market, and the agency that defines and directs civil society is no other than the bourgeoisie. Curiously, the neo-liberal penchant for (global) civil society in the wake of globalization is a historically accurate pledge. The promotion of a market based order, private capital and the push for other multiple and contending non-state agents in the decision making process, coincides with the liberal advocacy to
overcome the conceit of the state and its natural propensity for inefficiency and corruption (Pasha, 1996). The following post-Marxist critique builds on the salient points of this discussion.

1.2 POST-MARXIST CRITIQUE

The previous discussion outlined some of the liberal uses and abuses of civil society to advance the universalist project for capitalism and democracy. Hence, it is perhaps easy to dismiss the concept altogether as too close to the history and mandate of liberalism, therefore, providing a dubious ground to pitch the tents about any discussion on the transformatory potential of civil society. Although the genesis of the term and its historical elaboration are indeed closely linked to this liberal-pluralist paradigm, it most certainly is not exclusive to it. For many interested in emancipatory politics and the struggle for systemic social change, civil society – although maintains the existing elitist social order - can also facilitate a new and different social order. This revival and embrace of civil society as a realm for emancipatory politics is once again still closely affiliated in western political thought, this time being waged from the left in the work of Antonio Gramsci (Cox, 1999).

As noted earlier, Gramsci presented two understandings of civil society: one recognizing the role civil society plays in sustaining the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, but also, one on which an emancipatory counter-hegemony could be constructed (Cox, 1999, Cox 1993, Gill 1993).

In highlighting Gramsci’s work, it is important to situate his analysis of civil society in a period where he perceived revolutionary transformation still seemed possible. As Cox (1999) remarks, Gramsci, writing in the 1920s and 30s, was concerned with changing the
world, and the emancipatory potential for human agency in history. His concern with civil society was to understand the status quo, and then to devise a strategy for its transformation. In the Prison Notebooks, Gramsci does not give a unitary definition of civil society, but considers it an elastic concept having different connotations in different passages (Cox, 1999). Civil society appears to have some autonomy and to be more fundamental than the state, in many sense, Gramsci relates civil society as both a shaper of the state and to be shaped by it, "an agent of stabilization and reproduction, and a potential agent of transformation." (Cox 1999, pg.5). In following with Gramsci's line of thought, Cox asserts that there is no point to establish a fixed definition of Gramsci's concepts of civil society, as he writes, "Any fixed definition of the content of the concept civil society would just freeze a particular moment in history and privilege the relations of social forces then prevailing." (pg.5)

Gramsci's starting point for thinking about society (consistent with Marxism) was class structure derived from the relations of production. He referred to the potential of the working class in alliance with others in the formation of a counter-hegemonic bloc. Consciousness of the class was according to Gramsci an historical construction, not an automatically determined condition. There were different levels of consciousness, the lowest being corporative consciousness, which is the collective self-interest of people that did not challenge the status quo in any essential respect: it just looked out for the interest of a particular group. The highest, being hegemonic consciousness, which would transcend class consciousness by incorporating interests of the non-fundamental groups (peasants, petty bourgeoisie) into a vision that appears to be the natural order of society. This progression from corporative through to hegemonic can be taken as a natural history of civil
society (for details see Cox 1993, Gill 1993 and Augelli and Murphy 1993). It is in this framework whereby the process of globalization and resistance to it are discussed in neo-Marxist thinking. As Cox (1999) mentions, in today’s context, the challenge is to bridge the differences among the various groups peripheralized by the process of globalization towards bringing a common understanding of the nature and consequences of global capitalism. After establishing this groundwork, people must work to devise a common strategy towards addressing and overcoming it and calling forth a new regime of social equity. The potential for collective human action is built upon self-conscious human groups networking and operating within the sphere of civil society. Gramsci noted that in the absence of high morale and community strength and consciousness, the struggle against a dominant power over people, whether foreign or domestic, would be improbable (Cox, 1999). The condition that sustains an oppressive regime, Gramsci wrote, is a “state of social disintegration of the...people, and the passivity of the majority of them” (Cox, 1999, pg.27)

Two other Gramscian concepts are relevant to this process of building civil society: the war of position and passive revolution (Cox, 1993). The former relates to a civil society that is animated through popular participation by a longterm construction of self-conscious social groups building a concerted emancipatory bloc within society. This is contrasted by what Gramsci termed war of maneuver, which might involve certain groups in civil society that simply seize state power and provide a fragile victory - before consolidating a ground work of social organization. The other concept integral to civil society in the work of Gramsci is passive revolution. This concept identifies some of the obstacles and inadequacies of constructing a dynamic civil society, by referring to the internal tensions
that fragment civil society, or when the dominant power successfully manages to co-opt certain elements in civil society to preclude its potential for change (Cox, 1993).

Robert Cox (1993, 1999) is the leading theorist in support of Gramsci’s insistence on the counter-hegemonic potential of civil society. He probes the potential for civil society to be a “surrogate for revolution that seems a remote possibility towards the attainment of an alternative social and world order” (Cox 1999, pg.3) Indeed Cox (1999) raises an important point, particularly in the wake of globalization as both activists and theorists have begun to look at civil society as potentially a sphere whereby people can mount their protests, seek alternatives and demand more equitable forms of society. This perspective is linked to the potential for transformatory groups in society to occupy the space within civil society in order to facilitate change. Cox (1992, 1999) refers to the growing number of environmental, human rights and women’s groups that are already insisting and pressuring states to reform in ways favourable to the poor and marginalized. Yet Cox (1999) too is elusive on key areas, regarding conflict within civil society between market interests and social movements. Further, how do social movements create a counter-hegemonic system when many of these actors are dependent (ex.financial) on the “system” for their own survival? Cox (1999) provides examples of resistance around the world, articulating that this would be the base upon which a new or reconstructed political authority would have to rest. Is this realistic in relation to obvious power/resource differences? Is civil society not made up of many scattered and perhaps disconnected movements that would be problematic for a unitary counter-hegemonic force to emerge? Cox (1999) does not follow through on these issues, only claiming that presently civil society is still relatively weak and uncoordinated. He mentions, “(civil society)...may contain some of the elements but has certainly not
attained the status of a counter hegemonic alliance of forces on either the domestic or the world scale’ (Cox, 1999:13)

1.3 ANTI-COLONIAL CRITIQUE

“Autonomous forms of imagination of the community are overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the post-colonial state. Here lies the root of our post-colonial misery. It is not in our ability to think out new forms of the modern community, but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state. The result is that the history of the community and that of the state have remained out of joint and often in open antagonism, testimony to the simultaneous and often antagonistic existence in most countries of Asia, Africa (and now, suddenly, of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union) of a state which dominates without being hegemonic and of several hegemonic projects still in search of dominance” (Pasha 1996:653)

An anti-colonial critique of civil society intends to interrogate the construct from a discursive approach that recognizes the following: an awareness of the western origins of theories and concepts transposed to an indigenous context; the centering of indigenous frames, concepts and theoretical frameworks to oppose or use as alternative paradigms to the domineering western (colonial) models; the importance of locally produced knowledge relevant to the experiences and histories of local cultures; the projecting of alternative sets of questions, techniques and strategies; and the power of local activism in surviving colonial encounters.\(^3\) By employing this framework, this section will critique the renewed interest in civil society and its pervasive use in understanding and describing associational life in non-European contexts. In advancing an anti-colonial critique, this section will also

\(^3\) This brief overview of an anti-colonial framework is taken from George Dei’s *Towards an Anti-Colonial Discursive Framework and Synthesizing Indigeneity and Anti-Colonial Theory*, unpublished handouts.
show the narrowed lens of the civil society construct, in missing potent forces of resistance manifested in multiple forms.

Political anthropologists, Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn (1996), have questioned how an idea with such significant variance even within European intellectual discourse is exported across the globe, in what they term as a form of “putative universalism” (pg.3). Clearly there is a strong and vibrant history of people-centered associations and groups around the world that is now only recently being taken up in the framework of “civil society”. As Ali Mazrui poignantly observed, it is a mistake to think that because a special name or concept for a phenomenon did not exist previously, it should be followed as if the phenomena itself did not exist at all (see Drah and Oquaye, 1996). In this sense, it is not only problematic to uncritically “lift” and “fit” western terminology’s to other contexts, but its often haphazard application lends to a descriptive generality and speculative outcome, rather than concrete analysis (Drah and Oquaye, 1996). Robert Cox (1999) issues a similar caveat stating,

“European political thought can no longer make an uncontested claim to universality...western terms may cover realities that are different. To westerners, these terms may obscure these differences by assimilating them to familiar Western meanings. This must be borne in mind in using terms like civil society” (pg.5).

Robert Cox (1999), alongside many other scholars discussing civil society (for example Michael Bratton 1990 and Naomi Chazan 1992), although make an effort to note the euro-centric bias and shortcomings of the term, fail to critically isolate the concept from its skewed paradigmatic location in western political thought. As Mahmood Mamdani (1995) reveals, the underlying agenda of civil society discourse emanates from a unilinear evolutionist perspective within western liberalism. He identifies the concomitant
relationship between civil society and western liberal notions of democracy and capitalism that almost mandate the growth of a vibrant civil society. A universal path is explicated whereby the west serves as the brilliant example of democratic consolidation with a healthy civil polity effectively interacting with the state. The discourse of civil society becomes prescriptive as all subsequent paths for social and political development in other societies are fated to tread. As Mamdani (1995) states, “the outcome is a history of analogy rather than history of process” (pg. 608) whereby, African reality, for example, has meaning only in so far as it can be seen to reflect a particular stage in the development of European history. This is discernible in the recent evaluations of civil societies in Third World countries, so as to determine the political maturity of a particular nation-state and the extent of “progressive” democratic mores evident in its society. The study of African civil societies by western political theorists is a strong case in point, revealing the tendency to easily equate the dearth of organized voluntary groups with a limited societal commitment to democracy. Naomi Chazan (1992), in her writings on African civil societies, reveals the “nascent” presence of civil society actors in the political landscape. She is uncertain if these groups within African society can potentially contribute to building a dynamic democratic political system, as many in her opinion, “have their roots in processes antithetical to the crystallization of civil society” (p. 286). Eventually, it is hoped these societies will strengthen their civil actors to mature and actively interact with the state, comparable to their counterparts in the west.

In their anthropological critique, Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn (1996), similarly echoed this entrenched western model of liberalism that has narrowly circumscribed the debates of civil society. They argue that the exploration of civil society requires careful
attention be paid to a range of informal interpersonal practices. Aili Mary Tripp (1994) takes up this discussion by addressing the tendency of civil society theorists to revive the modernization project. Preoccupations of modern organizations that espouse liberal democratic values (such as individual rights vs. community rights) tend to push non-formal associations into the category of the "traditional" - falling outside the realm of civil society. This modernist/traditionalist dichotomy, implicit in civil society, is taken up by Mamdani (1995) who explores the assumptions behind the transformation of a community into society, or rather, the natural habitat modern man is supposed to have left behind as he entered civil society. Mamdani (1995) asks, "Is community not the silent residual term in the polarity of which civil society is the lead term? (pg.613). He argues the modern sphere of organizations is predicated on a differentiation between the political and the social and the social and the economic, whereas the "traditional" sphere is where the organizations of life proceed by the diffusion - not a differentiation - between the economic, the social and political. Mamdani (1995) infers, "The modernization theorists at least recognized and named the residual part of humanity as enveloped in tradition. The theorists of civil society, however, refuse this humanity even that residual recognition, turning a blind conceptual eye towards them. It is this uncompromising modernism of civil society theorists that reveals them as indeed parochial" (pg.614).

Indeed there is a general consensus among recent theorists, particularly those observing civil society in the third world, to demarcate only those social forces as actors in civil society that actively seek to in a formal organized fashion, med or influence state power. Many African scholars (Tripp 1994, Ekeh 1996, Mamadani 1995) argue for a broader, more inclusive definition of civil society, to incorporate unorganized, sporadic and
localized activity and networks. As Ekeh (1996) points out, liberal-pluralist definition of
civil society rules out ascriptive primary groups based on "affective ties of blood, marriage,
residence, clan and ethnicity" (pg10). If theorists continue to frame their discussions in
ways that ignore such informal phenomena, Aili Mary Tripp (1994) asserts that important
aspects of Africa's changing social landscape and rich associational activity will be
overlooked. In her work studying women's associations in Uganda and Tanzania, Tripp
(1994) notes the different ways informal associations struggle to create a different
configuration of political space - one more responsive to the urgent needs of the people.
The women's associations she observed were informal, loosely organized networks (not
officially sanctioned by the state) and their main purpose is to help women survive
economically. Members consciously avoid involvements in politics which they view as
involving sectarian, divisive conflicts. She poses the questions as to whether these informal
groups - operating at a distance from the state - are irrelevant to the discussion of civil
society and the process of democratization.

An interesting point raised by Tripp (1994), is the need to study broader changes in
values and structures that occur and shape how people think and act politically. Those
organizations that engage the state certainly capture some of the many changes occurring in
Third World societies, but it is problematic to overlook the complexity of some of the more
fundamental political, economic and social transformations taking place that do not fall
easily into the state-society dualism civil society implies. Similarly, due to the deepening of
the economic crisis worldwide, it is worthwhile to add how for many individuals and
groups it is perhaps a privileged luxury to engage in political advocacy as all efforts are
directed towards meeting the basic needs of food, shelter, and survival in desperate
situations. Furthermore, the most vulnerable groups that organize to change their conditions may be inhibited by the lack of human, financial resources needed to set up “formal” associations, that are more often than not urban based and operate in a matrix of power and privilege. Mainstream theorists rarely take up the external constraints to associational activity, such as issues of access, trust, repression, political instability and war - that all interact to limit the parameters of overt political participation. As Aili Mary Tripp (1994) poignantly asserts,

“In other words, how applicable is the notion of civil society in the African context where the state was a colonial implant, did not emerge from social structures within society itself and the post-colonial state did not fundamentally renegotiate the bases of state-society interactions? Is it a useful concept where state-society interactions are often characterized by the use of patronage networks to extract cheap/free state resources, services or to acquire jobs? What does it mean in countries where the state is weak and barely autonomous from society and is infused by personalistic rule and patronimial politics that cater to ethnic, religious, and other particularistic interests? Women’s groups and other associations have often situated themselves outside this sphere of state influence precisely because it does not serve their interests and at times has undermined those same interests. where women’s groups have replaced state efforts in the provision of social services the states centrality is diminished.” (pg.28)

Perhaps groups choose to disengage with the state so as not to legitimate its presence, due to corruption, patronage and oppression that exists. Peter Ekeh (1996) builds on this point, by stating informal groups in Africa, such as secret and hometown associations, have historically resisted state authoritarianism by disengaging from the state. The state is not trusted in many communities around the world, and as Cheru (1996) points out, “it is better to avoid the state altogether, withdraw within their local communities on a subsistence basis and engage in collective action to find solutions to common problems”(pg.156). The struggles of local communities are not taken up in civil society
discourse. Communities through traditional institutions may disengage from both the state and formal groups, such as NGOs, and choose to instead pull their own resources together to raise income levels, support families during crises, build schools and mobilize savings and informal credit - among other activities. Peter Ekeh (1996) situates these organizations in what he refers to as the “primordial public realm”, that possesses the latent capacity to legitimate and de-legitimate the state. According to Ekeh (1996), the “primordial public occupies “vast tracts of the political spaces that are relevant for the welfare of the individual, occasionally restricting and frustrating the state’s efforts to extend its claims beyond the civic public sphere”(pgs10-11). Resistance in this realm may not be overtly political, directly challenging the state, but consists of everyday forms of resistance that require little co-ordination, and even less formality; yet these acts certainly leave an impression on the state that may be comparable to the efforts of their more formal counterparts in civil society. Examples of these forms of resistance include: underreporting of crop output to the tax collectors, illegal cutting of trees from a state forest, illegal grazing in government owned land, diluting the milk (controlled by marketing boards) in order to make more profit, and secret trading and smuggling of cash crops (for a thorough discussion see Cheru 1989 (African context) and Agarwal (1994) for South Asia).

From a South Asian perspective, Agrawal (1994) engages in an excellent discussion on the struggles of Indian women against the state through non-formal means, citing the popular Chipko movement among others. Similarly in the writings of Ifi Amadiume (1995), the “primordial public” realm is termed the anti-power movements, described as the way traditional groups have historically defended their rights and maintained their autonomy and distance from states and formal political power. Amadiume (1995) focuses
on various informal and autonomous organizations of Nigerian women, for example, as part of this anti-power movement that sporadically exerted tremendous political potency through the dancing women movements in 1925, the spirit movement in 1927, and the riots of 1929 (known in history as the womens war). These women were not formalized actors of "civil society", but formed informally to mobilize crowds from 100 to over 10,000 against economic disadvantages, sexist policies, the marginalization of their social organizations and the banning of their religion. It is precisely the parochial liberal lens to describe civil society, that limits its scope to truly understand the broad range of forces of resistance, counter-hegemony and transformative potential. On the other hand, it is perhaps desirable to distance these "informal" movements and occurrences from the term civil society, which is itself full of contesting and contradictory meanings and is for the most part framed from an exclusive Euro-centric analysis. There is a tremendous amount of energy, commitment, struggle and passion existing in the area of resistance at local levels - rarely taken up in discussions of domestic or global civil societies. These events of ordinary people around the world do not attract the attention of researchers or funding agencies. They are, as Cheru (1996), poignantly notes, "like an army of termites eating away the wooden structure of a house inch by inch,..."(pg.153). Cheru (1996) identifies these struggles as "silent or passive" resistance occurring daily by individuals, and sporadic and unorganized groups. Their actions erode the foundations of an unlegitimized political and economic system. She terms it a silent revolution, also known in literature as passive resistance or everyday resistance. It is a means that people around the world employ, for whatever reasons, to engage in pockets of resistance away from the privileges of "organized" "bureaucratized" civil society organizations - be they local, national, or international. These passive forms of
resistance are taken up in the discussions of other approaches, such as the subsistence perspective to resistance advanced by Maria Mies (1993). Although the focus of this study precludes a detailed discussion on these “informal” processes, they have been briefly mentioned to indicate the spectrum of activities virtually ignored in discussions of civil and global civil society, hinting to the obvious limitations of the construct often proclaimed as the only domain for the “worthwhile” efforts of citizens to resist, change and challenge the systems of oppression that surround them. The following quote captures a current of activism, that for purposes of brevity and focus, will unfortunately not be further elaborated on in this study.

“We are establishing village republics (nate-na-raj, as the people call it here) in the true spirit of democracy, equity and fraternity following the Ghandhian tenets to the extent possible. The village republics of ours are not islands in wilderness, they comprise the smallest circle amongst the ever-expanding circles in the open sea. We believe that life in its totality and vivacity can be perceived, experienced and realized only in the microcosms of community and family. It is the community and community alone - not the formal state in any case - which can save the earth for humankind and other forms of life”

B.D Sharma, Alliance for Tribal Self Rule\(^4\)

\(^4\) taken from Parajuli & Kothari (1998) pg.18.
CHAPTER 2

GLOBALIZATION, DEMOCRACY AND STATE-CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS

"Imagine that you are still at the crossroads between two worlds -- a world of transnational corporate rule that is beyond the reach of people’s will, and a world that continues on its difficult, bumbling way toward genuine democracy. Imagine being at that point in time where people can still choose which world lies ahead "(Sere,1999, pg.2).

The neo-liberal rendition of globalization masquerades as the universal paragon of "modernity". Every region in the world is locked in this latest path of capitalist economic growth, experiencing the concomitant social, political and environmental realities that exist as a result (Power, 1997). Globalization is promoted as the evolutionary dream towards the establishment of a universal market-based order, leading to global societal convergence based on similar “universal” goals, values and priorities. As Mustapha Kamal Pasha (1996) points out, it is rationalized by an ideology of competitiveness, liberalization and privatization, whereby the market is the central guiding force with promises of a “brave new world of prosperity and material attainment” for all who desire (p.636). This liberal orthodoxy assures everyone will stand to benefit from the expanding world economy in the long run, so long as societies, the Third World in particular, tighten their belts and submit to the discipline of the free market (limiting public spending, privatizing public services, removing barriers to foreign investment, strengthening export production, controlling inflation) (Power, 1997). Liberal economists accept that in the short-term inequalities are exacerbated, consoling societies to endure the temporal “side-effects” of this path they confidently admit all societies must inevitably travel upon (Hurrell and Woods, 1995).
In this chapter, the impact and effects of globalization will be explored particularly as they relate to the state-civil society binary. This first section will provide a general glimpse into the destructive pattern of economic globalization, followed by a discussion on how the growth of new market fundamentalism has assaulted Third World state sovereignty and consequently lead to its weakening. The effects of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) will be explored, and how these aggressive policies have diminished the state’s capacity to deliver even the most basic services to its citizens. A case study of the strategies of local resistance to SAP policies by rural women in Kenya will also be included. Building on this discussion, the renewed interest in civil society to then take over in “gap-filling” roles on behalf of the state is critically examined. It is here where the contention that civil society actors, particularly development NGOs, help to strengthen the international capitalist agenda emanates from. By acting as “cushions” to lesson the impact of neo-liberal policies, this section elucidates the complicit behaviours of NGOs that prefer their “gap-filling” activities, over advocating for structural and systemic changes. Finally, this chapter concludes by exploring the democracy movements in different parts of the world, crediting their growing presence in reaction to globalization.

2.1 GLOBALIZATION: AN OVERVIEW

The neo-liberalist agenda of globalization is considered a coercive, invasive and authoritative project in the majority-world, resisted passively, actively, formally and informally in virtually every society (Power, 1997). Advanced as a benign and progressive dogma, the process of globalization is rarely debated by policy makers, and is consistently adopted and inculcated into the policy directives at the national and international levels,
precluding public consultation. Promoted as a relatively new phenomena, globalization is rarely historicized and contextualized as the latest stage of the ongoing aggressive and exploitative colonial/imperial project towards a unitary transnational political economy. Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem (1998) identifies globalization as not so much a new thing, but a new context for the recolonization of the Third World. This time, not by specific European countries, but through the auspices of “international” financial institutions and transnational corporations. In the context of Africa, Tajudeen Abdul Raheem (1998) adds,

“The IMF/WB are in direct control of most of the African States and spread western economic gospels to states that cannot afford to say no .....The logic of global marketeerism dictates that we produce what we are best at, which condemns us to commodity production for exports just as in colonial times. In this enforced situation we produce what we do not consume and consume what we do not produce. And the west/USA that dominates the global political economy dictates both prices “(pg.24)

The adverse effects of globalization, however, are not restricted to the Third World, as concerned citizen groups in the First World are also resisting the encroachment of the global capitalist agenda. In Canada, for example, we are witness to the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state and the consolidation of a corporatist nation-state (Clarke, 1997). Corporations in Canada are re-inventing the role and powers of the government, successfully facilitating the return to “minimal government” and centering the market as the driving force for the nation. Parallel to the global trend, Canada is also not immune to the massive transfer of wealth from the rich to poor, from the public to the private sector, and from citizens to investors. In North America, middle and low income earners are not only being taxed proportionately much more than the rich, but are considered to be taxed to repay the rich! In 1993 alone, the wealthiest 30% of Canadian families took home an extra
$14.3 billion, and most of this added wealth transfer came from the bottom 50% of the Canadian population (Clarke, 1997). In the meantime, the real wages of Canadian workers have not only barely kept pace with the cost of living over the past 15 years, but compared to their bosses, have actually declined (O’Neill, 1994). In this changing global economy, Canada and other First World nations, are abdicating their responsibility to ensure the basic rights of citizens by drastically cutting public spending on social services, housing, health care, environmental protection and education. The deteriorating circumstances in this country, considered one of the wealthiest in the world, is evident as 15% of our country’s children live in poverty (O’Neill, 1994).

The outcomes and existing realities of globalization are well documented and remain the focus of considerable academic intrigue and investigation around the world. Activists and scholars alike, concur with the gross social and economic polarization exacerbating in the world, perpetuating the tremendous schism that exists in the human community. Extremes of affluence, over-consumption and over-production are evident in the First World and in pockets of the Third World, paralleled by a concentration of poverty, scarcity, and exploitation in the Third World and in pockets of the First World. The research on the impact of the globalization process is vast, and in the interest of brevity the following facts (taken from Schugurensky, 1997, pp.25-26) aim to reveal only a glimpse of what is unfolding worldwide, and is expected to worsen:

- In the last 30 years, the ratio of shares of global income between the richest 20% and poorest 20% of people has doubled from 30:1 to 61:1

- Third World debt multiplied between 1960 to 1990 from 50 billion to 1.3 trillion and the net transfer from the Third World to the First World ranged between 20 billion and 30 billion a year.
At least 6 million children under the age of 5 die each year (since 1982) in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

15 of the world's largest TNCs now have gross incomes that are larger than the GDP of 120 states.

TNCs as "stateless" actors control 70% of global trade and 80% of the land set aside for cash crops. They have sought unrestricted access to the plant genetic resources of the third world, reaping enormous profit to the detriment of indigenous/peasant communities.

600 major MNCs control 25% of the world economy and 80% of world trade.

In more than 100 countries per capita income is lower than it was 15 years ago, and more than a quarter of humanity 1.6 billion are worse off today than they were 15 years ago.

1.3 billion people survive on less than one U.S dollar a day.

Assets of the worlds 358 billionaires exceed the combined annual incomes of countries accounting for nearly half - 45% of the worlds people.

Globalization disrupts healthy, sustainable livelihoods, and as Parajuli and Kothari (1998) indicate, it impinges on peoples own sense of identity, dignity, survival and justice. There is a struggle occurring between cultures of growth and progress versus cultures of justice and survival. The poor and marginalized have incessantly witnessed a profound loss of control - from the local to the national level. As Frank Amalric (1999) indicates, the basic livelihood of local communities is threatened by external interests, leading to economic, cultural and environmental impoverishment and marginalization. In numerous cases, most communities are unable to assert their rights and demand changes in aspects of mass retrenchment and diminishing wage earnings, prevent the exploitation and export of local resources, improve working conditions, and/or restrict or oppose the dumping of toxic and hazardous materials (Parajuli and Kothari, 1998). Vandana Shiva (1994) poignantly indicates how the major environmental threats of this century are caused by globally powerful institutions (TNCs, WB, IMF) which reach every city, village, field and forest.
through their worldwide operations. Transnational corporations specifically are the driving force behind the international capitalist agenda. They have intrusively infiltrated rural and urban areas in search of cheap labour and raw materials, contributing to gross human rights violations and unrepairable environmental costs (Shiva, 1994). Most recently, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) was pushed worldwide to allow corporations the right to reject as illegal any national standards on human rights, labour rights, or environmental protection. In fact, in the agreement, governments who refuse to privatize health and education would be liable for payment of compensation to corporations that had lost opportunities to make profits (Laxer, 1993). Similar agreements continue to be advanced, exposing globalization as a process for unregulated and exploitative corporate power, forcing societies to make their basic decisions in the market place, while leaving only regulatory functions to the state.

As outlined in the previous section on civil society, it is important to not depict communities as passive, helpless victims in the midst of this globalizing process. Societies and cultures in the Third World have a rich history of resistance, albeit their stories are rarely surfaced, except the coverage given to the more “organized” and “overt” forms of resistance such as the Chiapas movement in Mexico and the Swadhayya movement in India (see Alvarez et al 1998, Walker 1994). However, what is important to note, is that the ability of local communities to make concrete changes in support of their rights is eroding at the local and national levels, as the concentration of power and capital is increasingly shifted to the few business and political elites residing in the west (Sen, 1997). Decision making power is rapidly moving into an emerging nexus between four types of actors – transnational corporations, international banks and financial institutions (IMF, World
Bank), supranational organizations (OECD, NAFTA, WTO, APEC) and economic and political elite’s in both the majority/minority world (Schechter, 1999). In fact liberal economists attest that globalization gives rise to powerful non-state actors to facilitate the free-market process, creating a demand for international groups and organizations to work cooperatively. Governance and regulation at this international level amongst non-state entities is necessary to facilitate the consolidation of the "global village". These new and emerging authorities are gaining momentum, a process that correspondingly necessitates the decrease in state power and desire for independence (Hurl and Woods, 1995).

2.2 GLOBALIZATION AND THE WEAKENED THIRD WORLD STATE

The growth of this new market fundamentalism calls for the rolling back of the state, enforcing the mandate that the market is more capable of promoting growth, stability and development than the state. Stephen Gill (1993) suggests, globalization has instigated what he terms the "transnationalization of the state". This involves the hegemonic alliance of major capitalist states and business allies to promote their conception of a more stable form of world order, to the detriment of Third World states. In this process, the Third World state is specifically targeted and implicated as the cause of the "development crisis" due to its assumed corruption, economic inefficiency and paternalism (Gill, 1993). Some liberals will go as far as question the need for the state’s existence. As Ohmae (1993) puts it: "...the nation state has become an unnatural, even dysfunctional, unit for organizing human activity and managing economic endeavor in a borderless world. It represents no genuine, shared community of economic interests; it defines no meaningful flows of economic activity" (pg.78). However, most contemporary liberals accept the need for the
state to sustain the necessary power and authority to facilitate the economic process, albeit pushing for its reform and reduction in the enigmatic disguises of "structural adjustment" policies, "institutional strengthening", and "capacity building" (Hurrell and Woods, 1995, pg.450-62). In the context of Africa, for example, the controversial study by the World Bank, popularly known as the Berg Report, identifies the African state as the problem to the development crisis. The dominant strategy purposed to alleviate the crisis was to reduce the centrality and authority of the African state (Nyang’oro and Shaw, 1998). Under the dictates of neo-liberal policies, countries in Africa are therefore urged to be more open and exercise less and limited participation in their own domestic affairs. As Adams et al (1999) mention, power and authority is steadily shifting to global institutions and corporations. This inversely undermines the sovereignty of Third World nation states to control their political and economic affairs internationally, as well as within their own boundaries.

In inter-state negotiations, less powerful states are increasingly losing voice and representation. African states, for example, exert little influence in international bodies and are considered economically the weakest in the world, attracting the lowest amount of foreign direct investment in the past twenty years (Plahe, 1998). This has led to their disadvantaged position at multilateral trade negotiations alongside other poor states in Asia and Latin America. These marginalized countries find it very difficult to protect their national interests and to advocate for social, economic and cultural rights within their territories (Plahe, 1998). It is important to note that under the Westphalian state system, the nation-state is mandated to exercise full (de jure) sovereignty rights over all economic and political affairs within its territories. The state assumes primary responsibility for the
provision of basic goods and services, wages, and controlled prices and interest rates. It
ostensibly must act as a buffer and “protector” for its citizens against global political and
economic penetrations (Adams et al, 1999). With the onslaught of global economic
integration, however, the Third World states’ protective responsibility and distributive role
vis-à-vis its citizens is weakening. The Third World state, due to external and internal
pressures, is steadily abandoning its mandate of representing and intervening in the
immediate and long-term interests of the citizens within its own territory (Kothari, 1996).

Since the 1980s the state in developing countries has disengaged from the
economy, mainly in response to the restructuring programmes prescribed by the North.
These programmes are intended to “assist” Third World countries in staving off the
complete collapse of their highly indebted and inflated economies, as well as to open up
their markets to global transnational capital (Schmitz & Hutchful, 1992). The policies are
packaged as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and the conditions are set by
northern states through two major international financial institutions: the International
Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). Undeterred by domestic opposition,
Third World states were encouraged to take on extensive economic reforms: the devaluing
of currency; refinancing of their foreign debt, reducing government expenditures; selling of
public corporations, releasing of public services (health, education) to the private sector,
deregulating domestic economies; slashing import restrictions to protect domestic infant
industries and creating incentives to attract foreign capital (Adams et al 1999, Harris 1999).

By pursuing these policies states are steadily transforming into markets, causing
serious unrest and suffering amongst the poorest of the world’s people. As noted earlier,
neo-liberalism at the international level has exacerbated world poverty and the disparity
between the rich and poor within countries and between countries. In particular, the cuts in public expenditure (for example, health, education, social security) have had a detrimental effect on the poor, and women more so, who have had to bear the brunt of the costs (Harris 1999). While defense budgets increase in many countries, the reduction in subsidies on food items, transportation, utility charges and fertilizers, have all adversely and unevenly affected both the urban and rural poor. Mustapha Kamal Pasha (1996) mentions the effects of these aggressive economic policies as directly and indirectly contributing to the over half-billion people in South Asia who currently fall into the category of the “absolute” poor; over 400 million poor reside in India alone. Richard Harris (1999) in his examination of the social effects of SAP policies in Latin America, indicates the dramatic increase in poverty levels from 118 million people in 1980 to 196 million by 1990; this was a 42% increase or double the population growth rate of 22% during the 1980s. Additionally, Steven Langdon (1999) in his research on global poverty, offers the results of a local-level study conducted in the northern part of Ghana. His study revealed how 70% of households ran out of stored food before the end of the lean season; over 70% had no access to safe water, 50% of children were not immunized and only 13% of households were within one hour of a health clinic.

It is necessary to emphasize that the Third World State is paralyzed to meet even the most basic services to its citizens in this period of economic globalization. People are for the most part disenchanted with their governments for not providing basic necessities, or protecting their economic interests internationally. Hence, the already weakened state is further eroded by losing its legitimacy and credibility from within among its citizens. Despite the deteriorating situation and resentment of neo-liberal policies, SAP enforcers are
quick to defend the programmes as necessary to make the economy of Third World
countries more efficient and responsive to market demands. In the face of extreme and
escalating poverty, the IMF cunningly states, they merely advise governments on how
much spending has to be cut, and further aim to vilify Third World governments by
imploring that it is their prerogative and responsibility to decide where those cuts are to be
made ((Mlambo, 1995). The effects of structural adjustment policies around the world have
been well documented revealing the intensely brutal impact on various social groups
extending from the rural and urban poor, to women, children, indigenous peoples and the
environment. It seems that a policy that ostensibly is designed to improve the quality of
life of the majority, is in the final analysis a ruthless undertaking that is nothing short of an

“...people seem to be excluded from the growth process in that they were left out
from the booty during the good times but were being called upon, almost
exclusively, to make sacrifices as things got tough. And yet they were expected to
shut up, accept the burden and wait for the better tomorrow promised them, in
which nobody believes.” (pg.74)

As mentioned earlier, despite the invasive policies of globalization and its aggregate
adverse effects on the social, economic, political and environmental systems in the world,
resistance in its multiple forms is occurring in all societies. Women, most definitely, bear
the brunt of these violent policies as they have to resort to different strategies for the basic
survival and welfare of their families and communities (Brownhill, 1996). The resistance
to SAP policies by rural women in Maragua Kenya, is an example of the ways local people
seek to regain control over their lives and assert alternative frameworks to ensure their basic
survival. As in other rural communities in the Third World, in Marangua during the period
of 1986-1996, the IMF imposed a program that shifted the production of locally grown subsistence foods in favour of expanding coffee crops for export (Brownhill, 1996). The impact of these policies were immediate, as the decline in essential subsistence crops for the nourishment of the community inversely lead to the escalation of poverty and malnourishment - not curtailed by the (marginal) profits accrued in the sale of coffee beans. (Brownhill, 1996)

The women of Maragua took drastic action, and despite strict restrictions, they planted beans and bananas between the coffee, and as a more overt sign of protest uprooted numerous coffee trees to be used as firewood for their families. Concurrent to growing coffee, therefore, women increased their production of subsistence crops (bananas, beans and vegetables) on coffee plantations and strengthened their informal local trading networks as a result. Coffee production, to the dismay of the IMF and government, declined in the region but was not paralleled by the “depletion” in living standards (Brownhill, 1996). This was because the trading networks of women were lucrative, signifying their efforts to become more self-reliant and empowered despite the impact of globalization to incorporate their labour into the global capitalist economy. By concentrating on local knowledge, using local resources in efforts to strengthen and sustain their households, women in Maragua and elsewhere, are laying out the groundwork for new community responses to larger social and economic problems (Brownhill, 1996).

The aggregate impact of their efforts, however, are not quantifiable nor are they well documented. As outlined in the previous discussion exploring the construct of civil society and which groups are encompassed in it, it was made evident that the loosely organized, informal efforts like the Maragua rural women are not taken into account as
measurable indicators of resistance to globalization - despite the enormity and intensity of their actions, and the implications their struggles have had on their lives and livelihoods. These localized everyday forms of activism are shadowed by the more formal, structured organizations operating in the political sphere of civil society. The tendency to peripheralize these loosely structured subversive experiments against globalization, in the end, exposes the gaps, biases, and unequal representations of civil society and global civil society theorizing. There exclusion, however, more problematically lends to the myth that Third World people are somehow passive and submissive to the whims of globalization, because they fail to create large, formal mass movements that directly engage the state. These issues need to be taken into consideration as the next section looks at the revival of civil society, and the increased role and activities of formal non-state actors in the wake of globalization.

2.3 GLOBALIZATION, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE STATE

The revival of civil society interestingly occurs in this period of globalization, as the state can no longer sustain the needs of its citizens. Actors in the domestic civil societies of Third World states have made an unprecedented entrance on the national level, mushrooming in numbers and intensifying their efforts. NGOs, for example, are increasingly attending to gap-filling activities: improving popular access to water and sanitation, basic primary health care, education, and credit programmes - to combat poverty in households (Clarke, 1991). From relative obscurity more than a decade ago, there are now over 4,000 development NGOs in the First World connected to over 20,000 southern
NGOs, dispersing over 6 billion US dollars worth of assistance each year (Edwards & Hulme, 1995). A similar escalation has occurred among foreign and indigenous environmental, human rights and women’s social movement organizations, pressing for change against national and international forces that make healthy sustainable human relations and human-earth relations virtually impossible. These vast and numerous actors in civil society have severely criticized the state as unaccountable to the people, ineffective in the management of services - undemocratic, corrupt and oppressive (Edwards & Hulme, 1995).

Their activities are considered the panacea to the ills of globalization, contrasted to local, informal groups not considered to be effective agents for resistance and change. To recall the previous discussion, contemporary political scientists applaud the mushrooming of these more formal civil society actors in the Third World, to not only pick up where the state “left off”, but as pluralizing agents of the institutional environment checking state power and promoting democratization (Diamond, 1994). The revival of civil society in the age of globalization should not be construed as responsive, but simultaneous and symbiotic. In this period of economic globalization, liberals prefer the increased role of non-state actors, such as NGOs and social movements, to fill in for the government by offering vital services to the poor and marginalized in order to cushion the stringent neo-liberal directives (Pasha, 1996). As Pasha (1996) contends, the neo-liberal project can only continue when communities are pacified, or rather, benevolently aided to circumvent rural/urban unrest. The presence and function of civil society actors in this dominant neoliberal model, for the most part, functions to mollify the side effects of globalization and paves the way for neo-liberal directives to proceed undisrupted. In this sense, the renewed interest in civil society
is unsettling as these formal actors - mainly emanating from the North, or at least financially supported by it - although are assisting the weakened Third World state, are at the same time, tacitly sustaining the international capitalist agenda.

Increasingly formal and informal social groups and movements at the domestic level are realizing the need to therefore strengthen the state to stave off the effects of globalization. These social actors are seeking to build partnerships with their governments in order to fight the larger battle, where the global trade trends are slowly eroding the nation state (Plahe, 1998 and Sen 1997). More and more there is a recognition that the struggles and concerns at the local level are inextricably linked to global processes, and in order to strengthen the capacity of communities to meet their needs, the Third World state needs to be strengthened in the global political system. As Stephen Ndegwa (1994) outlines, the western liberal dichotomy of the “angelic civil society opposing the satanic state” is no longer relevant, as actors in civil society can simultaneously challenge the state for greater accountability, efficiency and transparency; while at the same time seek to strengthen and support it against foreign capital interests. This is most eloquently expressed by the following:

“We do not want a government trying to govern us all the time, everywhere and even against our will. We want a government which can offer us protection and support in case of calamity or conflict. When we want its support, we go to it. It does not meddle with us, our internal affairs. We are able to take care of ourselves most of the time. Sometimes we need the help of others, like the government. And that is what we want: a government that is for us like the shade of a tree.”

Indian peasant in Oaxaca, Mexico
2.4 GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRACY

In the quest for the economic reform of Third World countries, liberals are quick to emphasize the role of civil society to facilitate the consolidation of democratic infrastructures; or as a number of neo-liberal scholars believe, there can be no perestroika without glasnost (Mkandawire & Olukoshi, 1995). Proponents of structural adjustment embrace this credo, admitting structural adjustment is beneficial for both Africa's democratic and economic prospects. This is said to be done by market reform programmes that encourage the emergence of a genuinely productive domestic bourgeoisie that can then lead countries to democratic governance (for details refer to Mkandawire & Olukoshi, 1995 and Schmitz & Hutchful, 1992). However, in stark contrast, many scholars pointing to the concrete experiences of countries under SAP, admit these neo-liberal economic programmes have actually strengthened authoritarianism, and repressed democracy. As Bade Onimode (1991) expressed:

"Almost without exception, the effect of structural adjustment has been to undermine the fragile structures of democracy in our countries, in the sense that these programs are typically so unpopular, at least with respect to the effects, that they usually require authoritarian regimes to implement them successfully". Adjustment has tended to "coincide with, if not provide, the militarization of politics and growing authoritarianism." (pg.61)

States have felt themselves accountable not to their citizens but to the IMF and the World Bank, whose rigorous performance criteria they must strive to meet at any costs. In fact, those states that "give in" to domestic pressures against neo-liberal market reforms programmes are dubbed by the Bank as lacking the "political will" to follow through - the coded term for repressive capacity. Not so surprising is that the countries the World Bank publicly hails as "model states", such as Ghana, are those where authoritarianism has been a

5 Taken from Parajuli & Kothari, pg.26
central element for the quest of economic recovery (Mkandawire & Olukoshi, 1995). It is in
this context, whereby once again, the proliferation of social movements is contextualized as
a response to the deepening crisis that pervades Third World societies. According to
Schmitz and Hutchful (1992), social movement have increased their efforts at all levels to
maneuver and resist economic liberalization, therefore, the democracy movement is not a
result of SAP - but in resistance to it. The pressure for democratization has come about as
interest groups including women, students, labour, peasants, farmers have struggled to,
“construct coalitions in defense of their political rights and to demand a voice over how the
costs of adjustment are to be distributed” (Schmitz & Hutchful 1992, pg.12). They are
pushing at every level - local, national and international, to ensure political space for
themselves and take part in a worldwide resistance efforts to democratize and pluralize
structures of repression. In doing so, people truly recognize that part of resistance is to
strengthen the Third World state that has no power to influence the external world by
themselves. In no way is this to absolve states of responsibility or depict them as passive or
helpless actors. States have a responsibility and need to consolidate their social contract
with citizens, however, at the same time, their role and power vis-a-vis the international
state and economic system needs to be problematized and contextualized in any discussion
regarding the role of social movements in civil society.

It is here where the next discussion on global civil society proves relevant, as
resistance and advocacy efforts are increasingly being framed from an international context
in response to the wilting power of nation states. As globalization ruptures nation-state
sovereignty and local problems are increasingly connected to global origins, social actors
are proceeding to challenge and call for reform at the international level. In the past decade,
the activities of non-state international actors has flourished, heightening the discussion on what many believe is an emerging global civil society. Based on the worldwide effects of globalization, the activities and strategies of international non-state actors is considered inevitable, expected to multiply and intensify. As Laura Macdonald (1994) notes,

"As the process of globalization continues, important decisions are increasingly made by business and governments at the international, rather than the national level. There is a need for a parallel globalization of civil society". (pg.267)
CHAPTER 3
GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

"More and more people who are bypassed by the new world order are crafting their own strategies for survival and development, and in the process are spinning their own transnational webs to embrace and connect people across the world...a global civil society is beginning to take shape – mostly off camera...It is the only force we see that can break the global gridlock" Barnet & Cavanagh (1994)

In order to proceed to a discussion on global civil society, some of the salient points raised in the previous sections on (domestic) civil society and globalization serve as necessary starting points. Recalling from the last chapter on globalization, the implications of a weakened Third World state and correspondingly the renewed interest for non-state intervention will be extended to this discussion. However, the primary focus in this chapter will be on constructing a theoretical framework to understand global civil society, and exploring and debating its reified potential. Chapter one established the parochial analysis of civil society within Euro-American discourse. Formal, organized groups that actively engage the institutional political process are identified as the only effective channels of legitimizing and advancing people-centered political projects for social change. The chapter highlighted the kinds of resistance struggles and networks that fall outside of civil society, hence exposing the limitations of this construct to truly capture the range of counter-hegemonic and transformative potential. For good reasons, anti-colonial and many Third World scholars eschew the term to describe political struggle; the construct, for example, dislodges the discussion over why many Southern groups and individuals choose not to or are unable to "formalize" their struggles (financial constraints, basic survival
priorities, state repression). Extending the analysis to global civil society further exacerbates the inadequacies of this term. This time, large transnational movements based in the North engage the global political process “on behalf of the poor”. In writings, the absence of large Southern movements representing their own interests does not take away from the “globality” of global civil society, since (similar to domestic civil society) issues of power, contradictions and internal tensions are rarely surfaced (see Chapter four). The capitalist agenda embedded within the civil society framework, further problematizes this construct. As will become evident in this chapter, from the two contrasting agendas of civil society described by Gramsci earlier, it seems at the international level it is the capitalist agenda that is more strongly consolidated. Transnational corporations appear to be the major benefactors of global civil society, as they are better organized and more effective in influencing than their social movement counterparts. This section will also indicate how a global civil society can only be facilitated by the strengthening of multilateral institutions, like the UN, to facilitate inclusive representation. Yet even the most optimistic proponents are aware of the obstacles within the UN to increase non-state decision-making power. The theoretical basis of global civil society within international relations theory will be the starting point for this discussion, followed by a discussion over the pragmatic limitations in attempts to reify the construct.

3.1 GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY: INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION

The density and increased visibility and activities of international non-state actors is unprecedented in world history. These diverse actors continue to assert their voices at the
international level on a variety of issues - environment, labour, development, women, human rights, indigenous rights - in order to connect, resist and advocate for multi-level systemic change. Their complex interactions transcending state boundaries, forms the nucleus of what many consider is an emerging global civil society. It is important to note, although there is a consensus among even the most optimistic scholars and activists that a global civil society does not currently exist, the activities at the international level involving social movements, in particular, has sparked debate over whether one is nascent, what one would look like should it mature, or whether or not it can possibly exist based on the current structure of the international state system. By way of situating this discussion, therefore, it is important to first clarify that the term is used in this study as a heuristic, to investigate the theoretical foundation of global civil society, and to explain and explore the potentials and obstacles of this “observed” phenomena of non-state presence and increased activity at what is considered the “global” (meaning beyond the context of specific nation states) level.

Global civil society within its broadest sense is defined as a network of institutions through which groups could represent themselves at the international level (Martin Shaw, 1994). More specifically, the concept refers to the range of non-state, formal and organized actors interacting and seeking to influence states, intergovernmental organizations and international financial agencies. The dominant liberal-pluralist perspective evident in the writings of M.J Peterson (1992) Wapner (1997) Lipshutz (1992) outline how an autonomous political sphere already exists by the establishment of transnational linkages among a wide variety of non state actors: banks, international scientific associations, international associations of trade unions, religious organizations,
environmental groups, feminist and peace groups etc. From this perspective then, a global civil society is considered to be emerging analytically separate from states, as an arena where there is relative autonomy from the international state system. For some, therefore, it is a signal of a parallel arrangement of political interaction challenging and circumventing state autonomy and sovereignty, while for others, it means little more than western social movements congregating at global ad hoc conferences.

Miguel Darcy de Oliveira and Rajesh Tandon (1994) extend the definition away from mere organized international activism, by insisting on the profound commitment to solidarity and compassion global civil society actors encompass for the fate and well being of others. They add, “it is a responsibility and reliance on one’s own initiative to do the right thing, the right impulse toward altruistic giving and sharing; the refusal of inequality, violence, and oppression” (pg.32). Perhaps it is the contribution of Robert Falk (1992), which captures the conventional understanding of the concept, clearly resonating from the Tocquevillian impressions of civil society discussed earlier:

“Movements for democracy and human rights, for environmental protection and Green politics, for feminist reinterpretation, and for a peaceful world are vehicles for disseminating these new images of solidarity and connectedness that both spring from and give rise to a sense of shared human destiny and, with this sense, feelings of species identity that complement feelings of local, national, and civilizational identity. The aggregate of such transnational groupings can be associated with a political postulate: the emergence of global civil society as a background against which history unfolds.” (pg.49-50)

As mentioned earlier, the tenuous and inconsistent understandings of domestic civil society are only to be echoed in an international context, creating a dubious ground to pitch the tents of any theoretically solid discussion on the construct of a global civil society. This
task proves more problematic with the dearth of theoretical analyses on the topic, despite its growing popularity worldwide.

3.2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND REALIST THEORY

Nestled in the domain of international relations theory, only a handful of scholars have attempted to provide a theoretical backdrop to the term, and even fewer have critically interrogated it. Global civil society, or its derivatives of “world”, “international” or “transnational” society, although incrementally gaining ground in IR theory are more often than not referred to in passing within the more established and recognized discussions of multilateralism, liberalism, and new mediavalism. There are reservations towards the concept within traditionalist IR theory, as it is intrinsically problematic within the dictates of the prevailing state-centric realist paradigm. The realist perspectives have dominated the academic discourse consolidating the centrality of the nation state as the most important actor, thereby situating non-state actors to a peripheral, negligible position in international politics. International relations scholars have analyzed and characterized international politics from this state-centric perspective throughout most of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In realist thinking, the basic starting point views nation-states, exclusively, as the primary actors of international politics existing in an environment of anarchy. That is to say, that sovereign states rely only upon themselves and aim to maximize their interests with no superordinate authority that can manage, direct or exert any power in the relationships within and between them (Holsti, 1995).

According to the Hobbesian model of anarchism, since there is no overarching authority, there is likewise no morality in the interaction of states nor are states bound by
any law or moral principle except their own insatiable lust for power. This means, states can never legitimately be criticized or condemned on the basis of the morality or immorality of their actions (Turner, 1998). The *raison d'etre* for states in the realist paradigm is self preservation, and their interactions in international politics have to do little with humanitarian and altruistic efforts and mostly about power, security, war and peace. As the Hobbesian model dictates, states institutionalize violence and exert absolute authority over, "naturally avaricious human beings", in order to maintain order and security. They act and react on the basis of increasing their power vis-à-vis other states, and their sovereignty and absolute authority is determined by the subordination of its constituents (Turner, 1998). In this sense, Richard Falk (1999) clarifies, states are not subject to standards or procedures of external accountability in the treatment of their own citizens unless they are willing or at least give prior consent.

Realist thinking, therefore, challenges claims at the “ascendancy” and “growing importance” of non-state actors, including international institutions such as the UN, maintaining that the state ultimately dictates the norms and behaviors at the international level. As Nye (1993) explains, realists argue that states think and act in terms of increasing their power, and world order is achieved not by adhering to international norms or being subjected to altruistic demands, but by states balancing each others power and operating to serve and maximize their national interests. Realists for example, would argue that states are perhaps sympathetic to social justice issues and will make an effort to appease interest groups, but in the end will not likely modify their behaviors if it means to compromise their power and/or wealth vis-à-vis other states. Realists would perhaps point to UN world conferences, and indicate the gap between rhetoric and reality that is played out, especially
the resistance of the north (despite social movement pressure) to sign treaties and actually follow through on conference promises that are incongruent to their own economic and political agendas. A notable example, is the worldwide high profile campaign against landmines supported by the UN, Red Cross and numerous other organizations. Despite international pressure, the US publicly rebuffed the campaign by refusing to sign the treaty for a variety of political and implicit economic reasons. Many activists skeptical of the efficacy of social movements working to reform the international “system”, advance a similar critique. They too perhaps agree with the realists, that non state actors, even at the international level, do not produce any “real power” over state affairs. The international state apparatus is set up in such a way, that procedural practices make it impossible for non-state actors to pursue any interests apart from those of the members states which dominate policy forming bodies.

3.3 NEW MULTILATERALISM

The state-centered perspective of realism is challenged by many, pointing to the penetrating effects of globalization and the increased role of non-state actors in determining the agenda’s and policies of states. It is argued that non-state actors are challenging the premise of the traditional Westphalian concept of state sovereignty, as they expand efforts to influence, circumvent and challenge state policies. Ronnie Lipschutz (1999) insists, non-state actors serve to reconstruct, re-map and re-imagine world politics, challenging the nation state system from below, and above as the end of the twentieth century is witnessing the weakening of sovereignty away from the state. This in turn is opening a space for international non-state actors to operate across what he terms the “reified boundaries of
space as though they were not there” (pg.390). The withering of the state, according to liberals, will eventually nurture a new global civic consciousness built around new global networks that interact outside the state system. Ken Booth (1991) states:

“Sovereignty is disintegrating. States are less able to perform their traditional functions. Global factors increasingly impinge on all decisions made by governments. Identity patterns are becoming more complex as people assert local loyalties but want to share in global values and lifestyles. The traditional distinction between “foreign” and “domestic” policy is less tenable than ever. And there is growing awareness that we are sharing a common world history.... The international system which is now developing...is of an egg-box containing the shells of sovereignty: but alongside it a global community omelet is cooking” 7

In support of this perspective, Turner (1998) points to the emerging phenomenon of non-state actors at the global level, arguing they most definitely pose both an empirical challenge to the state-centric model of international relations, as well as a normative challenge to the basic assumptions of realism. Supporters of the global civil society concept tend to situate their discussions within the theoretical space of new multilateralism. Jonas Zoninsein (1999) for example, admits this perspective offers a refreshing redefinition of power and hegemony in the world order against the dictates of the traditional statist principles. New multilateralism perceives the international state system not in terms of a balance of power formula among states, but as a “complex multi-level world formed by a combination of macro regions (like the European Community), the disintegration of some existing states into autonomous micro-regions (Croatia, Catalonia etc), transnational firms, social and religious movements, global communications networks, the “technological revolution” and increasing interconnections and interdependencies among states.” (pg.49) It

7 As quoted in Lipschutz (1992) pg.396
is defined as a “post-Westphalian” political order grounded on the internationalization of the state, and based on a new global political and economic discipline, that according to Andy Knight (1999) can be characterized as:

“The changing relationship between the public and private spheres and the virtual collapse of the dividing line separating the domestic from the external environment suggests a fluid but closely integrated global system substantially at odds with the notion of a fragmented system of nationally delineated sovereign states.” (pp.277-278)

New multilateralists contend, the greatest power of non-state actors resides in their capacity to influence public values and norms on a global scale. The presence of international social movements and the pressure they exert over states and public opinion, have as Smouts (1999) mentions, managed to weigh in the decision-making process in numerous instances. Rupesinghe (1999) gives examples of effective non-state intervention in El Salvador, Northern Ireland and Haiti by Church and NGOs, that have rarely received public attention. South Africa, for example, serves as a powerful illustration of the new multilateralist position, and hope in the potential of a global civil society. By contesting realist claims of the “peripheral” role of non-state actors, they indicate how social movements around the world created a “world conscience” of apartheid, and subsequently succeeded in redirecting the policies of both states and corporations (Turner,1998). It is in these examples that new multilateralist theorists purpose the potential challenge to traditional realism. They do not, however, suggest these traditional institutional hierarchies are unilaterally flawed or likely to vanish soon; rather, they aim to develop a theoretical framework for contrasting the potential paradigmatic implications of global civil society with the conventional state-centric realist model of world politics. (Turner, 1998).
Turner (1998) clarifies, how global civil society does not aim to overturn the state system, but represents a different set of priorities than those traditionally associated with the state-centric system. The traditional Hobbesian concept of anarchy, for example, is one case in point. As noted earlier, Hobbes believed in an amoral anarchic state system where hierarchy and absolute state authority is necessary to impose order on naturally avaricious human beings (Turner, 1998). In discussing global civil society, scholars do not refute Hobbes theory of anarchy entirely, but submit to the conventional version of anarchism in so much as there is no single sovereign authority that should be able to impose a particular form of order. However, new multilateralist theorists depart from Hobbes in considering morality, not amorality, as a central feature for global civil society. In the sense that non-state actors are not driven by power, but for their commitment to certain social justice principles. From this theoretical perspective, an anarchist society for new multilateralists would be made up of a society of institutions and governments, populist in nature and based on, individual liberty and voluntary patterns of cooperation, instead of force, intimidation and efficiency (Turner, 1998).

As mentioned earlier, it is within this new realist perspective termed new multilateralism that the discussion of global civil society has found considerable discursive space. Towards addressing the potential of global civil society, this perspective suggests countless strategies to accelerate and consolidate the presence and power of this body within the framework of global governance. Global governance, as defined by Marie-Claude Smouts (1999), implies that individuals participate and share in the management and responsibility of their lives with public authorities. This implies improving opportunities for citizens to participate in setting the multilateral agenda and to discuss the
bases for international public action. Andy Knight (1999) adds, the arrangements of global governance insist upon global, regional and local levels to resolve transnational dilemmas, ranging from sociopolitical concerns, economic issues, the environment to military. Within new multilateralist perspectives, discussions around global civil society are part in parcel of supporting the preeminent role of multilateral institutions to facilitate the interplay between state and non-state actors around fundamental issues.

The debates surrounding global governance are less concerned with establishing a single world government, and more preoccupied with multilateral institutions and the procedures, practices and activities required for state and non-state actors to engage in cooperative, and community beneficial activities (Knight, 1999). New multilateralist theorists recognize the emergence and importance of developing a cosmopolitan global culture and the operations of a global community dealing with matters that although may seem localized, are part and parcel of a global problem. In order to facilitate these interactions, they advocate the strength and proliferation of multilateral institutions, that will be truly reflective of the needs of the majority (Schechter, 1999). Although they are critical of the top-down, undemocratic mores of multilateral institutions like the UN, they are in favour of the reformation of these existing multilateral institutions and the creation of new transnational institutions whose members are elected by world citizens rather than nominated by sovereign states. From this perspective, the push is not to dissolve the nation state system, but to broaden political participation by including a range of "informal" voices into the decision making process, and by empowering civil societies to take on a greater influencing role. This position holds that multilateral institutions are not independent of states, but are dependent on them for their resources and remain key instruments through
which state governments can enact collectively derived policies (Knight, 1999). Multilateral norms, principles and institutions have in essence a super-structural character and a facilitating function in terms of helping groups of states to achieve common goals.

In this respect, proponents of global civil society encourage proposals to further democratize global governance by suggesting the following: multiplication of regional parliaments, holding global referendums, reforming the Security Council, annual forum of civil societies, creating an enlarged UN Social and Economic Security Council, strengthening world judicial powers and creating a peoples assembly (Smouts, 1999). In fact the Commission on Global Governance included similar calls for reform in a chapter on global civil society in its recent publication, “Our Global Neighborhood” (see Falk 1995 for critique). The report strongly favoured new modes of political participation, in light of widespread disenchantment with government. Without challenging the neoliberal consensus too drastically, the report stressed the need to provide more space in global governance for people and their organizations, even stressing the need for a peoples assembly to be set up through the direct election of the world’s population (Falk, 1995). As will be discussed at a later point, these proposals to reform the existing multilateral structure in order to facilitate the workings of a global civil society, are highly criticized by scholars and activities for a variety of reasons.

Upon this understanding of new multilateralism, therefore, one may wonder what is so new about it? In the sense that this was arguably the initial vision of the UN, and to which those who consistently advocate the UN’s efficacy continue to frame their discussions. The only notable point of departure in the writings of this new brand of multilateralism is the “bottom-up” focus (Smouts, 1999). Previously in the writing of what
could be stated as the old multilateralism, there was indeed a top down focus on global issues and concerns whereby the UN system was aiming to exercise centralized “global governance” having formal relationships with states only, and interacting in a state centric structure with “sovereignty bound” actors. This meant a highly structured and centralized multilateral institution working exclusively with the “legitimate” political community (Knight, 1999). It is important to note that the theoretical base for understanding new multilateralism is new (not neo) realism - a paradigm which has much in common with classical realism in its focus on power relations, but differs in its call to broaden the range of determining social forces beyond state power. New multilateralism aspires to a bottom up approach to make structural changes to the world order. It privileges the interests of the less powerful, and marginalized majority with references to the, “greater social equity, greater diffusion of power among countries and social groups, protection of the biosphere, moderation and non-violence in dealing with conflict and mutual recognition of the equality of civilizations” (Zoninsein, 1999, pg.50). This framework purports the construct of global civil society based on the need to establish a new power configuration in the world system, through the interaction and participation of a host of non state actors (social groups, social movements, NGOs, religious communities, scientific associations, ethnic cultural groups etc) with state counterparts in a democratically driven, non-hierarchical world order facilitated through new and different multilateral institutions.

Ronnie Lipschutz (1992) states that the spatial boundaries of global civil society are different, because its autonomy from the constructed boundaries of the state system also allows for the construction of new political spaces. For new multilateralists, international civil society actors are morally superior to states, serving to counterbalance the power of
authoritarian states as well as to seek to influence and constrain government behaviour. This perspective echoes domestic conceptions of state-civil society relations, making a similar connection that the greater the diversity and number of non-state activity at the international level, the more it will lend to a democratic international state system (Stienstra, 1999). Not surprisingly, the most important agenda for global civil society also remains the promotion of democracy internationally. Parallel to domestic civil society, the existence of a civil society in which competing interests are organized is seen as the main guarantor of democracy. Yoshikazu Sakamoto (1997) investigates the relationship between democracy and global civil society, asserting that the latter is the engine of reflexive democratization and the source of democratic legitimation in the international state system. In his study, global civil society sets a new norm of transnational accountability whereby states are now accountable beyond their own citizenry (Sakamoto, 1997). He advocates the globalization of democracy, which means, “the creation of a global perspective and values in the depths of peoples heart and minds, establishing the idea of a global civil society.” Thus, democracy can be deepened only if it is globalized, and it can be globalized only if it is deepened.

3.4 CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

In assessing the new multilateralist project for a “global” civil society, the various meanings, debates, critiques and limitations of the term from a domestic context need to be taken into consideration. Laura Macdonald’s (1994) caveat is warranted, outlining that the discussion surrounding global civil society reproduce the conflicts and contradictions of the domestic civil societies it emerges from, and also creates new ones reflecting the dynamics
of power at the international level. Parallel to the discussion on domestic civil society, the construct of global civil society equally embodies the duality, or perhaps contradiction, of simultaneous “top down” and “bottom up” processes. Or rather, borrowing from Gramsci, as being part in parcel of the neo-liberal, capitalist establishment as well as serving as a counter hegemonic form against it. By way of critique, it is the project of the former, that is considered by many scholars and activists to be gaining preponderance in this era of globalization. In fact, Mustapha Kamal Pasha (1996) is convinced that the idea of global civil society was born as a liberal recasting of world politics in a period to facilitate the process of globalization, more so, then to act as a counter-hegemonic ideal for resistance.

Recalling the extensive comments on the inseparability of civil society and capitalism made by various scholars in the previous section (refer to Woods 1990, Mamdani 1994), it is interesting to note the silence on part of the majority of liberal scholars, to discuss this link at the global level. Surely, the commitment to the realm of non-state actors interacting and influencing world politics also includes the pervasive presence of transnational business corporations. Once again, liberal theorists downplay the role of economic factors in global transformation, and conveniently make no differentiation between the growth and power of big business on the one hand, and the emerging presence and poignancy of social movements on the other. In this respect, liberal proponents of global civil society overlook global hierarchies of power and wealth, emptying out the imbalances between social forces. In his study of global civil society, Michael Schechter (1999) argues how multinational corporations, parading as civil society actors, have been the greatest benefactors of the emerging global civic space. He contends the concurring project of globalization and global civil society simultaneously contribute to the weakening
of states and the efforts of humanitarian intergovernmental organizations’ abilities to
govern, especially in the economic sphere. Social movement forces have not gained as
much access and influencing leverage on states and international bodies like the UN and
WTO, as have big businesses. In fact as the efficacy of social movement organizations is
debated at the international level (please refer to chapter four), there is no debate, about the
increasingly effective role multinational corporations have already carved and are expected
to strengthen in global civil society.

A prime example is the World Trade Organization, the newest UN related
organization concerned with global trade, to which many critics claim is the, “most neo-
liberal, supranational, anti-democratic and globalist of intergovernmental organizations”
(Schechter, 1999 pg.77). Not surprisingly, this multilateral institution has blatantly
discarded the lobbying efforts of citizen groups, and within its charter the press and public
are both banned from access to its tribunals. The only civil society actor privy to WTO
agendas are multinational corporations whose interests, subsequently have been supported
and advanced. Set up in 1995 at the formal end of the Uruguay round of the General
Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), it is now the most powerful trade body in the
world, with some 134 member nations and a further 33 wanting membership. WTO trade
agreements provide legally binding rules for international commerce and trade policy
(Schechter, 1999). The operations of WTO are perhaps the best example of the efficacy of
global civil society, in so much as the interests of non-state actors (read: multinational
corporations) are the most powerful voices. The WTO is entirely representative of the
interests of corporations and richest one-tenth of the world's population. In favour of
corporate interests, the WTO has the right to completely rescind any law passed to protect
the environment, health and labour rights. It ruled in favour of commercial interests against
dolphins protected by US marine mammals act and turtles protected under the US
endangered species act. Countless other agreements passed by WTO signal the overriding
interests of corporations over social movement organizations and states. For example, the
TRIPS agreement (Trade Related Intellectual Property Measures) sets enforceable rules on
patents, copyrights and trademarks. The agreement gives pharmaceutical companies
monopoly rights to resources in the south and certain medications which will exclude
poorer countries from controlling their own natural resources and producing their own
drugs at affordable rates. It is from these events and circumstances to which Schechter
(1999) points to how the global civil society arena is therefore loaded with power and
politics, and mega corporations are currently better organized and more effective in
effectuating their goals than other actors. He states,

"Operating under the deceptive banner of free trade, multi national
corporations are working hard to expand their control over the
international economy and to undo vital health, safety, and environmental
protections won by citizens movements across the globe in recent
decades. These megacorporations are not expecting these victories to
be gained in town halls, state offices, the US Capitol, or even at the
United Nations. They are looking to circumvent the democratic process
altogether by relying on NAFTA, the GATT and now the WTO" (78)

Interestingly, there has also been a recent increase in UN/corporate collaboration.
As will be discussed in the next chapter, the highest recognition and influencing capabilities
for non-state actors in the UN is extended to those who have category one consultative
status (Riddell-Dixon, 1995). In this category, groups have the greatest privileges in terms
of influencing the official agenda, circulating their written statements and speaking at UN
meetings and conferences. It is important to note that most social movements, even the

* All Information on WTO is taken from http://www.wtowatch.org
largest such as Greenpeace and Amnesty, fall into categories two and three. However, the International Chamber of Commerce, an umbrella group representing the interests of over 7,000 companies and businesses in 130 countries, has category one status (Broadhurst & Ledgerwood, 1998). In addition to this privilege, corporations are increasingly working with the UN on collaborative projects. Claudia Deutsch (1999) reveals the intention, "companies know that if they help the UN with its pet projects, it will open doors and act as a valuable buffer between them and the governments of countries in which they wish to operate" (pg.16). Examples of these goodwill corporate gestures include: Amoco's (oil company) donation of $800,000 to help local fishermen in Angola; Bill Gates $26 million to UNICEF to fight tetanus in infants; Levi-Strauss' $40,000 donation to fight AIDS in Poland; and Chevron's (oil company) donation of $500,000 to UNDP in Kazakhstan (Deutsch, 1999). Although it is debatable whether these corporations have actually co-opted UN agencies in these countries, the intentions are summed up by the President of Chevron's Kazakhstan operations who states, "It all boils down to our desire to have a stable economic and political environment in which to operate, and to stimulate the local economy". (Deutsch, 1999, pg.17)

Global civil society, like its domestic counterpart, is naively considered a pluralistic arena whereby a wide range of actors, from social movements, interest groups and multinational businesses, all interact and advance their interests within a homogenous democratic space. Transnational businesses aiming to monopolize and exploit world resources are considered on an equal footing in their ability to influence international institutions with environmental lobbyists and others promoting justice and equity between the North and South. The disparity of power, financial resources, access to information and
political leverage that is evident among the various groups are not even flagged as relevant issues. Advocates of global civil society assume equity in the relations and positions of the multiple forces, and considers their common purpose as essentially to counter the abuses of state power (Woods, 1990). Internal tensions, contradictions and outright clash between members of global civil society, such as multinational corporations and human rights groups, for example, are significantly downplayed if not completely ignored. (Hurrell and Woods, 1995). Instead of analyzing these dynamics and assessing their implications on the functioning and efficacy of a global civil society, liberal theorists have instead, blindly replicated domestic discussions juxtaposing an "angelic" global civil society, in "natural" conflict with "satanic" nation-states.

The disparaging of nation-states, therefore, is to be expected in the writings on global civil society by the established preference of non-state actors over the predictable flaws of state behaviour. A more salient attack remains on the Third World state, considered the pejorative other incapable of self-rule. The sovereignty of Third World states is consistently challenged by the globalising activities of non-state actors. As mentioned previously, the capitalist project has circumvented the ability of states to determine their economic agenda, as unaccountable international agencies, collaborating with multinationals, increasingly make influential policy decisions on behalf of and in lieu of states. States' roles in their own economy, in particular, are significantly lessened as their ability to regulate basic exchange and interest rates, taxes and public funding is eroding, whereas foreign businesses attached to WTO are strengthening their decision-making powers. The declining role of states vis-à-vis multinationals becomes more evident as international trade disputes are now being handled by bodies like the International Chamber
of Commerce’s court of arbitration instead of in national courts. This gives transnational companies the right to regulate themselves and remove themselves from accountability and the public scrutiny of citizens within a particular state (Schechter, 1999). An obvious trend set out by globalization, only to be further legitimized under the rubric of global civil society.

Instead of addressing these inequalities and the structural causes of poverty perpetuated by international financial organizations and their big business allies, as discussed in the previous chapter on globalization, there is a renewed interest in civil society to sweep up after the state and execute the services for the poor that it can no longer provide. Echoing the impotence of the state, as was done from a domestic context, the liberal agenda strengthens the plea for international NGOs to take their positions against global hunger and poverty in the creation of a vibrant global civil society. States have become incapable of denying an augmented role for international NGOs, especially due to the amount of money these “altruistic” agencies shuffle into the countries. World Bank and agencies like the IMF publicly encourage the growth of an international NGO sector, perhaps because these groups are able to handle the “temporary” side-effects of globalization, without upsetting the global structures that sustain these conditions. A growing trend among official aid agencies is to bypass the state and contract NGOs to implement components of their projects as an alternative to the bureaucratic rigidity of government (Hurrell and Woods, 1995). Bratton (1989) adds, that governments generally tend to react negatively, especially if donors begin to reallocate development assistance away from them. Over the past years, millions of dollars have been redirected towards the international NGO community, considered more “credible” and “efficient” than the state,
particularly in areas of health and rural development. This trend is acute on the African continent, met with considerable resistance and disapproval by African governments insisting on the sovereign political right to act as gatekeepers between organizations within their borders and agencies from the outside. Clarke (1991) states:

“(governments) see the erosion of their sovereignty; the increasing execution of state functions by staff who are answerable not to them but to foreign governments; the diversion of some of their most skilled labour from government to non-government service; and the gradual takeover by foreign influence, culture and values (pg.55-56)

Interesting to note, is the power and privilege international NGOs exercise, particularly with the support of the World Bank and IMF, in pursuing large scale operations reflective of western priorities and interests in the South. Opening the doors of a global civil society has arguably led to the imperialist euro-centric project guised in humanitarian intervention. Population programmes, are one example, rigorously carried out by western based NGOs and are among the most heavily financed programmes in the Third World. Controlling “over-population” is prioritized in order to address issues of declining world resources and poverty in the Third World. This is challenged by many activists, arguing that the programmes are racist re-casting the eugenics agenda to limit the birth of non-white babies (for thorough discussion see Maria Mies 1993). Further it is argued that population control programmes detract from discussion over wasteful over-production and over-consumption in the North, and unjust economic policies targeted at the South. The aggressive promotion of contraceptive technology by national and international chapters of Planned Parenthood, for example, has invoked controversy over reproductive and human rights violations of rural women in the South who have little access to health
services (Hartmann, 1987). Contraceptive technologies are being tested on women in the South without consent, by leading pharmaceuticals in collaboration with NGOs. As one health practitioner in Bangladesh asserts:

"If we were to tell women that this was part of a research programme or that there were certain possible side-effects, no one would have volunteered.....women were simply told it was safe and effective". (Hartmann, 1987:171)

This is just an example of some of the ethical issues that surround the activities of non-state international actors, questioning issues of transparency, responsibility and accountability within global civil society. Who are actors accountable to? How are their activities monitored? Why are social movement organizations assumed to be the paragon of social justice and morality? Furthermore, the privileged voices of those involved in the campaign against "excessive" population growth find there politics and agenda conveniently supported and further articulated at international UN conferences. This begs the question as to whose voices indeed get represented and advanced in a global civil society?

The poignant critique as to who comprises civil society put forth by Mahmood Mamdani (1995), is revisited here in the discussion of global civil society. Similar to domestic civil society, sporadic informal groups are denied access to this emerging international field. As Clarke et al (1998) observes, it is only the large, formal, most active and financially strong organizations that have the luxury to "go global". Their study points to the overwhelming number of Northern social movement organizations active at the global level, in terms of advocacy and participation, and admit the leading Southern groups are usually the financial "partners" of the former. This is not to imply that these groups
unilaterally promote skewed agendas, but it does raise issues of whose voices are excluded, and consequently raises question as to what types of issues are formulated and prioritized and what are not. Although the details of North/South social movement relations will be discussed in the next section, a worthwhile point to be made here is the recreation of inequalities and power relations between the North and South evident within global civil society. As stressed earlier, here again we can notice tensions and contradictions within the realm of global civil society, despite its success to masquerade as an emancipatory and democratic entity. As will be discussed in greater detail, organizations like Greenpeace and Amnesty International have carved their niche in global forums, but at the same time, small scale advocacy groups in the South are routinely marginalized. Riddell-Dixon (1995) attributes this to the limited paid personnel, travel funds to attend meetings and global conferences, access to information, faxes, internets, financial resources as well as the experience and information required to guide lobbying efforts. Not only are small informal groups denied agency in global civil society, but even some mass movements with large following are peripheralized in the discussions around global civil society.

A strong case in point is the Swadhayyia movement in India, accepted as a leading movement among the poor and impacting well over one to four million people across the country. The Swadhyaya has been able to transform the social, cultural, economic and spiritual life of village communities based on Hindu Vedic principles (Walker, 1994). The practices of this movement are grounded in the cultivation of self-respect, which generates a sense of command over one's destiny, a sense of justice and thus a sense of participation in a broader community. The Swadhyaya is drawing international attention because of its success in transforming "marginal" villages into self-sustaining, creative and economically
sound communities. According to Walker (1994), although Swadhyaya is capable of making worthwhile contributions on a global scale, the movement is not fit for consideration as an actor in a global civil society. Among the concerns are its non-political approach (that is its distance from state politics), its regional specificity (or orientation in rural villages mainly) and its lack of institutional stability (limited bureaucracy). The strongest concern raised, however, was the deep seated cultural identity of the movement, and its religious motivation. Walker (1994:) notes, “as far as modern or western cultures are concerned, God may have been dead for a long time...the integrity of the movement would seem to depend more on finding God and the world in the particular local...then in trying to spread the word “out there” (pg.689). This is an implicit liberal prerogative, whereby in order for movements to cross into global civil society they must somehow overcome their particularist rooting and be in consonance with the more familiar cultural, philosophical and apparently secular orientations and traditions of Europe and North America. Although the Swadhyaya movement perhaps has no interest in becoming part of a global civil society, it is interesting to note that the potential contributions this movement could make worldwide are adamantly and arbitrarily denied because it does not conveniently conform to the hegemonic liberal prerequisites. This is not surprising based on the issues raised in the domestic civil society context, however, once again the racist exclusion of cross-cultural interpretations and participation raises the question as to why global civil society is termed global in the first place? At the same time, the theoretical link between global civil society and promoting international democratization are contradicted by this very exclusion, given that it is precisely this dense and durable network of numerous informal and semi-formal organizations (ethnic associations, religious groups, local youth groups, literary and
sporting clubs) that are the channels, instigators and supporters for popular democratic participation! (Schmitz and Hutchful, 1992).

This brings us to a discussion on the democratic project explicit in global civil society. In light of the discussion thus far, the notion that the plurality and diverse representation within global civil society hint to its own democratic substance and its intrinsic capacity to promote democratic principles abroad - can be seriously challenged. As mentioned, liberal theorists have failed to observe the internal tensions and contradictions within civil society. Indeed many actors are favorably geared to democratic principles, but the powerful presence of multinational businesses and various financial/scientific groups can be confidently construed as anti-democratic. Further Walker (1994) forecasts the stifling and eventual “doom” of global civil society if it becomes too plural with voices contesting claims about race, culture and even gender. In understanding these various struggles at the international level, some attention also needs to be paid to the democratic procedures and practices anticipated to facilitate the interactions within this global civic space. As previously mentioned, the concept of global governance is proposed to broaden political participation by coalescing state and non-state voices in the decision making processes, in order to make it more responsive to the needs of people. Liberals emphasize the enormity of issues faced by the world, from environment to militarism, that cannot be undertaken by states alone and have necessitated global governing strategies (see Lipshutz 1992, Wapner 1997). Global governance entails widening the democratic process for an ever increasing interdependent world community. Democracy reaching this international height is the liberal dream, but as Claude Ake (1999) insists, democratic spaces are actually becoming more and more obsolete, and its proposition at the global level does not enhance
the power for emancipatory movements. Rather, he maintains, global civic space creates a disorienting sense of spacelessness whereby interests are increasingly tangled with people and events far away.

Given the effects of globalization, Ake (1999) does not believe the democratization of transnational social movements is ever achievable, because of this very detachment of issues and events away from the reality of local communities. He mentions power in transnational social forces have considerable autonomy, but they have no center to stay connected with. This is considered problematic by Ake (1999) since transnational movements are likely to function without accountability and transparency with the individuals whose day to day decisions and activities produce, legitimate and are affected by them. Globalization breaks up territoriality and nationality, and the opening up of global civic space adds to the distance between people and local communities able to represent themselves in governance structures. Schechter (1999) adds, by drastically reducing the importance of proximity people must rely on new technologies, mainly cyberspace, to keep connected. Further, the potential for building global civil society might come at the expense of weakened identity with one’s state and with the civil society within the country in which one has one’s primary abode. These issues are problematic for a number of activists who insist on prioritizing local governance instead, where power is built upward from the bottom making it accountable and responsible to the ground and not to remote centralized authorities of power. (Parajuli and Kothari, 1998). Achieving a healthy democratic process at the international level, therefore, must begin by consolidating the process from the bottom first. To counter the overbearing emphasis on global governance, a comprehensive vision of grassroots governance is emphasized outlining the necessary linkages between the
local, national and global. Frank Amalric (1999) succinctly highlights the general connections of this three tiered approach: First, it involves strengthening the capacity of local communities to defend their rights locally; secondly it ensures that at the national level there exists supportive legislation, institutions and policies (hence emphasizing the vital role of the state); and thirdly, that state and non-state representatives represent their localities at international decision-making processes in solidarity with other networks to put forward alternatives and bridge micro and macro concerns.

This line of critique implies global governance to be part in parcel of strengthening the democratic viability and capacity at the local, national, and regional levels simultaneously. From this perspective, it can be discerned that global civil society must rely on strong regional activism and coordination alongside strong national governments, receptive to the voices of their domestic civil societies, who in turn are supported by local communities (Ake, 1999). Although there are ostensible mechanisms to promote the democratic process at these levels, there is debate over the efficacy of democratic performance in a global context. Ultimately what Ake (1999) stresses, is that for democracy to make sense at any level (whether local, regional or global) it should consist of identifiable power centers in a territorial entity, consistent with a community which is conscious of itself as a self-governing entity. He adds, “there can be no democracy in amorphous space through which power is infinitely diffused. Whatever arrangements are made to recontextualize and defend democracy must emulate the nation-state in terms of a discrete spatial and social entity and a specific power center” (pg. 187) These thoughts are shared by Marie-Claude Smouts (1999), who indicates the ambiguity amongst theorists to discuss the details of how a democracy can actually operate at the international level.
Smouts (1999) speaks to the difficulty of conceptualizing democracy at the international level by outlining four basic features of democracy absent in international discussions: first, an existing government in place to ensure communication between the governed and the governing bodies; second, voters choose representatives who make policy decisions ensuring representation and the legitimacy of decisions made in the name of common interest; third, democracy consists of a set of institutions to ensure basic rights and freedoms; and lastly, in a democracy governing officials are accountable for their actions, and citizens have the capacity to dismiss their leaders. These four basic features of democracy imply a rigorous definition of global civil society actors (who has a voice and who is accountable?) and a territorial division of constituent voices. Since neither of these elements exist, Smouts (1999) insists this sharply curbs the possibility of creating democracy on an international scale, unless a new process is envisaged. A serious limitation to Smouts (1999) idea is her parochial understanding of democracy as a political system of governance, that must bear similar domestic features at an international level. Arguably, democratic political institutions are fallible and are considered by many as weak mechanisms no longer sufficient even at the domestic level, and by extension, erroneous to duplicate at the international level.

There is no doubt that discussions over global governance must critically examine the details of democratic participation, but to entirely refute this international political process at this point in history may be premature. Knight (1999) agrees, some framework of participation, stability and the ordering and steering of peoples concerns at the global level is deemed necessary. New multilateralists are confident that multilateral institutions like the UN are ideal vehicles for a “bottom up” reform process. In order for the UN to be more
responsive to the needs of people, there is unanimous agreement of the need for structural and procedural change (Falk, 1995). For liberals, the UN is bound to face a legitimacy crisis unless it is grounded in transnational civil society, and the functioning of one demands the reformation of the UN for three main reasons: first, the current decision-making process privileges the concerns of the most powerful states and underprivileged those of the least powerful states which are most in need of UN assistance; secondly, UN pays minimal attention to the voice of people, particularly those already marginalized in the international system; and thirdly, its state-centric approach is incapable of resolving many of today’s most pressing problems (Riddell-Dixon, 1995). However, the credibility of the UN has generally eroded, as it is considered a highly bureaucratic, statist instrument that offers mere token representation of non-state actors. How can transnational actors advocating for a new world order based on principles of equity and justice work within an international institution that was conceived and is held together by inequality and disparity between the hegemonic power of minority states and the peripheralized majority. Kothari (1994) is convinced of the inability of the UN to facilitate global transformation, and in fact implicates the UN itself as one of the key instruments undermining democratic struggles and sustaining the global capitalist agenda. Ali Mazrui (as quoted in Kothari, 1994) shares this opinion stating, “for the time being, the United Nations is part of the cultural hegemony of the Western world”, and cites the example of the former Director General of UNESCO, who was released from his position after attempting to resist western dominance of the organization. (pg.25)

These are important concerns particularly because global civil society can not be conceived without an increased role and strengthened capacity of multilateral institutions
like the UN. One needs to question whether working with international institutions like the UN is even possible as it reflects a pattern of structural power between the have and have not states. As Hurrell and Woods (1995) observe: “On the one hand, states create international institutions because they wish to resolve distributional conflicts and relative gain concerns. Yet, in the end, it is powerful states who will shape the agenda, decide who can play the game, define the rules and enforce outcomes which are favourable to themselves” (pg461). Liberals in their discussion are preoccupied about the UN’s state centric approach which they believe undermines the ability to promote human rights, terrorism and nuclear weapons. Perhaps more focus should be geared not to lessen state sovereignty, but rather, to ensure the equitable distribution of decision-making power and agenda setting.

To be fair, the UN itself has pronounced the need for reform, echoed in reports such as “Our Global Neighborhood” issued by the Commission on Global Governance. The document makes specific endorsements for global civil society, and the need for the UN to provide more space in global governance for people and their organizations (Falk, 1995). As mentioned earlier, recommendations for the establishment of a peoples assembly, an annual gathering of representatives from some 200 to 300 transnational citizens groups, that would meet prior to the General Assembly in the same facilities used by government representative. An annual forum for actors in global civil society is also recommended for networking and the sharing of ideas, as is the right for citizen groups to petition the UN on any grievances to then be reviewed by an independent Council of Petitions, recommending a referral, if appropriate to the Security Council, General Assembly and or Security-General. These are indeed worthwhile suggestions, but as Richard Falk (1995) points out,
are easily deflated without a call for a parallel and complementary reform of the hierarchical and undemocratic entities such as the Security Council. He further mentions, the document Our Global Neighborhood although is receptive to transnational social forces, is simultaneously in favour of the Bretton Woods institutions and the neo-liberal capitalist agenda. Falk (1995) confidently states the reforms and changes recommended by the Commission will not likely be accepted, and if they ever were, there is not much prospect that the statism of the UN could be challenged by these means. Falk (1995) continues:

“At most, such innovations would provide global civil society with entry-points and mobilizing occasions, not for neighborly discussion, but to posit demands and to convey the depth and intensity of cleavages and perceived grievances to a wider audience.” (pg.574)

In fact, even if one was interested in making reforms to the UN to create a more conducive environment for global civil society, then at least an acknowledgment of the existing inequalities and contradictions within the UN must be outlined, before one can establish the mechanisms needed to deal with the underlying unjust, undemocratic systemic and structural problems. In fact the recent claims to consolidate a vibrant global civil society by building and strengthening multilateral institutions, is actually contrasted by a systematic depletion and exclusion of these very suggestions at the UN. For example, Southern hopes of establishing a New International Economic Order have been dashed by the North, systematically rejected proposals hinting to even slightly redistribute resources for the benefit of the South (Riddell-Dixon, 1995). As Kothari (1994) explains, the past decade has witnessed the downsizing or complete closure of several UN agencies most adept to facilitate the input and synthesize the articulations of transnational social
movement actors in particular. The Centre for Transnational Corporations, for example, was on the verge of defining a code of conduct for corporate behaviour and has now ceased to operate. There is a call for the closure of UNIDO, an agency that mediates between the self-interested and aggressive actions of the first world who seek to control a significant proportion of the world’s generic resources. Similarly, several attempts have been made to reduce the scope of UNCTAD on the grounds that its functions have been overtaken by the work of GATT and the WTO. This is considerably problematic because UNCTAD was formed as one of a number of organizations established by the Third World to foster a new international order based on justice and equity. Similar calls are made to dissolve or reform UNITAR, and the United Nations University recently shifted its priorities from the social to the more technical sciences. If there is any potential to resurrect the UN as a meaningful forum for people organizing for change from every part of the world, particularly the Third World, then the rhetoric needs to be bridged to reality (Kothari, 1994). The distrust and animosity activists have towards the UN are warranted, and not likely to be mollified any time soon. Global civil society will continue to be perceived by many as elite, privileged space for the few who choose to take part in the token representation of marginalized voices (Shiva, 1994). In fact, as many activists and scholars note, taking part in global forums as civil actors does not advance the project for justice and radical change, but instead leads to co-optation and the legitimization of the structures of oppression. This view is expressed by Parajuli and Kothari (1998) who state, “we feel it is misplaced to expect international institutions…to be aligned with the ongoing grassroots processes of democracy…the more we participate the more susceptible we become to co-optation by the global mechanisms of power” (pg.24)
This previous discussion highlighted only some of the more salient grievances, skepticism and trusting impressions of global civil society and the global governance project. The uncritical adoption of the term by new multilateralists is widely promoted in very recent writings on globalization and the changing nature of international politics. Similar uses of the term have also been put forth by activists in the North, trusting the potential for systemic change at an international level. In contrast, the term is rarely taken up, even in so far as to offer a critique, by Third World scholars and activists. As the previous discussion illustrated the term is promulgated as an emancipatory process, yet can be prone to the clever co-optation of minority voices and a benign instrument to only vent concerns without seriously stirring the system. These criticisms are acknowledged by the majority of scholars, even those in favour of the strong potential of an active global civil society. Lipschutz (1992), for example, as a strong liberalist does briefly mention conflicts within global civil society between private business interests and social activists, however, is convinced they are neither structural, nor will they hinder long term transformation. However, Lipschutz, (1992) too is also uncertain of the actual workings of an international civil society. For a strong proponent and leading theorist on global civil society, what is most surprising is his prudent admission that the emergence of a global civil society will also not necessarily lead to a more peaceful or unified world (Macdonald, 1994). Does this mean then that the discussions of global civil society are no longer relevant for the various resistance and emancipatory struggles occurring in the world? Can the term be dismissed exclusively for its propensity to consolidate the neo-liberal agenda? Theoretical ambiguity and the uncertainty and distrust of the construct are problematic for many activists and scholars, particularly from the South. Yet it has not been unilaterally rejected by some
scholars, committed to not do away with the term entirely, but to surface a neo-gramscian understanding for the potential of a transnational counter-hegemonic network to emerge (see Cox 1999).

Recalling the discussion on civil society within the domestic context, Robert Cox (1999) speaks to the possibility of a "bottom-up" sense of civil society articulated by Gramsci. As discussed earlier, Antonio Gramsci articulated the double meanings of civil society: one that was the ground that sustained the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, but also one on which an emancipatory, counter hegemonic struggle could be based, comprised of social forces distinct from state and capitalist interests (Cox, 1999). This latter version of civil society is gaining acceptance, and is considered to have received its impetus from the movements of opposition to Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe and similar movements against authoritarian rule and capitalist dominance in Asian and Latin American countries. Therefore, according to Cox (1999), civil society can be detached from its liberal-pluralist history and be appropriated as a comprehensive term for the ways in which people can collectively mount their protests, seek alternatives and resist established power, both economic and political (Cox, 1999).

This counter-hegemonic movement is integral to Gramscian thought, as Gramsci recognized the need for it to fervently challenge bourgeoisie hegemony, which is fully achieved when the major institutions and forms of organization - economic, social and political - became models for emulation in other subordinate states. According to Stephen Gill (1990), the changing global political economy has already lead to global hegemony by the ruling elite, with its origins in the core powerful states and its outward expansion in the periphery. This world hegemony necessitates a consensual order, involving minimal use of
illegitimate force, and has, for its constitutional expression, a parliamentary or liberal

democratic regime. On world hegemony, Gill (1990) states:

"World Hegemony is describable as a social structure, an economic
structure, and a political structure; and it cannot be simply one of
these things but must be all three. World hegemony, furthermore, is
expressed in universal norms, institutions and mechanisms, which
lay down general rules for the behaviour of states, and for those
forces of civil society that act across national boundaries - rules
which support the dominant mode of production" (pg.48)

Gramsci was convinced that when the apparatus of hegemony eventually fragments
and will likely break down, the situation is ripe for a shift in power and the search for a new
counter-hegemonic consensus to take place (Gill, 1993). This entails a "bloc" of
transnational alliances that is made up of people from more than one class, and to a large
extent is considered as a "natural" and legitimate entity endorsed by most of its members.
According to Cox (1992) the social forces that emerge must ultimately be representative of
the global community and will most likely be "schizophrenic" in operation. That is to say,
one part of it will be involved in the present predicaments of the international capitalist
system, and the other probing the social and political foundations to build a new order. Cox
(1992) admits that sweeping changes will not be followed by the moral exhortations or
utopian schemes for institutional reform advanced by the social forces in a global civil
society. They are more likely to come about through two current observable historical
processes. One is the challenge to the capitalism and the need to come up with viable
alternatives to the system and the other is to address the weaknesses of social cohesion
within civil society, in so much that linkages can be made to build a political base for a
globally coherent alternative set of policies (Cox, 1992). This neo-gramscian endorsement
of global civil society, speaks to its counter-hegemonic potential to disrupt, resist and counter-pose the current neo-liberal transnational hegemony. In this sense, what is implied is that the means by which a transnational ruling class has sustained its current hegemonic position, must be challenged by a counter-hegemony that ultimately involves the alliance building of people and groups from all world to aggregate their interests for transformative change, whereby “narrow interests are transformed into more universal views as ideologies are adopted or amended and alliances formed.” (Gill, 1993, pg. 129). The neo-Gramscian model, unlike liberal-pluralists, addresses the challenges to create this counter-hegemonic force recognizing the existing and potential exacerbations of the contradictions, conflicts and multiple oppressions within the realm of global civil society. Despite similar ambiguities and uncertainties echoed in this conceptual analysis of global civil society, Laura Macdonald (1994) insists the concept is an important innovation because it opens up theoretical space for addressing the “democratic deficit” within the current world order. Her optimism for the construct global civil society is shared by Cox (1999), who states that the ambitious project to create a new order by global civil society, will have to be built in solidarity among diverse groups from the bottom up. He states, “the present order falters in its attempt to hold things in place from the top down...freedom of initiative and freedom to build is the critical condition for the emergence of the new world order.”(Cox, 1992, pg.15). In this hope, it is the impact and potential contributions of social movements that have been identified as the pivotal actors to create and consolidate a different vision, and to challenge the violent and oppressive systems in place.
CHAPTER 4

TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT OPERATIONS

"If social movements are to be taken seriously in relation to claims about world politics, at least some attention will have to be paid to ways in which they do, or do not, challenge the constitutive practices of modern politics. It is futile to try to gauge the importance of social movements without considering the possibility that is precisely the criteria of significance by which they are to be judged that may be in contention" (Walker, 1994:672)

The increased visibility and activity of transnational social movement operations is considered unprecedented in world history (Smith, 1998). The role and activities of transnational social movements has become the central focus for discussion and analysis, particularly in gauging the potential emergence of global civil society. Many questions are warranted in this regard: Do these increasingly visible movements actually manifest a global civil society? What are the obstacles to their work for social change? Do they promote and facilitate change? How and why do these movements emerge globally, which movements span outward in this way, and which ones don’t and why? Do they actually pluralize and democratize the global polity? Whose interests do they represent and seek to address, and what is the process engaged to achieve them? Are these movements reactionary or visionary? Is there legitimacy for these movements at the grassroots? How is information collected, channeled and used from the grassroots? And how do tensions and points of difference between and within the movements affect their work as actors in a global civil society? Do they offer viable alternatives reflective of real needs of people from across continents? Are these movements unitary? These are the sorts of questions this chapter seeks to explore. The first section will introduce and define transnational social movements, followed by an attempt to contextualize and theorize international social
movements within mainstream social movement theory. From this starting point, the discussion will then move to assess the activities and efficacy of transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) as potential lead actors in global civil society, by employing some of the conceptual tools of social movement theory.

4.1 TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: INTRODUCTION

Social movements advancing a plethora of issues, have raised their agendas to an international platform, forging links across borders in defiance of national borders, no longer construed as either the source or solution to problems. In a globalizing world order, the political strategy for many social movements is to inculcate concurrent national and international operational frameworks to address issues considered spatially scattered and elusive, resonating the interconnections of the local with the global and the convergence of cross-cultural and cross-national concerns. People are increasingly framing their experiences and concerns with others around the world: women resisting exploitative factory working conditions, land claim disputes among indigenous people, environmental destruction by multinational corporations - to name but a few.

The increasing visibility and intensity of international social movement activities has thus been historically contextualized as a response to the invasive agenda of globalization (Wignaraja, 1993). Theorists refer to the emergence of a “new” set of social movements in response to neo-liberalism and the contradictions of modernity. New social movements are a pivotal type of social institutions considered peculiarly contemporary, spawning predominantly, although not exclusively, from the internationalization of the environment, woman, peace, development and indigenous movements’. They are
demarcated from earlier movements, historically linked around class based organizing such as peasant revolts and traditional workers movements and the anti-colonial struggles characterizing much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Shaw, 1994). Samir Amin (1993) refers to these as the old movements (trade unions, popular and labour parties, national liberation movements) that struggled to seize power from the monopolies of the bourgeoisie classes and foreign imperialists. Although the “old” movements succeeded in accomplishing most of their goals, they are considered today to have been either co-opted, stagnant, or too conservative, hence making way for the “new” social movements of the late twentieth century to emerge. The latter, on the other hand, are defined from the contradictions within “modern” societies and cultures in transition. They are an expression of unsatisfied social needs and protest internationally in the wake of modernity and globalization forces, linked to the contradictions, effects and weaknesses of transnational neo-liberal policies (Wignaraja, 1993). As Alvarez et al (1998) mention, new social movements are defined by their concern with a range of social divisions (gender, ethnicity, lifestyle) and of systemic issues (environment, peace, development) that all intersect and interconnect in complex and multiple ways. The challenge of these new social movements is to mobilize people to set the grounds to pose different sets of meanings and stakes, by resignifying and reconfiguring social and political power. Ponna Wignaraja (1994) in her collection entitled New Social Movements in the South outlines the salient characteristics of these new movements,

“Larger and larger numbers of people are no longer willing to accept, fatalistically exploitative or repressive regimes and state structures, or a development paradigm that excludes them. They may not be concerned with the capture of state power and big bang revolutions. Yet they may in reality be building, consciously or unconsciously, a countervailing
power to the dominant state power. In the new people’s movements, the actors may also be demonstrating ways to humanize the larger macro processes, whilst showing that the terms of incorporation into the modern world at all levels can be changed.” (pp.18-19)

In the context of global civil society, this chapter will focus exclusively on formal, institutionalized transnational social movement operations. The largest, most prominent transnational social movements include the human rights, environment, development and women’s movement. They are identified as transnational because they network with other social actors across national borders, and they regularly interact with states, intergovernmental organizations and other international actors to: argue, persuade, strategize, document, lobby, pressure and complain (Clarke et al, Smith, 1998). It is their direct interaction with the international state and inter-governmental structures, that define their position in a global civil society (Smith, 1998).

The last part of the twentieth century has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the size, number and density of the “new” transnational social movement networks. Movements have grown dramatically over a range of issue areas over the past 40 years, from just under 200 in 1973 to more than 600 by 1993. Organizations that form the human rights movement make up the largest segment, doubling in size from 41 in 1973 to 168 international organizations in 1993 (Smith, 1998). TSMOs working for women’s rights - gender equality, economic development, family planning - also multiplied over the past decade. However, the environmental movement is by far the fastest growing segment, expanding from a mere 10 international organizations in 1953 to 90 in 1993. This dramatic growth is largely attributed to the heightened environmental “scare” of the 1980s, reflective
of the increasing international and intergovernmental forums for environmental activism and awareness (Smith, 1998).

The dramatic rise of transnational social movements over the last twenty years has surprisingly not been paralleled by an increase or expansion in their study. In fact social movement theorists agree, research on transnational social movements remains for the most part an uncharted area of scholarship, both theoretically and empirically (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). By culling the vast literature of domestic social movement phenomena within the discipline of sociology, various scholars have been able to extend the analysis, albeit hesitantly, to explain how transnational networks of movements emerge, operate and under what conditions they can be effective. As Martin Shaw (1994) explains, social movements are a very broad category of sociological analysis, and conventional understandings typically define social movements as the following:

“a collective actor constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interests and, for at least some significant part of their social existence, a common identity. Social movements are distinguished from other collective actors, such as political parties and pressure groups, in that they have mass mobilization, or the threat of mobilization, as their prime source of social sanction, and hence of power. They are further distinguished by other collectivities, such as voluntary associations.... in being chiefly concerned to defend or change society or the relative position of the group in society.” (pg.651)

Jackie Smith et al (1997) adds social movements result when networks of actors, relatively excluded from routine decision-making processes engage in collective attempts to change some elements of the social and political structure. Offering an international perspective, Keck and Sikkink (1998), build on this understanding by suggesting international social movements are comprised of relevant actors working internationally on
an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services. They organize to promote causes, principled ideas and norms, and struggle to make changes in social behaviour and/or policy. New social movements have particularly been important in what Keck and Sikkink (1998) refer to as value-laden debates over human rights, the environment and women, where large numbers of people from around the world, situated in different political and social contexts, seek to work in solidarity for transformation. These new social movements are made up of a dense network of actors from both the North and South, including local NGOs, international organizations, religious organizations, trade unions to foundations and advocacy groups. According to Clarke et al (1998), these actors engage in regular information exchange and work in collaboration and coordination to construct "mutually beneficial" strategies in the interest of social justice. In congruence with civil society tendencies, social movement theorists often refer to the strategic importance of movements to exert pressure on states and intergovernmental and international organizations, in efforts to instigate changes and advocate for policy reform. This explicit political function of new social movements is a dominant strand in recent theorizing on social movements, particularly relevant in debates of their role in an emerging global civil society.

4.2 SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Applying sociological research on national social movements to the analysis of transnational social movements has proved a necessary starting point towards understanding and contextualizing their recent expansion and growing intensity. By drawing on the theoretical contributions of social movement theory, some of the
conventional conceptual tools used to analyze social movements will be highlighted to further explore and understand the phenomena and their workings in a global civil society. Sociological research on social movements typically outlines six concepts relevant to understanding social movements: strategic framing processes, activist identities, mobilizing structures, resource mobilization, political opportunity structures, and repertoires of contention (for a thorough discussion refer to: McCarthy 1997, Smith et al, 1997, Keck & Sikkink 1998). In the interest of brevity, three of the more salient and relevant concepts will be overviewed in this discussion, as they are most frequently employed in discussions on the internationalization of social movements. They are: mobilizing structures, strategic framing and political opportunity structures.

4.2.1 Mobilizing Structures

Social movements are conceived as collective and cooperative efforts for social change. Understanding the process and methods by which social movements mobilize groups and individuals, reveals the central importance of the mobilizing structures of any given movement. According to McCarthy (1997), mobilizing structures refer to, “the more or less formally organized everyday life patterns upon which movements build collective action, ranging from religious groups and neighborhood associations to workplace cliques and friendship groups” (p.249). The infrastructure of social movements, therefore, is what Alger (1997) refers to as the soil out of which (transnational) social movements germinate. The coming together of different formal and informal groups to take part in broad coalitional strategies, instigates the strengthening of the movement by bringing more human and financial resources, more legitimacy, higher profile, and most importantly, a larger and
more diverse constituency whose involvement, endorsement and activism may enhance a movements political impact (Smith et al, 1997). The ability of social movements to take advantage of mobilizing structures, is pivotal to its long term efficacy and ability to translate goals into reality. For instance, any movement advocating for the homeless, for example, must acknowledge the strategic necessity to involve a range of groups and individuals to articulate the issue, from religious groups to social workers, service organizations, foundations, and other advocacy groups. The most successful social movements, according to social movement theorists, are ones who have fully utilized and strengthened their mobilizing structures so that they are able to amplify the movements message to a more general audience, and exert considerable political potency by shaping public opinion and concern over a particular issue. (Smith et al, 1997).

From the perspective of transnational social movements, the mobilizing structures are not built from scratch but rely on the existing structures of national movements from different regions of the world. The networks are international in scope, typically made with groups and organizations that have a common understanding over relevant issues, and communicate/network with one another on different levels. In discussing the mobilizing structures of transnational social movements, Smith et al (1997) comments:

"transnational social movements incorporate members from more than two countries, have some formal structure, and coordinate strategy through an international secretariat. Their transnational membership structures facilitate communication and action across national borders as well as in intergovernmental institutions."(pg.61)

From the perspective of strengthening global civil society, many scholars point to the fundamental prerequisite of increased cooperation and coordination between different
levels of non-governmental organizations within and across different movements around the world (see Smith, 1998, McCarthy, 1997). The mobilizing structures of the more prominent transnational movements, include a strong and dense network of local, regional, national and international groups. Ties to local organizations enables broad based international movements to monitor and aggregate local and national concerns at an international level. For instance, Greenpeace has been engaged for nearly a decade in a campaign to end international trade in toxic waste. One feature of this campaign is to work with local groups involved in the issue, in order to strengthen the campaign for the international treaty banning the trade of toxic waste (Wapner, 1996). In addition, Alvarez et al (1998) note, campaigns against human rights violations were more successful in Latin America then in other parts of the world in the late 1970s, partly because of well organized domestic human rights organizations that networked with other international groups to express concern, investigate, and bring about international pressure for change. Linkages between organizations in the North and South are considered to be mutually beneficial. According to Keck & Sikkink (1998), by taking advantage of mobilizing structures, the less powerful third world actors are able to bring their concerns to the rest of the world, and have access to pertinent opportunities (networking meetings, international conferences) and information ( effective lobbying strategies) - than if they didn’t. For example, Wapner (1996) mentions, local groups protesting toxic waste were able to situate their local efforts within a global context, and had access to research, new tactics for lobbying and more importantly, were able to exert greater leverage with local authorities. In addition, a local indigenous peoples’ coalition in Brazil struggling to resist environmental destruction on their land solicited the assistance of Earth Action - a broad transnational coalition of local,
national and international associations promoting environmental justice. Sanderson (1993),
indicates various indigenous leaders in South America found more ready allies in northern
based environmental groups than in their own national, urban-based environmental
associations. Earth Actions international campaigns result in sending hundreds of letters
from around the world by their affiliate organizations, to government authorities. The local
activist group resisting logging in Clayoquot Sounds highlights the benefits of forging these
alliances. In their letter to Earth Action, they wrote, “the written letters of support that Earth
Action initiated have really empowered our efforts here in Clayoquot Sound. We don’t feel
alone anymore...Please tell those who sent letters of support....how very very much we
appreciated them doing that” (Smith 1998, pg101).

Likewise, Keck & Sikkink (1998), believe the large Northern movements
immensely benefit from multi level mobilizing structures, as they are able to strengthen the
participation of previously “unconnected” people and groups, and able to project local
concerns to an international audience. Although not stated, it is implied that the
“grassroots” connections solidify the legitimacy of an international movement, perhaps
increasing the political clout with states and intergovernmental organizations. Expanding
membership in efforts to represent a truly global constituency, is therefore a key priority of
many international social movements, typically concentrated in the North, aiming to
intensify their presence and activities globally. Although critics maintain the mobilizing
structures of transnational movements generally preclude the participation of smaller
Southern local and national groups, organizations from the Third World are however
increasingly being sought and integrated (Walker, 1994). According to Smith (1998), the
percentage of transnational social movements reporting members in the Third World grew
from 46% in 1983 to 61% in 1993, concurring with a similar increase in the shift of international offices from the North to the South, from 17% to 24% in 1993. These trends should not necessarily infer that the tensions and power relations are somehow mollified as a result of greater integration. International movements are still disproportionately based in the North, and are located in major North American and European cities. Global inequities hinder the ability of Southern groups to take full advantage of mobilizing structures in order to intensify their efforts for cross-national collective action. Social theorists, however, tend to skirt the differences between the North and South, framing their discussions exclusively around the activities and behaviours of larger, Northern based movements such as the environmental and human rights movements.

This leads us to question the difficulties/obstacles for Southern groups to take advantage of international mobilizing structures. Which groups tend to participate in broadbased movements and which groups do not, or can not? How much do the ideological and political standpoints need to converge and can only those groups in the South with greater resources participate? These issues are very pressing in the discussion around global civil society, particularly because there are so few examples of international movements based and directed from the South. Some scholars have attempted to analyze the various reasons why local or even national movements in the South have not been able to "go global", successfully tapping into international mobilizing infrastructures to facilitate their politics around the world and more strategically aim to influence the state system and multilateral institutions on their terms (see Riddell-Dixon, 1995). Access to resources is considered a key factor, because to take advantage of mobilizing structures means to have the resources to travel and interact regularly, hold networking conferences, publish
materials for circulation, and have access to cheap and reliable telecommunications to transport knowledge fast and effectively among groups from around the world. Furthermore, a degree of financial autonomy is necessary, yet remains difficult for many Southern groups who can only increase their scale of operations in relation to foreign donor funding (Riddell-Dixon, 1995). In his study of social movements in Africa, for example, Chris Atim (1994) remarks, “Many of Africa’s NGOs exist only to the extent that there is a donor somewhere prepared to fund their activities” (pg.13). Donor money more often than not is tied to specific projects (water & sanitation, education, micro-enterprise development), leaving little change to support national, let alone, international advocacy and lobby efforts (Bratton, 1990).

Localized movements in the South, in addition to funding dependencies and lack of resources, are further marginalized from mobilizing global structures because of a lack of training, requisite skills and experience needed in networking and international lobbying. There is intense competition within and between movements to consolidate an international infrastructure, and without doubt power and privilege plays a significant part in the ability of local actors to also be able to co-opt - or rather, to facilitate international mobilization around the substantive issues that concern them (Smith, 1998). As Smith (1998) mentions, such conflict and competition are rarely taken up by mainstream social movement theorists. There is an acknowledgement, nonetheless, of the importance of formal and informal links (such as friendships with others in the field, among governmental officials and intergovernmental organizations) that form part of the implicit mobilizing structure, to which movements of the North are overwhelmingly privy to. McCarthy (1997) notes, the larger more established movements based in the North, have an edge over Southern groups.
because they have more resources to successfully integrate, or as he suggests “co-opt”
groups. This is prioritized, because Northern based movements understand having no ties to
the “people” or grassroots community for example, will inevitably weaken their political
leverage and legitimacy on all fronts. On the other hand, Northern movements attest they
are better equipped to take on leadership roles - agreeing they are more effectively suited to
lobby and pool information and resources from around the world, in order to channel
technical, political and tactical information to organizations otherwise lacking such

In fact, access to and the dissemination of information is a key impetus behind
mobilizing structures. Transnational movements are the means by which critical
information and research is gathered, analyzed and used as the knowledge base for efforts
to change government pollicies and popular practices (Smith et al, 1997). Ideally the
information culled at the international level, should be built up from the grassroots
involving localized groups, which then have ties to national groups and hence some
semblance of connection to international movements. Many transnational movements, the
environment, human rights and women’s movement, claim to generate their knowledge
base in this way. These movements depend on their mobilizing structures for continuos
flow of information, which in effect make them legitimate players with the institutions at
the global level. (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). For instance, the environmental movement
maintains links with grassroots environmental NGOs, indigenous organizations,
international NGOs and the scientific community, in order to most effectively aggregate
and accumulate data for advocacy efforts at the inter-state level. Similarly, the human rights
movement, headed by Amnesty International, provided the UN with concrete information

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on human rights violations, and also helped draft the language for UN declarations and
treaties. Information, often means power, and in the context of global civil society, a
political platform is created and sustained by solid, forceful and accurate information (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Theo Van Booven, Director for the UN Center for Human Rights speaks
to this importance:

"It was thanks to them, in fact, that we could carry on our work
because I've always claimed that 85% of our information came from
NGOs. We did not have the resources or staff to collect information
ourselves, so we are dependent." (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, pg. 96)

As Johnston and Lio (1998) mention, movements may speak and act in the name of
a network of organizations, however, they may not necessarily consult and maintain regular
communication links with all their members. The larger the movement, they contend, the
weaker the link to smaller scattered groups. The national women’s organizations in
Pakistan forming part of the international women’s movement, are made up of urbanized,
well-educated and well financed groups that are not necessarily connected to the “masses”
of women they purport to represent. Although they may be part of the international
infrastructure to push for equity and justice for women, critics are skeptical if these
national, and therefore, international movements truly reflect the needs and concerns of
people. Maria Mies (1993) echoes this concern, articulating the loss of information and
knowledge from the “bottom” on the way up. She argues that the most powerful and
successful localized groups rarely connect internationally, giving examples of numerous
peoples movements, particularly made up of peasants, urban poor, tribal groups. These
localized groups are more responsive to the immediate concerns of the poor, because they
are visibly present and specifically aligned to local concerns. Nonetheless, she does not rule
out the importance of linking with international groups, citing the rare example of the international campaign successfully waged by Indian resistance groups against the Narmada Valley Project (NVP) - a mega project financed by the World Bank. Resistance groups in India supplied information about the harmful effects of the project to international groups, hence mobilizing support against the World Bank project. Johnston and Lio (1998) although acknowledge the success of these incidences, are still convinced international movements divert attention away from smaller, localized groups and networks where the work is being done, and where the majority of people are affected. In theorizing mobilizing structures, social movement theorists have for the most part neglected these issues of equity and access, leading Johnston and Lio (1998) to conclude how mobilizing structures are more, “oriented towards identity construction and maintenance....than political claims making” (pg. 465).

4.2.2 Movement Strategies and Frames

A key process social movements engage in, is to nurture a shared identity and common platform for action amongst the different actors within a movement. Before mobilizing its constituents, social movements partake in a process of framing, which according to David Snow (1986) means “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action.” (pg.6). In his discussion of framing, David Snow (1986) adds that in order to mobilize and activate people, social movement actors must devise interpretive frames that process political information to decipher or identify common problems and convey the need and potential efficacy for collective attempts to address it (Snow, 1986).
By way of example, social movement theorists refer to public demonstrations, media campaigns, and internet petitions as “frame dissemination tactics” employed by social movements to attract new sympathetics or activate former members on specific issues, such as the homeless crisis or escalating child poverty (Smith et al, 1997). Strategic framing is usually an exhaustive process as the various actors within the social movement must work out differences to eventually align on a common political platform and have a consensus on priorities and strategies. Framing occurs through dialogue and discussion whereby a common political platform is anticipated in efforts to negotiate a collective identity in a movement (Johnston & Lio, 1998). Achieving common frames therefore, is an essential component of a movements political strategy, and more often than not, the process aims to simplify issues in clear terms of right and wrong. According to Snow (1986) an effective frame for social movements is to appeal to shared principles (justice, equality etc) in simple, clear and powerful messages in order to persuade the average person, and consequently society at large to pressure for change in policy (Snow, 1986). As Keck & Sikkink (1998) mention, framing aims to motivate action by identifying particular social issues as problematic, attributing blame, proposing a solution and providing a rationale for collective action. As an example, the framing strategy developed by transnational environmental movements involves dramatizing the plight of endangered species or the rampant destruction of tropical rainforest, whilst the international human rights movement focuses on specific cases, not abstract issues, to solicit response (Smith et al, 1997). An example of successful international framing was the campaign to boycott Nestle corporation, accused of infant deaths in the Third World by their campaigns to promote milk formula. The human rights movement framed the campaign as violence against
children, using such piercing slogans as, "Nestle: killer of Babies!" to invoke an international response. The successful advocacy and framing strategy led to the establishment of a code by WHO (World Health Organization) to halt Nestle's aggressive advertising campaigns and marketing strategy, and in turn, to include the superiority of breast milk in their ad campaigns (Van Esterik, 1989). As expressed by Van Esterik (1989), the international boycott of Nestle in the late 70s and early 80s was considered a success, largely due to the effective framing strategy of the human rights and women's movement. She comments,

"The appeal of the infant formula controversy was due to the fact that it was presented as a simple, solvable, convergent problem. People were attracted to the campaign because it transformed many of their unspoken concerns into a clear, concrete example of exploitative behaviour that could be acted upon." (pg.12)

Theorists admit framing is a difficult and contentious undertaking within any particular movement and its extension at the transnational level involving a range of actors from various regions further problematizes the process. John McCarthy (1997) admits, movements attempting to construct frames from diverse cultural settings involving local/indigenous actors as well as international NGOs pose difficulties for various reasons. Although he fails to elaborate on the details, language barriers, cultural differences, disagreements on priorities and perhaps differences in tactics and approaches may stifle the process to reach a mutually beneficial and unitary political strategy at the international level. What comes to mind is the dominant framing tactic used by many NGOs in the development movement of the North, who bombard the media with images of sickly, vulnerable (fly waving) children in order to "conscientize" the public of "third world suffering" and solicit funding for their overseas projects. Further, Third World development

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NGOs would rather choose to prioritize issues around international finance and structural policies that perpetuate "underdevelopment" in their framing strategies, where as, northern NGOs centre their framing campaigns on aspects like "grassroots sustainable development projects" -or "people helping people" slogans - in order to mobilize action and responses (Drabek, 1987). Clarke et al (1998) indicate, the development of common frames suggests a more complete global integration of non-governmental organizations, however, they admit unaligned frames are sharpest along the North and South as different and often competing issues are prioritized.

Within the environmental movement, divisions between the First and Third World were clearly evident at the Environment and Development Conference in Rio in 1992. As Rowlands (1992) mentions, the movement witnessed contrasting framing strategies; the Northern environmental groups prioritized global warming, biodiversity and tropical rainforests whereas Third World environmental groups stressed the importance of the international capitalist economy, Third World debt and consumption patterns to the environment problems. The environmental movement was not successful in consolidating a united frame for the conference, and because of obvious inequities and power differences (discussed earlier) the agenda of Northern environmental groups received the most attention, and was hence officially adopted into the agenda of the conference. Observing these differences, Rowland (1992) remarks, "the North-South NGO relationship has come to mirror the North-South interstate relationship. In order for both to redress this imbalance and to exert their own influence, Southern NGOs may actively disengage themselves from their counterparts in the North"(pg.217). Bernard Eccleston (1996) argues, that in a global civil society driven by international movements, the framing strategy will inevitably echo
the priorities and concerns of the North. Working with Malaysian NGOs, Eccleston (1996) comments how some Malaysian groups felt Northern NGOs were more interested in positions which would improve their own fund-raising capacity than address the real problems facing people of the South. In Malaysia the global campaign to “save” the forest people in Sarawak, isolated the efforts of environmental NGOs in the country who were accused of neglecting the plight of the 37 other ethnic groups affected by logging. Termed “green imperialism”, Southern NGOs often feel that they lose control of their own campaigns after “going global”, having to submit to the agenda set by Northern based groups (Eccleston, 1996).

The issues capturing the women’s movement also mark considerable North/South divisions. Malika Dutt (1992) mentions the frustrations of Third World women activists who insist that the mainstream women’s movements concentrate on themes (violence, gender relations) without dialoguing or incorporating Third World perspectives in their analysis and advocacy efforts. Dutt (1996) adds, the numerous pre-Beijing conferences and meetings could have served as useful forums to explore these differences and discuss issues of racism and power within and among movements. Mohanty (1994) argues, women from the South are more concerned about development, imperialism and power differences between white and non-white women, yet their concerns are not readily advanced and prioritized at the international conferences. Similar to the sentiments of Third World environmental groups, Southern women’s organizations are also hesitant to embrace the notion of a global civil society, knowing too well what it means. One of the most striking experiences in the women’s movement, was the controversial campaign in 1974 against the practice of female genital mutilation. By naming the campaign genital mutilation, instead of
terms such female circumcision or infibulation, the women’s movement alongside the
human rights network raised its salience, literally marking the issue as an urgent matter of
public international concern. The campaign was framed around violence against women,
generating action in many countries and ultimately leading to various UN recommendations
calling for the eradication of this traditional practice (Mohanty 1994, Kink and Sikkink,
1998). What is important to note from this example, is that the process by which the issue
was framed and delivered for international attention, excluded the voices and concerns of
many third world women’s and human rights groups who objected to the simplification of
the campaign and its latent racist overtones. Framing strategies in social movements aim to
raise awareness through using poignant language and images that dramatize events or
“push” the right buttons for mobilization. In discussing the international campaign against
mutilation, Angela Gilliam (1991) cogently observes, “the form in which the issues were
articulated was in terms of those “savage customs” from “backward” African and Arab
cultures...this action forced Arab and African women - who had always fought against
female circumcision on health grounds - to feel compelled to defend it.” (218). Social
movements typically engage in framing to push the salience of select lucid issues, as
opposed to framing multiple, interlocking and complex themes, in order to effectively
mobilize masses and be more successful in political influencing. From a transnational
perspective, the focus to simplify and select movement frames has proven difficult and
contentious. In this case, Kathleen Berry (1992) admits Third World women are portrayed
as the victims needing help from the west, and is repeatedly objectified as the other. In
contrast, Berry (1992) proposes if there are serious attempts for movements to be global,
then networks must become part of an interactive process by which people from different
regions can communicate and exchange beliefs, information, testimony strategy and even services.

As mentioned previously, social movement theorists skirt these contentious areas of difference between the North and South, and rather, opt to focus on the more successful transnational framing efforts of the international human rights movement. The entities that make up the current transnational human rights advocacy network have ostensibly succeeded in the difficult task of embedding a relatively concrete human rights frame (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The entities that make up the current transnational human rights advocacy network include parts of intergovernmental organizations, international NGOs, and domestic NGOs from all continents in addition to private foundations and parts of some governments. The success of the human rights movement is their activities at international forums and institutions within which they wage framing contests and then successfully lobby, in a concerted fashion, for their inclusion in international agreements and conference proceedings (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The inclusion and sensitivity of human rights issues in the policies of international and intergovernmental organizations like the World Bank and various bodies of the UN as well as its attachment to the foreign policies of many states, is considered a result of effective framing strategy. A noteworthy example, often referenced by social movement theorists, is the unparalleled accomplishment made at the UN conference in San Francisco, where diverse actors from around the world (local NGOs, churches, ethnic groups etc) lobbied for the inclusion of human rights language in the final UN charter. The links and networks among human rights groups continues to strengthen internationally, as international political frames are advanced on common interest issues of torture, freedom of speech, against authoritarian regimes and false imprisonment. The
transnational human rights network as a result continues to proliferate in numbers. Latin America has more domestic human rights NGOs than other parts with 220 in 1981, compared to 145 in Asia and 123 in Africa and the Middle East - these numbers have mushroomed in recent years (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Their communicative strategies and solidarity in pushing for collaborative political projects is considered successful, and largely attributed to notions of shared “universal” principles and values on social justice (Alvarez et al 1998).

As transnational social movements work to operate in a global civil society, seeking to influence states and intergovernmental institutions, the whole construct of needing to wage a common, unitary frame for operations hinting to shared principles among diverse groups proves contentious and maybe idealistic. Although the international human rights movement is considered successful, particularly in cementing human rights language in international agreements within the UN structure and by mobilizing a large cross national constituency over violations around the world, the movement does not entirely escape from critique or controversy (see Alvarez et al, 1998). Even within the human rights network, framing strategies are susceptible to being contrived and controlled by those who are more visibly prominent in the North, such as Amnesty International, and have more human and financial resources available to them. Hence, the process for frame alignment has the tendency to reflect power differences amongst the actors involved, particularly echoing differences in experience and goals along different cultural and geographical lines between the North and South. As Clarke et al (1998) observe, “North-South Differences and concomitant differences of philosophy remain a significant source of “unaligned” NGO frames, or social divisions” (pg.23). These differences indeed question the globality of
social movement operations working in global civil society, as the process of framing means prioritizing the agenda and political strategy of transnational social movement operations.

From the context of global civil society, governments and multilateral institutions operate by responding and dealing with the frames proposed by international social movements. The exchanges that facilitate the involvement of social movements within global structures are around the implementation, education, research and formulation of solutions and approaches to the frames constructed and endorsed Clarke et al, 1998). In this respect, the debates and discussions surrounding the framing process of transnational social movements bear serious implications and consequences in terms of their activities in an emerging global civil society.

4.2.3 Political Opportunity Structure

Social movement theorists agree the social and political environments in which movements operate are characterized by a variety of “opportunity structures”, or factors that facilitate or constrain social change efforts. Sidney Tarrow (1996) in his work describes political opportunity structures to mean, “consistent - but not necessarily formal, permanent or national - signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements”(54). The most salient signals include, the opening up of access to power, shifting alignments, the availability of influential allies and cleavages within and among the elite. McCarthy (1997) concurs with Tarrow’s suggestions, but adds two other dimensions of political opportunity structures that are relevant to understanding movement dynamics. They are the state’s capacity and
propensity for repression, and the relative openness of the institutionalized political system. Opportunity structures are often discussed from this latter sense, understood as the political institutions and political climate available for movements to maneuver within. Theorists specifically assess these structures by looking at the access movements have within the political apparatus of a state, such as legislatures, bureaucracies and courts - or it can be viewed dynamically as changes in formal or informal political power relations over time (McCarthy, 1997, Smith et al, 1997).

Although political opportunity structures are theorized from a national context, by examining the national institutions and influencing patterns open for movements to access, from an international perspective, the opportunity structures available to transnational social movements primarily involve their participation in intergovernmental/multilateral organizations. Social movements are said to utilize these opportunities by engaging in the global political process and carrying out multiple activities to advance the movements goals. Social movement theorists agree that understanding the political context of “opportunity structures” is the key to understanding any movement’s emergence and to gauge its success (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, McCarthy 1997)). To understand and evaluate transnational movements then, the type and degree of their involvement in existing multilateral institutions must be taken into account. Have social movements taken full political advantage of their presence at the global level? Have they achieved any progress or success working with multilateral institutions? What type of political leverage to they really exert? What are the limitations and constraints to their activities in multilateral institutions? These are pertinent issues that need to be understood, particularly since they lend to an analysis of the workings and potential efficacy of a global civil society. Jackie Smith et al
(1997) outlines the range of activities transnational movements are currently involved in at the global governance level:

"Transnational social movements serve as movement focal points...cultivate relationships with officials in intergovernmental organizations and national delegations, monitor progress on given issues, and devise and implement means of advancing movement goals when progress is stalled...they help to define and raise issue to the political agenda, draft proposals for resolutions or legal conventions...publicize and monitor states’ compliance with intergovernmental agreements" (pg. 43)

When considering the political opportunities available to social movements at the international level, the most salient focus remains on the UN and the different direct channels open for movements to influence it. The principle means for direct access include the consultative status with the ECOSOC and other UN agencies, in addition to formal participation at the various UN international conferences. In terms of consultative status, under Article 71 of the Charter, the ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of the UN) is authorized to make suitable arrangements for NGO involvement in UN activities. Consistent with the UN’s state-centric operations, states are the gatekeepers of the consultative process, ultimately determining which groups can and can not participate (Willetts, 1996). The minimum criteria requires organizations to be non-profit, with goal and activities compatible with the “spirit” of the UN Charter and the aims and purposes of ECOSOC. More specifically, the organizations must have an international standing and be representative of substantial numbers of people in different parts of the world. An established headquarters is required along with a democratically adopted constitution, and operations that are democratically principled (Riddell Dixon, 1995, Willetts, 1996).
There are an estimated 1,000 active transnational social movement organizations in the UN with consultative status, officially divided into three categories. Groups in category one exercise the most privileges which include: receive official documents and agenda's, attend public meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies, circulate their statements to Council members, speak at meetings, and suggest items for inclusion on the agenda. Those organizations in category two, on the other hand, have the same rights with the exception of the right to propose agenda items. Finally the last category of organizations are not only precluded from agenda setting, but also not able to speak at meetings (Riddell Dixon, 1995). There are considered to be many examples of successful interactions and effective influencing between social movements and the UN as a result of consultative status. For instance, the unanimous adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, was a result of the direct involvement of over 40 international social movement organizations working to draft and promote the convention for more than 10 years (Longford, 1996). Movements have had similar experiences with a vast majority of UN agencies. Most recently, very close relations ensued with UNHCR around the escalating concern of refugees around the world. Not only did social movements help draft the 1951 Convention, but they are now considered pivotal partners of UNHCR, receiving over $300 million for joint ventures. Recognized as experts in the field, social movement organizations dialogue with governments and provide crucial information as they monitor the treatment of refugees (Penrose & Seaman, 1996). In 1982 a leading UNHCR official, Gilbert Jaeger, wrote:

"It would not be enough o say that the role of non-governmental organizations in the matter of refugees is important: it is vital...
for some sixty years international action on behalf of refugees and displaced persons has been characterized by close collaboration between NGOs and the intergovernmental organizations.....UNHCR has defined the relationship as being one of equality, a “partnership” with full recognition.” (Penrose & Seaman 1996, pg.249)

The international women’s’ movement is considered, according to Tinker (1999) as having made “staggering” progress in less than three decades. After early successes in including and codifying women’s political and civil rights in international conventions, the movement was able to expand and mainstream women’s issues inside the UN, and thereby raise awareness in interstate affairs. Feminists celebrated the inroads they made in introducing women’s concern to the international political agenda, and were particularly proud of the subsequent formation of two new UN agencies - UNIFEM (United Nations Development for Women) and INSTRAW (International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) (Prugl & Meyer, 1999).

In addition to consultative status, the other direct access transnational social movements have with the UN to influence global policy is through the international conferences. From the 1980s the number of UN conferences has increased, paralleled by an increase in the participation of NGOs. The three largest conferences have been the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro; the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna; and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing (Clarke et al, 1998). Although NGOs do not have equal standing as states in negotiations at the conferences, in fact few opportunities for involvement exist during the conference, they do take part in the planning process leading up to conference.
According to Willetts (1996), their involvement in the preparatory process can and often has set the stage for the official conference.

The UN, prior to the actual conference, typically involves transnational movements in important aspects of agenda-setting, mainly to define how political actors should perceive a problem and outline what should and should not be tabled for discussion. They typically set up working groups on each of the agenda issues of the conference and work to influence the final conference documents. Few transnational organizations are able to speak at certain conference sessions and distribute proposals amongst government delegates (Clarke et al, 1989). In addition, understanding the restricted role of NGOs at the conferences, the UN has for the past two decades assisted to convene parallel NGO forums to coincide with its major international conferences. These “unofficial” conferences have been popular centres for NGOs to divert attention, propose their own agenda’s, network and lobby government delegates and UN officials. In fact it is now common practice for NGOs at the forums to circulate their own draft conventions among the official delegates (Riddell-Dixon, 1995). In 1992, 1400 NGOs officially registered with the Rio conference, and 18,000 attended the parallel NGO forum; while in Beijing, an impressive 3,000 accredited NGOs gained access to the Fourth World Conference, while a profound 300,000 people attended the NGO forum (Clarke et al, 1998). These parallel conferences have expanded the level of participation of NGOs, and for the most, have involved a broader spectrum of NGOs from the developing world especially. In discussing the growing trend and popularity of UN world conferences, and their parallel NGO forums, Atwood (1997) states:

“Global conferences help to publicize issues, to change dominant attitudes and to initiate problem solving actions, often by strengthening existing international institutions or developing
new ones...in addition conferences help raise new issues, redefine or increase the salience of existing ones, and restructure global responses to them" (pg.142)

An example of a social movement maximizing the political opportunity at international conferences, is the often stated success of the international peace network promoting nuclear disarmament. David Atwood (1997) examines how the UN Special Sessions on Disarmament held in 1978, 1982 and 1988, provided the opportunities for transnational mobilization against nuclear weapons and as a result heightened the attention of governments to nuclear disarmament. The role of TSMOs at these global forums had important direct consequences: first it affected public mobilization on the issue and therefore the terms of national and intergovernmental debate; second, it resulted in political learning and fostered transnational cooperation among peace and disarmament organizations.

Similarly, the preeminence of the international feminist agenda, was by all accounts, the hallmark of the 1994 Cairo Population Conference. The Cairo conference has come to symbolize a women-center approach to population policy, and many observers attributed it to the influence of women’s health activists. The International Women’s Health Movement (IWHM) is a complex configuration of formal and informal networks that aggressively organized to shape the outcome of the conference (Higer, 1999). During the prepatory process leading up to the conference, the IWHM engaged in a wide range of activities from networking, to planning regional conferences for greater consultation, to circulating resources on the issue of women and population policy. In particular, the first prepatory meeting for Cairo produced influential documents that were then shared with other
advocacy networks. Other influencing strategies included working with countries to influence the drafting of national position papers, producing data to serve as the basis to shift policy, and pursuing an aggressive media strategy. These strategies led to the endorsement of the feminist agenda by the Clinton administration, which promoted a broad approach to population and development, emphasizing women’s empowerment, and high quality family planning and reproductive health care (Higer, 1999).

The previous examples certainly point to some of the accomplishments by transnational social movements at the global level. Clearly as illustrated in this section and parts of previous sections, international social movements have increased activities and are more prominent on the international stage today than they were 20 years ago (Van Rooy, 1997). Even the most pessimistic critics will admit the presence of transnational non-state actors have had some degree of impact and influence in the past few decades, and in doing so they have carved a poignant presence at the global level (For the success by the environmental movement refer to Van Rooy 1997, Broadhurst and Ledgerwood 1998, Wapner 1996, for the women’s movement refer to Prugl and Meyer 1999, Clark et al, 1998, Dutt, 1996 and for the human rights movement refer to Willetts 1996, Cook 1996, Clark et al, 1998). Keck and Sikkink (1998) admit transnational social movements have made progress, albeit the extent is arguable, in five key areas of global governance: issue creation and agenda setting; influence on institutional procedures; influence policies at multilateral level, MNCs; and influence state's behaviour. The above examples captured some of these potential political roles of transnational social movements that impress upon the construction of global civil society. Yet a recurring theme in this study is to critically interrogate the true globality of transnational operations, in the context of representing a
counterhegemonic force representative of a truly global constituency. The efforts of
transnational social movements to maximize political opportunity structures does not
escape this critique.

Exploring the direct access movements have with the UN, acquiring consultative
status is considered to be the most effective. Although there has been an increase in the
number of movement organizations acquiring this status, roughly 1000 NGOs enjoy this
status, because of the narrow criteria the disproportionate presence of large, well financed
movements from the North should not come of surprise. The disparity of resources (human,
financial) between the North and South have been addressed in the previous sections. In
terms of consultative status, however, a few more points need to be raised. Riddell-Dixon
(1995) argues, that although Southern groups have gained consultative status in categories
two and three, the same can not be said for smaller, less formally organized groups which
often have the most to contribute and provide the vital services - but which lack
international standing and the financial and human resources to participate in the UN
system. Indeed, being involved in the UN is a long term, expensive , slow and questionable
venture for movement organizations. Taking part in the prepatory planning meetings for
world conferences, for example, is also a privileged undertaking. The success of the
International Women’s Health Movement could only have been possible due to an
overwhelming amount of financial support received by private foundations (Higer, 1999).
Similarly the participation and involvement of environmental groups at the Earth Summit in
Rio, was financially supported by various Northern governments. For instance, Canadian
environmental organizations received a total of $2, 437,549 from the Canadian
government(Van Rooy, 1997). As noted by an executive member of a grassroots
organization in India, organizations without large funds find it difficult to attend international conferences, let alone engage in policy advocacy (Krutt, 1997). Once again geographical cleavages between the North and South impact on the ability and access some movements have to political opportunities at the international level.

However despite these issues that preclude the involvement of many smaller organizations, many activists, particularly in the Third World, are skeptical of social movement participation at the international level (Mohanty, 1994). For many, its elitist exclusionary politics confirms the lack of transformative potential at the UN, and in contrast, debates about tokenism and co-optation are advanced. This wry skepticism regarding large movement organizations and their politics at the UN is most poignantly summarized in the words of an anonymous activist:

“in terms of mind set, modes of thinking and methods of living... (social movements) are no different from the governments and multilateral agencies which fund them. They use the same hotels, drive the same cars, drink the same wine together in the evening and commute together back and forth (to the meeting halls)....Yes there are a few genuine and committed pro-people organizations and individuals but they are few and far between and their voices are not heard and often their thoughts are not allowed to be expressed. Above all, most NGOs are part of the problem and not a part of the solution”

( Rosenau 1996:56)

These sentiments have surfaced at UN world conferences and the parallel NGO forums. Clarke et al (1998) describes the tensions between social movement activists that come to conferences to lobby, versus those who come to connect and strengthen links only with other non-governmental organizations. At the Rio conference, for example, lobbyists viewed those engaged in networking only as “lost in the process”, and potentially threatening the conference process (pg.12). On the other hand, the networkers saw lobbyists
as wasting their time and resources on useless government proposals that are not relevant to 
the lives of the poor. The frustration of networkers is echoed in the writings of Esteva and 
Prakash (1996), who insist that the more social movements actually continue to participate 
in these global UN conferences and forums, the more they legitimize the current 
international system of exploitation. Largely since the UN restricts the voting/decision-
making capacities of social movement organizations, and particularly since states have the 
final say, many activists believe participation just gives the consultative stamp for 
oppressive policies to persist. Proponents for global civil society, on the other hand, would 
insist the incremental changes made thus far are worthy of recognition and can only be 
expected to intensify and expand in the future. This is considered “naive idealism” by many 
scholars and activists all too familiar of the reality that the UN continues to be a state-
centric entity, and the states that ultimately hold the real power in the organization and have 
no intention on sharing it (see Kothari 1994).

This is most evident in the infinite obstacles transnational movements face within 
multilateral organizations. Governments continue to debate and are seriously divided over 
the issue of the role of NGOs in global politics. States vehemently oppose their 
involvements on issues that particularly impinge on state sovereignty, such as economic 
and military issues (Krutt, 1997). To varying degrees governments even aim to 
circumscribe NGO participation at conference preparatory meetings, and many incidences 
have been documented about the convenient exclusion of NGOs when more delicate 
matters are negotiated between states (Clark et al, 1998). This overriding state power even 
left its mark during the preparatory meetings of the successful women’s conference in 
Beijing. Women’s groups were in a state of quandary over their last minute exclusion from
many discussions about the conference document. In fact the conference secretary-general, Gertrude Mongella, was said to have described the occurrence as one which, "the delegates, as hosts, invited the NGOs into their sitting room, but then disappeared into the kitchen to cook, keeping their guests waiting and hungry" (as quoted in Clarke et al, 1998:18). These types of exclusions are more a regular pattern at the UN, leading one activist to wonder:

"If the total amount of time and space for NGOs remains tightly controlled, and if most NGOs continue to be excluded from crucial informal and "formal-informal" discussions, then expanding access may mean no more than forcing more non-governmental organizations to crowd their literature onto the same display tables or compete for a fixed amount of speaking time" (as quoted in Van Rooy, 1997, pg109)

Irrespective of these critiques, social movement theory for the most part strengthens the active political pursuits of transnational social movements at the global governance level. The theoretical elaborations of framing and taking advantage of political opportunities within social movement theory, strongly resonates the framework of global civil society. The two inextricably connect to support the potential construction of a more inclusive, democratic space in global governance. Social movement theorists tend to accentuate the benefits of mass movements, that consolidate their presence at the international level by engaging in coalitional strategies, and seek to engage in formal political processes thereby revitalizing the institutions of civil society. The divisiveness between the North and South is rarely taken up and issues of power, privilege and critically evaluating overall efficacy are rarely addressed. This is not to suggest that the theoretical contributions of social movement theory need to be dismissed, but a more informed, fair and accurate grasp of the issues need to be incorporated.
One the last note, although my focus in this chapter has been on formal transnational movements, it must be clarified that not all social movements are considered part of civil society discourse, for example, the Swadhyaya movement in India as explored in the previous chapter (also refer to chapter one). In fact, there are multiple and competing definitions of social movements, however, the prevailing perspective identifies them as struggles to regain power by those who have been systemically denied access to power (for a more detailed discussion on social movements please refer to Walker, 1994, Riddell-Dixon, 1995, Smouts, 1999, Wignaraja, 1993). This study has confined the discussion on movements in relation to global civil society, however, R.J Walker (1994) offers a glimpse into the other types of interesting and competing perspectives on social movements:

"To begin with, movements are precisely movements. They will not stand still. Look carefully, be wary of the tendency to reify human energies into inert institutions, and movements proliferate. Look more carefully still and everything moves. What the frustrated skeptic might ask, is not a social movement? They come and go, rise and decline, provoke a fuss and wither on the wine. To be in motion is to be at odds with many of the criteria on which serious politics has come to be judged" (Walker, 1994:677)
CONCLUSION

“If people, as historical beings necessarily engaged with other people in a movement of inquiry, did not control that movement, it would be (and is) a violation of their humanity...to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects” (Freire 1997, pg.66)

Paulo Freire’s words are pivotal to the project of transformation, and the on-going struggle to create a new, alternative social order. The process for global change mandates that pedagogical interactions center the experiences of the oppressed. Those who are marginalized from the insidious assaults of the international capitalist agenda, are not passive objects but active knowledge producers whose lived realities and struggles for resistance have profound pedagogical implications for transformative change. In this period of economic globalization, they have carved new spaces for resistance and reclaimed old ones. Their paths to challenge and disrupt exploitative structures are manifested in multiple forms - from everyday forms of “passive” protests, mass public demonstrations, to membership in large formal, and organized movements at national and international levels. There are indeed broad based organizations that target the formal political process to advocate accountability and change, and even more informal, sporadic and amorphous movements that seek to resist, challenge and subvert the global capitalist agenda. People have and will continue to oppose oppression and injustice either individually or collectively, passively or actively, formally or informally, peacefully or violently - or a blend of a few or all of these. Some choose to actively engage the formal political process, while others disengage from it completely. What should be emphasized is that the range of these struggles, despite their scale or intensity, are part of building, consciously or unconsciously, a countervailing power to the oppressive forces - be they local, national, or
international. (Wignaraja, 1993). Tripp (1994) captures this point by referring to the name of local women’s group “Togaya kye zinze”, which literally translates into “do no discard a rolled up piece of paper” - understood to mean to not dismiss what appears to be insignificant. However, Wignaraja (1993) cautions against romanticizing the range of resistance efforts, as they are not unitary, but full of contradictions and tensions that are indicative of cultures in transition in this period of globalization. Nonetheless, she submits to the aggregate efforts of these diverse struggles, indicating they are the kernels for social, cultural and political change.

Any strategy or theory for resistance that does not anchor these experiences - is susceptible to reinforce the oppression. Or as Freire (1997) remarks, “pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressor....and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression” (pg.36). This study has hinted to this outcome in the critical analysis of the global civil society construct. The key problematic tendencies of the global civil society were the following: first, the use of the term itself was questioned exposing its euro-centric bias that precludes its applicability to fully explicate the range of struggles in non-western societies. The use of this western construct, despite its theoretical frailty, engages in a “universalist” project to which all resistance efforts are measured and understood. Second, the term’s usefulness is further eroded by its unusual “schizophrenic” character to support capitalist hegemony and facilitate the globalization process, yet at the same time, to resist it. And, finally the global claim of global civil society was refuted based on the over representation of the North, and the peripheralized presence and priorities of the South.
So where do we go from here? At the outset of this study I questioned whether a truly global counter hegemonic force made up of these diverse social actors from around the world - with strong interconnecting local, national and international links - is what is needed to de-rail the international aggression of globalization. Proponents of global civil society seem to think so. They speak to the necessity of formal, institutionalized large scale movements to amplify the concerns of the grassroots by engaging the formal global political process. The ideal of global civil society is hence seductive - invoking the solidarity project for the amalgamation of local, regional and national concerns to formulate an all encompassing global agenda. Yet as this study indicated, how can we speak about this “ideal” without discussing issues of power, voice, difference, combined knowledge production, internal tensions, biases and contradictions?

Although I have argued that the global civil society construct itself is problematic, there is a need to investigate and come up with coherent frameworks to make sense of the global political process. We need to avoid the pitfalls of situating this discussion exclusively within one paradigm. This has happened with the significant revival of the civil society construct, as it has totalized the discourse of resistance, advocacy and transformation. We need to broaden the spectrum of conceptualizing the struggle for social change, by positioning the multiple and competing frameworks to understand resistance, and the creative, persistent ways marginalized and oppressed people are challenging the prevailing hegemonic system. Or rather, as Freire (1997) insists:

The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not “marginals”, are not people living “outside” society. They have always been “inside” - inside the structure which made them “beings for others,” The solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can
become “beings for themselves” (Freire 1997, pg.55)
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