Civil Society and Democratisation Theory: An Inter-regional Comparison

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Abstract

This thesis constitutes an inquiry into the relationship between civil society theory and democratic theory. It revolves around an investigation into, and comparison between, recent discourses on civil society originating from within diverse political contexts. This is in order to uncover what the central claims - both normative and programmatic - of civil society theory are in the contemporary era, how these relate to the political contexts within which they have originated, and why they reemerged when they did. The findings from this investigation then provided the material for a substantive critique of the overall coherence of recent civil society theory, and of the contribution of the idea of civil society to democratic theory and practice; they also enable a comparison of current ideas about civil society with classical civil society theory.

The thesis presents a number of new arguments. Firstly, that *all* models of civil society, since their revival in the 1970s, make assumptions - though often hidden or unconscious - about what democracy is and of where it should take place. Secondly, recent notions of civil society are divided most clearly into radical and liberal-democratic models, with crucial implications for how civil society is conceived. Thirdly, civil society theory illustrates the close linkages between political ideas and the political base within which they are articulated; political discourse, despite its power to shape the political context, must itself evolve in accordance with the exigencies of the political base if it is to survive. Fourthly, contemporary civil society theory has shifted in a crucial aspect from classical civil society theory: while the latter was tied closely to liberalism, today's civil society theory is connected almost exclusively to democratic theory. Finally, it is argued that recent civil society theory adds little that is original to the lexicon of political theory. For despite the novelty of radical models of civil society from the 1970s and early 1980s (which, it is argued, have not retained their initial force), the idea of civil society figures increasingly as a rubric for already established liberal democratic orthodoxies about the desired relationship between the state and society.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyses discourses surrounding the idea of civil society in, or in relation to, three regional contexts: Central-Eastern Europe, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. The purpose of this inter-regional focus is to compare and contrast a cross-section of recent civil society theory drawn from diverse spatial and temporal contexts. An overview such as this, previously absent from the literature, goes a long way towards revealing the contours of recent thinking on civil society in terms of the origins and subsequent evolution of this thinking. In addition, this overview serves the double purpose, firstly, of shedding light on how and why the connection between the ideas of civil society and democracy has become established, and, secondly, as a basis for a comprehensive critique of current civil society theory from the perspective of democratic theory. The civil society concept is now ubiquitous within democratic theory, yet there is little knowledge of what, overall, contemporary civil society theory asserts about the meaning of democracy and the process of democratisation. Given this lack of a 'state of the art' overview or of detailed classificatory work, it has been difficult to sustain an argument about what civil society theory has to offer to democrats and democratisers today. Indeed, at present, the concept seems to escape thorough critique precisely because it can be infinitely redefined in political discourse. While this thesis cannot claim to be totally comprehensive, an inter-regional study of civil society theory does succeed in revealing broad trends, otherwise invisible, which go some way to laying the groundwork for such a critique.

Due to the lack of analysis at this macro-level, and to the parochialism that therefore attends most studies, it has been difficult to establish the degree to which recent civil society theory reflects the exigencies of the specific political contexts within which it has been articulated. Put another way, there simply has not been a wide enough sample with which to begin to separate out the particular claims of theories of civil society from those that are more universal. Certainly, the frequent assumption that contemporary civil society theory tells us truths that transcend any particular context, whether western or non-western, northern or southern, needs to be examined critically. Also obscure is the more empirical question of how and why the concept has reemerged so forcibly across different regions within a relatively short period of time. Although intuitively a connection is suggested, it is as yet a moot point how these diverse discourses are interconnected, if at all (after all, the relationship between word and concept is not a fixed or stable one, so there need be no substantive connection). In summary, while many recent expositions have been provided of classical civil society theory, and despite the increasing number of new models of civil society, there has been a remarkable paucity of work which seeks to look at where civil society theory actually *is* at present, and at whether there even exists a recognisably distinct debate, or set of debates.

Given the widespread ignorance about these broad trends, another major problem has been the extent to which civil society theory has become increasingly fragmented within any number of separate discourses. Unfortunately, this fragmentation has subsequently led civil society theory into something approaching Eurocentrism. Thus interlocutors to the debates on civil society within the western academe have been largely ignorant of the contributions to civil society theory, indeed of the initial impetus to reconceptualise civil society per se, which have come from outside of the West. Even those western theorists of civil society who are aware of non-western contributions generally point only to the Central-Eastern European models. In fact, as this thesis demonstrates, significant ideas relating to civil society and democracy have also come from Latin America and from some African scholars.

The various chapters within the thesis are organised as follows: The first chapter provides an introduction to the historical trajectory of the civil society concept, before: (a) locating the thesis within the wider literature; (b) establishing the parameters of the thesis; and (c) outlining the methodological approach of the thesis. The second chapter examines critically discourses on civil society in relation to Central-Eastern Europe. This is done according to country (Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary), since this is how debate in the region best divides up given the relative isolation of the individual societies that formed the communist bloc. The third chapter assesses the contribution to civil society theory made in the Latin American field. Here, where the debate had a more clearly regional character from the beginning, the material is most clearly divided chronologically: moving, that is, from the discourse which took place on the Latin American Left starting in the late 1970s, through the 'new social movement' debate which began in the early 1980s, and, finally, to the literature on regional transitions from the late 1980s onwards. In the fourth chapter, which analyses the more concurrent Africanist debates on civil society, the discussion is divided according to the different ideological schools which deploy the concept in African studies. In the fifth chapter, an overview of all the discourses relating to the different regions is provided. The emphasis here is upon comparisons and contrasts: particularly on establishing the crucial distinction which this thesis upholds between radical-democratic and liberal-democratic approaches to conceptualising civil society. In the sixth chapter, building upon the binary classification established in chapter five, I address the question of whether it is possible to point to any common ground between the two main models of civil society, the absence of which would suggest that the concept is an essentially contested one. Included at this point, and on into the conclusion, is a discussion of whether or not contemporary civil society theory imparts any new insights to democratic theory, and of the wider strengths and weaknesses of the two models of civil society which I identify. Also in concluding, in order to situate the findings of the thesis within a wider

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perspective, I explore what the recent history of the idea of civil society reveals about the following themes: First, the relationship of contemporary to 'classical' civil society theory; second, the changing nature of liberalism as a political ideology; third, the recent decline of left-radicalism; and, finally, how the relationship between political discourse and the political 'base' should be understood.

CHAPTER 1

Civil Society Theory: The Background and the Research Question

1. The History of a Concept

The idea of civil society was articulated first by the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment.[1] These philosophers were able to posit the universality of civil society (commercial society within a framework of law), as a solution to the particularity of the market sphere which was increasingly redefining the estates system of feudal society. This particularity, which for Adam Ferguson represented a serious threat to civic virtue, arose out of the increasing thirst for private wealth, which turned people away from 'affairs of state' while also increasing the state's role in upholding security. The very real threat of despotism followed from this, according to Ferguson (Ferguson 1966: 261).

The concern, first, with the rising tension between individualism and community life, second, with the need to check the power of the state, and, third, with the need to rediscover some kind of republican virtue or public spirit, represent enduring concerns for theorists of civil society to this day. However, in its Enlightenment form, such thought was arguably not yet fully 'modern'. This is so for Ferguson because, although he is able to identify associationalism as important to the resolution of the problems named above, this is not defined as activity outside of the state. Ferguson is still thinking in the classical terms of an essential unity between civil society and the state (Keane 1988a: 44). A less than fully 'modern' approach to civil society is also characteristic of the theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment more generally. They (particularly Adam Smith) posited civil society's 'solution' to the problem of the greater good in society as arising from the natural sympathy or moral sentiment displayed within it. This was a quintessentially eighteenth-century notion, shaped still by Christian and natural theology, which suggested that a transcendental mutuality was implicit in the recognition by individuals of other individuals in the arena of exchange (Seligman 1992).

Hegel was the first philosopher to begin to develop a properly 'modern' notion of civil society (in his *Philosophy of Right*, written in 1821). Although he articulated the same tension between individual autonomy and community as the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment, he did this without reference to an ethical unity 'from without'. Instead, Hegel sought to resolve the contradictions that existed in civil society due to its particularity by reference to the universal state. It is only at this point, then, that the idea

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[1]Hume, Smith, Ferguson, Hutcheson and Kames were the most significant of these philosophers, who wrote between circa 1730-1780. Of these theorists, Furguson's book, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, is the first to use the concept systematically (Pearce 1998: 10).

of civil society first became one concerning the proper relation between the state and civil society as separate spheres. However, Hegel's theory of civil society also gave the concept a pejorative hue for the first time. The state, in order to realise its universality, requires the creation through civil society of individual freedoms and the ability to satisfy needs. Yet, by this very process of development, a sphere characterised by chaos and inequality is created which, of itself, will increasingly undermine ethical unity. This ethical unity is found only in the universal state, which, although it should not abolish civil society, should rule and guide it.

For Marx, going further than Hegel in criticising the privatist implications of an unfettered civil society, any separation of spheres between state and civil society had to be overcome entirely. Marx rejected Hegel's account of the supposedly impartial, 'universal', state ruling over civil society; as far as he was concerned, this state actually furthered the dominance of the bourgeois class over subordinate classes in civil society. Although Marx retained Adam Smith's identification of civil society with economic interactions through the mechanism of the market, he was decidedly less sanguine than Smith about the possibility of the 'greater good' emerging from the sum total of these transactions. The formal 'freedoms' of civil society were for Marx a sham masking the deep structure of class inequality which defined this sphere in the first place. Real political freedom could only be attained if the working class took over state functions which, in being alienated from civil society, reinforced the latter's individualistic, egoistic and therefore socially-atomising character (see Marx, *On the Jewish Question*). In this moment of revolution, 'particularistic' civil society itself would be abolished by the universal rule of the proletariat. Marx's damning critique concerning the alienation and exploitation supposedly to be found in the sphere of civil society contributed thereafter to its significant decline. More generally, the growing dominance of the modern state from the second half of the nineteenth century led anyway to declining interest in the sphere of civil society.

It was nearly a century after Marx's critique before Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, isolated civil society as a category of importance in its own right. Gramsci characterised civil society as the realm of culture and ideology, or, more concretely, as the associational realm (made up of the church, trade unions etc.) through which the state, under normal circumstances, perpetuates its hegemony or achieves consent. However, precisely because this represents a non-state *and* a non-economic sphere, Gramsci, contra Marx (who saw the state as a manifestation of civil society's deep structure in market relations, therefore amalgamating all three spheres and rendering them bourgeois), saw it as having the potential for dual autonomy from both the state and market relations. He was therefore the first to articulate the idea that civil society, in a moment of counter-hegemony, could actually be resistant to state power as, in his well known phrase, so

many 'earthworks and buttresses' (Gramsci, 1971: 238). The voluntarism of Gramsci's account of civil society contrasts profoundly, of course, with Marx's structural-determinism. Rather than political change being dependent on the unfolding of the laws of history within the deeper structure of production upon which civil society rests, action in civil society itself is made possible. Gramsci's more political - agency-centred - emphasis is reflected in most contemporary accounts. As Jenny Pearce points out, civil society is therefore used to identify an arena of willed action, rather than an 'unwilled, non-purposive, arena of human interaction' such as the early-moderns had in mind when they coined the term to describe the operation of commercial societies. (Pearce, 1997: 58).

Reflecting this greater emphasis on self-determination invested in the concept, accounts of civil society within political studies typically now move from a minimalist understanding of associational life free from state control, to those more nuanced perspectives on the left which see civil society's independence as providing the impetus for democratic deepening generally. For these theorists, civil society, being communicative and self-reflexive, creates a 'public sphere' whose boundaries it must then protect from the intrusions of economic and bureaucratic power (see Cohen and Arato, 1992, after Habermas). Whether in terms of society's freedom from state interference, or of the pluralist representation of diverse interests, or of reducing the scope of economic and bureaucratic power, all see civil society as autonomous and as the agency necessary for democracy.

How did this new emphasis within civil society theory arise? It appeared first with the re-emergence of the concept in Central-Eastern Europe.[2] Central-Eastern European opposition movements (especially in Poland) used the idea of civil society in theorising their struggle to create a protected societal sphere separate from the official sphere of the all-embracing party-state. Indeed, accounts of the history of civil society theory itself have been rewritten to some extent through the influence of these discourses. Tocqueville, for example, despite his infrequent use of the term itself, has recently emerged in academic consciousness as a key civil society theorist. This is at least in part because of the compatibility of his observations with those arising from the Central-Eastern European opposition movements; that is, he was the first, in *Democracy in America*, to articulate the need for strong, independent associations to stand between the individual and the state.[3] It was to these movements that the term civil society was first reapplied in the western academe - to account for, and project more widely, the role and

[2]Keane (1988) and Arato (1982) have demonstrated in more general terms that the distinction between civil society and the state - obliterated by Marxist theory in the nineteenth century - first reemerged (although in a different form) in Central-Eastern European (particularly Polish) thinking.
[3]Also, as with Gramsci, civil society for Tocqueville is non-economic - which marks a distinction from the classical (including the Hegelian) idea, a distinction which we also see in contemporary versions.

character of Solidarity in Poland.[4] For Tocqueville, looking in bewilderment at the totalitarian implications of statist, centralising and, as he saw it, potentially stifling and conformist developments in post-revolutionary France; and for the Central-Eastern European oppositionists considering their weakness in the face of even greater 'totalisation' from above, the importance of the 'self-defence' of society against the state must have been equally obvious.

Robert Fine differentiates this new approach to civil society (what he terms 'civil society theory', which he too claims emerged during the 1980s in connection with the political struggles in Central and Eastern Europe (Fine 1997: 9)) from the concept of civil society that we inherit from the 'classical' theory. For Fine, what sets current civil society theory apart, 'is that it *privileges* civil society over all other moments or spheres of social life, on the ground that civil society furnishes the fundamental conditions of liberty in the modern world... [I]t places civil society on the side of agency, creativity, activity, productivity, freedom, association, life itself' (Fine 1997: 9). I believe that Fine (echoing Pearce above) has a valuable insight here, and although he does not make this point explicit himself, I would also argue (as will become clear in the rest of the thesis) that a crucial feature of this development is that the idea of civil society is now held, by all theorists from across the political spectrum, to be inextricably linked to democracy. In other words, civil society is now seen as somehow crucial as a mechanism for *collective* self-determination and autonomy.[5] This was *not* the case for the 'classical' theorists of civil society, for whom the idea variously signified modernity and the market, and was connected, whether for good or ill, with liberalism and its emphasis upon *individual* freedom and autonomy.

Fine hints at this distinction when he suggests that the difference between today's civil society theory and 'classical' notions is that the former is actually closer to the traditional natural law theories (e.g. from Locke), which, in equating civil society and political society, 'prefigure[d] the propensity of [current] civil society theory to subordinate politics to civil society and its requirements' (Fine 1997: 15). This, I suggest, has happened as a result of the marriage of civil society theory, since its reemergence in the 1970s and 1980s, with democratic theory. If civil society is seen as the seat of democracy, then of course it becomes just as sovereign as the by now largely uncontested political value which it is seen to represent. 'Classical' conceptualisations of civil society, by way of contrast, were not connected with democracy, which was then,

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[4]See Andrew Arato's influential work *Civil Society Against the State: Poland 1980-81* (1981); Arato being perhaps the first to use the term for this purpose.

[5]A good example here comes from a currently influential theorist of civil society, Larry Diamond. Diamond writes: 'civil society 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, and hold state officials accountable' (Diamond 1994: 5).

indeed since Plato, a norm widely feared and despised by philosophers. *These* thinkers 'placed civil society between the poles of property on the one side and the state on the other...not, as is usually suggested in [today's] civil society theory...[in] a dyadic schema based on the opposition between the life-world of civil society and the systems of politics and economics' (Fine 1997: 16). Thus the emancipatory potential of civil society for the 'classicists' (with the notable exception of Marx and, more ambiguously, Hegel) lay in the role that private property apparently played in freeing 'humanity from the personal dependencies, status inequalities and other injustices associated with the old political order' (Fine 1997: 16). In other words, civil society is here celebrated not as an emancipatory end in itself, but as the nexus of individual freedom and autonomy in the market. It is celebrated by *liberals* for achieving *liberal* purposes (anti-paternalism and non-dependence in particular), and although these self-same principles of individual freedom and autonomy provided a basis for the democratic revolutions to come, these theorists were not democrats, and did not see civil society employed for democratic purposes. (Neither of course, did the *opponents* of the liberal model of civil society - Marx and Hegel.)

As far as Fine is concerned, the new situation in civil society theory of the privileging of this sphere over all others, is a shared feature of otherwise very different approaches to using the concept. That he is correct in this assumption should become clear from the following review of current civil society theorising.

Starting on the left of the political spectrum, it might be imagined that leftists would be given to recalling Marx's critical analysis of 'bourgeois' civil society. Yet, on the contrary, increasing numbers of left-wing academics seem to be abandoning any reservations that they once had about the category of civil society. This is especially true of the so called 'New Left'. Many New Left or 'post-Marxist' theorists who are engaged in critiquing liberal democracy find insights within the idea of civil society which are seen as crucial in coming to terms with two admitted areas of weakness in their earlier accounts. The first of these is the failure of orthodox Marxism to recognise the threat to democratic self-organisation posed by modern state bureaucracies. The state has a tendency to subordinate ever more areas of social life to its control *regardless* of whether it has been captured by and 'represents' previously oppressed classes (see Lefort 1986: 280). The second alleged mistake was to downplay or ignore the so called 'fact of pluralism', which is seen to require that some kind of private sphere (even if reconceived) must always be protected from public political power.

From the point of view of those such as Cohen and Arato who are influenced by Habermasian critical theory, an autonomous civil society is actually central to a

new/renewed democratic project.[6] Democracy constituted merely as a political mechanism for controlling the state, on this account, is not sufficient to protect a democratically self-reflexive society (civil society) being undermined by state bureaucracy (or the system of 'power') and by the economic power of the market (the system of 'money'). For these theorists, then, civil society constitutes the public sphere wherein democracy finds its source - it must be strengthened (through the agency of the 'new social movements', for example) if democracy is to be deepened (cf. Keane 1988b: 62; Habermas in Calhoun 1992: 452-7; Habermas 1994: 8; Cohen and Arato 1992: 25; Held 1996: 316; Giddens 1994: 116; Lefort 1986: 265-6 and 278-9).

The New Left are not alone amongst western academics in redeploying the concept of civil society within their own political and analytical schemas. Within mainstream political science, the concept seems to have taken off as an explanation for the collapse of communist - and other authoritarian - regimes, through the apparent resurgence of independent associational life or popular political resistance. Here the term civil society becomes central to the vocabulary of analyses of the so called 'third wave' of democratisation, especially in Central-Eastern Europe. As John Schwarzmantel observes, this mode of thinking about civil society actually places the concept in a line of thinking about totalitarianism, and resistance to it, which traces back to theorists such as Arendt (who did not use the concept themselves). Here, the antithesis between civil society and 'rude society' identified by the Enlightenment theorists, is replaced by a new binary opposition between civil society and totalitarian society (Schwarzmantel 1996: 7). In other words, the norm of associability which the term civil society originally deployed in critiquing 'barbaric societies', is now used to oppose the atomisation of society under total state control. For theorists such as Arendt, totalitarian regimes obliterated the groups and associations which were all that stood between the power of the modern state and the weak, isolated individual. This understanding of civil society as a bulwark in the face of the state leviathan, is now the commonly accepted one. It turns the civil society 'solution' away from problems posed to society arising 'from below' (i.e. untrammelled individualism), and exclusively towards threats 'from above'.

Schwarzmantel recalls quotes by two of the currently most influential theorists of civil society, Ernest Gellner and Larry Diamond, to illustrate that this approach to civil society is now the dominant one. Gellner states that 'civil society is that set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state [and which] can prevent the state from dominating and atomizing the rest of society' (Gellner 1995).[7] Diamond, who agrees that civil society is defined in its relation to the state, writes that he

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[6]Cohen and Arato have written perhaps the most influential recent book on civil society: *Civil Society and Political Theory* (1992).

[7]Schwarzmantel points to the use of the word 'atomizing' as an example of the link of this conceptualisation with Arendt's earlier work (Schwarzmantel 1996: 9).

conceives of it 'as the realm of organised social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules' (Diamond 1994: 5). Diamond's definition demonstrates that a number of categorical assumptions about civil society flow from its identification as a non-state sphere that calls the state to account. Indeed, Diamond identifies these for himself. They are, firstly, that civil society is concerned with public not private ends, secondly, that it does not seek power in the state, and, thirdly, that its associations are themselves pluralistic and diverse (Diamond 1994: 6). The interesting thing about this set of ideas about civil society - which are shared by most civil society theorists today - is that, by redefining it, they claim civil society for liberal democracy. In some senses, the concept, so interpreted, returns to pluralist thinking on the character of liberal democracies - where these are understood as possessing multiple centres of power with no one set of interests predominating (since membership of groups is cross-cutting) and with influence, broadly speaking, moving from the bottom of society to the top. Of course, theorists of civil society are less optimistic than pluralists (though they have more in common with neo-pluralists) that the state constitutes merely one group amongst others and that it has no fixed agenda of its own, yet apart from this their concerns are much the same. That is, both schools of thought see the main danger facing society as coming from the concentration of political power, and not from economic or class power. In this sense, much civil society theory in the West today falls squarely within the boundaries of *liberal* theory, focusing as it does upon the separation of powers and the control of power. However, the difference with the 'classical' theory should not be underestimated. Then, civil society was important to liberalism in its struggle with feudalism, now it is important to liberalism in its struggle with the state (hence its putative importance for the theory and practice of democracy). Yet in its contemporary prioritisation of the separation of spheres between state and society, which effectively endorses a market society and a limited state, the idea of civil society in western theory remains an essentially liberal concept.

2. Locating the Thesis Within the Literature

As the review above demonstrates, through existing work it is possible to gain a clear sense of the origins and subsequent development of the concept of civil society within western political theory (see Seligman 1992; Gellner 1994; White 1994; Tester 1992; Kumar 1993, to name but a few). What is not clearly portrayed is why the concept has recently reemerged so dramatically in, or in relation to, other widely different contexts, in what ways this has happened and, most importantly, how these developments have changed the meaning and status of the concept overall. Arato's 1981 essay on the civil society debate in Poland is clear as to why the concept was important there at that time, and Keane's 1988 collection of works by Central-Eastern *and* Western Europeans

broadens out this analysis in order to explain the European-wide resurgence of civil society theory. But these works were written at a considerably earlier stage in the evolution of renewed thinking about civil society (even before the fall of communism in Central-Eastern Europe), and it therefore remains to be established what *subsequent* influence on the idea of civil society this regional body of theory has had, both within and outside of its original context. Also, there are still no substantive works on the wider picture of how and why the idea of civil society has spread even further afield than its European heartland. This dissemination of civil society theory admittedly includes (though is not exhausted by) the application of the concept by western academics to non-western contexts. Yet even this phenomenon needs to be explored in terms of why it is assumed that civil society is useful in understanding these non-western contexts, what civil society is seen to consist of within them, and how the concept has been reformulated in the process of this new research.

However, as the analysis of Latin American and, to a certain extent, African, discussions on civil society demonstrates, it is also true that civil society theory is debated by non-westerners and non-Europeans. How these various non-western discourses relate to each other and back to current western theory, is opaque in the literature. Cohen and Arato provide a very brief overview in their (1992) book *Civil Society and Political Theory*, yet this comes across as tendentious, since their project here is to provide their own model of a civil society-directed democratising project. It appears likely, therefore, that their presentation of inter-regional civil society theory as centred around a political project akin to theirs, constitutes a rather selective reading of the evidence available.

Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn have edited a collection entitled *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models* (1996), yet this work goes about critiquing western models (through arguing for a 'broader understanding' of them) only on their own terms - that is, by way of sociological-anthropological analyses of various non-western contexts which are then shown not to fit western models. None of the book's authors, with the exception of Michal Buchowski (in a chapter which anyway looks only at Poland), explore alternative civil society models which arise from, or are specifically worked out in application to, these contexts themselves. Similarly, Adam Seligman has provided a work, *The Idea of Civil Society* (1992), which hypothesises that civil society theory is determined by the sociology of early western modernity from where it originated. By extension, he argues, it does not capture important aspects of the sociology of the various non-western contexts at which he looks. Here again, however, the focus is on the scope and reach of established western models of civil society (in this case the classical one), and not on the current state of civil society theorising in its various other forms, occidental or not. Finally, Ernest Gellner (*Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*, (1994)) also applies the concept of civil society as it came to be

understood within western liberalism to non-western contexts (communist societies and the Muslim world). Although he is interested in why the idea of civil society was engaged with and given new meaning in Central-Eastern Europe, while in the Muslim world such theorising has been 'underdeveloped', Gellner understands the concept as only making sense within 'westernised', liberal contexts. In other words, Gellner sees civil society theory as an exclusively western body of thought, and, as with Hann and Dunn and Seligman, he is concerned with the transferability (in his view the non-transferability) of this western model to non-western contexts. He is not interested in alternative conceptualisations from within, or in application to, these non-western contexts themselves.

Furthermore, for Gellner, as for Hann and Dunn, Seligman, and even Cohen and Arato and Keane, civil society is not just an idea, it exists as a sociological phenomenon. In this very important sense, the project of these authors involves identifying the normative significance of civil society and then looking for a set of institutions that can instantiate these norms in practice. Arguably, no political idea can be legitimately articulated in the absence of any consideration about how it could be realised. Yet there is a constant danger, when analysing civil society as both idea *and* reality, of making a category mistake. This is, in short, that these theorists possess a model of what they think civil society looks like 'on the ground'. It is therefore difficult for them to look with any reasonable degree of objectivity at competing ideas of civil society on their own terms. Of course, reification could be avoided if theorists limited themselves to a model of civil society as *either* something actually existing *or* as a purely conceptual construct. Yet in analysing other theorists' models of civil society while at the same time seeking to identify what civil society 'really is', these scholars are forced to treat civil society as both idea and reality in order to demonstrate why *their* empirical civil society deserves the title better than another.

Because reification is endemic within the literature which treats civil society as a substantive concept, those few analyses of civil society theory which fall broadly within the same project as this thesis (i.e. being neither region-specific, nor 'context free'), are largely unequipped to provide an account of the recent history of the civil society concept, or, by extension, to critique extant civil society theory systematically. Conversely, this thesis is unique in not engaging with the concept of civil society as a description of some sociological reality, but treating it instead as a category of political discourse - as carrying, that is, both normative and analytical intent.

Yet there is a further lacuna arising from the rather tendentious character of existing overviews of civil society theory (such as these are). Here I am referring to the lack of detailed classificatory work carried out on recent models of civil society. There are, of

course, some exceptions to this rule. Robert Fine, for example, has differentiated between three approaches to civil society currently in use: the radical type, the sociological type and the economic type. The radical type he connects to the theory of the Central-Eastern European theorists, such as Havel, where civil society romantically signifies the 'life-world' in opposition to the 'system'. The sociological type, linked by Fine to Habermas, emphasises civil society as post-traditional realm of voluntary association. For Habermas, this 'public sphere' is the sole source of legitimation for modern societies. Finally, Fine understands the economic type of civil society theory (exemplified by Ernest Gellner) as involving the return to eighteenth century political economy, in which the separation of politics from economics, and the subsequent transition from centralism to pluralism, is celebrated as the achievement of modern, bourgeois, civil society (Fine 1997: 9-15).

Yet while Fine's categories are useful in classifying civil society theory (for the Western corpus at least) in terms of its various characterisations of the sphere of civil society itself, there is another, arguably more important, line of differentiation to be drawn between models of civil society, one to be identified in this thesis. This line divides models of civil society according to their assumptions about what democracy is - specifically, how it is characterised as a procedure and where it is envisaged as taking place. As will become clear, all theories of civil society, since their recent reemergence, contain such assumptions, the only question is: what are they? This important question remains unaddressed in the literature on civil society theory; here it will be tackled through the identification of a radical-democratic and a liberal-democratic approach to conceptualising civil society.

Taking all of the above points together, a key contribution that this thesis is able to make to the literature on civil society, given the research focus adopted, is that it can comment authoritatively upon how the idea of civil society relates to the political space within which it is articulated. Indeed, a central insight of the thesis is that the texture of civil society theory - particularly the assumptions about democracy and democratisation which are central to it - changes dramatically according to the spatial and temporal context. Through situating recent developments in civil society theory, it also becomes clear just how closely these developments have paralleled (or been parasitic on?) wider changes in political theory and praxis, especially the evolution of Marxism in the last twenty five years. This observation provides new material for reflection on the deeper question: how, in general, should we understand the relationship between a body of political ideas and social praxis?

3. The Parameters of the Thesis

In order to establish the proper boundaries of this thesis, a number of caveats are necessary. While the thesis provides a regional overview of discourses on civil society, it does this in order to examine a range of spatially and temporally separate discourses (as instrumental to an overall critique), not in order to describe what each region has to say about civil society, as if any one region could contain a single, distinct debate. In other words, the division of the thesis by region is intended in part as a framework within which to capture a larger and more diverse sample of discourses than have previously been studied together; it is thus a framework for qualitative, rather than quantitative, analysis. Indeed, in relation to the same region, discussions on civil society can be separated by time, political circumstance, ideology, and by whether they are carried out largely inside or outside the region itself. So it is particularly important not to artificially amalgamate debates connected to any one region by seeking to make them speak with one voice. An additional point here is that while this thesis seeks to provide an overview of regionally orientated discourses on civil society, it does this in order to point up significant comparisons and contrasts, and to explore the significance of context for political debate, rather than to provide exhaustive accounts of all the dialogues on civil society pertaining to any one region.

By extension, my intention is not to document even those dialogues which *are* studied in terms of locating each and every interlocutor within them. Instead, the intention is to unearth some of the broader characteristics of a range of debates through looking primarily at those theorists who were both the most prominent and influential within the discourse(s) to which they were party - who will also be those who have engaged *substantively* with the concept and the wider discussion surrounding it. These theorists, of course, may not be native to the region in which they work, or may now live and work outside of their home region and so on. Thus, to reiterate, no attempt is made to isolate a set of purely endogenous regional discourses.

Despite these caveats, the application of a comparative method based upon region succeeds in revealing some crucial features of the idea of civil society which - although being by no means exhaustive of all that is said of, or attributed to, the concept with regard to any one region - would otherwise not be apparent to either regional specialists or political theorists - the former being restricted to a 'single' context, and the latter being relatively uninterested in context. In short, the task of identifying patterns of thought associated with any political-theoretical idea is held to be an important one, even if those patterns are contested and not attributable to all interlocutors.

Moreover, although the regions adopted in this study are instrumental to the inclusion of a wide range of dialogues on civil society, this is not their only purpose. For this thesis also seeks to provide a clear sense of where, broadly speaking, new thinking about civil society and democracy has come from, and of the political contexts and ideological frameworks within which this thinking has been enmeshed. In these terms, regional contexts are *themselves* significant, as will become apparent in the course of the thesis. For now, though, it is sufficient to outline what the choice of regions is, and of why this choice is purposeful and necessary.

Three regional discourses (or sets of discourses) are covered in the thesis: Central-Eastern Europe; Latin America; and Sub-Saharan Africa. The inclusion of three regions is deemed suitable, first, in order to provide a large enough set for general observations to be made. Were there any less, then the study would end up merely comparing two debates directly with one another, in which case anomalies become harder to see and impossible to verify. Second, three regions is believed to be the maximum feasible number before 'overstretch' begins to weaken the more general observations necessary to this study. Central-Eastern Europe, as the region where theorists first reengaged with and reworked the concept during the 1970s and 1980s, demanded inclusion. So too did Latin America, where the discussion surrounding the idea civil society is almost as old and has been equally substantive. Both these regional contexts, at least in their initial stages, contained discourses which were also substantially endogenous and innovative.

Sub-Saharan Africa represents the other end of the scale, and as such serves as a useful comparator. This is so in three senses. First, this debate on civil society is more recent and appeared much more suddenly - following the 'wave' of democratisations which swept Sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s - than in the other two regions. In these regions, by contrast, the earliest discussions concerning the idea of civil society *preceded* regional 'waves' of democratisation. Second, and by extension, the Africanist dispute about the nature and significance of the idea of civil society has mostly not taken place in relation to authoritarian political contexts, or in relation to the working out of a model of political praxis for democratisers; indeed, it has taken place largely within the western academe. It is thus a very different discourse from some that were present in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America. Third, the political economy of Sub-Saharan Africa - with its widespread underdevelopment, limited urbanisation, dominant peasant social base, and uncertain state capacity - makes the concept of civil society - linked as it was originally to European attempts to describe certain aspects of capitalist development and modernity - particularly 'alien' in Africa, when compared to the comparatively developed societies of Central-Eastern European and Latin America. Sub-Saharan Africa is therefore a fascinating example of apparently hostile soil for a concept such as civil society, which only makes it even more unusual that the concept has recently flourished

within African studies. Of course, discourses on civil society are now found either in, or in relation to, almost every corner of the globe, yet nowhere else (apart from in the West) have they been as rooted or as long-standing as those in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America, or as contestatory and ideologically diverse as those within Africanist circles.

4. Methodology

Why study the concept of civil society by analysing its formulation within specific discourses? As Michael Freeden has pointed out, political concepts form the basic units of thinking about politics, they 'constitute its main foci, just as words are the basic units of language' (Freeden 1996: 2). Since words are most clearly understood within the wider socio-linguistic framework of the language users themselves, by extension political concepts need also to be contextualised if their shifting meanings are to be mapped with any degree of accuracy (since the relationship between word and concept is not a fixed one). While the concept of civil society has been theorised most extensively in terms of its logical coherence and ethical possibilities, in short, against the yardstick of a universalisable model, little has been done to uncover its interrelationships with other political concepts in the context of political discourses with all their cultural, temporal, spatial and logical constraints (Freeden 1996: 14).[8]

From this wider methodological perspective emerges an analytical thesis, one that seeks to elucidate the (recent) history of the idea of civil society in terms of assessing, by means of a temporally and spatially diverse sample, a cross-section of different theoretical-political approaches to it. The intention is to uncover significant new trends and then to seek to account for them, and not to aim at encyclopaedic comprehension, or large scale theory-construction of my own. Put another way, the point is not merely to describe the various versions of civil society theory (since comparisons between discourses does not anyway open up the possibility of an inductivist general theory, but only of morphological mapping), nor to provide an entirely different theory (which, in seeking to operate 'boundlessly' by seeking out what is logically and normatively ideal, would be unrelated to the less than boundless contexts in which political thinking actually occurs). Instead, more ambitiously than the former of these projects, and less so than the latter, I seek to make a contribution in terms of assessing what is, or is not, politically useful or desirable about the idea of civil society in its *recently revived form(s)*. Of course, any such contribution is an analytical-normative, rather than a narrowly empiricist, one. To reiterate, no positivist reconstruction of the 'true' definition (via inductivism), or of the 'real' value (via transhistorical political philosophy), of civil society

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[8]What this method also ensures, of course, is that the study of civil society as a concept does not fall into the Idealist fallacy of treating ideas as if they had a life of their own.

is possible or desirable - civil society is a political concept, standing not on its own, but in a shifting relationship to other concepts.

Given that I take civil society to be a political, or rooted, concept, one way to approach the analysis of debates on civil society would be to adopt the method of discourse analysis, which looks at how norms are created discursively, rather than assuming the possibility of their having any 'objective' validity in science or logic. In fact, in this thesis I actually reject some of the key claims of discourse analysis. But in order to explain why and how I do this, and also so as to reveal the contours of my own position, it is necessary to outline the discourse approach and to flag up some of its strengths and weaknesses for a research project of this type.

'Discourse' can be used to signify: firstly, all language and the process by which utterances and texts are produced according to a system of rules; secondly, the texts and utterances that these rules generate, 'regardless of their literary or factual status'; thirdly, clusters of texts and utterances (Mills 1991: 8). In this thesis I take issue with the 'strong' version of the discourse approach, which states that discourse is entirely self-sufficient, or, in other words, that all of 'reality' is constituted within discourse. This view flies in the face of one of the central observations of this thesis, which is that political discourse does not determine political praxis but rather exists in a dynamic, two-way relationship with it. Indeed, on the evidence of this thesis, it is true to say that in order to thrive, political ideas must be able to provide the conceptual resources for efficacious political praxis. One response to this would be to say that discourse itself sets the standards for 'efficacy', and not any such thing as a 'political base'. Yet this leaves us with an inadequate account of how political discourses break down. The evidence in this thesis suggests that political discourses are very quickly abandoned or change shape once their 'political base' has changed. This implies a line of causality from 'base' to discourse that should be explored further.

Macdonell writes of discourse:

> ...a particular area of language use may be identified by the institution to which it relates and by the position from which it comes and which marks it out for the speaker. The position does not exist by itself, however. Indeed, it may be understood as a standpoint taken up by the discourse through its relation to another, ultimately opposing discourse (Macdonell 1986: 3 in Mills 1991: 9).

One valuable insight of discourse analysis is thus that discourses are irreducible either to the authors of texts and utterances, or to the truth of texts and utterances. On a 'strong' argument this implies that one cannot analyse discourse in terms of interrogating texts or utterances contained within it according to some external criterion, but can only explore

the 'configuration of discursive structures with which the author [or speaker] negotiates' (Mills 1991: 9). Yet ignoring for the moment the problems posed by this 'strong' argument, an advantage of discourse analysis is that it directly confronts discursive claims to 'truth' and 'reality' on their own terms, without immediately suggesting an alternative truth or reality. It better enables the discourse analyst to discuss the ways in which interlocutors within the discourse are describing 'reality' or 'truth' and also to show how these various visions of 'reality'/'truth' are shaped by the encounter with alternative 'realities'/'truths' as expressed by competing or overlapping discourses.

Interlocutors to discourses on civil society, of course, imagine themselves as referring to 'reality', or as telling 'the truth' (sometimes this is stated explicitly). Mistakenly, most comparative studies of civil society theory, such as there are, respond to this situation by taking the same starting point - that is, they have the intention, ultimately, of providing their own model of an 'actually existing' or 'true' civil society. Clearly, such an objective distorts attempts by these same theorists to interrogate systematically other discourses on civil society; and these other discourses are actually included for largely instrumentalist purposes.

Analysing the idea of civil society as being in some important ways only a *representation* of structures in the real world is therefore an approach which is adopted within this thesis, which is why various debates on civil society are understood throughout as constituting discourses. This method helps clarify some of the aims of the thesis, which are to provide further understanding of the ideological aspects of civil society theory by exploring its representation of social and political life. Put another way, the ambition is to expose the main characteristics of civil society as a category of political discourse. This aspect of the research programme is thus a simple one: to analyse discourses on civil society (understood as signifying practices), in order to problematise the relation between word (civil society) and object (that which supposedly corresponds with the term 'civil society' in the world):

> ...in analysing discourses themselves one can see the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice. These rules define not the dumb existence of reality, nor the canonical use of a vocabulary, but the rendering of objects (Foucault 1972: 48-9, in Mills 1991: 10).

Foucault continues:

> The analysis of statements, then, is a historical analysis but one that avoids all interpretation; it does not question things said as to what they were 'really' saying, in spite of themselves....; but, on the contrary, it questions them as to their mode

of existence...what it means for them to have appeared when they did - they and no others (Foucault 1972: 109, in Mills 1991: 10).

After Foucault here, the intention in this thesis is not to analyse texts and utterances on civil society in order to make them speak in a certain way - either in favour of or against an already privileged idea of civil society - but, rather, to unearth the recent genealogy of civil society theory. Thus the interpretation, or political critique, of civil society theory *follows on* from discourse analysis. Of course, this is not to say that discourse analysis can ever be 'neutral' or 'objective'; nevertheless, as a methodological approach it is vital to the task of uncovering how discourses on civil society signify meaning, and of the ways in which this meaning has shifted through time and space. Without knowledge of these processes, any subsequent critique of civil society theory is likely to miss its intended target or, worse, to set up a 'straw man' which serves to legitimate already fixed ideas about a civil society defined in opposition to it.

A more contentious aspect of Foucault's approach to discourse analysis revealed in the quote above, from which this thesis in fact departs decisively, is that, '[r]ather than set up a scientific knowledge against which ideology is viewed, Foucault locates his own work within the discursive framework he has described' (Mills 1991: 12). Foucault thus rejects absolutely the distinction, such as Althusser described (Althusser 1984), between ideology and scientific knowledge (Mills 1991: 11). While accepting that the relationship between word and object is a complex one within which ideology plays a significant part, it is argued here that it is too much to say, as many discourse analysts following Foucault do, that discourse shapes what is politically possible, but never vice versa. Indeed, this thesis demonstrates that there is a significant and observable link between political ideas and their political base running from the latter to the former. When this base changes significantly, so to must political ideas if they are to avoid marginalisation and even extinction. In other words, political ideas evolve in perceivable relation to the shifting political base, and not just through intra-discursive or inter-discursive encounters.

Here, my methodological approach is close to that of Freeden, who, in summary, is worth quoting at length for his insights into this debate:

> [P]olitical concepts are located within a pattern of ideas concerning the understanding and shaping - through changing or conserving - of the political world. In that sense they have a dual existence, in part internal and in part external to the realm of language... Moreover, political concepts are units of structure as well as units of meaning, be the two ever so connected. That structure must not be fused or confused with the structure of language itself, but draws crucially on patterns of culture and history... [This is an] important difference between linguistic and political-conceptual analysis...The meaning of words [do not, as Saussure claims,] hinge entirely on their relation to each other at a given point in time...political concepts exist in the 'real world' of time and

space and their meanings derive in part, though not completely, from that world... [P]olitical thinking [in contrast to private or semi-private language such as technical or professional language] is a cultural construct designed for public consumption. The ability of political concepts to account for, or explain, the changing world to which they relate becomes a further test of their viability (Freeden 1996 51-52).

Before moving on to look at regional discourses on civil society, it is necessary to provide a broad characterisation of the concept of civil society to guide us through the rest of the thesis. As has already been made clear, I understand the concept to be normative and therefore essentially a category of political discourse (i.e. not fixed), so any attempts at definition seem foolish. In particular, starting with a precise definition of civil society, as argued above, precludes reasonably objective research into other definitions and meanings. Nevertheless, at points in the thesis I look at the work of theorists who, although they are certainly engaged in wider dialogues within which the concept of civil society is of central importance, do not use the term themselves. In these cases, some justification is needed as to why I take these ideas to be ideas about civil society. In short, I cannot escape locating the concept, even if this is done in very broad terms. The outline below, therefore, should be read as identifying the parameters within which arguments about the meaning of civil society take place. It is *not* a definition, but rather identifies the central tenets of what might be called an 'ideal type' conceptualisation of civil society. This 'ideal type', though its claims would be disputed by many interlocutors, is somewhere close to the axis around which contemporary debates on civil society rotate. Crucially, it could be interpreted as referring to civil society as a process *or* as a set of institutions, since theorists differ on this point. Yet, ultimately, all talk of civil society, as either institution or process, must identify a location where it can be found.

In the context of recent debates on civil society with which this thesis is concerned, civil society denotes those collectivities, or those collective actions and norms, which are outside of and autonomous from the state, being also neither the property of the 'private sphere' (of family life) or of the economy (whether or not the economy is defined as 'private'). Civil society is therefore at once public and private - 'public' in the sense that human association always has implications for the wider community, placing the individual in a particular relation to others and to the whole; and 'private' in that it falls outside of the formal political sphere where publicly binding decisions are made. Of course, both the family and the economy also posses these characteristics, yet civil society is defined apart from these constructs because it is in some ways (or ideally) a realm of voluntary association. Neither involvement in the family (however defined), nor the economy, are strictly voluntary activities.

CHAPTER 2

The Central-Eastern European Discourse

1. The Polish Discourse on Civil Society

At stake in detailing the Polish debate on civil society is a proper understanding of the recent intellectual history of the concept. Indeed, Andrew Arato - who along with Jean Cohen has written perhaps the most influential recent book on civil society and political theory (*Civil Society and Political Theory*, 1992) - helped to restart the debate on civil society in the West through his 1981 analysis, in the left-wing journal *Telos*, of the Polish Solidarity events according to the model 'civil society against the state' (Arato 1981). Arato was thus the first to use a previously contextualised Polish debate about civil society as a category of political theory generally - that is, as connected to notions of the public sphere 'allegedly applicable to all societies' (Ely 1992: 176). The considerable influence of Arato's work on civil society theory therefore constitutes, at least in part, the popularisation of the 'Polish model' of civil society.

That the Polish debate formed a new starting point for civil society theory is also revealed by the fact that this debate did not in any significant ways draw on theoretical models external to the Polish context. As Arato wrote in the very first sentence of his 1981 essay, reviewing these thinkers and their models, 'The categories of civil society are not extraneous to the Polish events' (Arato 1981: 23). At stake for Polish theorists was not just an adequate theoretical account of what might constitute civil society, but also a mode of political practice that would prove sustainable given the constraints of their situation, yet without compromising wider normative considerations. One element of the Polish debate that encapsulated this union of theory and praxis was the idea of the 'self-limiting' revolution. First explored by Polish theorists prior to 1980, it came also, as Keane records, to characterise something of the character of Solidarity:

> Solidarnosc sought neither to form a political party nor to 'capture' state power. It sought neither the restoration of capitalism nor the withering away of the state. Rather, it pursued a self-limiting 'evolutionist' strategy...(Keane 1988: 5).

This more strategic approach to opposition may appear to have necessitated the abandonment of more substantive values. Yet the tactic of the peaceful transformation of society towards self-organisation - which would 'hollow out' and eventually transform the institutional arena[1] - although undoubtedly pragmatic in its recognition of the limits

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[1]Kuron wrote in 1980, for example, that the organisation of 'democracy at the lowest primary social level...should expand so as to include eventually the activities of the whole state administration' (Kuron 1981b: 37).

to action posed by Soviet power in the region, had also a wider normative significance. It is important to see that this ideal of 'self-limitation', of autonomous self-organisation outside of the official and state sphere, was understood as an end in itself. As a norm that came to prominence within the Polish civil society debate, but which is now a significant component in much civil society theorising of a more general nature, 'self-limitation' is illustrative of the significance of this debate:

> The self-limiting revolution avoids the total destruction of its enemy, which would inevitably mean putting itself into the place of the sovereign, thereby depriving society of its self-organisation and its self defence... The common core of all the interpretations [of self-limiting revolution]...is the concept of civil society, or rather some of the components of this concept. All agree that civil society represents a sphere other than and even distinct from the state (Cohen and Arato 1992: 74).

I proceed in what follows by looking, first, at the origins of thinking about civil society in Poland in the formative years 1976-81. In section two, in order to establish a broader theoretical context to these developments, I outline the importance of the totalitarian paradigm. Third, and finally, I highlight the distinctive ideological elements of the 'Polish model' and the political debates contained within it.

(i) The Original Polish Idea of Civil Society: Content, Context and Timing
Ideas that after 1980-81 come everywhere to fall under the rubric civil society, are expressed by three main thinkers (Leszek Kolakowski, Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron) in essays from as early as 1971. All of these men were Polish, seeking to develop new approaches to political opposition in the wake of the failure of two major workers' challenges to the communist system in 1970-1971 and 1976.

1976 saw the formation of the KOR (Workers' Defence Committee) in which Polish intellectuals - including Michnik and Kuron - reestablished close ties with the workers' movement (Lewis 1992: 7). This year also saw Michnik's highly influential essay *The New Evolutionism*, which built on earlier work by Kolakowski, an exiled philosopher. Prior to 1980 and these developments, the term civil society is used in only a number of isolated places: by Smolar in the preface to *Une Societe en Dissedence* - a volume of writings by Polish dissidents published in 1978; and by Rupnik, following Kolakowski, as a term for the new 'post-revisionist' opposition strategy (Arato 1981: 23). Yet by 1982, a series of lectures (under the title 'Power and Civil Society') given by Leszek Nowak - a philosopher and 'Solidarity' activist - to his 'Solidarity' cointernees, is orientated entirely around the concept of civil society, defined as 'the sphere of civil autonomy' (Nowak 1991: 29).

Leszek Kolakowski, though in exile, set in train what was to become the civil society debate in Poland as early as 1971. In his essay *Hope and Hopelessness* (1971), Kolakowski 'broke with the prevailing pessimism about the possibility of democratic political change in Eastern Europe after the Soviet normalisation of Czechoslovakia' (Bernhard 1993: 313). Despite the willingness of the Soviet Union to use overwhelming force in the region when processes of reform from within the ruling parties went too far (as in Czechoslovakia in 1968), Kolakowski believed that Soviet-type systems could nonetheless be reformed 'from below'. Because the party-state could only retain its control by suppressing all dissent, Kolakowski called for the reconstruction of the social sphere through resistance. This resistance was not to be aimed at overthrowing or substantially reforming the communist regime directly, but at creating a growing societal realm free from party-state control. As Kolakowski put it, oppositionists should look and hope for a:

> reformist orientation in the sense of a belief in the possibility of effective, gradual, and partial pressures, exercised in a long term perspective of social and national liberation (Kolakowski 1971: 42, in Bernhard 1993: 313).

Stimulated by Kolakowski's earlier ideas and, further, by the failure of recent workers' strikes, the new political thinking inside Poland came to hinge on two key themes: the interrelated oppositional strategies of 'evolutionism' and putting 'society first'. Turning initially to the former idea; this was first outlined in Michnik's seminal essay *A New Evolutionism* (1976). The idea of 'evolutionism' was intended as a critique of revisionism in that, like Kolakowski, Michnik thought it only realistic to accept the limits imposed by Soviet power in the region. 'For me', he wrote in this essay, 'the lesson of Czechoslovakia is that change is possible and that it has its limits...[R]evisionists...believed in having concessions and rights "granted" from above · rather than in organising pressure from below' (Michnik 1985: 139-40).

At the same time as these ideas were evolving, Michnik was also part of the movement seeking to put them into practice - with the 'organisation of pressure from below' taking the form of the KOR: 'To offer solidarity with striking workers', he wrote in *A New Evolutionism*, '...is to challenge the intraparty strategy of the revisionist[s]... Social solidarity undermines the fundamental component of [reformist] strateg[y]: acceptance of the government as the basic reference point' (Michnik 1985: 142). As will become apparent, this link between theory and praxis was to be characteristic of the Polish civil society model.

However, if reformism would not work, then the idea of 'evolutionism' accepted that neither would revolution:

The dilemma of nineteenth-century leftist movements - "reform or revolution" - is not the dilemma of the Polish opposition. To believe in overthrowing the dictatorship of the party by revolution...is both unrealistic and dangerous. As the political structure of the USSR remains unchanged, it is unrealistic to count on subverting the party in Poland (Michnik 1985: 142).

Eschewing revolutionary action was not mere pragmatism, since Michnik denied that there was any legitimacy to the idea of the Leninist vanguard: 'Given the absence of an authentic political culture or any standards of democratic life, the existence of an underground would only worsen the illness and change little...'(Michnik 1985: 142).[2]

What, then, was the evolutionary strategy to consist of?

In my opinion, an unceasing struggle for reform and evolution that seeks an expansion of civil liberties and human rights is the only course East European dissidents can take. The Polish example demonstrates that real concessions can be won by applying steady public pressure on the government... To draw a parallel with...the Spanish model...[evolutionism] is based on gradual and piecemeal change, not violent upheaval and forceful destruction (Michnik 1985: 142-3).

Nevertheless - as Michnik made clear when he ruled out the idea that reformers in the party could be political allies (Michnik 1985: 146) - putting pressure on the government to concede civil liberties and human rights was a hoped for by-product of 'new evolutionism', not its raison d'être:

what sets today's opposition apart...is the belief that a program for evolution ought to be addressed to an independent public, not to totalitarian power. Such a programme should give directives to the people on how to behave, not to the · powers on how to reform themselves. Nothing instructs the authorities better than pressure from below (Michnik 1985: 144).

This 'society-first' strategy, as it has been termed, was at the heart of the new civil society model for other Polish theorists too. Bernhard gives the example of Kuron's changing political thinking at the time, which reveals a similar trend. In the mid-1960s Kuron, as with most other dissidents, still addressed his grievances to the party. In this way, the final legitimacy of the party was not called into question. For example, Kuron's *Open Letter to the Party* (co-authored with Karol Modzelewski) from this period advocated a programme of socialist self-management which, despite its plea for decision-making to be decentralised to the workers and the peasantry, was, according to it own title, not intended primarily for this wider audience (Bernhard 1993: 313). Yet, like Michnik, by the mid-late 1970s Kuron was looking towards 'society' as the locus of political change

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[2]Kuron provided a similar analysis when he wrote that a democratic order 'can only be attained through democratic means' (Kuron 1981b: 39).

rather than the party-state. This can be seen in his 1976 pamphlet on oppositional strategy, which Arato claims was the first to outline 'a systematic programme for the reconstitution of civil society through the re-establishment of the rule of law, an independent public sphere and freedom of association' (Arato 1981: 28). In 1981, intimating again his departure from conventional state-directed dissidence, Kuron said: 'of course it would be better if the party mustered up enough strength for an inner reform. But I know too little about that and have no way of influencing it. I have to think in terms of my own categories' (Kuron 1981: 95).

Kuron also shared Michnik's view of the need for an evolutionary process of change, for 'self-limitation' (the 'self-limiting revolution' was a term first coined by Kuron during the Solidarity period) by the organised forces of pressure from below: 'Let me express the conviction', he said, 'that in the interests of the Polish nation, and all other nations of the Soviet bloc, that these changes are accomplished in an evolutionary manner' (Kuron in Hankiss 1990: 150). Elsewhere, in a 1980 edition of an opposition information bulletin, Kuron called for a path to democratisation that would 'safeguard national security by not overstepping [its] boundaries' (Kuron 1981b: 37). And in a 1981 interview, even at the height of the Solidarity period when so much seemed to have been achieved, he reemphasised how important it was 'not to lure the [Soviet] wolves out of the woods' (Kuron 1981: 94). Again, it is important to see the normative, rather than purely tactical, nature of this emphasis on 'self-limitation'. In 1982, even despite the defeat of Solidarity's self-limiting strategy after the imposition of martial law, Nowak addressed his Solidarity cointernees in continuing support of this strategy:

> ...according to a well-known saying, "the revolution devours its own children" (Nowak, 1991: 57).

> [Revolutionary] utopia does not offer any guarantee of universal freedom, equality, and fraternity, except for one: the good will of the revolutionaries... Therefore [revolutionary] utopia expresses the interest of the oppressed, but it does so only so long as the social system against which it has turned lasts (Nowak 1991: 97).

Recognition of the futility of replacing one absolute power in the state with another led the 'society-first', or civil society, theorists to deny interest in state power as a *permanent* feature of their political programme. In this sense, the Polish model of civil society, as Arato for example has always claimed, did implicitly advocate the separation of spheres between state and society as more than merely strategic:

> While the full range of meanings in the concept of self-limitation was never fully articulated... the notion... meant not only the need to avoid the transformation of the movement of society into a new form of unified state power, but also that one will not attempt to impose the logic of democratic coordination on all spheres by

suppressing bureaucracy and economic rationality. Movements rooted in civil society have learned from the revolutionary tradition the Tocquevillian lesson that such fundamentalist projects lead to the breakdown of societal steering, productivity, and integration, all of which are then reconstituted by dramatically authoritarian means (Arato 1990: 26).

However, despite their undoubted acceptance of the necessity of an autonomous societal sphere (which is how they defined civil society in the first place), there is strong evidence that Arato is incorrect in describing the Polish theorists as advocating a strictly *delimited and tripartite* separation of spheres (a polity within which democratic control is only *directly* applied in civil society). First, these theorists *did* see a market sphere as necessary to reducing 'totalising' bureaucratic control by centralised state mechanisms[3] - so this sphere can be seen to hold some kind of separateness for them; but it is not clear that market rationality was seen as sufficient for the coordination of this sphere as some kind of separate 'sub-system'. Second, with regard to a state separate from civil society - this was clearly accepted as the mainstay of their political programme;[4] but as a distinct *subsystem* with its own (administrative) rationality separating it from direct democratic control - this much was not accepted. The emphasis of Kuron, Michnik et al, as will become clear, was in fact placed upon the transformation of the societal sphere (including the economy) through local self-management; and they also talked very little about a substantive role for the state in democratisation - though the state was recognised as necessary in preventing anarchy and in order to provide minimalist administration functions.[5] A quote from Kuron indicates well both these points: first, that the desired autonomy of civil society from the state was not intended to countenance the state operating under only indirect (i.e. Parliamentary) democratic control; and second, that while the economy was to be taken outside of state control and marketised, that this was not to preclude direct democratic control of the productive sphere either:

> [W]e have to bring ourselves to inject our independence into dependent state structures. Now is the time for what I call the 'interdependent economy'. It is time to form self-management workers' councils in factories, to make state enterprises autonomous, to replace administrative control with the market (Interview with Luczywo, in Rupnik 1988: 285).

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[3]'...if the motives of private profit in production are eradicated', wrote Kolakowski, 'the organisational body of production - i.e. the state - becomes the only possible subject of economic activity and the only remaining source of economic initiative. This must, not by bureaucratic ambition but by necessity, lead to a tremendous growth in the tasks of the state and its bureaucracy. This is what really happened. The civil society...is left economically passive and deprived of...initiative. L. Kolakowski, 'The Myth of Human Self-Identity: Unity of Civil and Political Society in Socialist Thought', in Kolakowski, Leszek, and Hampshire (eds.), *The Socialist Idea* (London: Cox and Wyman, 1974), p. 31.

[4]As Kolakowski put it: '...far from promising the fusion of civil with political society, the Marxian perspective,...if put into practice, [leads to] a cancerous growth of quasi-omnipotent bureaucracy, trying to shatter and paralyse civil society... Kolakowski, 'The Myth of Human Self-Identity', p. 31.

[5]'The urgent question is how society can tame its expanding bureaucracy and not how it can dispense with it'. Kolakowski, 'The Myth of Human Self-Identity', p. 34.

In fact, the key to understanding the earliest versions of the civil society model in Poland, as will be explored more fully in section (iii) below, is that the theorists concerned wanted some form of socialist democracy. Arato has glossed this over in retrospect (though he saw it at the time, in his 1981 article), and, given his own Habermasian project, everything has come to rest upon the tripartite separation of spheres. Clearly, though, it is necessary to see the emergence of the civil society concept in Poland in its context - neither the systematic post-Marxist ideology, nor the theoretical cohesiveness which Arato ascribes to the 'Polish model', really belong to this context.

Returning then to the formulations of these ideas in their earliest setting: democratisation, it was realised, necessitated not only changes at the 'top' of society, but also the re-building of pluralist and autonomous social structures from below. This self-organisation, what was seen as a nascent civil society, became an end in itself - not just the hoped for product of a more conventional (reform or revolution) process of political change:

> A Polish democratic state will never be born if democratic structures do not exist beforehand in Polish society (Michnik 1985: 55).

> A system for society to function must be worked out...It is a matter of a system in which the social structure can be established from below, from the populace, which is increasingly well organised...[and] which demands more pluralism, more democracy (Kuron 1981: 95).

It is in this sense that the term civil society itself started to be used around 1981. Michnik wrote at this time, describing the Solidarity accords:

> For the first time organised authority was signing an accord with an organised society. The agreement marked the creation of labour unions independent of the state which vowed not to attempt to take over political power.
> The essence of the spontaneously growing Independent and Self-governing Solidarity lay in the restoration of social ties, self-organisation aimed at guaranteeing the defence of labour, civil, and national rights. For the first time in the history of communist rule in Poland "civil society" was being restored...(Michnik 1985: 124).

As Arato pointed out, observing these events as they developed, there was in fact a general consensus among Polish theorists that this 'civil society building' strategy was the only way forward. In sum, the Poles 'settled on a path to social transformation that began and ended with the reconstruction of civil society' (Reidy 1992: 169).

(ii) The Wider Theoretical Context To the Polish Idea of Civil Society:

Alongside this germinating civil society model was another related development, that of the reemergence of the totalitarian paradigm. The rediscovery of the totalitarian paradigm in the 1970s was a specifically Central-Eastern European innovation. Indeed, within the western academic community, theories of totalitarianism had long since given way to apparently more realistic accounts of the quasi-pluralism extant in communist regimes in the post-Stalin era. Neither, according to Rupnik, was 'the rediscovery of the concept (and realities) of totalitarianism a return to the American political science of the 1950s. It was a completely new attempt to redefine the concept in the light of the system's evolution and the new methods of Communist rule' (Rupnik 1988: 267).

The western political science of the 1950s had defined totalitarianism according to criteria such as charismatic leadership, mass terror, the 'permanent purge' and ideological mobilisation (Rupnik 1988: 271). The Polish theorists, differently, did not emphasise the role of personal leadership or terror and purges, since these categories were not strictly relevant to their situation. Yet despite this change of emphasis, the Poles' version of the totalitarian paradigm was still, contra Rupnik, built upon elements of theorising done in the 1950s - specifically on the key role of ideology in totalitarianism. Thus in repudiating newer western theories of a *post*-totalitarian order - which they acknowledged had some purchase on the changing nature of the communist regimes, but which missed the remaining 'totalising' tendencies of a system in which the state sought to control all areas of human activity (Keane 1985: 8) - the Poles adopted a more orthodox account of the totalitarian properties of the party-state mechanism. This was mainly because of the state's central role, as Kolakowski put it, in ensuring the supremacy of ideology as the 'institutional lie':

> This is the great cognitive triumph of totalitarianism. By managing to abrogate the very idea of truth, it can no longer be accused of lying (Kolakowski 1983, in Rupnik 1988: 269).

This account of totalitarianism focused upon the totalitarian power's ability to manipulate information so that the very basis of 'truth', and with it the moral and political resources necessary for social autonomy, are destroyed. Here there was certainly continuity with earlier work from the western academe in the 1950s, particularly Arendt's, where both the Poles and Arendt looked not so much upon the strength or violence of totalitarian regimes, but upon the ideology which usurps normal moral considerations. As Arendt saw it:

> The point...is not the use of violence per se, not even on an unprecedented scale, but that "totalitarian indifference" to moral consideration is actually based upon a reversal of all our legal and moral concepts... In other words, the peculiarity of

totalitarian crimes is that they are committed for different reasons and in a different framework which has a "morality" of its own. Th[is] morality is contained in the ideology...(Arendt 1954: 78)

The theme of the central role of the 'lie', and of resistance to the 'lie', under totalitarianism was to be most fully developed by the Czechoslovakian thinker, Havel. The Poles were generally more 'political' in their thinking than Havel, yet they too sought to couch their resistance to totalitarianism in moral terms. Michnik for example, along with Arendt, sees the totalitarian power's ideological hegemony as more pernicious than its coercive properties:

> I...believe that totalitarian dictatorships are doomed... They still have the power to jail and kill, but almost no other power. I say "almost" because (alas) there still remains their ability to infect us with their own hatred and contempt. Such infection must be resisted with our whole strength, for of all the struggles we face this is the most difficult (Michnik 1985: xix).

Thus Michnik apparently shared Arendt's fear that 'totalitarian movements conjure up a lying world of consistency which is more adequate to the needs of the human mind than reality itself...' (Arendt 1958: 353).

The influence of the reworked totalitarian paradigm on the Polish civil society model is therefore clear: in the face of so called 'convergence theory' in the West (which saw the modernisation of Soviet-type societies as leading inexorably - via the stage of 'welfare state authoritarianism' or 'institutional pluralism' - to liberalisation in all spheres (Ekiertz 1991: 292), Polish theorists recalled elements of the more orthodox totalitarian paradigm to account for the fact that basic features of the system *had not* changed (even after the upheavals of 1956 and 1968) and also that they were not likely to in the foreseeable future. This led in turn to a model of democratisation - the 'society first', or civil society strategy - that took this analysis as its starting point. Kolakowski's model of totalitarianism as a society deprived of all social self-defence (Arato 1981: 28), encouraged a proactive and political civil society model which did not expect 'modernisation' to weaken the authoritarian system, but which sought itself to 'defend' society against the state. This in fact was the reasoning behind the establishment of KOR (The Workers Defence Committee) by Michnik and Kuron et al in 1976, as a statement from Kuron in 1980 made clear: 'The general direction of th[e] [democratisation] programme has been worked out some time ago by various groups working with KOR... It is a programme of social self-defence... (Kuron 1981b: 37).

Yet the specifically Polish strategy of building 'civil society' to counter 'totalitarianism' was in some ways a contradictory thesis. As Kolakowski had identified it, societal self-defence was necessary because with resistance the 'system' could never be totalised

(Arato 1981: 28). Thus although the idea of totalitarianism provided the driving force for the new civil society strategy, it was accepted that, de facto, totalitarianism did not exist. Michnik seemed to indicate this when he conceded that 'the communist powers in Poland ha[ve] learned to coexist with independent bodies - for instance, with the powerful and independent Catholic church'. But he then goes on to say: 'All this allows me to believe in the viability of a hybrid system in which the state's *totalitarian organisation* could be combined with democratic institutions in the society' (Michnik 1985: 110, my emphasis). Similarly, Kuron made the seemingly nonsensical observation in the 1980s that, 'Today Polish society is outside the totalitarian system...' (Interview with Luczywo, in Rupnik 1988: 285). Arato was therefore clearly right when he observed that:

> ...the reintroduction of the totalitarian thesis [was] primarily for polemical rather than theoretical reasons. As long as one seriously expected the system's liberalisation, the totalitarian thesis remained unacceptable. For critical East European intellectuals its acceptance would have meant the end of one strategy before the birth of a new one (Arato 1981: 29).

However, there is no doubting the utility of the idea of totalitarianism to the Polish authors of the civil society model. In effect, it significantly strengthened the case for a strategy that didn't expect too much too quickly and which was highly decentralised. As Milosz comments in his introduction to a volume of Michnik's work:

> In th[e] deep reach of totalitarian government into daily life, which is usually seen as its source of strength, KOR discovered a point of weakness: precisely because totalitarian governments politicise daily life, daily life becomes a vast terrain on which totalitarianism can be opposed (Milosz 1985: xxvii).

This strategy was intended to allow 'society' to sustain its 'self-defence' even without large scale, formal movements - but built instead upon the basis of private, informal and familial groupings. As Arato described the civil society thinking behind this response to 'totalitarianism':

> Circles of family and friends protect the private sphere from an administered public one. They permit the defence of...society, its customs, mentalities, its national and local identities. The reconstruction of society is possible because the foundations are there. Only more complete social ties have to be reconstructed (Arato 1981: 29).

Having traced the origins of the emerging concept, what were the distinctive ideological elements of the Polish idea of civil society?

(iii)   The Politics of the Polish Civil Society Model

The key political issue that dominated the Polish civil society debate during the years 1976-81, concerned the relationship of the new thinking to the socialist tradition: of how to reconcile socialist solidarity and self-management with pluralist interest representation and formal-legal political democracy. The discussion surrounding this issue is too broad for it to be covered comprehensively here, but the two major theorists of the civil society model in this period, Michnik and Kuron, will form the focus of attention, as in the previous sections. The Solidarity-linked philosopher, Nowak, will also be included because of the detailed theoretical contribution that he made to the debate on the character of civil society.

The KOR theoreticians Michnik and Kuron described themselves in our period as democratic socialists - and their goals as compatible with socialism. For all concerned, the emphasis was placed on worker self-management, on forms of direct or participatory democracy for the working class.[6] Parliamentary or 'proceduralist' democracy, as Arato observes, was hardly mentioned (Arato 1981: 46). Michnik regarded himself as the leading representative of the Polish left-liberal tradition (Jorgensen 1992: 44) and concludes his influential 1976 essay with the sentence:

> Every act of defiance helps us build the framework of democratic socialism, which should not be merely or primarily a legal institutional structure but a real, day to day community of free people (Michnik 1985: 148).

This emphasis on local self-management over formal-legal political democracy was even more typically of Kuron:

> Its [the state's] powers ought to be as narrowly circumscribed as possible, limited by the right of those affected to appeal to court, to challenge censors...[But any guarantees so won] are significant only when they are connected with social organisations independent of the state. These organisations are the decisive thing, the key to it all (Kuron 1981: 97).

Nowak also privileges the participatory activism of civil society over institutional mechanisms for preserving political accountability in the state. Wherever 'the mechanisms of political competition' extend their scope beyond that which is indispensable for society to function then, according to Nowak, this is where the 'civil masses' should step in:

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[6]Kuron, for example, called in 1980 for the establishment of a 'mini parliament'. Yet he goes on to describe this as a council 'elected by all the employees of any given enterprise' (Kuron 1981b: 38). The emphasis on economic democracy and on changes to the organisation of the sphere of production, illustrates Kuron's still socialist perspective.

The commonness of revolutionary attitudes among the citizens and the resulting tendency of the citizens to control the authority are sufficient to guarantee that the sphere of regulation does not reach beyond the range of administration...(Nowak 1992: 64).

All three thinkers seem at first sight to possess a model of decentralised self-management - with a minimalist, purely administrative, state - reminiscent of libertarian-Marxist or even anarcho-syndicalist approaches. Indeed, Wojcicki, a Solidarity-linked Catholic intellectual contemporary to the KOR theorists, did accuse these theorists of retaining Marxist ideology: 'of advocating the repoliticization of society, the vanguard role of the working class and a council democracy comprising the unions' independence' (Arato 1981: 35).[7] Yet what actually sets them apart from experiments in council democracy ('where it is a question of rebuilding a monolithic order from the ground up' (Arato 1981: 34)) is their emphasis on interest representation. The crucial issue seems to be that while Kuron, Michnik and Nowak emphasised self-managing forms of democracy, they did not see this as *exhausting* democratic politics (Arato 1981: 29). Indeed, their inclusion of the idea of interest representation points to an ultimately liberal conception of politics as involving competition between various given interests:

> Democratic equilibrium is the result of a continuously renewed compromise between the various elements of society (Michnik 1981: 75).

> The government must realise that the institutionalisation of conflict and compromise is the only way to base public life on the principle of social accord (Michnik 1985: 105).

Given this understanding of politics, any notion of a vanguardist identification of society's universal interests is also dropped from Michnik's account of democratisation:

> It seems to me that the underground today does not need the moral principles and organisational structures of an army of the Leninist kind. What it needs is the bond of shared aims and solidarity in action. And respect for individuality. And consent to plurality. It seems to me that the underground should not promise a world devoid of conflict (Michnik 1985: 62).

Similarly for Kuron, who stated that 'the accommodation of different interests and divergent points of view can be accomplished only by social movements' (Kuron 1981b: 39), although state functions should be socialised and civil society should be politicised (practising genuine self-management instead of acting merely as a forum for interest representation in the state), it must also be pluralistic:

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[7]Michnik, in *A New Evolutionism*, had based his strategy on 'faith in the power of the working class' (Michnik 1985: 144).

As Kuron put it [in interview], the movement of industrial workers now institutionalised as Solidarity has brought about a new level of independence of civil society. But what role should it play? Is it to be (1) *the* alternative power bringing about the further legal and institutional power of civil society; or (2) one of the *many* alternative powers to do so?; or (3) one form of interest representation under the new situation? Kuron himself says he has moved from (3) to (2) (Arato 1981: 34).

This insight into Kuron's thought reveals a number of things. First, he does *not* 'seek to remythologise the workers as a universal subject' (Arato 1981: 34).[8] Evidence for this can be found elsewhere, when Kuron accepts that union representation constitutes only one set of interests among others:

> Solidarity must push through the concept of self-management, but as an institution it must be absolutely independent of the unions...Because it is impossible to occupy simultaneously the employer's and the employee's standpoint (Kuron 1981: 96).

Second, in his view, Solidarity's raison d'être is not to unite 'society' into some undifferentiated whole, but rather to defend the autonomy of various social groupings:

> I am not just thinking of pluralist unions...I am thinking of a democratic pluralist society, i.e., pluralism on the level of corporations, cooperatives, consumer associations..., different cultural associations... (etc.) (Kuron 1981: 95).

On the basis of evidence such as this, Arato described KOR at the time as *post* rather than *neo*-Marxist (Arato 1981: 35). If by this he was referring to the pluralist content to Kuron and Michnik's thinking, then he was surely correct. However, if both theorists advocate pluralism on a societal level, it is not so clear that they agree on how such pluralism should be represented in the state. In fact, in contrast to Michnik, the idea of the state as a mere administrator of society's self-managing components remains alive in Kuron's accounts. As Arato himself pointed out, Kuron bypasses the issue of the vertical structure of compromise within which his pluralist society would, in reality, need to be integrated (Arato 1981: 36). Kuron calls vaguely for 'institutional forms to be created to enable these pluralist movements to organise and cooperate. A system for society to function must be worked out' (Kuron 1981: 95). But it is not clear how this relates, if at all, to state design or function. Kuron's faith seems to rest entirely with civil society, as is shown when he writes that 'the interests of society will emerge from discourse and compromise' (Kuron 1981b: 39). Arato ended up categorising Kuron's thought as 'syndicalist' (Arato 1981: 39).

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[8] As evidence of shared thinking on this issue by all the KOR theorists, KOR (an acronym for Workers' Defence Committee) changed its name to KSS-KOR (Social Self-Defence Committee - KOR); 'to indicate its support for *all* initiatives for...interest representation...' (Arato 1981: 23).

The difference in Michnik's thinking was that while he too talked only of societal pluralism, this was clearly because his thesis built pragmatically upon the likelihood of a monolithic state existing into the foreseeable future (thus he calls for 'a plan for a realistic system of political democracy' (Michnik 1981: 130)). So Michnik does not, to the same extent as Kuron, de-emphasise the state as occupying a potentially (and necessarily) substantive role in a democratic polity (Arato 1981: 38). Indeed, in an underground debate, carried out in the *Biuletyn Infomacyjny*, Michnik criticised Kuron for focusing only on the formation of autonomous institutions which could then channel social demands onto the existing authorities. It was as if Kuron's strategy, in looking no further than the self-organisation of civil society, predicted, over time, the 'withering away of the state':

> In Kuron's thinking the movement for independent institutions [alone] can be classified as political opposition. In our opinion these independent institutions form [only] a part of the broad movement aiming to make our society democratic...(Michnik 1985: 150).

Nowak, in theorising the relationship of political power to civil society, is more akin to Michnik in his emphasis on the dangerous utopia of a stateless society:

> It is not so that the authority is merely the enemy of the society...as anarchism claims. Nor is it so, however, that the authority is an institution established by society for the common good, as the ruler's ideologists claim (Nowak 1991: 39).

But if the state, as with any authority system, 'is a class system that generates enslavement [and] enslaves civil society' (Nowak 1991: 39), what socially useful role can it really play in democracy? Must we not then return to decentralised forms of self-managing, direct democracy alone? Nowak answers as follows:

> The only systematic form that the civil masses can influence permanently is [political] democracy... Democratic administration represents a compromise between authority, which is forced to be democratic, and civil society, which is forced to obey the state authority...Political democracy [thus] becomes an arena of the already legalised pressure of the civil masses to institutionalise the autonomous sphere of social life (Nowak 1991: 81-2).

Nowak's civil society model thus shares something in common with post-Marxist thinking in the West (as Arato has always claimed the Polish model did generally). First, democracy is seen to require as much citizen participation as possible in the form of self-management. Second, it nevertheless shuns anti-statist critiques - which reject any form of centralised political power - as unable to provide the conditions necessary for their own reproduction. In other words, without the state, it is argued, the settled structure of

rights necessary for the reproduction of civil society can never be institutionalised. Third, it is also accepted that the utopia of the purely socialised state - as a mere administrator of things - misses the anti-democratic implications of bureaucratic power in any society, no matter how egalitarian. Hence, in addition to citizen involvement, formal political democracy that institutionalises state-civil society mediations is needed.

In addition to the debate about the place of the state and its relationship to civil society, another key characteristic of the Polish civil society model was its commitment to working out directly political strategies. There is an organic link in all the different formulations between theory and praxis - between normative commitments and analysis of practical possibilities. With regard to Michnik, Garton Ash claims that there seemed to be a palpable tension between [his] moral and political argument (Ash 1989: 204). Certainly Michnik and the other Polish theorists, following Kolakowski, did retain a moral tenor to their oppositionism. Michnik wrote:

> In searching for truth, or, to quote Leszek Kolakowski, "by living in dignity," opposition intellectuals are striving not so much for a better tomorrow as for a better today (Michnik 1985: 148).

Yet, as the last half of Michnik's quote illustrates, perhaps unlike civil society theorists elsewhere in Central-Eastern Europe during this period, the Poles *did* have a distinctively political orientation and strategy. Their commitment to democratisation was rooted in the present and as such demanded realisation through a practical programme of action. Most of Michnik's essays, and this was true throughout the democratic opposition, are addressed to ongoing situations in Poland at the time and to reflecting upon other relevant Central-Eastern European experiences (especially Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968) from the past. His most famous piece, *A New Evolutionism*, is entirely devoted to tactics. Elsewhere, in *On Resistance*, his political orientation is again made clear:

> The institutional form of Solidarity must be left open... No nation has ever been given human rights as a present. These rights have to be won through struggle. The question is: how should this struggle be conducted?... I know that no generalised moral values can replace political perspectives (Michnik 1985: 55).

Concerning this political perspective, it needs to be asked how significant the civil society model was for the character of Solidarity in the period 1980-81. KOR, of which Michnik and Kuron were members, was linked to Solidarity in an advisory role from the beginning. Their influence in this capacity is indicated, amongst other things, by the attempts of the communist authorities, once they started negotiating with Solidarity, to make the expulsion of the KOR committee of advisers a condition of these negotiations

(Swidlicki 1981: 119). Elements of the highly original Solidarity strategy undoubtedly came from Michnik et al. The most obvious of these was Solidarity's explicit denial of any interest in 'political' power (by which they meant power in the state). Lech Walesa went so far as to call Solidarity an apolitical movement; clearly the strategy of self-limitation, first outlined in Michnik's *A New Evolutionism*, was here taken on board. Solidarity and the KOR theorists of the civil society model also shared a certain bias towards social self-management or council democracy. As has been shown, Michnik, Nowak and especially Kuron, emphasised direct democracy - and had a concomitantly vague idea of the role, if any, of the state in a democratic polity. This lacuna is present even more strikingly in Solidarity's thinking: for example, at their 1981 Congress, Solidarity leaders enshrined the idea of the 'self-governing republic'. This was articulated in council-democracy terms: as involving the transference of factories from state control to self-managing units with democratically elected workers' councils. But Solidarity's plans for 'social ownership' did not stop here:

> Self-management was to be introduced into education, culture and mass media. The residual legal and financial powers of the state in these fields were to be controlled by democratically elected 'national' or 'social' councils (Pelczynski 1988: 375).

These various connections between the KOR civil society thesis and Solidarity theory-activity, have led many commentators to adopt a rather simplistic perspective on the relationship between the nature of the Solidarity movement and the Polish model of civil society. Yet it is clearly a mistake to see Solidarity as the practical outworking of the theorists' civil society model in any straightforward sense. Even apparently shared perspectives, such as an emphasis on social self-management, may actually have had different motivations behind them. The theorists' ambiguity towards the state can be explained by their libertarian-socialist orientation. For Solidarity, however, given its less distinct theoretical origins,[9] it is far more likely to have come from the 'traditional Polish antipathy to the state (understandable in a country with a history of foreign rule)' (Smolar 1996: 27). Thus for the leaders of Solidarity, as for the majority of those involved at every level, it was apparent, as Wojcicki and other contemporary observers pointed out, that traditional Polish values were just as important as the intellectuals' civil society model:

> [Solidarity] workers had an ambiguous attitude towards the democratic opposition. They sympathised with it, were fascinated by its mystique, and yet could not help feeling removed from it (Wojcicki 1981: 101).

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[9]The eclectic mixture of theory characteristic of Solidarity is illustrated by the difficulties commentators have had in unearthing any overarching theme. Lukes, for example, describes an 'amalgam of the ethical teachings of Catholicism, of Polish Nationalism, of liberal democratic values and of a basic egalitarianism...[but] with no particular links with socialism, even with a human face' (Lukes 1985: 15).

Indeed, in 1981 Walesa terminated KOR's advisory role - a clear indication that the close relationship between the two bodies and their respective political thought can easily be overstated. In fact, Michnik and Kuron were not uncritical concerning Solidarity's tactics and thought. In 1982 Michnik wrote: 'I do not want to idealise Solidarity, its actions, or its activists. I know about the demagogy and baseness...' (Michnik 1985: 51). Earlier, in 1981, he had stated:

> Solidarity...has for a year now been the *guarantor* of the growing Polish democracy. But it is still too soon to draw up a balance sheet of its bright and dark sides... [It] combines the cult of its leader with a democracy that reaches pathological proportions; and that joins an astounding wisdom with a rare naiveté (Michnik 1985: 130).

One of the characteristics of Solidarity that has frequently drawn criticism to the Polish civil society model which it supposedly encapsulated, was its tendency to view Polish society as a unified whole: 'Eastern European intellectuals tended to develop civil society as a new 'Weltbild' of a highly integrated society without major factions', as one commentator put it with Solidarity clearly in mind (von Beyme 1994: 106). Accusations such as these are not made without reason. For example, the National Congress in 1981 declared Solidarity's activities as those of a 'self-governing Republic' in the following terms:

> Our union sprang from the people's needs... It is the product of the revolt of Polish society against political discrimination. Thanks to the existence of a powerful union organisation, Polish society is no longer fragmented, disorganised and lost, but has renewed strength and hope. There is now the possibility of real national renewal. Our union, representing the majority of workers in Poland, seeks to be and will become the driving force of social renewal (Pelczynski 1988: 370).

Yet in contrast to this view, as has already been shown, Michnik and Kuron saw the importance of civil society as precisely the idea of societal pluralism. And they saw Solidarity in this light too. As Kuron put it: 'What we are dealing with is a tremendous social democratisation movement in all possible strata. The independent self-managed union Solidarity is just part of this movement and at the same time its symbol' (Kuron 1981: 94). Michnik went as far as denouncing 'the idea for a "centre" and a front for national reconciliation [which] are typical products of wishful thinking. I do not believe in the Poles' "moral-political unity" '(Michnik 1985: 111).

Also, with regard to the seemingly shared anti-statist bias to Solidarity's and KOR's thought: while it may be true that Solidarity leaders were, per se, in favour of council democracy in their proposed 'self governing republic'; for the KOR theorists, the self-

organisation of society and the future democratisation of the state apparatus were inextricably linked. The lack of attention to the issue of the democratisation of the state, while noticeable, probably reflected more the pragmatic approach of these theorists - who did not see this as a viable strategy for some time to come (if ever). This same analysis almost certainly motivated Solidarity's approach. For whatever else separated Solidarity activists from their KOR advisors and also from the latter's civil society model, ultimately both views were positioned on a single continuum - the essence of which was an analysis of system and opposition as *combined* (Jorgensen 1992: 41).

2. The Czechoslovakian Discourse

The opposition intellectuals centred round the Czechoslovakian human rights group Charter 77, unlike their counterparts in Poland during 1976-1981 and those also in Hungary from 1987 (see below), were never able to pursue a directly political programme. That is, neither a programme for autonomy as occurred in Poland, nor a quasi-reformist programme directed more explicitly at the state, as in Hungary, were feasible. The weakness of the Czechoslovakian opposition movement was a result of the effective repression pursued by the Husak regime after the 'Prague Spring' of 1968. This oppression effectively isolated dissidents from the general population - Charter 77 never had the opportunity to link up with, or develop into, a mass movement in the way that the Polish KOR and Solidarity did. It may be for this reason that the civil society theorists in Czechoslovakia did not articulate as specific a conception of political opposition as the Poles ('New Evolutionism') and the Hungarians (the 'Social Contract'). Indeed, the interaction between political theory and collective action in Czechoslovakia was generally confined to symbolic action (Jorgensen 1990: 46):

> In Czechoslovakia too, thinking about totalitarianism and civil society reflects a specific situation. In the face of the apparently unending 'normalisation', considerations tend[ed] to focus on the 'metaphysics' of totalitarianism: on spiritual and cultural resistance to the totalitarian language and mode of thinking relentlessly imposed by the system on the society (Rupnik 1988: 285).

Characterisations of the Czechoslovakian discourse such as this one, appear to be based upon the assumption of a relatively 'apolitical' body of theory. Vaclav Havel, one of the most significant, and perhaps the best known, of civil society theorists from this period, certainly gives a more 'metaphysical' slant to the 'Czechoslovakian model', which is probably why it is often seen exclusively in these terms. Yet Havel's thinking can be misrepresented by notions of its 'apolitical' character (see more below), and it is also true that many of the opposition theorists around Charter 77 provided a strikingly similar set of analyses to those found in Poland at the same time. In other words, the Czechoslovak discourse (including Havel's contribution) was actually more 'political' than it has been given credit for, and it certainly contained vigorous debates about what programmatic steps were required for democracy in the region to become a reality. (On the explicit connection made between a 'moral' and a 'political' model of resistance, cf. Havel 1985: 40; Battek 1985: 104; Benda 1985: 121; Hejdanek 1985: 146; Kusy 1985: 174; Uhl 1985: 192.)

(i) The Charter 77 Discourse on Civil Society
The discourse upon which I concentrate in this section on Charter 77 was constituted by the collection of eighteen essays - with Havel's *The Power of the Powerless* forming the

centre piece - which were published in 1979, in *samizdat*, under the title *On Freedom and Power* (Lukes 1985: 12). This dialogue was contemporary to the Polish KOR dialogue, and, like the KOR theorists, the Chartists do not yet, except in a few instances (see Hejdanek 1985: 149; Battek 1985: 101; and Kusy 1985: 155), use the term civil society. This rubric, as was outlined in the last section, emerges only during the Solidarity period and first in Poland; yet the ideas that came then to fall under it are expressed in the same terms (only as yet without the title) by the Chartists.[1] Indeed, *On Freedom and Power* was intended as a joint Czechoslovak-Polish venture (that is, to be a collection of works including contributions from both Charter 77 and KOR)[2], and the Warsaw Solidarity leader, Zbygniew Bujak, remarked in 1981 that Havel's contribution to this collection 'gave us theoretical backing, a theoretical basis for our actions' (quoted in Lukes 1985: 12).[3] It is therefore no sleight of hand to characterise the Chartists' discourse retrospectively as a discourse on civil society.

The Charter 77 theorists, being more numerous and having signed up to the Charter for less specific reasons (as the only way to continue opposition), had wider political differences between them than did the KOR theorists, whose project was originally to link up with the workers' movement. This is undoubtedly why Charter 77 is remembered for the terms of its resistance (seeking to hold the party-state to its endorsement of the Helsinki Accords on human rights and also to its own legality) rather than for any distinct theoretical-political models. Thus the Chartists appeal variously in their essays to: Czech national tradition (Cerny looks to its suppressed literary heritage); ethical teachings from Czech history; non-Marxist social democracy; Catholicism (Benda's 'radical conservatism'); lay Protestantism; and neo-Trotskysim (Lukes 1985: 13) - to isolate but a few. As well as privileging widely different, even incompatible, political histories, the Chartists clashed in their analyses of the political character of the present, and also as to the desired future of politics. With regard to the present, what could not be agreed (in contrast to the Poles), was how totalitarian the party-state system was:

> For Havel, the system is 'post-totalitarian'; for others [e.g. Battek] it is still 'totalitarian'; for Uhl it is bureaucratic centralism (from an economic point of view) and bureaucratic dictatorship (from a political point of view) - a view that Havel directly contests (Lukes 1985: 17).

Finally, the various visions of the political future appeared even less compatible:

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[1]Apart from the essays within *On Freedom and Power* that are the subject of attention here, the Czech thinker Vaclav Benda, in his 1978 essay *The Parallel Polis*, also advances 'strikingly similar' ideas to those contained in (Polish) Adam Michnik's *The New Evolutionism* (1976) (Garton Ash 1989: 194). The very notion of a 'parallel polis' is certainly reminiscent of the Polish emphasis on a self-organising society constructed outside of the party-state and the 'official sphere'.

[2]However, due to arrests, the Czechoslovakian papers had to be rushed into publication on their own.

[3]Of course, the 'Polish model' (primarily from the KOR theorists) was profoundly influential on the Czechoslovakian chartists too (cf. Havel 1985: 60, 67; Uhl 1995: 194-196).

There is a clear contrast between Benda's Catholic-based 'radical conservatism', with its vision of a 'return to the sources' of life and politics...and Uhl's talk of embryonic revolutionary consciousness' and his vision of an international 'anti-bureaucratic revolution'. Some, such as Zverina and Cerny, stress the spiritual and cultural dimensions respectively; others, such as Hajek and Ruml, are more directly political, both linking the domestic scene to the international context... Battek represents a strongly anti-communist form of independent, internationally-minded socialism; Hejdanek a kind of rights-based democratic liberalism (Lukes 1985: 17).

Remarkably, however, and despite these seemingly irreconcilable political differences, there emerges within *On Freedom and Power* a recognisably distinct and even unanimous approach to the question of how to pursue political opposition and also of some of the desired ends of this opposition.

Turning first to the shared programme for democratisation, the Chartists were agreed upon the inadequacy of reformism as a political project. As with the Polish theorists, the Chartists repudiated conventional, party-state directed, dissidence for leaving initiative in the hands of incumbent elites. Battek, for example, wrote: 'What must become fundamental for us is *initiation*, not *dissidence*. That is, we should consider ourselves first and foremost as initiators of future possibilities... We should transform our *opposition* into an increasingly clear *position*' (Battek 1985: 104). Thus, just as it was said of the Poles that they turned to a political programme which began and ended with the formation of civil society, so it was also with the Czechoslovaks. Reformism and revolution, given their state-centrism, were seen as sharing the same limited horizons; the 'new politics' (as Benda put it) involved putting 'society first'.

The Chartists also spoke with one voice on the importance of non-violence and of the need for the self-limitation of the popular forces, who should not seek power in the state. Revolutionary violence was seen as self-defeating for, in Havel's words, it would 'fatally stigmatize...the very means used to secure it'. Yet, to reiterate the point, this was not meant to imply a preference for conventional reformism:

> ...this [anti-violence] attitude should not be mistaken for political conservatism or moderation. The 'dissident movements' do not shy away from the idea of violent political overthrow because the idea seems too radical, but on the contrary, because it does not seem radical enough (Havel 1985: 71)

Other Chartists emphasise their commitment to non-violence in different ways. Cerny, echoing the Polish concern with a sustainable evolutionary strategy in which gradual pressure from below is preferred to direct confrontation, writes that 'The Charter is not a resistance movement, it is a pressure group' (Cerny 1985: 129). At times, this emphasis

on non-violence does overlap with a more 'moral' sense of opposition, yet it is usually no less 'political' for all that. Vohryzek, for example, claims that 'violence as a form of civilian resistance has lost its human dimensions...[since] all [violent] groups...degenerate morally'; yet he also advocates 'civic resistance' (Vohryzek 1985: 200). And in a similar fashion to Cerny, Hejdanek writes of the need for 'concentrated', 'widely exerted', and 'slow and steady' pressure (Hejdanek 1985: 150), which is then the context within which his call for '"moral' support rather than political support' should be understood (Hejdanek 1985: 147). For Hejdanek, the opposition struggle 'can only be jeopardized by political agitation, organisation, coercion and violence' (Hejdanek 1985: 150). Indeed, this emphasis upon non-violence is shared even by the quasi-revolutionary theorist, Uhl, who calls for a form of revolution 'which... will limit violence to a minimum' (Uhl 1985: 197).

The imperative of non-violent resistance was also, by extension, a rejection of the revolutionary vanguard. Much like the Poles, the Chartists believed that 'the revolution devours its own children':

> A violent *coup d'état* could just as easily replace the mass discrimination of today with a new wave of discrimination... (Vohryzek 1985: 198).

> Conspiratorial methods...considerably slow down the evolution of alternative projects like the parallel *polis*. The principle of operating in the open, which Charter 77 established to a broader extent, must be strengthened and extended (Uhl 1985: 194).

> In the past, the avant-garde, usually a revolutionary party, has assumed the role of organizer. However...this party always becomes the cradle of a bureaucracy (Uhl 1985: 197).

These insights led to the desire to move beyond the traditional oppositional project to seize political power in the state. Just as Solidarity theorists were later to deny any interest in political power, Cerny similarly claimed that Charter 77 'does not aspire to power' (Cerny 1985: 128). Jirous also averred that 'the parallel polis does not compete for power. Its aim is not to replace the powers to be with power of another kind, but rather under the power - or beside it - to create a structure that respects other laws...' (in Benda et al 1988: 227). And Havel, echoing the Polish call for a strategy for societal 'self-defence', proclaimed 'the purely defensive character' of the various national dissident movements 'as their greatest strength' (Havel 1985: 69). The seeming contradiction of seeking to develop opposition as a permanent political project, again typical also of Solidarity, is grappled with by Hejdanek:

> [Charter 77] do[es] not consider [itself] a political opposition, nor [does it] have any intention of constituting the first rung on the ladder for some alternative power bloc. The political role of such groups is obvious: they hold a mirror up

to the face of the regime... By playing this role, they might indeed begin to represent an opposition-in-formation... In the long term, however, the principle of keeping at arms length any pretensions to power...opens up a new dimension of political, or should we say 'apolitical' public activity... As soon as the opposition wins power, its criticism of injustice, illegality, etc., ceases to be functional... Without the background of a vigorous 'alternative' cultural front independent of state structures, the activity of the defenders of human rights and freedoms would inevitably atrophy and decline. (Hejdanek 1985: 145-146).

What Hejdanek is seeking to articulate here would now be seen as a common-place call for a civil society, separate from the state, to act as a 'watchdog' for abuses of state power. Indeed, Hajdanek goes on to say that the '[i]nternational understanding of a non-governmental and extra-governmental character is becoming absolutely vital' (Hejdanek 1985: 148). Uhl similarly talks of what would now be termed civil society when he writes that: 'For the future, we must also be thinking about 'initiatives' like independent trade unions, political discussion clubs and parties. [However] the term 'citizens' initiative'...unfortunately does not express the lasting nature of the alternative associations' (Uhl 1985: 196). Yet for Hejdanek, Uhl, and the other Chartists, there was a more radical, or certainly less instrumentalist, reason behind their denial of interest in state power. For their programme for democratisation was about more than the growth of non-state associational life, being concerned also with the development of a 'new' politics that not only disowned state power, but 'power' per se:

> The way forward must consist chiefly in providing tangible proof that the state and political power are not the supreme expression of the life of societies...and, indeed, that [they] will have to play an increasingly minor role (Hejdanek 1985: 148).

It is apparent from Hejdanek's comments above that, in at least some instances, the call for the opposition forces to be self-limiting was informed by a somewhat antipolitical project. Crucially, 'antipolitics', in this context, was not meant to imply, as some commentators have assumed, that regime opponents should retreat entirely into the micro-sphere of friends and family networks. Albeit that it *was* envisaged on a local - i.e. less alienated - level, this was instead an anti-bureaucratic, republican message that called for instrumentalist, technicist politics to be overcome through the rediscovery of political virtue (Havel calls it 'civic awareness') and of a genuinely collective politics. As Havel put it:

> I believe in structures that are not aimed at the 'technical' aspect of the execution of power, but at the significance of that execution in structures held together more by a commonly shared feeling of the importance of certain communities than by commonly shared expansionist ambitions directed 'outward'... Any accumulation of power whatsoever (one of the characteristics of automatism)

should be profoundly alien... They would be structures not in the sense of organisations or institutions, but like a community (Havel 1985: 93).

Benda shares Havel's vision of 'a future form of politics...light years away from politics in the present sense of a struggle for power...'. For Benda, politics should instead be about a 'playful and sacred concern for the affairs of the polis' (Benda 1985: 122). Also for Hejdanek, the domination of 'the life of society' by bureaucratic, coercionary state mechanisms, is a worldwide problem, 'which is why it will take a worldwide programme to halt or suppress it' (Hejdanek 1985: 148).

This 'antipolitical' message, when explored further, reveals a number of other elements tied up with it: namely antistatism, the attendant emphasis on self-management, and a 'third way' vision of a 'new politics' beyond that of both East and West.

Explicit antistatism, that is an antistate agenda that goes beyond the critique of 'real socialism', is present to varying degrees for many of the Chartists, as it is with the Poles. Hejdanek, for example, claims that thorough-going democratisation is impossible 'without the emancipation of the overwhelming majority of the lives of societies and individuals from the clutches of *dirigisme* and control by the machinery of the state' (Hejdanek 1985: 150). Kusy, who interestingly retains a Marxist notion of civil society (as 'a product of the bourgeois revolution'), also sees socialism as 'a movement from civil (*etatist*) society to a society that is genuinely human... [So,] just as Marx's socialism is a negation of civil society,...real socialism is a negation of that negation, a return to *etatism* (Kusy 1985: 155). Although Kusy still holds to a pejorative Marxist notion of civil society, this is in the sense of seeing civil society as the outcome of human worth understood only in relation to the state. Marx's utopia of a state-free, communist future is employed here against that model of civil society which is seen as destroying self-management. In other words, Kusy's argument is similar to that made by many of the Chartists who see civil society positively, only the Marxist terminology is not yet inverted in Kusy's account. This basic affinity can be seen by comparing Kusy's antistatist vision to one provided by Uhl. Uhl has the same ends in mind as Kusy, only he has stopped using Marxist language to express it:

> It is utopian to assume that [under a bureaucratic dictatorship] society will 'merge' with the parallel *polis*, thus causing the withering away of the state and its bureaucratic machinery... It is only during the revolutionary process that it will rapidly 'absorb' society, which will create, on islands of alternative associations and activities, a *polis* which is no longer parallel, but an authentic *polis* of free people (Uhl 1985: 195).

For the Chartists in general, antistatism flows from an emphasis upon self-management, rather than being antecedent to it; and this is as it was with the Poles. The imperative of

self-management is certainly more central to most of the Chartist accounts than explicit antistatism. Havel sets the tone in his essay when he writes that 'the classic impotence of traditional democratic organisations' (which he elsewhere specifies as parliamentary democracy) can only be overcome through the formation of structures which 'naturally rise from *below* as a consequence of authentic 'self-organisation' (Havel 1985: 93). Indeed, for Havel, non-bureaucratic, grass-roots self-management is so important that, once specific needs have been met through particular instances of self-organisation, the structures in question 'should also disappear' (Havel 1985: 93).

Other Chartists are equally unambiguous about the need for self-managing, direct democracy. Battek calls for 'social structures [to] be democratized by expanding the elements of self-management, limiting institutional growth...and strengthening direct democracy' (Battek 1985: 108). However, perhaps more representatively of the other Chartists than Uhl and Kusy (above), and despite his call for 'the bureaucracies ruling society [to] shrink to assume merely compliant roles', Battek goes on to 'shun those fascinating social utopias with their visions of the elimination of power, government and the state... Given the complexities of modern social structures, power cannot be eliminated, just as the state form of social organisation cannot be done away with' (Battek 1985: 108). Yet Battek does not mean to imply that the model supplied by 'modern democracies' is therefore sufficient to the democratic organisation of society. While he concedes that liberal democracies have many important insights to bestow, Battek has in mind 'the future democratic, self-managing socialist society', a society needed throughout 'the world of today' given the 'unjustified, unwarranted class privileges' that obtain in both East and West (Battek 1985: 108). What then, exactly, do the liberal democracies have to contribute to this 'third way' vision? Battek, is somewhat vague here. The closest he comes to endorsing liberal-democracy is when he apparently proposes some form of pluralism and separation of spheres, although this is by no means unambiguous:

> Every proposed organisation of society, even one with a maximum of self-management, will need to be balanced by extra-governmental, extra-managerial, extra-organisational activity on the part of the voluntary associations established for the widest variety of short-term and long-term needs and purposes... Hope ...lies...[in] the realization of a social order in which the formalized and functionalized structure of society will be regulated and controlled by this 'newly discovered' spontaneous civic activity, which will be a permanent and essential source of social self-awareness (Battek 1985: 108).

Battek's desire to move 'beyond' liberal, representative, institutions towards more direct forms of democracy is widely shared by the other Chartists. Hajek also calls for 'radical changes in the systems either side of the dividing line in Europe' along the lines of the experience of the Paris Commune (Hajek 1985: 138). Hejdanek, although he accepts the

need for some form of 'central control', also argues that 'the dangers inherent in this can only be avoided by a thorough-going democratization, i.e., the establishment of self-managing bodies at every level... It is also clear that a similar solution is called for in other parts of the world' (Hejdanek 1985: 149). From an even more radical standpoint, Uhl claims that parliamentary government 'does nothing to develop forms of direct democracy which can help emancipate society and individuals and overcome alienation' (Uhl 1995: 190). Indeed, 'social self-management is not a panacea: it is only worthy of support if is guarantees the continual expansion of direct democracy in favour of the gradual dismantling of representative democracy' (Uhl 1985: 191).

Another noteworthy point about the Chartists' emphasis upon self-management is that it represents to varying degrees the continuation of a socialist project.[4] This is true even for Havel, whose political writings came to represent the antithesis of socialist thought for some commentators. For example, Havel calls for the principle of self-management to be applied to the economic life of society. He sees this as achieving 'what all the theorists of socialism have dreamed about, that is, the genuine...participation of workers in economic decision making...(Havel 198: 94). As for the other Chartists: Cerny and Hajek talk of the fundamentally democratic character of socialism (Cerny 1985: 131; Hajek 1985: 134); Hejdanek looks to the coming 'post-capitalist' society (Hejdanek 1985: 142) - since 'socialism is democracy taken to all its conclusions in every field' (Hejdanek 1985: 144) - and Uhl, calling also for an anti-capitalist project, envisions 'a democracy of the productive forces' in which 'democracy means a system of workers' councils, horizontally coordinated...'(Uhl 1985: 191). Indeed, Uhl is directly critical of what is seen in liberal democratic theory as one of civil society's most important functions: its role as a 'safety valve' to drain away social discontent. Uhl's 'alternative associations', by contrast, 'nurture the critical spirit that can influence the whole of society' (Uhl 1985: 192 - Uhl also claims that 'Charter 77 has no equivalent in the bourgeois democracies').

Overall, though (and excepting Uhl), the Chartists' ongoing desire to see democracy socialised was matched by a new awareness of the need for rights-based political democracy. This is clearly expressed by Hejdanek in the following proposition:

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[4]Lukes observes in his introduction to *The Power of the Powerless* that 'None of these essays is explicitly unfriendly to the socialist ideal or socialist principles. None advocates a return to capitalism or even to liberal democracy; and none is touched by the various forms of the free market ideology that have since become dominant in the West. Most engage in the 'immanent critique' of so-called 'real socialism' for failing to live up to its principle, which none explicitly rejects. With the exception of Uhl, and in a different way Hajek, these authors have no particular attachment to the Marxian socialist tradition, but they do not reject it either... The socialist tradition, in one form or another, still haunts these essays' (Lukes 1985: 14).

> Whenever the settlement of social demands has been violently divorced from its democratic roots, and whenever democratic structures have been abolished in the name of social progress...socialism has entered a historical blind alley (Hejdanek 1985: 144).

A similar warning is sounded by Hajek:

> While it is true that people cannot be really free unless they enjoy the right to work, education and social security, it is equally true, and experience in the socialist countries has proved it, that these eminent social, economic and cultural rights are not worth the paper they are printed on...if there is a failure to guarantee and implement those 'classic' civil and political rights and freedoms...(Hajek 1985: 140).

Even Hejdanek, despite his acknowledged desire for a 'post-capitalist' system, begins his essay with a statement made on behalf of all the Chartists: '[W]e are now seeing a convergence of emphasis on political democratization, which is viewed increasingly as a *sine qua non* of a developed socialist society' (Hejdanek 1985: 141). Benda too (despite his concern with the 'world-wide crisis of politics' (Benda 1985: 112)) is convinced of the importance of the limited, liberal democratic state:

> [T]he 'new politics'...should...involve people up to their necks... Yet it should not tie one down: a state...may be perceived as a useful factor in limiting evil, but it must never become an instrument for creating a 'heaven on earth'. It should be a politics in which human rights and the rules of a parliamentary democracy...are all a matter of course...(Benda 1985: 123).

So despite their ongoing commitment to radical political models, a noticeable feature of all the Chartists' essays is the concern with the rule of law, pluralism and a system of rights. The notion of legality implied operating publicly and openly in the face of the arbitrary abuse of power, and was therefore seen as a mainstay of the opposition programme (Havel 1985: 69). Yet the rule of law was also perceived as a necessarily permanent feature of a democratic polity because of its role in limiting political power. In Hejdanek's words, 'The purpose of human rights campaigns [in the socialist bloc countries] was, at the outset, to establish the bounds beyond which *all* state and government intervention ceases to be legitimate and legal...' (Hejdanek 1985: 148, italics added). Also, for Hejdanek and the other Chartists, despite their radical critique of liberal democratic forms, human and civil rights were not bourgeois mystifications, but rights of an 'inalienable' attributes of citizenship (Hejdanek 1985: 141).

With regard to pluralism, a broad consensus emerged that there was no possibility of reforming the artificial and oppressive unity of 'real socialism' through the imposition of

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yet another monist view of society.[5] Thus Battek, for example, writes that '[e]fforts to democratize any totalitarian system only make sense when the ground is laid in society for a free choice between options' (Battek 1985: 107). Similarly, Ruml bemoans the fact that some within the democratic opposition 'have apparently not yet broken old habits of 'united fronts', so that they still confuse personal responsibility with military discipline' (Ruml 1985: 184). More frequently, the acceptance of pluralism is reflected in the Chartists' engagement both with the issue of the separation of spheres between state and society and also with the debate about the desirability of a public sphere. It is also at these points that the Chartists' come closest to discussing civil society in terms that would be recognisable to contemporary radical theorists of civil society (the New Left).

The Chartists had a notion of civil society as constituting a sphere that was at once public and private - public in the sense of its status as an arena wherein collective interests could be expressed and open debate facilitated, private in its articulation of a non-state (though *not* a liberal-individualist or market) sphere by which 'politics' could be strictly delimited. In essence, then, civil society represented a realm of republican citizenship, as Battek makes clear:

> [There is] a tension between two attitudes in the same individual - between his or her attitude as a person...and as a citizen (the individual's position in civil society). Essentially, it is tension and conflict between the private and the public, the individual and the collective, the non-political and the political, the personal and the social... [However,] [t]hese two categories (of being human and acting as a citizen) *are neither exclusive nor separable* (Battek 1985: 101, italics added).

Havel is similarly clear that the 'independent life of society', as he terms it, includes 'civic attitudes' and 'free creative activity and its communication to others' (Havel 1985: 65). Again there is no mention of the freedom (as choice) of the individual in the market-place; Havel has in mind instead a realm of republican freedom. This republican vision was of course most clearly expressed in Benda's seminal essay *The Parallel Polis*, written in 1978. In this essay, Benda 'calls for organised, parallel activities independent of the state, in which the various currents gradually form a broad, unlimited association of people, a community, a *polis*' (Uhl 1985: 192). Typical of the Chartists in this matter at least, Uhl takes the significance of Benda's 'parallel polis' to be its republican qualities, that is, its 'openness, both in principle and practice, in the sense that more and more people should be able to participate' (Uhl 1985: 193).

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[5]One exception here was Benda who, due to his Catholicism, was confident that a "more essential' unity' was possible. However, Benda did accept that 'this unity [is] among people of disparate opinion and background..' (Benda 1985: 120-121). Uhl is also ambiguous on this point, for, although he recognises the need for the opposition to 'frequently regroup and divide, unite and separate', he is still in search of 'the revolutionary avant-garde' (Uhl 1985: 197).

Yet despite their emphasis upon a republican public sphere wherein the imperatives of participation and deliberation could be construed as placing the community over the individual, the Chartists did locate this public sphere within a broadly liberal polity. This can be seen, for example, in Battek's call for associations and clubs (although he does also mention tribunes and committees!) that are independent of government, but which nonetheless remain 'within the framework of the legal code' (Battek 1985: 103). Battek is here advocating a separation of spheres within law, rather than a separation which aims at the construction of an independent 'polis' (which is what Benda implies). This line of thinking is also evidenced by Hejdanek, with his analysis that the 'root cause of the failure and deviation of socialism' came from 'the linking of the machinery of the state and its political structures with a country's economic structures'. This acceptance of the importance of a permanent separation of spheres between political and economic power (along the lines of the liberal model), is then applied by Hejdanek to civil society:

> There is only one way to right [the trend towards total control over society]: by emancipating civil society from domination by the state and its machinery... As a complement to the old and, in general, well-tested separation of powers and the decentralization of the state machine, it is necessary to separate culture, information and communication media, education, etc., from the state, on the same lines as the church/state separation (Hejdanek 1985: 149).

(ii) The Analysis of Totalitarianism as 'The system of the Lie'

The Chartists emphasis upon a sphere of civil society, both as a site for opposition and as an end in itself, was inseparable from their analysis of the system within which they lived. As with the Poles, some of the Chartists, and of course Havel in particular, persisted in seeing state-socialism as 'totalitarian'. In a similar manner to Michnik of the Polish KOR, who understood totalitarianism as encapsulated in the 'system of the lie', Kusy writes:

> In its entire spirit and thrust, real socialism is an ideology...of *as if*: those who preach it behave *as if* the ideological kingdom of real socialism existed in 'what we have here now',...the nation behaves *as if* it believed it... This *as if* is a silent agreement between the two partners (Kusy 1985: 164).

Through this all-embracing language, Kusy believed that 'real socialism has politicized and ideologized the totality of life. It is total politics and total ideology' (Kusy 1985: 159):

> What is the source of this total politicization of real-socialist life? Unquestionably, it has to do with the very essence of the totalitarian regime. For what is specific about real socialism is that once it has started that kind of idealization of reality. it cannot stop halfway...' (Kusy 1985: 160).

Kusy was not alone in persisting with the claim, along with the Poles, that for these reasons real-socialism was most adequately characterised as totalitarian: Battek also wrote about the 'totalitarian political structure, [wherein] just about every facet of human existence is politicized' (Battek 1985: 104); Cerny, rejecting reformism in favour of 'sp[eaking] the truth about the way things are', announced that 'it is folly to rely on totalitarian power' (Cerny 1985: 130); and Vohryzek, describing 'the totalitarianism of today...[which] demands...a total vacuum of civic will, a *perpetuum silentium*, passivity and quiescence...', claimed that 'silent disagreement is one of the pillars of totalitarian power' (Vohryzek 1985: 200). Most strikingly akin to the Poles in this matter was Benda. Benda was explicit that radicals must adopt an understanding of totalitarianism, and that western leftists, in as far as they did not do this, were inaccurate in their reading of 'real-socialism':

> The western Left, in the widest sense, may be right a hundred times over in their critical assessment of politics in their own countries, but as long as they fail to understand the vast differences between totalitarianism and democracy (and the Left does *not* understand them, and clearly, for very basic reasons, does not even want to)...(Benda 1985: 111).

Havel's contribution to the debate about totalitarianism in Central-Eastern Europe is clearly the most central here. In his earlier work, including *The Power of the Powerless*, Havel's oft used injunction to 'live in truth' stands not just as a moral imperative, but as a political statement. In short, 'living in truth' is seen by Havel as 'a way of denying the legitimacy of a public realm that rested on the forced acceptance of an official definition of reality' (Smolar 1996: 26). Some, like Roger Scruton, have seen the undoubtedly individualist emphasis in this, and other, essays by Havel as symptomatic of the strength of New Right thinking in Czechoslovakia (Scruton 1988: 457). However, it is worth noting that, in *The Power of the Powerless*, Havel saw 'living in truth' as including 'any means by which a person or group revolts against manipulation: anything from a letter by intellectuals to a workers' strike...(Havel 1985: 43).[6] Thus it is less that Havel's political philosophy is individualist (as we have seen), and more that his analysis of totalitarianism brings to the fore its effects upon individuals. For according to Havel, through outward semantic conformity to official ideology, individuals:

> *live within a lie*. They need not accept the lie. It is enough for them to have accepted their life with it and in it. For by this very fact, individuals confirm the system, fulfil the system, make the system, *are* the system (Havel 1985: 31).

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[6]Scruton also sees Havel's talk of antipolitics as indicative of a generally conservative thinker. Yet, as Jorgensen observes, the call to 'antipolitics' in *The Power of the Powerless* is directed at elements 'of Charter 77 (the reform communists, among others) which sought power or influence and those...who viewed Charter 77 as a revolutionary avant-garde' (Jorgensen 1990: 42).

Thus Havel's analysis of the effects of the state-socialist system is premised upon what it does to the individual:

> [The] line of conflict...in the post-totalitarian system...runs de facto through each person, for everyone in his or her way is both a victim and a supporter of the system (Havel 1985: 39).

It is this insidious characteristic of state-socialism that leads Havel to adopt the phrase 'post-totalitarian', not because 'the system is no longer totalitarian; on the contrary, I mean that it is totalitarian in a way fundamentally different from classical dictatorships, different from totalitarianism as we usually understand it' (Havel 1985: 27). Crucial to this distinctiveness for Havel, as with the Poles (who of course were influenced by *The Power of the Powerless*), was the central role of ideology within the 'system of the lie'. Without 'totalising' ideology, things are seen more for what they really are and are difficult to hide. But '[i]deology, in creating a bridge of excuses between the system and the individual, spans the abyss between the aims of the system and the aims of life. It pretends that the requirements of the system derive from the requirements of life' (Havel 1985: 30).

Havel's later writings appear to concentrate less upon the politics of 'living in truth' in civil society, and more upon the existential aspects of resistance:

> 'The best defence against totalitarianism is simply to drive it out of our own souls...A reaffirmed human responsibility is the most natural barrier to all irresponsibility. It is becoming evident - and I think this is an experience of an essential and universal importance - that a single seemingly powerless person who dares to cry out the word of truth and to stand behind it with all his or her person and life, has, surprisingly, greater power, though formally disenfranchised, than do thousands of anonymous voters... It is becoming evident that the wholly personal categories like good and evil still have their unambiguous content and, under certain circumstances, are capable of shaking the seemingly unshakeable power...(Havel 1988: 396-8).

Yet despite the apparent change in emphasis from his earlier work, there is a basic continuity to Havel's thought. As Keane points out with regard to the above quote, democratic opposition is perceived by Havel to succeed best when keeping its distance from politics. However, this remains a 'political' agenda since, as far as Havel is concerned: 'Democratisation is not merely a matter, say, of replacing party-appointed officials with a government or head of state elected once every few years. Democratisation rather depends [as a first step towards meaningful social cooperation] on successfully cultivating mechanisms of self-protection [and] individuation' (Keane 1988: 124).

On a more philosophical level, as Mische points out, Havel's emphasis upon the private sphere of moral-ethical individuation, for him 'paves the way for a type of civic participation in which human subjectivity is not sacrificed to politics' (Mische 1993: 245). Crucially, then, civic participation is the telos of Havel's account: the individual, 'living in truth', 'becomes the very basis for civic responsibility and public action in concert with others' (Mische 1993: 245). We have here what Mische, comparing Havel to Arendt, terms a 'conciliatory' conception of public and private. In other words, at root, Havel has a republican notion of politics and he is in no sense a liberal-individualist or 'new-right' thinker:

> [With Havel] [w]e are back to Arendt's "lost treasure" - the rare harmonization of private concern with public action... We see that for both Arendt and Havel, the maintenance of a distinction between public and private is essential to fight to protect subjectivity against the encroachments of totalitarianism. However, the aim is not to maintain two mutually opposed realms, but rather to understand the one as a "holding area" of the self, from which the self must necessarily emerge to act publicly within the other. In Havel's view, it is the recovery of the "hidden sphere" of subjectivity that provides the basis for the "independent life of society" as courageous individuals refuse to continue living the lie and begin to engage in active resistance and the subsequent reconstruction of moral and civic life outside the sphere of government control (Mische 1993: 245).

So we see that Havel's individualistic political philosophy (he talks of 'reconstituting, as the focus of all social activity, the autonomous, integral and dignified human "I"') stemmed originally not from a rightist political theory which advocated depoliticisation and marketisation, but from an analysis of totalitarianism which was provided precisely in order to work out the possibilities for a reinvigorated politics (being also an analysis taken on board by *leftist* oppositionists in Czechoslovakia and Poland). Yet there *are* problems inherent in any classification of Havel's thought on civil society as basically akin to that of other radicals, problems which cannot be conjured away. Havel's theory of totalitarianism is distinctive in that he begins to see it not only as a function of state-socialism and ideology gone wrong, but of modernity itself. This is only hinted at in *The Power of the Powerless*, where Havel is critical merely of a politics which thinks it 'knows best what the people need' (Havel 1985: 69) and which secures by violence 'a better future' (Havel 1985: 71).[7] These criticisms, while they could be construed as being directed at the Enlightenment project in general, must surely be understood as attacking Marxist ideology and its outworkings under state-socialism. Yet, in a later piece, Havel writes like a much more convinced critic of modernity per se:

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[7]Havel is also critical of technology in *The Power of the Powerless* (see Havel 1985: 89), but this is articulated in more conventional terms - i.e. he is fearful of the possibility of nuclear destruction, which appeared particularly real at the time.

States grow ever more machine-like; people are transformed into casts of extras, as voters, producers, consumers...In politics, good and evil, categories of the natural world [lifeworld] - and therefore obsolete remnants of the past - lose all absolute meaning; the sole method of politics is quantifiable success...This impersonal power has achieved its most complete expression in the totalitarian systems...[However] In the relation of Western Europe to the totalitarian systems, I think that no error could be greater than the one looming largest - that of a failure to understand the totalitarian systems for what they are: a convex mirror of all modern civilisation. They are, most of all, a convex mirror of the inevitable consequences of rationalism, a grotesquely magnified image of its own deep tendencies, an extreme outcropping of its own development and an ominous product of its own expansion (Havel 1988: 388-9).

This deep-seated antimodernism sets the 'later' Havel apart from that leftist reading of civil society dominant for the other oppositionists in Czechoslovakia (with certain exceptions such as Benda - see Benda 1985: 101-102) and Poland, in which civil society is unashamedly modern: premised first upon some form of pluralist differentiation and a separation of spheres.[8] For Havel, the 'lifeworld' is not now but one of a number of 'differentiated' spheres, it is the *only* sphere of true human existence - the sphere from which Enlightenment reason broke away in a first step towards the modern state and its impersonal, totalising and dehumanising power (1988: 387):

Both the [child] and the [medieval] peasant are rooted far more intensely in what some philosophers call 'the natural world', or 'life-world' than most modern adults. They have not yet grown alienated from the world of their actual personal experience...(Havel 1988: 382).

It is not surprising that Jorgensen, along with Mische, sometimes wonders whether Havel is paraphrasing Arendt. Certainly, 'her sensitive understanding of the pre-political as a precondition for politics' is highly relevant, as is her 'tendency to substitute a poetic of politics for systematic analysis' (Jorgensen 1990: 39). Havel's identification of the 'essential trait of all modern civilisation' as its 'mass characteristics and its consumer orientation' (Havel 1988: 387), is also characteristic of Arendt's critique of the 'rise of the social' under modernity.[9]

With this shift in his basic analysis of modernity, Havel's understanding of oppositionism also appeared to be reworked. Certainly, his sense of how democratisation was actually

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[8]Again for Scruton, Havel is thus typical of the conservative movement in Central Europe (1988: 459).
[9]For more on the similarity between Chartist thought, especially Havel's, and Arendt's thought, see Isaac 1988: 115-117. Isaac notes the comparison between Arendt's description of her 'elementary republics' as 'oases in the desert' of mass politics, and the Chartists understanding of their own community as a 'small islands in a sea of apathy' and as the 'visible tip of the iceberg of discontent'. For both Arendt and the Chartists, the 'elementary republics' or 'parallel polis' are islands of civic engagement in a sea of modern conformity, consumerism, bureaucracy and vacuous political rhetoric (Isaac 1988: 116).

going to come about became more vague. Only one thing was now clear, it had to be a uniquely Eastern European 'way':

> Anti-political politics...is possible and can be effective, even though by its very nature it cannot calculate its effect beforehand. That effect, to be sure, is of a wholly different nature from what the West considers political success. It is hidden, indirect, long term and hard to measure. Often it exists only in the invisible realm of social consciousness, and therein it can be almost impossible to determine what value it assumes and to what extent, if any, it contributes to shaping social development (Havel 1988: 397).

However, in a more recent shift in his attitude towards civil society and democracy, Havel's analysis seems to have been influenced by the 1989 transitions to multiparty democracy.   Apparently coming back into line with original Chartist theory, his understanding of civil society now supports a view of democracy that, if not exactly a 'third way' between socialist and capitalist models, is certainly far more participatory than the Western liberal model. Indeed, in speaking explicitly of civil society, Havel does so in republican terms that are more reminiscent of his original formulations in *The Power of the Powerless*. Civil society is defined as a 'society with a large measure of self-government, where citizens assume their role in public affairs'. And the moral imperative of 'living in truth' is also articulated as something akin to republican virtue, since 'civil society' consists of:

> a social space that fosters the feeling of solidarity between people and love for one's community... Civil society encourages ordinary people to participate in government, thereby strengthening relations between citizens and their state... Collective activism not only improves citizen pride; it also nurtures such positive traits as "love thy neighbour" (Interview with Havel 1996: 18-19).

The evidence is thus that Havel has returned to the analysis that he first provided in *The Power of the Powerless*, where he wrote about civil society in much the same terms, only then under a different title:

> What is this independent life of society?... It includes...the most varied free, civic attitudes, including instances of independent self-organisation. In short, it is an area in which living within the truth becomes articulate and materialises in a visible way (Havel 1985: 65).

(iii) Civil Society and the Counter-Hegemonical Properties of 'Truth'
In summary, the Chartists' discussion about the nature of civil society was clearly very similar to the discussion being carried out in Poland at around the same time. Like the Polish theorists, the Chartists were still, at this stage, sympathetic to socialism, and consequently understood self-management in all spheres as the essence of a democratic

society. Also comparably with the Polish theory, this emphasis upon self-management led to a widespread ambiguity towards the state - though this is stronger for some theorists than others - and, subsequently, there was no great enthusiasm for liberal, political democracy with its concentration upon interest representation in the state. Yet despite saying little directly in favour of liberal democratic forms, the majority of theorists accepted something of liberal politics - that is, pluralism and the separation of spheres. This, again, represents common ground between the Czechoslovakian Chartists and the KOR Poles.

Where there were differences between the Chartist and the KOR models, this was more a matter of emphasis. Likely reflecting the more limited room for manoeuvre in Czechoslovakia, the Chartists' model is slightly more 'negative', as is illustrated by the term 'antipolitics', which is not present in the early days for the Poles. Of course, as has been shown, 'antipolitics' referred not to some privatist, reactionary political agenda, but expressed instead an anti-power and anti-state stance. Nevertheless, the Chartists do not reflect much upon the long-term prospects for the democratisation of the state apparatus, as for example Michnik and Nowak do in Poland. In this sense, the Chartists' model advocates even more explicitly than the Polish one, a 'civil society first' strategy - civil society is seen exclusively as an end in itself, and not as instrumental even to the democratisation of the state.

That enthusiasm for a self-management project was even more central for the Chartists than for the Poles, is evidenced also in the formers' apparently more 'moralistic', but actually more republican, emphasis upon 'living in truth' (as Havel termed it). The notion of 'living in truth' reveals itself in the Chartists' writings as something akin to civic culture, and many theorists actually use variations on the word 'civicness'. The Chartists' hopes of the better society to come - the 'parallel polis' - are premised upon the possibilities inherent in a move away from the 'institutionalised lies' of the ideological system of state-socialism, towards a social sphere characterised by publicity, openness and communication. Thus, following Benda, the 'parallel polis' really is a republican public sphere for the Chartists.

The analysis of totalitarianism as involving the capillary penetration of the ideological 'lie', is central to the Czechoslovakian call for a sphere with complete autonomy from the 'official' or state one. Essentially, what is provided within *On Freedom and Power* is a model outlining the parameters of a counter-hegemonical struggle. Although the Chartists do not refer to Gramsci's theory of hegemony, their political programme (if not their desired political end-point) is actually very close to his in terms of their analysis of the obstacles to progressive political change. They had an even keener sense than the Poles (although Michnik is similar here) that systemic control was not all, or even

primarily, about the coercive power available to the party-state. What really concerned them was hegemonical power - the power of dominant ideology to instil unquestioned conformity and quiescence. Thus civil society (or the 'parallel polis'), by *political necessity*, not just for abstract 'moral' reasons, was to be the space wherein 'lies', even more than political enemies in the party-state, were to be resisted and eventually excluded. Beyond the provision of a civil society with autonomy from the state - given their location within the harshest of political environments - the Chartists did not presume to look.

3. The Hungarian Discourse

According to Arato, the civil society concept has become a 'journalistic commonplace' in Hungary (Arato 1994: 4). But how and why did it emerge there in the first place? In the first section below, in order to provide some answers to this question, I look at the influence of Polish opposition theory in the Hungarian context (Czechoslovakian opposition theory appears to have been less directly influential). In the second section, I ask what, if anything, was distinctive about the Hungarian model of civil society.

(i) The Influence of the Polish Model of Civil Society

Hankiss refers to the sizeable number of Hungarian scholars who, during the course of the 1960s and 1970s, began to refer 'to the existence and growing importance of a latent, second sphere of socio-economic existence, of a cleavage and interaction between the 'first', official, society and of a 'second', informal and latent society' (Hankiss 1990: 83). Yet Hankiss also observes that further explorations of this phenomenon, after the initial interest in it, are not found again until the early 1980s. Although Hankiss does not say so, this reemergence of 'second society' theorising was prompted by the Polish events of 1980-81, and by the model of civil society which accompanied them.

All relevant scholars are agreed that this civil society concept, later to become common currency in Hungary,[10] arrived initially through the mediation of Polish opposition writings. As with the key Polish theorists, Kuron and Michnik, the original Hungarian civil society theorists came from an earlier reform-communist, revisionist, background (the so called 'Budapest School'). Janos Kis and Gyorgy Bence, for example, continued to work primarily within the Marxist paradigm up until the early 1980s - that is until the influence of the Polish KOR and Solidarity experiment encouraged their final abandonment of Marxist tenets in favour of a pluralistic 'civil society' programme (Jorgensen 1990: 50). However, even as early as 1978, Kis and Bence shared with KOR

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[10]In Hungarian, the phrase which is translated into English as 'civil society' refers generally to that which is not of the state: 'Something akin to the English word civilian (but while civilian in English is distinguished primarily from the military, here it is distinguished from all occupants of state office)' (Seligman 1992: 202).

and the Czechoslovakian Chartists the 'post-reformist' belief in the importance of a 'society first' programme. 'Even those people who have criticised the policies of the apparatus in the name of the working class', they wrote, 'have in fact addressed themselves to the apparatus and not to the working class itself' (Kis and Bence 1978: 105, in Bernhard 1993: 312 fn).

Comments by Hungarian dissidents made later on, during or soon after the Solidarity period in 1981, illustrate the influence of the Polish civil society theory-strategy even more clearly. For example, Hungarian dissidents commonly endorsed the Polish idea of 'self-limitation' as a political strategy and as a normative model - as can be shown by comparing the following accounts:

> The Poles have just shown that it is possible to obtain a genuine radical compromise without endangering the military interests of the Soviet Union nor even the hegemony of the communist party (Interview with Tibor Pokh, Hungarian lawyer, *Telos* 1981: 143).

> I think that at the present hour in Poland the two parties involved are following the route of compromise...Workers are formulating demands that remain within the compromise framework: instead of seeking to destroy power, they seek to transform it in a democratic sense. The cause of Poland's democratic development depends on the respect of both parties for the compromise thus realised (Interview with Andras Hegedus, Hungarian Sociologist and ex-Prime Minister, *Telos* 1981: 145).

> After 1976, the Polish democratic opposition invented a new formula which was, from a certain viewpoint, the opposite of the old one. It was no longer a question of clinging to a great democratic transformation: it was necessary to be resigned to seeing the existing, essentially anti-democratic regime be perpetuated. But within this framework, it is possible to be assured of an area for democratic autonomy and, within certain limits, formulate democratic demands...[However], I think that it is not just under constraint and in a spirit of compromise that they invented this formula and that they really do *not* intend to intervene in decisions and their implementation. They seem to be saying to the government and to the party: "Do your work, since it must be, but do it well, since we will no longer accept being its victims." Certainly, that is politics, for to have a policy presupposes that one occupies a position of power. But, in reality, this power is a counter-power: the free unions do not want to replace the party and government (Interview with Gyorgy Bence, Hungarian philosopher, *Telos* 1981: 145).

> ...I think that at the present time the road opening for Eastern Europe to move toward democracy is passing between the two historical impasses; on the one hand, the total challenging of the authority of the regime in power; and, on the other, the acceptance of reforms imposed from above. This narrow road consists in promoting limited changes sustained by autonomous organised forces independent of power. This has been the tactic of the Polish opposition since

1976; this is the development which is becoming reality in Poland (Interview with Janos Kis, Hungarian philosopher, *Telos* 1981: 146-7).

Janos Kis, the leader of the Hungarian democratic opposition centred around the *samisdat* journal *Beszelko* (Arato 1994: 11), demonstrates in this last quote his commitment to the 'Polish' idea of civil society. Not only does he advocate 'self-limitation' as a political strategy, he is also convinced that the autonomy of a 'public sphere' - that is its separateness from formal political power - is the very condition for the reproduction of 'self-limitation'; for the reproduction of democracy itself in which no-one group has absolute power in the state.

However, if some of the key players in the Hungarian democratic opposition, such as Kis and Bence, initially accepted the 'Polish model', others sought to modify it, or further, to propose a different model of democratisation altogether. After 1987, the Hungarian opposition finally consolidated their activities into a network of independent initiatives (the Democratic Forum) such as the Poles had done a decade previously. Subsequently, Janos Kis and his team (especially Koszeg and Solt (Jorgensen 1990: 46)) revised the Polish 'civil society' model of democratisation with the theory of the 'Social Contract'. As with the original Polish oppositionists, this model represented an attempt to marry theory with the exigencies of political practice specific to the country in question. Thus the 'Social Contract', in contrast to the Polish model, involved the Hungarian opposition more in party-state directed political action (Jorgensen 1990: 46). This befitted a weaker and less broad based opposition in a context where pragmatic segments of the party-state apparatus were themselves initiating a reformist programme. Here, precisely because of these developments 'from above', the 'two society' model based on the Polish experience had begun to lose its relevance (Hankiss 1990: 111). The 'Social Contract' therefore involved, unlike in Poland, oppositionists accepting a distinct role for the party-state. This was in order that an already evolving constitutionalism, or legality, could be institutionalised further (Hankiss 1990: 224). One example here would be Janos Kis's emphasis on the value of 'the conspicuous exercise of rights' (Smolar 1996: 26).

Despite this undoubted difference in emphasis between the Hungarian 'Social Contract' and the Polish model, some commentators remain convinced that there were fundamental points of agreement underlying the two models. Scruton, for example, although he acknowledges that the 'Social Contract' idea was representative of the Hungarian tradition of liberal constitutionalism, also points to the 'Social Contract's' 'more socialist-seeming values', such as the down-playing of private property and the separation of powers (Scruton 1988: 649). And as Arato sees it, the idea behind the 'Social Contract':

...was to combine two different rates of change, one in civil society and one in the state sphere, in a mutually reinforcing way, and to provide at the same time the

necessary change of 'environment' for institutionalising a genuine market economy...The 'Social Contract' retained an important link to the Polish politics of the 'new evolutionism' by maintaining, against other approaches of the time that still addressed the regime or its reformist elements, that groups, associations, and indeed movements outside the official institutions would have the primary task of pushing the reforms through. In Hungary, though, the idea was paradoxical, given the absence of anything resembling the Polish level of societal self-organisation (Cohen and Arato 1992: 64).

(ii) The Distinctiveness of the Hungarian Model

Yet if Arato is inclined to see a fundamental compatibility between the Polish 'civil society' approach and the Hungarian 'Social Contract'[11] (even if he admits that this was somewhat paradoxical given the different situations on the ground), others are not so sure that this was the case. Frentzel-Zagorska argues that the dominant Hungarian scenario of transformation was not just less confrontational or 'political' than the Polish model ('evolutionist' though this was), but was also more economy-centred and elite-focused (Frentzel-Zagorska 192: 44). Turning first to the concern with political elites, Hungarian theorists - unlike the Poles who sought to 'by-pass' the party-state - thought that transformation could only be achieved through a programme to change the character of the ruling elite rather than one to replace it (Frentzel-Zagorska 1992: 44). Frentzel-Zagoska points to Elmer Hankiss's book, *East European Alternatives*, as an example of this thinking. Here Hankiss advocates the formation of a 'grand coalition' between party-state elites and an emerging bourgeois elite of managers and entrepreneurs - these clientelistic links being seen as necessary to a smooth transition from state-socialism. The Hungarian philosopher Konrad shared this distinctively Hungarian view of transition:

> In Eastern Europe it is impossible to democratise society by trying to overthrow the local elite. Nor was that the way it was done in southern Europe... The political elites were not overthrown; a more broadly based middle class and technocracy simply absorbed them. A middle-class intelligentsia on the road to embourgeoisment swallowed up the political bureaucracy of dictatorship... The new recipe [therefore] calls for a transformation of the political structures by means of a slowly ripening social transformation. *Political changes must be preceded by social changes*. Mass movements *will not* modify or weaken the power structure in any significant way. It seems to me that the Hungarian way is more the way of social change, while the Polish way was more of political change (Konrad 1984: 144-5, italics added).

For both Konrad and Hankiss, the most important development is the embourgeoisment of Hungarian society. Transformation of the political system is seen as dependent upon a process of modernisation - 'a sort of repetition of the process of civil societies in the West' (Frentzel-Zargoska 1992: 45). In this sociological rather than political emphasis,

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[11] Which is perhaps not surprising, in that Arato has been the great populiser of the 'Polish model'.

the Hungarian approach certainly differed from the Polish one, which was something that some of the Hungarian oppositionists obviously wanted to make explicit themselves. Konrad's acknowledged debt to the example of the southern European transitions over the 'Polish model' is worthy of note here, although this appears to be based upon a misunderstanding on Konrad's part. For Konrad, the 'Hungarian way', as he sought to characterise it, was different primarily because it sought to avoid 'the overthrow of the machinery of power by means of a mass movement' (Konrad 1984: 145). Konrad seems here to be criticising Solidarity which, since it was a mass movement, he apparently assumes sought power in the usual way. However, as we have seen, the Solidarity-linked theorists of civil society (Michnik, Kuron et al), under the rubric 'New Evolutionism', were actually the first to provide an analysis of what Konrad calls the 'slowly ripening social transformation'. Konrad seems further to be unaware that the example of southern European transitions was important also to the Polish thinker, Michnik (see Michnik 1976: 143)

Michael Bernhard, seeking to characterise what he sees as the distinctiveness of the Hungarian mode of transformation, believes that the Democratic Forum 'espoused a "third way" between western capitalism and Soviet communism. Its ideal was a "garden Hungary" of local communities with a multiparty system and a mixed market economy. It also put greater stress on local and economic autonomy - cooperatives, small farms, workers councils, local self government, etc.' (Bernhard 1993: 319). Certainly, there is some evidence of 'third way' thinking amongst Hungarian oppositionists, but this was also true of the Polish KOR theorists, and of the Czechoslovakian Chartists. Essentially, all three sets of theorists focus more on social self-management than on liberal democracy. The Hungarian approach was also similar to the Polish and Czechoslovak ones in that, while ambiguous regarding parliamentary democracy, it was still undoubtedly sympathetic to pluralism:

> For me, historical compromise is not a political proposition, but an alternative of possible and desirable development - an alternative that leads to the creation of a new "historical bloc" (Gramsci), transcending existing monolithic social regimes. It would be a pluralist society in which, on the one hand, power would tolerate different non-integrable movements, organisations and tendencies; on the other hand, the forces controlling power - forces representing diverse social interests - would not seek to undermine power by insurrectional means, nor to constitute themselves as a political party in order to take over the direction of the state by means of parliamentary elections. They would be content with the possibility offered them to control power by social pressure (Interview with Hungarian philosopher Hegedus, *Telos* 1981: 144).

This statement compares with equally radical ones made by, say, Kuron in Poland or Uhl in Czechoslovakia. For, like these two theorists, in his emphasis upon self-management

Hegadus is ambiguous about interest representation in the state. In fact, Kis and Bence criticised Hegadus (as Michnik criticised Kuron in Poland) for not allowing such representation, arguing that:

> The [existing Eastern European opposition] movements are both stronger and weaker than Hegadus wants. Stronger [because] whether they can realise their goals does not depend on the power structure's good intentions [when in fact there is no guarantee of the authorities allowing something not compatible with its interests]. Weaker, because they cannot replace independent institutions of representation (Kis and Bence 1977: 394, in Arato 1981: 31).[12]

However, both Kis and Bence (as with the majority of the Polish and Czechoslovak theorists), given their comparative neglect of parliamentarism, had many of the same priorities as Hegadus in practice. The Hungarian philosopher George Konrad, in his influential book *Antipolitics* (1984),[13] was also explicit about the need for local and economic self-management over 'mere' parliamentary democracy:

> In Eastern Europe today, self-management is society's prime demand...It is a matter of common observation that the workers don't want to exchange their government-appointed managers for capitalist owner-managers... Workplace and local community self-government, based on personal contact, exercised daily, and always subject to correction, have greater attraction in our part of the world than multiparty representative democracy because, if they have their choice, people are not content with voting once every four years...That somehow seems very little when people hope that, by taking a part in the affairs of the community, they can gain a voice in their own destiny...When there is parliamentary democracy but no self-administration, the political class alone occupies the stage (Konrad 1984: 137).

Konrad's unambiguous call for direct democracy is not, he adds, a rejection of the importance of multiparty, parliamentary democracy (which he understands to be a condition for society's self-defence) (1984: 138). However, taken separately, '[t]he notion of self-governing factories and cities, not subject to Party authority, is at least as attractive as that of a division of the political class into two or more party leaderships...' (Konrad 1984: 138). Society's defence of its capacity to manage itself is, for Konrad,

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[12]In fact at the time, Arato saw the debate between Hegadus and Kis and Bence in Hungary as akin to the Polish one between KOR and the reformists. Kis and Bence, he believed, took a KOR stance - while Hegadus, hence his suspicion of parliamentary forms of democracy, moved only from a classic reformist position to a 'half-way' civil society model of 'reformism from below' (Arato 1981: 31). The 'Hungarian model' has subsequently been seen somewhat as representing the latter position; but, clearly, both views were present at the time. (Arato nevertheless saw Hegadus' thesis - in its acceptance of some form of state-society duality - as a 'civil society' one.)

[13]For Konrad, the notion of 'antipolitics' and civil society go together in a relatively straight-forward way. In common with other theorists, he sees civil society as essentially an autonomous societal sphere outside of the state: 'Antipolitics strives to put politics in its place and make sure it stays there, never overstepping its proper office of defending and refining the rules of the game of civil society. Antipolitics is the ethos of civil society, and civil society is the antithesis of military society' (1984: 92).

just as important in the face of the monopoly of this liberal-capitalist political class as it is when confronted with state-socialist *apparatchiks*. Indeed, this strategy projects the importance of 'society against the state' beyond the era of one-party rule; as such it is a more traditionally anarchistic, libertarian, model of politics, such as is found also in the writings of Kuron (Poland) and Uhl (Czechoslovakia). The more distinctively 'civil society' approach of theorists such as Michnik (Poland) and Hejdanek (Czechoslovakia), sets 'society' against the state partly for strategic reasons. Konrad certainly appears to possess an anarchist's antipathy to any form of centralised political authority, as, for example, when he wonders whether a Solidarity style 'self-defence organisation on a nation-wide scale (actually mirroring the articulation of the state administration itself)...is capable of self-management? If it is not centralised there is no coordination, and if it *is* centralised there is no self-management' (Konrad 1984: 142). Nevertheless, in his emphasis upon self-management and his generalised suspicion of systemic 'power', Konrad is not really far from the majority of other theorists associated with KOR and Charter 77.

Konrad is also fairly 'mainstream' when he calls for socialist economic management, criticising capitalist democracies for leaving the economy as a hierarchically organised sphere responding only to the decisions of owners (Konrad 1984: 140):

> Clearly, the democracy that exists where I am means more to me than the democracy that exists someplace where I am not... Self-management means that representative democracy spreads from the political sphere to the economic and cultural spheres as well (1984: 139).

This 'third way' political imagery that Konrad adopts is not essentially different from that of the Polish theorists in their earlier socialist guises, or from the Chartists' writings in *The Power of the Powerless* either.

Yet the distinctiveness of the Hungarian position should not be entirely denied. Jacques Rupnik provides one helpful explanation for those features, such as the greater focus upon the liberalisation of the market sphere, which were unique to the Hungarian opposition:

> Hungarian political thinking of the last decade...refer[s] to totalitarian features of the system [as] a by-product of discussions concerning the political obstacles to a genuine evolution in the direction of a market economy. Hungarian economic thinking (by no means confined to the democratic opposition) identifies the economic with society and calls for its independence from the Party-state. Whether belonging to the liberal variant...or to the more socially aware libertarian one [e.g. Konrad], the Hungarians tend to agree that a Polish-style solution is to be avoided and that in Hungary the economic (the local equivalent of society)

should become an autonomous sphere while keeping the Party-state involved in a self-limiting process of retreat (Rupnik 1988: 285).

This emphasis on the economic sphere no doubt reflected the fact that the Hungarian party-state had long turned a blind eye to, and even secretly encouraged, the development of an informal 'second economy'. Even the radical, Konrad, for example, advocated 'an amalgam of the second economy and the second culture' (in Garton Ash 1983: 205). Thus in Hungary, as in Poland and Czechoslovakia, political context was an important factor in shaping the discourse on civil society.

In summary, despite their greater emphasis upon a quasi-reformist strategy, Hungarian interlocutors to the region-wide debate on civil society do not provide a substantively different model of civil society itself. For these theorists, the same basic themes as for the Poles and the Czechoslovaks remain, namely: self-management, localism, and the socialist concern for a democracy without barriers separating it from the economic and social spheres. The greater flexibility of the Hungarian party-state when compared to the Poland and especially Czechoslovakia, demanded that attempts be made, as just one part of an otherwise 'society-first' opposition strategy, to achieve concessions within the state. In other words, the reformist content to the Hungarian 'Social Contract' can be read as largely pragmatic, rather than as indicative of a different understanding of democratisation altogether.

Furthermore, the increasing marketisation of Hungarian society was seen as providing useful space for the development of autonomy from the party-state sphere, and not as an essential precondition for democratisation per se, as this has come to be accepted by liberal democrats. In other words, when Hungarian radicals such as Konrad advocated the Hungarian 'social way' over the Polish 'political way', this was intended to suggest different *strategies* for democratisation. But democratisation itself was still understood as growing self-management, so Konrad and his colleagues fundamentally shared the Polish concern for a radical-democratic, rather than a merely liberal-democratic, end-point.

Indeed, Bozoki and Sukosd reveal that this radical model of civil society remained dominant for the Hungarian opposition even up until 1988. They write that the advocates of a 'civil society' strategy - arguing for 'a slow maturation process and the postponement of party formation' - were only at this point sidelined by those who sought to replace 'movement' with 'party' politics (Bozoki and Sukosd 1993: 229). 'While one group emphasised the re-politicization and self-management of society and the elimination of existing power, the other one had already shifted the stress to replacing it' (Bozoki and Sukosd 1993: 230).

4. Conceptualisations of Civil Society in the Post-1989 Literature on Democratisation in Central-Eastern Europe

> What are we to make of th[e] apparent convergence between Western Scholars and Eastern former dissidents on a liberal interpretation of 1989? (Isaac 1998: 155)

In this section I first explore reasons for the decline of the radical model of civil society supplied by the various opposition movements prior to 1989. I then concentrate on revealing the growing hegemony of liberal democratic tenets in the field of civil society theory after 1989. Although academic debates about the desired political character of civil society have continued since the transitions of 1989, these are primarily concerned with discussing the earlier dialogues of the opposition movements (see Ash 1989; Hankiss 1990; Jorgensen 1992; Arato 1994; Klaus von Beyme 1994). Indeed, it is true even of those more radical theorists of civil society working in the (post 1989) field of Central-Eastern European politics, that civil society theory is no longer seen as offering a 'third way' for democratic theory and praxis. Instead, 'radical' discussions are now confined largely to the role of elucidating conditions necessary for the ongoing legitimation, at best the deepening, of liberal democracy. The crucial distinction between opposition discourses on civil society and post 1989 discourses, therefore, is that while within the former civil society was understood as an end in itself, within the latter it is viewed as largely instrumental.

(i) The Decline of the Radical Model of Civil Society

The change in the theory of civil society (from a radical to a liberal democratic concept) that this chapter reveals, might appear to be a function merely of shifting attention to a separate body of work. In other words, by pursuing a different process of selection of theorists of civil society, it would be possible, by sleight of hand, to construct what is in fact an artificial cut-off point regarding radical formulations of civil society. Yet within the history of ideas, what is *not* said is often as important as what is said. And it is in fact true that the radical opposition theorists of civil society from the 1970s and 1980s have, since 1989, been almost completely silent on the subject of civil society. So it is *not* the case that these theorists carry on articulating their radical, republican models, except that this time no-one is listening; they have simply ceased to pronounce on civil society at all.[1]

Having said this, where pronouncements *are* made by these once radical theorists on topics that relate to the subjects of civil society and democracy, it appears, further, that they have largely abandoned their radical, third-way, political beliefs. Adam Michnik

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[1]Havel is a partial exception here (see last section), yet his political-philosophy, as has been shown, was always somewhat distinct from that of the other civil society theoreticians from the region.

illustrates this transformation from radicalism to main-stream liberalism well. In 1991 he wrote that 'liberal values in the era of post-communism, values codified in the writings of John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville, and also those of Hayek, are meeting with their true renaissance' (Michnik 1991: 70). This valorisation of liberalism above all other political values is reflected in Michnik's favoured policy agenda for his own country, which seems to have been influenced by his new-found admiration for Hayek. For in a 1995 interview, Michnik effectively pronounces himself convinced of the neo-liberal, monetarist model for socio-economic reform, rejecting even moderate social-democratic politics as presently unrealistic:

> Janos Kis is right: the space for manoeuvre in economic policy is very small. The real problems concern social policy. Social democratic politics may be possible in rich countries... and even there, there are problems such as bureaucratization. For us, if you want to seek something for the lower classes, the primary enemy is inflation, budget deficit, collapse of production... (Michnik 1995: 8).

So far from offering a radical critique of liberal democracy today, Michnik even reinterprets his political programme from during the communist period as having been limited to the desire for 'national independence, human rights and the economic freedom of citizens [as] a triangle marking a true basis for the new order' (Michnik 1985: 8). Undoubtedly, these liberal principles (self-determination, individual-rights and the call for a market economy) were all present in Michnik's opposition thinking (except that support for market capitalism was more ambiguous), but the emphasis was completely different. *Then* it was believed by Michnik and others that self-management was an equally necessary component of a new political order, including, to some degree, self-management within the market sphere. Now, such radical optimism seems to have disappeared entirely:

> ...I don't know a better condition than a market economy... My point is that today... a Third Way, is not possible. We can try to change, for example, the distribution of the national budget, give more money to culture rather than give it to the unemployed - but national economies are like a family budget: if you spend more on culture, you will spend less elsewhere (Michnik 1995: 10).

Even more revealing are Michnik's comments on the meaning of democracy. Responding to the question of in what sense he remains a 'radical democrat',[2] Michnik states:

> Democracy is a question of elections, after which the majority sets up a government... The culture of democracy is a problem of compromise, agreement

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[2]Michnik had claimed, in a 1994 interview, that what remained of socialism was radical democracy (Michnik 1994: 28).

on the rules of the game, of the peaceful coexistence of different communities and interests.

I am a "radical democrat"...because I find that all of the values of the left, are values which remain relevant today, but the institutional propositions are different. In the new institutional conditions, I want to defend values that are in the left tradition. For example, take social justice. Marx's goals of a planned society and social equality are impossible. But if there are men who starve and others who have wealth, there is an injustice, and to be a radical democrat means to seek to change things so that we can have a market economy with a human face (Michnik 1995: 10-11).

What stands out here is that Michnik now views democracy *not*, as he once saw it, as a double sided process occurring in both state *and* civil society, but as the institution of majority rule within the state (with liberal safeguards for minorities). The democracy of civil society has disappeared from view. In its place, Michnik calls merely for a pluralist political culture. His 'radical democracy', furthermore, is no longer connected to notions of participation or self-management, which is why the idea of civil society was *important* for him originally, but is articulated as little more than welfare or social democracy, which is essentially statist.

Michnik is not alone in making this journey away from radicalism. The once radical Hungarian theorists of civil society seem to have travelled the same road. George Konrad, for example, apparently oblivious to his earlier faith in collective self-management for workers, pronounced in 1990: 'Why am I a liberal? Because I am sceptical about everything human, about our collective self; because for me there are no institutions, persons or concepts that are sacrosanct or above criticism' (Konrad 1990: 189). Konrad has abandoned the collectivism, progressivism and account of agency which upheld his earlier notion of civil society. On this evidence, the civil society that he might currently articulate would enshrine little other than negative liberty and individualism - in other words, the market-capitalism of which he was previously so critical.

In fact, Konrad's recent statements on civil society, while they do not go to these extremes in denouncing collective action, do show just how far he has moved from the self-management agenda and from a non-strategic to a strategic conception of civil society. Commenting on the role of Charter '91, a Hungarian civic initiative based on the Charter 77 model and designed to lobby the then government in defence of constitutional liberties, Konrad writes that:

> Civil society continually searches for and experiments with appropriate forms for expressing itself. It does not want to replace representative democracy, only to place the political class, and, more narrowly, the governing administration, in the environment of a democratic society (Konrad 1992: 36-37).

Konrad goes on to say that self-organisation in civil society is the self-organisation of 'civil opinion'. In other words, he no longer sees civil society as concerned with direct citizen *involvement in* political decision making, but only with the formation of public opinion to be *directed at* decision-makers. This is a dramatically watered-down understanding of self-organisation, which is now assigned to the legitimation of politics in the state, not to the provision of alternatives to statised politics.

Similarly enlightening is an interview from 1995 with Janos Kis, another radical civil society theorist from the Hungarian opposition. Like Michnik, Kis claims an ongoing concern with broadly egalitarian politics, yet he specifies that this is liberal-egalitarianism, distancing himself from democratic socialism, which he sees as requiring severe limitations on private property in order to be distinctive (Kis 1995: 18). As with Michnik, then, it is only in a very watered down sense that Kis retains his once socialist affiliations.

However, where Kis (again like Michnik) has shifted ground to an even greater extent, is in relation to radical democracy. Once an advocate of 'civil society first' and of the self-managing democracy of civil society, Kis now believes that:

> As far as radical democracy is concerned, I believe that representative democracy has the advantage of being able to work as an institutionalized system, while radical democracy is the opposite of institutionalization, and without institutional routine, no society would be able to survive. But otherwise, the field must be open for single issue and other movements which are created and die out, which exercise pressure on party politics and introduce topics and issues, and which represent themes and interests that would otherwise be unrepresented. I am very much in favour of such movements, as long as they fall within the framework of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law (Kis 1995: 18).

For Kis, 'civil society', such as it is, should now turn to representing interests, rather than increasing self-management and democratic autonomy. Indeed, to the extent that Kis has redefined self-limitation to include a prohibition, not just on violence and revolution (as was originally the case), but on political alternatives to parliamentary mechanisms, it is hard to see what is 'radical' about the democracy he articulates at all.

Yet the decline of the radical model of civil society can be traced back even further than the watershed of 1989.[3] As Mastnak records it, the original, 'socialist', idea of civil

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[3]The apparent failure of the original 'Polish model' (as a consequence of Solidarity's defeat in 1981, as well as the continuing stalemate in Czechoslovakia and, to a lesser extent, in Hungary), led to general disillusionment. Indeed, by the mid 1980s, some previously leftist theorists, for example Michnik, stated that political distinctions between left and right no longer held any meaning for them (Michnik 1985). Thus the materialist analysis of civil society provided originally by Kolakowski and then by Kuron and

society had come by the mid 1980s to seem a 'contradiction in terms' to many in the ranks of the opposition. For it was the critique of 'real socialism' as abolishing the separation between state and society which led originally to this radical, 'socialist' reinvention of the category of civil society. Yet the notion of the separation of spheres which the idea of civil society reintroduced actually undermined, or strictly speaking contradicted, the still socialist sense that civil society should be about self-management. In other words, regardless of whether radical theorists of civil society intended it or not, although most did not, 'the distinction between state and society offered a starting point from which to criticise and refute self-management as an anti-statist and anti-social project' (Mastnak 1992: 134-5). In the absence of calls for formal political democracy and given that something like a fully autonomous civil society was envisaged, the idea of the self-management of civil society, while a utopian political vision, was at least coherent. However, as we have seen in previous sections, even the most radical theorists such as Kuron (Poland) and Konrad (Hungary), were in practice unwilling to deny outright the importance of political democracy - since this seemed the only way to safeguard the newly rediscovered sphere of civil society in the long run. That is, anti-statism, while attractive to these theorists, was understood to have anti-social implications in the form of the repoliticisation of society, which was something that they clearly wanted to avoid. There was a desire for self-management, but also for a private sphere, which seemed inevitably to bring them back to civil society understood not just as self-management but as requiring the distinction between state and society, public and private. Crucially, this tendency for the radical vision of civil society to collapse into a basically liberal-democratic schema, explains in part the decline of this model long before the revolutions of 1989 actually occurred.[4] For on a purely theoretical level, the radical model of civil society was difficult to sustain without first legitimating liberal democracy, even if this was still imagined as only a 'stage' on the way to more substantively democratic forms.

This long-term decline of the radical model of civil society due to its apparent internal inconsistencies was of course accelerated dramatically by the transitions of 1989.[5] 1989 undermined many of the basic premises of the radical model. This was especially true

Michnik, went into significant decline. Even Michnik himself, as Scruton points out, talked far more in non-socialist terms after 1983 - as his (1987) defence of the Polish church as the foundation of Polish civil society illustrates. As Scruton noted at the time, 'In his change of attitude, I believe, one can see the birth of a new, more sombre, but more realistic assessment of Socialist Europe' (Scruton 1988: 645).
[4]In Slovenia, the radical, self-management model of civil society was delegitimised by its cooption, as early as 1985, into the discourse of the ruling party. As Mastnak recalls, the ruling party sought to reinterpret the idea of civil society 'with the help of Gramscian neomarxism, in order to prove that civil society issues were 'organically' or 'essentially' linked to the existing self-management project, that this model was in fact a genuine civil society coming true and that civil society in that sense was in fact the Party's programmatic aim' (Mastnak 1992: 141).
[5]For even as late as 1987, Krizan was still able to conclude that the concepts of 'socialist and 'civil society' are similar (Krizan 1987: 110).

with regard to the totalitarian paradigm, which had been so important to the radical theorists of civil society because it reflected their increasing sense in the 1970s that the system could not be reformed from within (Smolar 1996: 27). Yet communist regimes had not only been reformed, but actually abolished, 'from within'. Gorbachev's programmes of *glasnost* and *perestroika* had, evidently to all, been the real reason for the collapse of communism in Central-Eastern Europe when it finally came.[6]

Even the more positive pronouncements on civil society after transition were actually damaging to the original opposition model. For example, the widespread talk of 'civil society in power' largely negated the earlier, radical, sense of civil society as inaugurating an anti-power programme in which state politics of the traditional kind would be replaced by a kind of republican consensus politics. As Smolar puts it, archly, once radical oppositionists found themselves in, or close to, political power, the need for:

> concrete choices and responsibilities cured many of the leaders of moral civil society of their illusory notions about the possibility of a "third way" beyond capitalism and socialism... What replaced these fancies was the decision to imitate Western arrangements like constitutional democracy, the market, and the rule of law. "Returning to Europe" or "becoming a normal society" became the watchwords of most of the leaders who came from the ranks of the democratic opposition to communism (Smolar 1996: 29).

It is certainly true that most analysts of the transitions of 1989 have taken a dim view as to the continuing relevance of the radical models of civil society. For example, Miller, writing in the third person, but giving his own position away, states:

> By 1989... it had already begun to seem as if the original, Gramscian, project of establishing a civil society within the bosom of the totalitarian system was already too modest.... The system itself had apparently changed so much that the scope and importance of civil society had to be fundamentally recast, both theoretically and practically... Civil society came increasingly to be assigned the task no longer of carving out a niche for itself within the existing 'real socialist' order, but of actively reconstituting a new, post-communist order - one in which it would gradually withdraw from intensive political engagement to operate under the 'normal' circumstances associated with Western models of parliamentary democracy and a free market economy (Miller 1992: 2).

For Arato, who in contrast to Miller has a stake in the radical model of civil society, its decline had less to do with the inherent limitations of this earlier model, and everything to do with the politics of opposition. Taking the example of Poland, he writes:

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[6]Tempest writes: 'It is already the case that a deep scepticism pervades the work of many who analyse the new democratic states of Central and Eastern Europe, as to the validity of the idea that a revived and vigorous civil society caused the collapse of communist power' (Tempset 1997: 133; cf. Ekiert 1991; Szakolczai and Horvath 1992; Curry 1993).

...there were always reservations, which came out in the free public sphere after the weakening of Solidarity: the civil society oriented program was too collectivistic for the liberal economists, too cosmopolitan for the nationalists, too defensive for the revolutionaries, too liberal for the neo-Marxist advocates of class interests, too populist for the *Realpolitiker*. With the enemy gone, all these trends turned against one another, and against the advocates and the very program of a democratic civil society that could have been a minimum basis of consensus among many of them (Arato 1994: 10).

Most problematic of all as far as the radical model of civil society is concerned, its dramatic decline post-1989 supports the notion that this model only makes sense in authoritarian political contexts. Of course, most of the radical theorists of civil society were explicit in opposition that their model of civil society needed to be understood as central to a transhistorical political project; yet this is not how it looks now. Once the possibility of democracy in the state presented itself (of course, this seemed *impossible* when the model was first developed) then the job that the concept was doing in articulating a site for democracy *outside* of the state, suddenly seemed less necessary and certainly less pressing.

(ii) The Post 1989 Hegemony of the Liberal Democratic Model of Civil Society

(ii.i) Civil Society as An 'Analytical Tool'

A key to understanding the paradigm shift which has occurred within the debate on civil society in, or in relation to, Central-Eastern Europe since 1989, is that the concept, apart from its realignment politically (see below), is now used in a methodologically different way. For the opposition theorists of the 1970s and 1980s, civil society was an explicitly normative idea which aspired to societal space wherein self-management and democracy could be worked out. That is, the idea of civil society was political and prescriptive. Since 1989, by contrast, civil society has been mostly used either as a descriptive term[7] (though with implicit normative implications as will become apparent below), or, where the concept is used reflexively, as an 'analytical tool' with which to account for democratisation in the region and to explore the likelihood of democratic 'consolidation'.[8] As Szakolczai and Horvath observe, '[i]n explaining the revolutionary changes that

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[7]In these cases, knowledge of the earlier normative-political idea of civil society, or of the self-definition of movements such as Solidarity as 'civil society', often seems completely absent. The term civil society is used basically as a label for the 'popular upsurge' that took place immediately prior to transition. Splichal, for example, writes: 'Civil society was created in East-Central Europe in a very short period of time; almost overnight it succeeded in overthrowing the old regimes and inaugurating parliamentary democracy' (Splichal 1994: 305).

[8]Bibic and Graziano's introduction to a volume on civil society and democracy is a typical example here. They begin: "Civil society' has played a crucial role...in the transition from authoritarian regimes to political democracy... A strong civil society is important in the consolidation of democracy in post-authoritarian regimes as well as in deepening democracy in already established liberal democracies' (Bibic and Graziano 1994: i).

occurred in Eastern Europe during 1989, one often encounters a discourse centring upon the resurrection of civil society' (Szakolczai and Horvath 1992: 16). Within this discourse civil society now denotes a 'neutral' social-scientific concept in contrast to its past incarnations as a normative idea; the positivist fallacy of a value-free science is everywhere. Lewis, for example, is critical that '[w]ith reference to Eastern Europe during the 1980s, 'civil society' became more of a slogan than an analytical concept' (Lewis 1993: 300); and Frentzel-Zagorska similarly writes:

> There are enough different theoretical approaches to the concept of 'civil society' and enough varying historical contents of the notion to turn every work dealing with the subject into a philosophical and/or historical treatise devoted to conceptual variations and subtleties. I want to avoid this here, since I intend to use the concept of civil society as an analytical tool for the particular historical developments taking place in Eastern Europe (Frentzel-Zagorska 1992: 40-41).

(ii.ii) The Instrumentalisation of Civil Society for Liberal Democracy

> The [opposition] model of civil society has been superseded. The idea of civil society has by no means been discarded as a consequence, however. On the contrary, it has become a virtual "buzz-word" in the discourse of post-communist politics. But the tasks assigned to civil society are substantially different: its role is to be constitutive and preservative of the liberal-democratic political systems and free-market economies...(Miller 1992: 8).

For the radical oppositionists, civil society was itself the site of democracy. But as Miller indicates, this is no longer held to be true. Civil society is now seen as external to, though no doubt important for, democracy understood as a political mechanism for controlling the state. This is illustrated by Skapsa's assertion that: 'As the post-communist experience indicates, the alternative forms of civil society flourishing before the collapse of communism prove to be dysfunctional in democratic society' (Skapsa 1997: 158). Skapsa is here referring to the negative impact upon the new institutions of political democracy that has ensued from the 'mistrust and hostility towards official institutions' engendered by the radical, autonomous and anti-statist model of civil society. Skapsa may well be correct in this analysis, but the underlying assumption remains that the civil society project present before transition occurred could not, of itself, create a democratic society in the absence of 'official institutions' and 'legal rules of the game' (Skapsa 1997: 158).

This shift in democratic theory, with the idea of civil society being similarly realigned, has been close to universal within the post 1989 literature on democracy and civil society. Essentially, it involves the instrumentalisation of civil society as now merely supportive of liberal democracy, rather than as *the* site for democratic participation which it mostly signified prior to 1989. Examples here are numerous. Bibic and Graziano write that the

'real or potential role of civil society with regard to democracy and democratisation...refers above all to political democratisation and political democracy (Bibic and Graziano 1994: ii). Bernhard likewise begins his analysis of civil society and democratic transition in East Central Europe, with the assertion that:

> Modern democracy...ha[s] only existed in conjunction with a civil society. It constitutes the sphere of autonomy from which political forces representing constellations of interests in society have contested state power. Civil society has been a necessary condition for the existence of representative government including democracy (Bernhard 1993: 307).

Also in his introduction, Benhard declares that he will question whether civil society 'can be more than this'. Yet from his conclusion it is clear that Bernhard's intention was never to examine the potentialities of civil society as a democratic end in itself, but merely to ponder whether, apart from its role in 'curtail[ing] state autonomy and as a basis for interest representation', civil society might also assist 'the process of democratic consolidation and the transition to a market economy' (Bernhard 1993: 326). Clearly, the horizons of Bernhard's democratic theory do not enable him to imagine civil society as anything other than a support structure for liberal democracy as it is currently constituted.

Another case of civil society theory with limited horizons comes from Hyde-Price. In his study of democratisation in Eastern Europe, he writes that:

> A flourishing democracy...must be grounded on much more than formal constitutional and political structures. Such structures can only provide a mechanism for democratic government if they are based on a pluralist distribution of economic and social power in society, and on a democratic culture - in short, on a healthy 'civil society' (Hyde-Price 1993: 222).

Typically of the literature since 1989, Hyde-Price sees civil society as instrumental to democracy understood as a mechanism which occurs at the level of the state. Similarly, his call for the distribution of economic and social power is not motivated by an egalitarian political philosophy (as it was for the oppositionists), but by the pluralist concern that no one group in society should emerge as politically dominant. This is really just a negative liberal vision of checks and balances rather than a positive notion of grassroots empowerment.

Ralf Dahrendorf, an influential commentator on the transitions of 1989, is another for whom civil society is strategic with regard to liberal democracy.[9] He introduces civil society (which he notes, only in passing, had been an idea central to opposition thinking) as the key to pulling together 'the divergent time scales and dimensions of political and economic reform... It is the ground in which both have to be anchored in order not to be blown away' (Dahrendorf 1990: 93). Elsewhere, he has similarly written that 'civil society is the common denominator of a functioning democracy and an effective market economy. It is only if and when civil society has been created that political and economic reform can be said to have credence' (Dahrendorf 1990b: 15).

There are a number of reasons why Dahrendorf, Hyde-Price, Bernhard and others see civil society as basically outside of democracy and as only strategic to liberal democracy. The first is that they understand democracy as limited to the institutional mechanisms for controlling the state. Secondly, they view civil society as simply associational life outside of the state. Thus there is no real sense for these theorists that civil society constitutes democratic space(s) for participation and self-management. Instead, civil society is seen as representing interests in a functionalist fashion:[10] while it is indispensable to the presence of choice within both the economic and political spheres ('...I prefer to think of civil society as providing the anchorage of liberty, including its economic ingredients' (Dahrendorf 1990: 96)), there is nothing inherently democratic about civil society. This is why many such commentators warn of the dangers of 'uncivil society' and of the non-democratic elements of civil society (cf. Dahrendorf 1990: 96; Lewis 1993: 302; Hirst 1991: 222). For the oppositionists, of course, if associations were not democratic (as they understood democracy), then they were not part of civil society.

(ii.iii) The Anti-Republican Model of Civil Society and the Fear of 'Excessive' Participation

Where contemporary analysts of Central-Eastern Europe's transitions appear to have preserved elements of the earlier, radical, model of civil society, this is usually only superficially so. For example, in parallel with the opposition theorists, Bozoki and Sukosd emphasise the importance of the self-limitation of popular movements; which they see as preserving human rights and as necessary because democracy is only possible

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[9]Interestingly, Michnik follows Dahrendorf in claiming that the crucial issue now is simply between those who prefer 'what Popper calls "the open society", and those who prefer a closed society' (Michnik 1991b: 101).

[10]Examples abound of this functionalist approach: 'What makes [civil society] 'civil' is the fact that it is the locus where citizens freely organise themselves into...associations...in order to pressurise the formal bodies of state authority into adopting policies consonant with their perceived interests' (Miller 1992: 8). 'The basic function of civil society...is to link the goals of the activity of the state with those of the independently structured population through different mechanisms of mediation' (Frentzel-Zagorska 1992: 41).

if self-limitation becomes a '*collective experience* in society' (Bosoki and Sukosd 1993: 228). Yet Bosoki and Sukosd go on to reveal that their enthusiasm for self-limitation is less of an endorsement of non-violent politics, which is what the oppositionists had in mind, and more like antipathy to a mobilised citizenry per se, which is precisely what the oppositionists wanted: 'The role of society in democratic transition is vital, nevertheless it is primarily symbolic...there is no need for constant mass political mobilization' (Bosoki and Sukosd 1993: 229). Later on, reinforcing this impression of a basically conservative outlook, Bosoki and Sukosd add: 'How could the masses that through the program of civil society had originally been mobilized...be demobilized'. Although they concede that the demobilisation of civil society and the rise of political society (political parties) has turned out 'only too well' (Bosoki and Sukosd 1993: 233), Bosoki and Sukosd's preference for a civil society that encourages high levels of participation only prior to regime transition is already clear.

Dahrendorf is another who wants to downplay the republican aspects of civil society which the oppositionists sought variously to encourage. For Dahrendorf:

> A civil society is civil, even civilised, and this requires men and women who respect others, but more important still, who are able and willing to go and do things themselves... I do not particularly like notions like 'active citizenship', which seems to place all the emphasis on the obligations associated with membership of society...civic virtues are indispensable but [so is] self-reliance (Dahrendorf 1990: 99).

The perennial liberal fear of an 'over-mobilized' society that lurks behind Dahrendorf's statement here, is even more starkly present in Lewis's elitist account of the dangers of an unmediated civil society:

> ...the apparent victory of civil society over communist dictatorship might be construed as leading less to political democracy than to populism, referring to the direct political dominance of 'the people' with little regard to constitutional arrangements, the institutional mediation of power relations or any protection of minority rights. It is an outcome seen in societies not dissimilar to those of Eastern Europe where political processes have been, at least initially, relatively unconstrained... The desires and aspirations of a greater fraction of society might indeed be better satisfied by the arrangements of such a political order - but this is not the same thing as the establishment of political democracy (Lewis 1993: 301-2).

Though differently from the orthodox liberal theory that those such as Dahrendorf and Lewis provide, even 'radical' theory has influenced the widespread rejection of the republican vision of civil society which the oppositionists held. Miller, for example, following Habermas, sees the importance of 'self-restraint' not in terms of non-violence,

but because it recognises 'the imperative of specialised expertise for the exercise of governmental policy-formation and regulation' (Miller 1992: 8).

(ii.iv) The Colonisation of Civil Society Theory by the Model of Liberal Democracy

In the face of the oppositionists' original vision of civil society as the locus for a 'third way' for democracy, civil society is now seen as the exclusive property of liberal democracy. Curry, for example, concludes her study of the 'realities of civil society in the light of postcommunist society' by asking:

> What are the necessary...conditions making institutions of democracy/pluralism like "civil society" work a la the Western model?... How do local groupings build a base for and encourage the development of a national level "civil society" that also works in the way Western democracies work? (Curry 1994: 247)

That the idea of civil society has now been adopted by theorists who see it as fully present only within liberal-democratic societies, is revealed also by an increasingly common cluster of assumptions about why Central-Eastern European countries apparently do not possess civil society after all. One of these assumptions, coming often from Central-Eastern European theorists themselves, is that civil society requires a pluralist political culture which is simply not present in the region. This is what Sztompka argues via the accusation of 'civilizational incompetence' on the part of post-communist countries (Sztompka 1993); which is an analysis similar to the one that Tarkowski (1991) provides under the rubrics 'amoral familism' and 'privatised society' (Tempest 1997: 136). Tempest also mentions Hann's (1995) report into the 'ingrained apathy and suspicion of all outsiders' in rural Hungary, which Tempest sees as being 'in contradistinction to the pluralist civil society theme' (Tempest 1997: 137). Questioning the analyses of these commentators - some of whom are anthropologists with vast experience of the societies within which they live and work - is not the important point here; and Tempest himself is critical of the implicit projection of 'civilizational competence' onto western society. However, quite apart from matters of detail is the feeling which Tempest brings to these analyses that they are investigating whether it is possible for civil society to exist in the culture or not. Clearly, for him, civil society is about the sociology of liberal, pluralist polities, rather than that universal political space for democratic action such as the opposition theorists of civil society had in mind. This is revealed further when Tempest talks of the crisis of 'civil society' also in the West: '..the middle class is in process of disintegration and [thus] *the principal social requisite for civil society* is in dissolution (Tempest 1997: 139).

Lewis also questions whether the label 'civil society' is appropriate to Eastern Europe. His concern is that the earlier equation of civil society in the region with social movements obscures the following problematic:

These [movements] were often not conducive either to general processes of democratization or to the development of the multi-party systems that are the prime institutional expression of modern representative democracy. They were, to varying degrees, inclusive and relatively undifferentiated forms of organisation...[and were] not so far removed from...Marxist resistance to pluralism... These movements were...not well suited to one of the core processes of modern democracy... - that of interest representation (Lewis 1993: 302-3).

Lewis's basic proposition is that organisations such as Solidarity did not constitute 'a process of representation in any way related to the articulation and pursuit of interests observed in developed western democracies' (Lewis 1993: 303). With this analysis he reveals clearly that the only model of democracy that he has in mind is that built upon the western, liberal-democratic, preference for 'exit' over 'voice'. His unease with the contribution of movements such as Solidarity is therefore unsurprising, for he does not hold, as these movements generally did, that democracy rather privileges 'voice' - i.e. publicity, participation and collective action - over the 'exit' possibilities opened up by pluralist interest representation and its provision of choice.[11]

Another common proposition about the liberal democratic character of civil society, which again would have sat uncomfortably with the radical opposition theorists, is that civil society should not be understood as a realm of substantive, that is socio-economic, equality, but only of citizenship or political equality:

> The vision of civil society that the anticommunist opposition in Central and eastern Europe used in its fight for liberty has lost out as a social program. The moral civil society, an...anticapitalist...community, could endure as a viable ideal only so long as it remained unencumbered by the need to make real choices. Actual postcommunist civil society...is challenging the egalitarian outlook that numerous opinion surveys have shown to be deeply rooted in the minds of Central and East Europeans (Smolar 1996: 37).

Smolar goes on to argue that civil society is actually the basis of private property and of a market economy. Having stated that: 'The major problem facing postcommunist societies is how to relegitimate private property and the open society with all the uncertainty that accompanies them', Smolar looks to civil society to provide 'the moral foundations of private property':

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[11]Lewis is reluctant to accord much, if any, democratic significance to movements such as Solidarity because of his agreement with elite-democrats such as Huntington that democratisation comes more from 'the top' of society than from 'below'. Along with theorists such as these, Lewis wants to emphasise the role of elite pacting (Lewis 1993: 304-5).

earlier models and reflecting the influence of liberal contract theory, is apparently seen as prior to that of civil society itself:

> ...sovereign state power may be considered an indispensable condition for the democratization of civil society (Lewis 1993: 302)

> For [societal] agents to constitute a civil society they need the sanction of the state; the public space must be guaranteed as a realm of freedom from the state by the state itself... Barring this, a liberated public space would be but an anarchy of competing interests (Bernhard 1993: 309).

In fact, Bernhard uses this argument to support the notion that the Polish opposition, while establishing 'important landmarks in the self-liberation of civil society,...fell short of a full reconstruction of civil society [itself]... This was because the Polish party-state had still made no de jure recognition of the opposition, its right to exist, or the boundaries or of the public space it had carved out' (Bernhard 1993: 315). On this argument, civil society only comes into being once political pluralism is enshrined by the state. In other words, it arises out of the legal framework established in the transition to liberal democracy, and cannot be said to have substance outside of this transition.[13] Needless to say, the radical oppositionists saw things very differently. For the civil society that they had in mind was often described as being no more present in the west than in the east.

Finally, the liberal democratic model of civil society appears to have fundamentally influenced even those more radical theorists who, though they no longer stand by a 'third way' model of civil society, are still concerned with its radical potentialities. The evolution of Arato's work is instructive here.[14] For in his original analysis of the Polish model of civil society in 1981, Arato was optimistic about the possibilities for greater self-management in all spheres that the strategy of putting 'civil society first' held out. He was also convinced of the need for the western liberal democracies to be transformed through an encounter with a radical, republican civil society. Yet in a 1994 analysis of *The Rise, Decline and Reconstruction of the Concept of Civil Society and Directions for Future Research*, Arato ends up in a not dissimilar place to the theorists examined above. That is, his focus is now limited to the question of what civil society can do for liberal democracy in terms of extending its legitimacy and deepening its democratic practices. Arato concludes his study by highlighting a number of issues of importance for a theory of civil society. These include, firstly, the problem of democratic legitimacy: civil society is seen to make a contribution here in terms of widening the legitimacy of

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[13]Coming from a similar angle, Dahrendorf asks: 'Can one *build* a civil society...?... Citizenship certainly can be built...[it is] a matter of legislation and supporting policies (Dahrendorf 1990: 96).
[14]I differentiate Arato here from the radical oppositionists who I earlier claimed had gone largely silent on the subject of civil society precisely because Arato is still engaged in civil society theorising. Furthermore, he, unlike most of the oppositionists, can still be thought of as a radical.

CHAPTER 3

The Latin American Discourse

In this chapter, I look at discourses on civil society in relation to Latin America. Unlike the previous chapter on Central-Eastern Europe, the material here does not divide up according to country. Latin American dialogues on civil society, particularly on the left, actually had a more regional feel to them. This was no doubt because they originated in large part amongst the exile community in Europe, who were therefore working to some extent within a pan-national context. The Central-Eastern Europeans, on the other hand, although they expressed solidarity with their fellow oppositionists in other countries, did not have the same opportunities to work directly with them. Their models of civil society were therefore much more concerned with the exigencies of individual countries than were the Latin models, which focused instead on the continent-wide struggle for democracy. Thus within this chapter, theories of civil society from a wide range of Latin American nationals are considered, although Brazilian theoreticians are predominant.

The material is therefore divided instead in roughly chronological order. Examined first is the debate about civil society on the Latin American left, which started in the late 1970s. In the second section, the 'new social movement' (NSM) discourse, which began in the early 1980s, is explored. Finally, models of civil society within the burgeoning literature on regional democratisations, from the late 1980s onwards, are uncovered. Of course, these discussions overlap, and the distinction between the Latin American left discourse and the 'new social movement' discourse is particularly artificial (given that leftists were instrumental to the NSM critique and dominated the leadership of the NSMs themselves (Loveman 1993: 32)). Yet in terms of revealing the general evolution of thinking on civil society relating to Latin America, and also so as to account for changes over time in the approach of key individuals, this is the most helpful route to take.

1. The Discourse on Civil Society on the Latin American Left

(i) The Latin American Left's Traditional Antipathy Towards Democracy and Their Negative View of Civil Society
The near total dominance of Marxist theory amongst Latin American intellectuals during the 1960s and 1970s, ensured that there was little attention given to the idea of civil society in the region, except in a pejorative sense. That the 1980s saw the concept take on a totally different, and this time favourable, meaning for many of the same intellectuals is perhaps the most remarkable feature of the civil society debate in any of the regions in which it has featured.

The stark but apparently realistic choice between either socialist revolution or 'fascistic' and imperialistic capitalism, did not encourage the Latin American left to take the idea of democracy (associated with 'formal', 'bourgeois' democracy) seriously.[1] Latin American dependency theory, hugely influential during the 1960s and 1970s, appeared to demonstrate that the level of penetration of international capital in the region had precluded the emergence of a relatively autonomous "progressive national bourgeoisie" which could foster the first (bourgeois-democratic) stage of the development towards socialism. As Dos Santos, one of the key dependency theorists, put it:

> Since 1966 we have defended the thesis that the dominant pattern of economic development in Latin America, characterised as dependent, super-exploitative, monopolistic, centralistic, exclusionary and marginalising is not compatible with bourgeois democracy (Dos Santos 1979: 43; translated in Barros 1986: 54fn).

Less in the theoretical foreground, but perhaps as important to this rejection of democracy, was the Latin American experience, prior to the authoritarian era, of oligarchic and exclusionary parliamentary regimes; of 'the very real limits of democracy' (Castaneda 1994: 340). What was the point of pursuing a parliamentary path to reform when previous parliamentary regimes had proved so incapable, and unwilling, in seriously challenging Latin America's vast inequalities of wealth and power. For Latin American leftists, the contradiction between formal political equality and the gross inequalities of peripheral capitalism made actually existing democracy appear just as hollow as it had done to Marx when he wrote *On the Jewish Question* over a century earlier.[2]

The historical inability of 'democracy' in the region to be substantively reformist was a point eclipsed anyway by the supposed impossibility of returning to parliamentary democracy, even if this was seen as desirable. Dependency theory had already suggested the basic incompatibility of 'bourgeois democracy' with dependent development. Hence the arrival of military regimes across Latin America in the early 1970s (following the Brazilian military coup of 1964) seemed an even clearer indication that the evolving imperatives of capitalist accumulation in the region (specifically the exhaustion of import substituting industrialisation) now required the absolute dominance of capital over all popular sectors and classes. This was the conclusion of Guilermo O'Donnell's seminal book *Modernisation and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism* (1973); and it was a conclusion shared independently by most Latin American Marxist's, given their belief that the state

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[1] In addition, the success of the Cuban revolution was hugely influential for the generation of 1960s radicals in terms of demonstrating that revolutionary strategies were achievable.

[2] Of course, the Latin American Left's commitment to Marxism-Leninism did not anyway endear it to democracy as an end in itself. For the revolutionary Left, 'democracy could have no value as a mode of will formation: ends were known, the real problem was one of the proper combination of tactics and strategy' (Barros 1986: 54).

was but an agent of class power. On this analysis, 'democracy ceases to have anything to do with constructing participatory, egalitarian institutions and is transformed into a problem whose realisation is exhausted by a transformation of productive relations subsequent to the seizure of power' (Barros 1986: 57).

An unsurprising implication of the dominance of Marxist theory for the Latin American left was that their understanding of civil society was similarly Marxist. Even as late as 1983, by which time he had moved away from orthodox Marxist analyses in most areas, Cardoso retained a negative Marxist perspective on civil society.[3] This is apparent when he criticises the 'theory of the gap' (between State and civil society):

> By postulating this kind of dynamic, what was clear in Marxist theory about civil society is hidden - that it is ruled by *domination* - and that - taken by themselves alone - civil society and democracy have nothing to do with each other as such, given that the democratization of society requires struggles among competing classes and the overcoming of the contradictions between the exploited and the exploiters (Cardoso 1989: 312).

Yet in the very same article Cardoso begins to embrace a new, positive approach as well - characterising civil society as a potentially participatory, public sphere within which the all-powerful state can be resisted (Cardoso 1989: 324). This apparent schizophrenia is illustrative of both the traditional dominance of the Marxist understanding of civil society (as the realm of unfreedom and exploitation), as well as its reevaluation at this time. Similarly O'Donnell (who was to become one of the leading proponents of the importance of civil society to democracy and democratisation in the 1980s - see O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986) identified civil society solely with the private sphere in a 1979 article *Tensions in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and the Problem of Democracy*. Though he soon abandoned completely this Marxist equation of civil society with the privatised, marketised realm of capitalist social relations, O'Donnell, like Cardoso, is already moving away from a Marxist understanding of civil society. This is revealed, as Cohen and Arato point out, by his more Hegelian focus overall on the mediations necessary for a private civil society to acquire a voice (Cohen and Arato 1992: 617fn). Thus civil society, though still defined as private, is at once identified as having a potentially public role - a characteristic it could never have possessed for Marx.

(ii) The Rejection of Orthodox Marxist Theory

Two factors seem to have had a particular bearing on the shift in the Latin American left's thinking on democracy and civil society. The first, theoretical, influence came from developments in European communism and in 'post-Marxist' thinking, particularly in

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[3] Although Cardoso was never a conventional Marxist (if indeed he could be described as having been a Marxist at all), his thinking was clearly influenced by Marxian categories.

France[4] and Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal), which many Latin American intellectuals encountered first-hand while in exile in Europe during the mid-late 1970s. Second, and of more material significance for those leftists who remained behind, including many non-intellectuals, was the brutalising experience of military rule. This forced a rethink about the place of violence in effecting social transformation, about a realistic location for opposition under conditions of such effective and widespread repression, and as to whether the state apparatus was an appropriate target for the popular forces. As Francisco Weffort, an influential Brazilian social scientist and former Marxist, put it with regard to Brazil, 'out of these years of confusion and fear arose in the country a new attitude in relation to the State, society, and democracy' (Weffort 1989: 432).

Turning to the influence of evolving thinking within the European left: for many Latin American theorists it was this that initially prompted the retreat from Marxist categories, with their exclusive focus on class struggle and the necessity of revolution. The scale of this shift is illustrated, for example, by the transformation of Ernesto Laclau's thought. In 1971 Laclau, an Argentinean social scientist, had attacked Andre Gunder Frank, a dependency theorist, for his lack of Marxist orthodoxy in emphasising capitalist exchange rather than capitalist production (Chilcote 1990: 5). Yet by 1985 Laclau, by this time resident in Europe, co-authored with Chantel Mouffe perhaps the definitive 'post-Marxist' work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, which turned away completely from class analysis and the revolutionary agenda in favour of a radical, pluralist democratic theory.[5]

The emergence of post-Marxist thinking of this kind owed much to the analysis made by Eurocommunism of the need to build a broader socialist coalition than orthodox Marxism, with its exclusive emphasis upon the workers' movement, would allow for.[6]

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[4]Latin American Marxists had always been particularly influenced by French thinking - within which Marxism had been so dominant - and were therefore likely to follow closely the 'post-Marxist' turn there (Pakenham 1992: 234).

[5]Other examples of ideological shifts in exile, though not identical to Laclau's, include former Chilean Communist Party Youth Leader, Antonio Leal (who spent his exile in Italy and Hungary). Leal 'attributes his ideological transformations to his immersion in European left debates throughout the 1970s and 1980s'. Similarly, former Chilean congressman and Communist Party member Luis Guastavino claims that 'his exile experience in Italy was the most influential factor in his ideological transformation' (interviews with Hite 1996: 317 and 325).

[6]'Post-Marxist' intellectual developments within Eurocommunism were particularly connected to the Italian Communist party (PCI) (for example, Norberto Bobbio). And as Hite observes of Chilean leftists in Rome, 'the Italian Communist Party...provided an extremely influential network for those in exile in the 1970s and 1980s' (Hite 1996: 322). Former Chilean congressman and Communist Party member Luis Guastavino was especially influenced by the PCI's openness: 'Now the Chilean Communist Party had lived in complete unanimity, unanimity was an article of faith, and here I was with the PCI divided in half, and the response over the phone from the leader was, 'Fantastic, keep up the debate, the polemics'. I looked at him as if to say that this is a sure way to destroy a party, to permit this so called freedom which isn't freedom, it's what was called and criticised as the freedom to criticise as Lenin wrote, and I remember my aversion to the scene I witnessed. Yet the communist party of Florence, they

The democratic transitions in Southern Europe during the mid 1970s also suggested for the first time the possibility of a bloodless revolution in overthrowing military dictatorships. This more pragmatic, 'political' perspective - reflected also in the increasing concern with mainstream politics by socialist parties in France and Italy - supported the claim made by some more recent Marxist theorists (for example, Althusser and Gramsci) that politics and ideology were relatively autonomous from political economy (Chilcote 1990: 6). These developments in theory and praxis were of course closely observed by Latin American exiles in Lisbon, Madrid and Paris, who, being structural-determinists, were surprised by the presence of purely 'political' openings and of the European left's willingness and ability to exploit these (Chilcote 1990: 11). Especially after 1982, with the international debt crisis increasingly undermining the effectiveness and therefore legitimacy of the military regimes in Latin America, the issue of openings for democratisation began to appear directly relevant for the home region as well (Munck 1990: 113-14).

Back in Latin America during the 1970s, the impetus for the left to re-examine its political theory and praxis was both pragmatic and principled. On a pragmatic level, the success of the military regimes in quelling armed insurrection and the ferocity with which they destroyed and disbanded traditional left parties and unions, forced a major rethink of tactics. Even more worrying was that the defeat of the left in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina, had come at the peak of each ones influence and power (Barros 1986: 50). In the short run this reversal, particularly in the case of the 1973 overthrow of Allende's reformist government in Chile, merely highlighted the apparent restriction of options for the forces of the left to that of violent revolution - especially in a situation where the dominant classes had signalled *their* intention to fight a brutal class war. But the sheer scope of the authoritarian regimes' ability to close down space within which opposition might be continued, signalled that such opposition must prioritise basic survival. Thus opposition became a matter of the recovery of the basic civil and political rights once dismissed as a bourgeois luxury: the imperative of the defence of freedom outside of the state had replaced the dream of socialist revolution in seizing the state. In 1983 Weffort wrote:

> The discovery that there was something more to politics than the state began with the simplest facts of life of the persecuted. In the most difficult moments, they had to make use of what they found around them. There were no parties to go to, nor courts in which they could have confidence. At a difficult time, the primary resource was the family, friends, and in some cases fellow workers...What are we talking about if not civil society, though still at the

have the mayorship of Florence, they have tremendous force and hegemony in the social life of Florence. They were contradictions that I lived with constantly. Those ten years in Italy were for me, want it or not, ten years of unconscious learning, there were things I picked up simply from the air I Breathed. (Interview in Hite 1996: 325).

molecular level of interpersonal relations?..."State terror" had reduced all it opponents - generally on the left, but also many liberals - to their common denominator as unprotected and frightened human beings. Civil society was born out of the experience of fear...In a situation of enormous ideological perplexity, the discovery of civil society was much less a question of theory than of necessity (Weffort 1989: 347-8).

Also as a matter of principle, 'the overwhelming presence of the state under the military encouraged a self-criticism of the left's own statism...Above all, the logic of war as practised by the military regimes led parts of the armed left to question its own militarism' (Munck 1990: 114). Munck, perhaps somewhat controversially, also claims that the 'undoubted, if rarely expressed, feelings of culpability' on the left at the presence of military rule contributed to the abandonment of a revolutionary agenda (Munck 1990: 114). Munck is implying here that the Latin American left shared his conviction that the threat of socialist revolution was *the* reason why the forces of reaction launched their military coups. As we have seen, earlier leftist theory had explained the coups in much more structuralist terms (as necessary to renewed capitalist accumulation in the region), and, as Munck himself implicitly admits with the proviso that it was 'rarely expressed', there is little evidence that 'guilt', as opposed to realism and fear, was a significant psychological factor in the metamorphosis of left thinking.[7]

A further spur to the Latin American left to reflect upon its own categories came, as in Europe, from the realisation that its traditional tenets could not accommodate the development of a necessarily broader, more inclusive socialist movement:

> Irrespective of the working class's "inherent revolutionary potential", repression, the suppression of political society, and changes in social stratification, class composition, and values during military rule have dramatically eroded and transformed the former constituencies of the Left. In this situation, a continued reliance on analytical categories, strategies, and styles of political work that implicitly presume already constituted subjects - precisely where their dissolution is the critical issue - can only be detrimental (Barros 1986: 64).

(iii) The Influence of Gramscian Categories

Close observers of the metamorphosis in the Latin American left's thinking that occurred in the 1980s (which includes the arrival of the positive reading of the civil society concept) are unanimous in the importance that they attribute to the influence of the work of Italian Marxist, Gramsci, in this process (Chilcote 1990: 12; Munck 1990: 118;

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[7]James Petras provides an alternative and controversial perspective on the shift in left theory. He claims that the ascendancy of 'institutional intellectuals' (through their connections with and - initially in exile - dependency upon Western funding and institutions) explains the abandonment of the orthodox Marxist categories which had previously 'illuminated popular struggles' (Petras 1990).

Castaneda 1994: 199; Pearce 1996: 148 and 1997: 63).[8] Although only schematically, Gramsci's thought was appropriated by the left for the timeliness of its central theme: that of building a popular hegemony in a civil society conceptualised as distinct from both state and economy. Prior to the rediscovery of Gramsci's more Hegelian separation of state and civil society, those on the left were wedded to the idea that politics was a matter of state power alone; civil society held no interest for them, except as the realm of capitalist exploitation which determined the nature of state power. For the Marxist intellectuals of the structuralist dependency school, for example, what mattered was the linkage between state elites in the periphery (i.e. Latin America) and the core (the West). Similarly for the armed left, the rejection of strategies built upon a broader social base was a function of the single-minded goal of seizing state power so as to achieve top-down change in a Leninist, vanguardist, manner.

So the failure of state-centric strategies made the idea of civil society as a separate, political, sphere (in which the neo-Gramscian idealist reversal of the primacy of the economic base played a central part), singularly attractive. It provided the left with a new arena for contestation based upon agents and methods of change radically different to those that had been privileged before. The recognition of the need for a more democratic and 'secularised' socialism, and the severe limits placed upon any directly confrontational tactics by the ubiquitous military apparatus, turned Gramsci's strategy of counter-hegemony into just about the only viable alternative. This was due mainly to its emphasis on a wider and more diffuse popular struggle made up of alternative forms of culture and organisation. Working on Gramsci, states former Chilean Communist Youth leader Antonio Leal, for example, led him to propose an alternative political culture too that of the orthodox left, one which would permit 'a kind of linking or bridge' for a multiple, multidimensional cultural project...[which could] open socialism to a plurality of needs and issues' (interview with Hite 1996: 317-318).

'Would it not be better', asked Borda, along similar lines to Leal:

> ...to move away from Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin, with their theses of social class monopolies over states, and closer to Antonio Gramsci to define the multiclass orientation of new, more generous political hegemonies (Borda 1992: 314).

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[8]Leftists themselves are also unequivocal here: 'I would say that a lot of [my inspiration] came from Gramsci. I really began to study Gramsci in 1977, and I began to publish articles about Gramsci in 1978. I remember a great feeling of revelation when I took *Prison Notebooks* with me to a conference in Poland and read it in fifteen days, and I returned to Italy transformed. I realised there was an alternative Marxism to the Stalinist one. Gramsci had created political categories that transcended the Marxist-Leninist ones, the concept of hegemony so important for socialist today... And from there i began to read...scholars of the Frankfurt School, Lukacs. I began to read Western Marxists, and I began to realise that I was in a distinct world from the Chilean communists. I continued to stay in the PCCh, painfully, being accused of reformism...(Interview in Hite 1996: 317).

The logic of arguments like this seemed obvious to many on the left, and for several reasons: First, small bands of guerrillas could be (and had been) easily destroyed, a plethora of popular organisations from neighbourhood groups to larger social movements would be much less vulnerable. Second, the revolutionary strategy to seize state power had been an all or nothing gamble that had largely failed, building the 'prefigurative practices and institutions of socialism in the here and now' (Munck 1990: 118), in everyday life, held out the promise of a decentralised, gradualist and therefore sustainable strategy. Finally, traditional organisations of the left had replicated the authoritarian and hierarchical culture of the right, the internally democratic groups of civil society could be ideologically counter-hegemonical as well.[9] As Barros put it in 1986:

> ...the Gramscian themes of "intellectual and moral reform", the "critique of common sense", "hegemony," and the construction of a "national-popular will" provide the raw material for setting out a radical democratic alternative to limited democracy...This renaissance of [Gramscian] theoretical work clearly has given rise to a strong commitment to democracy amongst [left] theorists, as well as serious theoretical efforts to articulate democracy with socialism (Barros 1986: 66-67).

The interesting thing about the emergence in Latin America of the explicitly Gramscian understanding of the life of civil society, is that it in some senses ran counter to theoretical developments elsewhere. For the intellectuals of the Eastern European opposition there was an understandable rejection of any of the thinkers from the socialist canon; Gramsci is not mentioned by them despite their attention to the category of civil society. And in the Western academe, particularly amongst French intellectuals previously so influential in Latin America, the trend was to transcend the state/civil society distinction. Marxist theorists such as Poulantzas and Althusser (not to mention the theorists of post-modernity such as Foucault) now 'stressed the fact that the "State was everywhere," and that thanks to "micro powers," linguistic, ideological, and anthropological structures, there was no area of society actually "exterior to the state"' (Castaneda 1994: 200n). In other words, as we have seen already, 'there were political reasons for [Latin America's] theoretical untimeliness' (Castaneda 1994: 200).[10]

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[9]In Chile, for example, the military coup of 1973 prompted a number of Chilean leftists to look, for the first time, at the 'effects, both visible and latent, of authoritarianism on Chilean culture and society'. Included here are works from Jose Joaquin Brunner (1981), and Pilar Vergara (1983) (Hite 1996: 301).
[10]Another reason why Gramsci proved popular in Latin America and not in Eastern Europe was that, by the 1980s, there was at least the possibility in Latin America (unlike in Eastern Europe until the demise of Soviet power in the region in 1989) of opposition political parties achieving power. Thus the importance of the party form to the democratic opposition in Latin America (especially Brazil), made Gramsci's reflections on the nature of a popular, counter-hegemonical, coalition particularly relevant to the crucial question of how parties should relate to the grass-roots, associational, elements. In Latin American history, political parties had always coopted and demobilised associational life; civil society theorists did not want this to happen within the ranks of the democratic opposition.

References to Gramsci, and the predominance of Gramscian terminology, are found everywhere in the work of key Latin American thinkers dating from the 1980s. Carlos Villas, an Argentinean social scientist who held various posts in Nicaragua's revolutionary government from 1980, wrote:

> If, as Gramsci (1977) argues, people become conscious of structural conflicts through the contest between ideologies, then the more important these kinds of unproletarianized groups and factions are in a society, the more likely are political struggle and ideological practices to be the determining factors in the development of the social formation as a whole. Therefore, in these societies we find that democratic, patriotic, religious, and, in general, ideological considerations have enormous relevance in determining the definition and alignment of the popular masses, and in their constitution as subjects of political action (Villas 1988: 58).

Villas goes on to say that the failure of the Latin American left to recognise the 'disruptive potential' of these groups - which they had previously dismissed as 'reformist, populist and petty-bourgeois' - has 'insulated them from the popular masses' (Villas 1988: 59). This formulation is pure Gramsci in its call for the construction of a more popular hegemony, a strategy applied by the Sandinistas themselves in Nicaragua. Weffort was also clearly influenced in his critique of statism on both the left and the right (in a 1983 article 'Why Democracy'), by Gramsci's understanding of civil society. He sees Brazilian political life in this piece as historically akin to Gramsci's description of Oriental societies, where 'The State was everything, and society, inarticulate and gelatinous, was nothing' (Weffort 1989: 347).

While Gramsci can be credited with providing the theoretical mould for the Latin American left's version of the concept of civil society, his understanding was not adopted in full.[11] First, most Latin American theorists, unlike Gramsci, did not see the counter-hegemonical struggle in civil society's various institutions as involving, in the final analysis, classes alone. The church, social movements and women's groups, for example, were not seen as 'fronts' for the deeper class struggle. And the liberalism present in the focus on human rights meant that individuals, as well as classes, were included in the conception of popular struggle. Second, the potential autonomy of civil society from the state was not for Gramsci, as it was for most Latin thinkers, an indication that the state

[11]Barros questions whether categories such as "hegemony" can be straightforwardly 'dissociated from the particular socio-historical conditions' in which Gramsci first articulated them. Of particular concern is that Gramsci contended that hegemony was applicable only in reference to the "fundamental classes". What, then would he have made of his idea of hegemony being used 'in societies with low levels of inter-sectoral integration, pockets of intensive capitalist production controlled by transnational and local oligopolies, and a relatively small industrial working class which is extremely variegated'(Barros 1986: 76fn)?

was disassociated from class structure, having a life of its own. Third, and relatedly, very few theorists retained Gramsci's focus on capitalism as the object of counter-hegemonical struggle: 'for the left, the essential point was that it offered a new rationale for a more multi-faceted struggle against dictatorship and militarism rather than capitalism as a whole' (Pearce 1997: 63). Fourth, Gramsci's Marxist teleology led him to expect the withering away of civil society once the popular forces within it had achieved the transition to socialism; Latin American leftists came to a much less instrumentalist understanding of civil society. Finally, while Gramsci called for a 'latter day Prince (i.e. some form of vanguard party) in order to articulate the anti-hegemonical struggle in civil society, the Latin American left became generally suspicious of the party form per se.

There were, of course, also some more directly critical voices. For Cardoso - the Brazilian social scientist and left politician - Gramsci's categories introduced as many new questions as answers when he first began to engage with them in the early 1980s. While accepting Gramsci's location of the 'moment of hegemony' in civil society (in the limited sense of the recognition that there is more to class power than exploitation and coercion at the point of production), Cardoso, in a 1983 essay, proclaimed himself concerned that:

> The notions of the moment of hegemony and of the germination of liberty in civil society [should not obscure] that the boundaries of the old natural law distinction and also the Hegelian opposition between producers and the State have been blurred. The State produces, regulates economic relations, and is a key part of manufacturing and service society (Cardoso 1989: 319).

At first sight this analysis is the same as that of Marx: that the separation of spheres between state and civil society is a mystification. Yet Cardoso seeks to emphasise that Marx's notion of civil society's dominance over the State (in the sense that the State is an instrument of class rule and these classes are located in civil society) must be replaced, in a Latin American context where development is dependent and State-led, by the idea of the State absorbing and shaping civil society. However, although turning the Marxist notion of civil society's dominance over the State on its head, the outcome is the same in terms of the rejection of the idea that the two spheres can ever be understood separately. Cardoso is thus suspicious of using Gramsci's work (as many around him were doing) to outline a form of resistance located only in civil society:

> As suggested by Gramsci's analysis we must not only stress that hegemony is developed at the level of classes as a struggle *in society* but also show that the State, in becoming a "Producer State," becomes part of the economic order and *ipso facto* of civil society (Cardoso 1989: 308).

In short, Cardoso had not yet broken substantially with the Marxist-structuralist account of civil society as economic society. This is then the main point of difference between his and Gramsci's understanding of the sphere of civil society as *relatively autonomous* from the economic base, and therefore as a site for resistance outside of the State whether or not the State is defined as intimately linked to productive activities. The lack of substantive autonomy attributed to civil society also explains Cardoso's emphasis on the need for political parties to build 'movable bridges' between the 'society of producers' (as a Marxist conceptualisation of civil society) and the 'society of administrators and collaborators' (the state)(Cardoso 1989: 319). Cardoso argued this because he knew that many of those in Latin America proposing civil society as a separate sphere also saw it as desirable to replace political parties with the more 'authentic' 'social movements' that made up civil society (Cardoso 1989: 319). Of this tendency he was one of the first, and rightly, to be critical; but at this stage his criticism is largely motivated by a refusal to see civil society and the state as essentially separate. Nevertheless, the degree of his engagement with Gramsci at this early stage, and his conclusion that Gramscian categories have left 'a living heritage' (Cardoso 1989: 319), once again demonstrates how important and influential they undoubtedly were.

(iv) The New Democratic Theory and the Idea of Civil Society

> Whatever meaning the word "revolution" had...the fact remains that between 1968 and 1974 we lived under the sign of violence. How can we explain that we emerged from this phase talking - or at least trying to talk - the language of democracy (Weffort 1989: 328)?

As a result of the factors outlined above, the 1980s saw democracy replace revolution as the unifying concept for debate among Latin American intellectuals: 'The antagonism between authoritarianism (of all forms) and democracy has largely superseded that posited between capitalism and socialism' (Munck 1990: 113).[12] An indication of the degree of change is that there had been no substantive debate about democracy in the literature by Latin American intellectuals during the 1960s (Barros 1986: 52). Indeed, Weffort claims that it was as late as 1979 before a Brazilian intellectual (Calos Nelson Coutinho in an essay entitled *A Democracia Como Valor Universal*) first treated democracy seriously 'as a universal value' (Weffort 1989: 332). This shift in emphasis was not limited to one or even just a few of the countries in the region. It was a debate in which 'most of the leading thinkers of the Brazilian intellectual left participated', according to Pakenham (1992: 214). Also 'in Peru, as in most of Latin America, almost

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[12]In 1982, Jorge Arrate, a leader of the Chilean Socialist Party, wrote: 'The authoritarianism [of the Pinochet regime] has meant the consolidation of antiauthoritarianism in the heart of the left... The loss of democracy and its denigration in the official discourse [of the dictatorship] induce a more profound appreciation of the value, meaning and contents of political democracy...'(Arrate 1983: 93, in Bermeo 1992: 278).

the entire left has replaced the themes of class struggle, revolution, and socialism with that of democracy' (Silva 1988: 77). In Chile too, 'the central preoccupation among [leaders of the Chilean left] has been with the meaning of democracy and democratic practice' (Hite 1996: 326).

Wherever there was talk of rejecting orthodox revolutionary socialism for 'democratic socialism' - if the word socialism was mentioned at all - then increasingly during the 1980s it involved paying homage to 'civil society'. In El Salvador, Joaquin Villalobos, one of the military commanders of the left-wing guerrillas, stated: 'The classical concept of a vanguard that hegemonizes power is history. What we are pursuing in El Salvador is a revolution of civil society' (interview in Castaneda 1994: 201). On a similar note in Brazil, Weffort asserted in 1983 that: 'The discovery of the value of democracy is inseparable, within the opposition, from the discovery of civil society as a political space' (Weffort 1989: 345). But what did these opposition intellectuals and practitioners like Villalobos and Weffort, all men of the left originally, mean by civil society and democracy, and why did the two concepts relate so closely for them?

Influenced by the Gramscian theme of counter-hegemony as constituting a *plurality* of popular subjects, and by the self-evident need to abandon the idea of pre-defined political subjects (the 'revolutionary' working class),[13] the Latin American left sought, from around the mid 1970s, to end its isolation by increasingly allying with popular movements as these were already constituted. During the 1970s, as a response by the popular classes to their almost total exclusion from the formal political sphere and from state resources, there had been a huge upsurge in the numbers of associations of the (mainly urban) poor and marginalised throughout Latin America. Yet it had taken a real shift in their thinking for many leftists to see these popular struggles as those of natural allies. The key development was that, 'once having rejected any "ontology of the popular," autonomy and self-constitution emerge[d] as the key values for [the] socialist movement' (Barros 1986: 65); values seen increasingly as coming under the title 'civil society':

> In terms of the project of democratic socialism, autonomy entails a recognition of the diversity of social interests, the refusal of class reductionism, and, above all, of economism...[I]t leads to a "new way of doing politics" which fully accepts the autonomy and validity of this dimension of society....[T]he pursuit of a socialist and pluralist civil society requires the weakening of all bureaucracies and the

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[13]The Sandinistan, Villas, wrote: '...the a priori attribution of revolutionary characteristics to the working class of the region ignored the evidence that, in many countries, these characteristics had still to be forged...It is evident that [this] perspective [is an] *essentialist* approach in which any class, group, or faction that occupies a given place in the division of labour is either revolutionary or counter-revolutionary...This is a mechanistic approach to social structure...The repeated failures of this essentialism in generating results in terms of a popular project speak for themselves with respect to its limitations' (Villas 1988: 60).

establishment and strengthening of spheres of autonomous public life (Munck 1990: 118).

As for many of the original theorists of the Eastern European democratic opposition, the idea of civil society was, at this early stage, partly emerging from, and connected to, radical socialist notions of democracy (indeed of socialism) as self-management. As Cardoso described it with regard to Brazil in 1983:

> [One] version of why Brazil is breaking with authoritarianism combines a radical vision of autonomy of civil society with a socialist critique of social domination...*Real* democratization will arrive (and is arriving, according to those who hold this perspective) as it is crystallised in the spontaneous solidarity of the disinherited. It lives as *comunitas*, experiences of common hardship which from a collective *we* based on the same life experience that is transformed only when, through molecular changes, the simultaneous isolation of the State and the exploiters - which will perish at the same time - comes about (Cardoso 1989: 313).

The ideas that Cardoso identifies in those who held up a radical model of civil society in Brazil, bear remarkable resemblance to elements of the model adopted by the Polish democratic opposition at around the same time. Communitarianism replaces classism, a radical critique of state power displaces statism, and revolutionary strategies are refuted in favour of evolutionary or gradualist change. Even more remarkable is Cardoso's observation - again strikingly similar to those made concerning the Polish model of civil society connected with the Solidarity movement - that 'In the [most] radical formulation of this type of democratic theory [common among social movement activists] there is a fusion of lay anarchism and Catholic solidarity thought' (Cardoso 1989: 313).

For intellectuals there were a number of evolving approaches to the ideas of civil society and democracy during this period, which prioritised the concept of civil society to varying degrees. The most sceptical were those, such as Cardoso, who persisted with a more orthodox Marxist account of civil society, although there was still a significant degree of engagement with the concept. Pakenham, categorising Brazilian intellectuals, claims that the subgroup who began to emphasise 'civil society' the most were those formerly Marxist scholars who had become 'social democrats' (although he concedes that they also accepted the label 'democratic socialists', which is perhaps more accurate[14]). These included Francisco Weffort, Marilena Chaui, Jose Alvero Moises, Lucio Kowarick, and Eder Sader, all of whom began to focus on 'social movements, trade unions and the like' (Pakenham 1992: 216). Yet for these thinkers, unlike those with a more radical vision of civil society's autonomy, 'one of the main theoretical and practical questions is how to respect the autonomy of social movements *and at the same time* get

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[14]This was also the self-definition of the original consumers of the idea of civil society in Poland.

them involved in politics so they can protect their interests' (Pakenham 1992: 216, author's italics).

However, in looking, for example, at Weffort's work from this period (1983), it is difficult to be as confident as Pakenham is, that 'democratic socialist' intellectuals avoided the utopia of a fully autonomous civil society. At the very least, civil society had become the centre of the 'new politics' - almost to the exclusion of everything else:

> If the state had formerly been the solution, now it was the problem...Yet if politics were to have a new meaning, a new sphere of freedom for political action had to be developed. For political Brazil, civil society, previously either ignored or seen as an inert mass, began to signify that sphere of freedom (Weffort 1989: 328).

Later in the same essay, and perhaps understandably in the context of continuing military rule, Weffort concludes strongly that the state is the enemy of civil society, and thus of freedom:

> We want a civil society, we need to defend ourselves from the monstrous State in front of us...In a word, we need to build civil society because we want freedom (Weffort 1989: 349).

This view of civil society as playing a defensive role against the all-pervasive State was also a feature of the opposition debate in Eastern Europe. In Poland in particular, the independent trade union Solidarity described itself as a 'self governing republic', expressing the hope that it could win democratic concessions from the state while at the same time providing a sphere of societal autonomy within which 'citizenship' could be practised and protected. Interestingly, in Brazil a similar 'new unionism' was described by one of the 'democratic socialists', Jose Alvaro Moises, in 1982 - only a year after Solidarity had been disbanded in communist Poland. Moises, using the term 'the new syndicalism', described how Brazilian unions had moved beyond traditional economic demands, to seek social and political rights as well:

> ...the significance of the new syndicalism is not only its character as a broad social movement of the masses which pressures for its own internal democratisation, but also the unique penetration of this movement in the process of the struggle for Brazilian democracy. By linking its social demands to the economic struggle, the new union movement collided with the limits imposed by Brazilian authoritarianism on the exercise of citizenship by the workers (Moises 1982: 67).

'New syndicalism' was also meant to suggest that Brazilian unions now played a defensive role, in which the provision of public space outside of the state was as important, if not more so, than traditional demands made in and to the state:

> Squeezed into a terrain [by the military government] in which their specific functions are not recognised, while pressured by the reality of a mass of workers from whom the rights of citizenship were literally torn, the union is converted into an instrument of protection for the working class and of defence of the condition of citizenship (Moises 1982: 69-70).

The pernicious character of the military regimes, allied to their own radically democratic agenda, encouraged many theorists to prefer civil society to the state per se, and not just as a function of the battle to democratise the polity. To the extent that he practically calls for the complete resocialisation of state power to 'civil society', this thinking is exemplified by the work of Argentinean leftist, Atilo Boron:

> The control of statism can be guaranteed only by the social expansion of democracy - by the empowerment of the activism and initiative of civil society; its classes, groups, and institutions; and its parties, unions, and social movements... By doing [this] Latin Americans will be able to place the state more and more under the control of civil society (Boron 1995: 164).

As Barros points out, the normative imperative in accounts such as these of 'participation from below', 'leads to an almost exclusive concern with the organisation of civil society at the expense of consideration of the state and formal democratic institutions' (Barros 1986: 68). Barros mentions, as another good example of this perspective, Tomas Moulian's critique of orthodox democratic theory in which 'he argues that the democratic state represents a "contradictory realization of liberty," whose particular forms of domination are not exposed by the generic category of dictatorship' (Barros 1986: 67).

This deinstitutionalised vision of a grass-roots democracy, in which 'civil society' is usually described as the location for democratic praxis by the subaltern classes, arose (as also in Eastern Europe where similar ideas were to be found) in part as a critique of power per se. This can be seen in Weffort's assertion that:

> If before it had been possible to call "democracy" what were merely juridicio-institutional forms of democracy, it was possible no longer. Out of an ambiguous historical legacy new meanings had to be developed, and, slowly and fearfully, democracy began to be seen not as a means to power but as an end in itself (Weffort 1989: 329).

Here is revealed both the importance attributed to the 'self-limitation' of the popular forces in not seeking direct power in the state, and also a certain 'Third-way',

participatory, vision of democracy. Brazilian Marxist Michael Lowy's account of democracy is a typical example of 'third way' political imagining:

> Democracy is not a problem of "political form" or institutional "superstructure": it is the *very content* of socialism as a social formation in which workers and peasants, young people, women, that is, the people, effectively exercise power...(Lowy 1986: 264, in Chinchilla 1992: 43).

Emphasising the democracy of civil society over other, institutionalised forms, was, crucially, part of the attempt to recapture agency. The predominance of structuralist paradigms in the region, which had focused variously upon the vanguard party (Marxism-Leninism); the working class (orthodox Marxism); capitalist development (the modernisation school); and external capital (dependency theory); seemed all to ignore the role of the popular forces in making their own history rather than inheriting one already determined for them:

> I remember that in 1968...there were those who said that we were moving towards revolution by imposition of historical necessity. Are the implications of the words "democracy" and "revolution" so devoid of human agency (Weffort 1989: 330)?

Because democracy was for Weffort and others a matter of human action as well as formal procedure, of grass-roots participation as much as elite accountability, there tended also to be a sense in which civil society denoted a public sphere more than a specific set of institutions:

> Our habitual equivocations on the meaning of politics has always been a privilege of the few; a history in which, until now, there was barely a public space where political activity, almost always limited to the dominant classes, could be differentiated from the activities of private lives (Weffort 1989: 330).

Built upon this emphasis on the importance of an expanded public sphere was the understanding of civil society as constituting all those collective activities, otherwise diffuse, that furthered publicity or made it possible in the first place: '[Civil society] was born in the family...After the family, in ascending order of participation, came the Church, the bar association, and the press' (Weffort 1989: 348).

The tendency, as illustrated by Weffort's writings from this period, for 'democratic socialists' to see civil society as an end in itself (Pearce 1997: 63), did not go totally unchallenged. Of particular interest are Cardoso's attempts, even at an early stage in the debate, to suggest that civil society can only ever be a mediating arena.

Cardoso's approach to the idea of civil society, as we have already seen, took longer to emerge from the orthodox Marxist view of civil society as essentially private, individualistic, competitive and egoistic - in other words as the market sphere in capitalist societies. Yet as he begins to engage with the concept in a new way, this negative perspective appears to give Cardoso a more realistic understanding of the possibilities contained within it. Although most 'democratic socialist' theorists of civil society in this period would not have accepted a classically liberal-individualist view of civil society as a society of property owners, Cardoso makes his point of departure from this model explicit:

> It is evident that "possessive individualism" and the idea of citizen-property owner as the basis for democracy is a weak basis for justifying the democratic struggle... What is at stake is not the "freedom of the individual" versus the totalitarianism of the State...[T]he social inequality and the fragility of the individual before business and the bureaucracy calls for the legitimating of a "collective" historical subject - that is the union, the community, the movement, and even the party - which appear as actors in the making to oppose themselves to arbitrariness and exploitation (Cardoso 1989: 322-3).

As with the theorists of the Polish democratic opposition, civil society is for Cardoso a society of citizens understood in the more republican, participatory sense of the positive freedom of the community rather than the negative (liberal) freedom of the individual.[15] This can also be seen when he criticises the 'classical' theory of delegation and representation for privileging the 'citizen-elector (individual and rational being)', over the 'collective we': 'the only thing that is capable of legitimizing a general will which is becoming concrete' (Cardoso 1989: 323). This republican, almost Rousseauean, emphasis is then attached to traditional socialist concerns,[16] and civil society appears as the potential agent of that elusive 'third way' beyond actually existing liberal democracy:

> This radically democratic and collectivist attitude... demonstrate[s] the emergence of the will to renewal on the part of civil society which rejects the notion that the "political opening" remains at the level of *re*democratization, based on liberal-individualist principles which in the past safeguarded social injustice, class inequality, and traditional bourgeois domination (Cardoso 1989: 323).

Yet Cardoso is also aware that this vision of civil society does not identify sufficient conditions for the institutionalisation of democracy in Brazil or elsewhere. It is here that

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[15]Although Cardoso - revealing his continuing Marxist sympathies in contrast to the Eastern Europeans and many Latin American theorists - includes 'business' (i.e. the market) as well as 'bureaucracy' (the state) in his list of the threats to civil society. In most instances, only the state is seen as the enemy of civil society. As a consequence of his wider perspective, Cardoso also sees civil society as acting ideally against exploitation (in the market), and not just arbitrariness (in the state).

[16]Elsewhere, Cardoso wrote: 'What is happening in Latin America calls for a simultaneous reading of Rousseau and Montesquieu in a post-Marxist light that would not deny the prevalence of class conflict' (Cardoso 1986: 41).

his concern with civil society as a sphere of mediation, rather than as the answer to all our problems, comes into play. First, his collectivist, self-managing vision of civil society does not preclude the recognition of the need for a democratised state:[17]

> ...what we have [in Brazil] is more a meeting between strongly associative, solidarity-based motivations and the state's recognition that the neighbourhood or group has rights as a social category. So, [the] error is to believe that the Latin American democratic spirit can do without the state and without parties. Anarchist and libertarian readings of some social movements' actions and analyses by social movement intellectuals have promoted theories of a "pure society" (Cardoso 1986: 37).

Cardoso's lingering concern that civil society remain strictly 'private' makes him fearful that, on its own, even a radically democratic, self-managing praxis would leave civil society defenceless against unaccountable state and market power - to isolation, cooption or coercion 'from above'. Thus Cardoso marries a reform-democratic acceptance of the state (and concern for a state of law) to the more radical democracy of civil society, in order that there might be public control over *all spheres* (Cohen and Arato 1992: 57):

> If, on the one hand, the *basista* (grass-roots) thrust and the constitution of a collective-popular subject so as to support a new historical subject of democracy breaks the confining bonds of past institutional forms, on the other hand the reform-democratic thrust which accepts the contemporary reality of the pervasiveness of the State breaks the illusions about the possibility of a democracy "of civil society" (Cardoso 1989: 323-4).

Cardoso's overriding concern with publicity over privacy in all spheres means that he does not advocate 'civil society against the state' as a strategy to minimise the state and maximise the 'private' sector of civil society. Instead, 'the anti-state struggle becomes more a struggle for clear-cut government action and more social (public) control of official policies and state management...' (Cardoso 1986: 38). In circumventing what he sees as the anarchist's utopia of a stateless society, Cardoso's strictly limited project for 'resocialising' the state centres around institutionalised mechanisms for its control, rather than its abolition. Furthermore, civil society without the state, even if it was attainable, carries the danger of overpoliticising the social realm, which 'cannot in itself rebuild institutions or ensure the necessary balance between different levels of society. The new democratisation entails rebalancing power among the state, the civil society's movements, and the political parties' (Cardoso 1986: 41).

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[17]No doubt Cardoso's emphasis on the importance of the state and 'political society' (parties) reflected his own engagement with them. He first stood for the federal Senate in 1978, having previously regarded all extant political institutions 'as "formal" expressions of the "pact of domination" of the capitalist state' (Pakenham 1992: 217). He is now, of course, President of Brazil.

As a consequence of this political theory, Cardoso, almost alone among Latin American intellectuals, included parliaments and political parties in his definition of civil society (Cardoso 1986: 28); and he is also critical of those who imagine parties to be genuine only when directly representing, or arising from, civil society's movements (Cardoso 1989: 319). If civil society is the mediating arena between a privatised 'society' and the state, and if it is to have sufficient control over both bureaucracy and the market, then what is often elsewhere differentiated as 'political society' (parties and parliaments) must for Cardoso be included in it.

Unlike Cardoso, with his more sophisticated understanding of the mediating role played by civil society in a democratic polity, most intellectuals using the civil society concept (not to mention grass-roots activists) saw it in the simple binary terms of 'civil society against the state'. Thus, as Cardoso observed of Brazilian political language in the early 1980s, 'everything which was an organised fragment which escaped the immediate control of the authoritarian order was being designated *civil society*. Not rigorously, but effectively' (Cardoso 1989: 318). This very crude sense of civil society as associational life outside of the state was by far the most common one throughout Latin America. Indeed, even for left intellectuals who were applying the Gramscian notion of counter-hegemony, there was little to distinguish from this definition except the privileging of associations from the popular classes. As Burbach and Nunez put it: 'By civil society we mean all the groups and organisations that are not part of the dominant order or the ruling class' (1987: 28). And yet, though crude, the notion of the existence (let alone usefulness) of political life outside of the state *was* novel in Latin America. In this sense the idea of civil society articulated a new political understanding in the region, however unsophisticated its conceptualisation.[18]

(v) From Structuralism to Voluntarism

The rejection of the Marxist understanding of history and revolution, and the renewed interest in a radical, grass-roots, democracy, led sections of the Latin American left inexorably away from structuralist analyses towards an agency-centred perspective. The problem with this analytical shift for the burgeoning civil society theory (itself a vehicle for this shift) was the turn towards political voluntarism. Cardoso's work, in particular,

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[18]Pearce points to Alain Touraine's 1987 work in which, writing about the difference between the European and Latin American experiences of social organisation, he highlights that Latin America had not historically seen a 'clear separation between social actors, representative political forces and the state - the former having lacked an autonomous identity outside their political status' (Pearce 1997: 64). Touraine argues that a democratic political system 'does not presuppose only the representativity of political forces and the freedom of representation; it rests equally on the existence of autonomous social actors, representable, that is, conscious and organised, in a direct manner and not only through political agents' (translated in Pearce 1997: 64). This direct 'self-representation', a 'civil society', was what Latin America had never experienced. Even in countries where political parties had a long history (Chile, Argentina), constituencies were still articulated 'from above'.

points to the ways in which many of the Latin American leftists talking about civil society and democracy did not properly address structural and institutional issues. While representing a new normative position of some power, there was little sense provided of what might constitute constraints to action: 'We [find] a recovery of Gramsci's emancipatory teleology, but not of his "absolute historicism" '(Barros 1986: 66-7).

As a clear example of this type of voluntarism, we might take Weffort's uncritical assertion that, 'if [civil society] does not exist, we need to invent it. If it is small, we need to enlarge it. There is no place for scepticism in this question, because it would only serve to make the weak even weaker' (Weffort 1989: 349). Differently from Weffort, yet equally voluntaristically, Moulian renders the institutions of political democracy external to the democratic project, while at the same time seeing them as a function of - and secondary to - it (Barros 1986: 67):

> Whether representative democracy is a corset that binds, by means of force, legitimation, or the integration via consumption of certain working class strata, will depend on the capacity of the subaltern classes to constitute themselves as political subjects (Moulian in Barros 1986: 67-8).

Of course, given Moulian's very general account of the 'subaltern classes' and his concern that they be self-constituting, is it not clear which forces in civil society are to achieve the transformatory project that he outlines for them and how they are to do it. Here we have the prioritisation of agency without there being any clearly identified agent. Indeed, as Barros points out, 'Despite the rejection of the discourse of the working class as an already constituted subject, the problem of the sources for "radical needs" for a transcendent project is never fully resolved by these theorists' (Barros 1986: 67fn).

To what extent the new civil society theory was to blame for what Barros terms 'the absence of sociological realism' is not, however, an altogether straightforward question. Given the upsurge of identity-based associational life in Latin America in the 1970s, and also that associationalism was increasingly seen as an end in itself, the influence on Latin America intellectuals of the New Social Movements debate (which they in turn shaped during the 1980s) was considerable (see next section). Attending this debate were the post-Marxist tenets of theorists such as Laclau and Mouffe with their rejection of objectivism in favour of the idea of the self-constitution of social actors (cf. Laclau 1985, Coraggio 1985, Mouffe 1984, Nunez 1988, Slater 1985). Given the history of the Latin American left, moving in this direction seemed both theoretically and politically important to the break with vanguardism. In this sense, civil society theory was swept along within a broader post-structuralist tide (see Artz 1997).

Yet there is no denying the singular importance of the idea of civil society *itself* for the left's voluntarist turn. Central here was the place of civil society theory to an anti-authoritarian political project that came close at points to being anti-political.[19] As with the Eastern European theorists of civil society, anti-statism and anti-politics blurred together as part of a radical critique of power in which civil society was to take on a self-management project completely separate from the state. As Cardoso observed, the main problem with this model of civil society was its resultant failure to articulate a genuinely positive role for the state in a democratic polity - to identify how, if at all, the radical democracy of civil society was to relate to formal political democracy. There seemed to be an only grudging and inconsistent acceptance by many civil society theorists of the necessity of representative institutions in the state - in order that societal conflicts might be managed. Unless a general will was to be imposed on society again under the utopian banner of a supposed harmony of interests, these theorists *did* recognise the need for some form of interest representation in the state. Yet always mindful of losing the texture of face to face democracy within civil society, there remained an implicit utopian aspiration that the state might one day simply 'wither away' in the face of civil society's self-organisation. This ambiguity manifested itself in a particular way for many Latin American leftists: that is, in their recognition of the need for a general institutional arena for mediating heterogeneity only 'in principle' or for 'the transition' (Barros 1986: 69).[20] For these thinkers, it seems, the pluralism of a self-managing civil society was deemed sufficient for democratic will formation even in a context where ends were no longer known.

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[19]This claim is made with regard to theorists of civil society. However, within the wider left debates during the 1980s, in particular from the Brazilian Workers' Party, there were those who wanted to create a new kind of party and who thus rejected anti-political and even anti-statist positions. Yet even these leftists took on board the new civil society themes to some extent. This is seen in the emphasis on a 'new' form of party organisation, one which avoided vanguardism and which would act merely as a conduit for pressure from below (in particular from the new social movements). Indeed, in this way, the Brazilian Workers' party debate ran into the 'civil society' one. That is, in looking to party organisation they were accused of statism by those prioritising civil society, while others - echoing Cardoso's argument that parties are essential bridging mechanisms between civil and political society - questioned whether the Workers' Party would be able to function as a party at all (i.e. articulating a coherent political agenda out of disparate elements) if it was too open to the influence of multiple social movements.

[20]Barros gives the example of Portanterto, who advocates a 'mixed democracy' 'involving a combination of workers councils, parliamentary forms of representation, and a plural party system. But this is in the context of a discussion about "the transition"' (Barros 1986: 69n).

2. The 'New Social Movements' Debate on Latin America and the Idea of Civil Society

> ...the thesis that the new social movements prefigure a new type of democracy - whose salient features are the autonomy of civil society and rank-and file participation in decision making at all levels - is as important for the Latin American Left as it is for that of Europe (Ellner 1993: 11)

As Ellner makes clear, the left's new ideas about the nature and role of civil society in Latin America became strongly linked with the literature which emerged on the so called 'new social movements' (hereafter NSMs) in the early 1980s. This literature represented the high point of civil society theory on Latin America and it arose apparently in response to the rash of grass-roots associations and social movements of various kinds that spread throughout the region in the 1970s and 1980s. To what extent there was anything genuinely 'new' about these movements, however, is not a straightforward question. Part of the reason for their sudden appearance within the academic viewfinder was that a different normative lens was being used by theorists to focus upon properties (for example pluralism, autonomy, democracy) previously deemed superfluous to real political change in Latin America. As Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna admitted in the introduction to their chapter in a (1992) collection on Latin American social movements:

> If we had proposed, a quarter of a century ago, to undertake a study of social movements, we would have analyzed national liberation; populist or national popular movements; labor union, peasant, and agrarian reform movements; and student revolutionary movements (1992: 19).

The fact that these authors did *not* look at these kinds of movements only partly reflects their undoubted demise in many countries of the region, it was also that their organisational and ideological features were deemed 'old' in comparison to the 'new' political logic of what was most often termed civil society.

While it is right to be cautious about the extent to which the 'newness' of Latin American social movements was purely in academics' minds, it would be wrong to dismiss evidence of the emergence of a qualitatively different political discourse and praxis within some of these social movements *themselves*. It is to this feature - that is the dissemination of the discourse of civil society to the grass roots - that I will turn first in this section. Second, I examine the literature on Latin American NSM's and draw out the understanding of civil society contained within it. Finally, I provide a critique of the NSM approach, and of the vision of civil society which it gave rise to. But before turning to any of these tasks, it is necessary initially to provide explanations for the upsurge in Latin American associational life upon which the whole NSM model was premised.

Between the mid 1970s and the early 1980s there was, by general consensus, a flourishing of grass-roots associations and social movements throughout Latin America. These ranged from neighbourhood associations to human rights organisations, from 'new unions' (Brazil) to women's or feminist groups, and from ecclesial base communities (CEBs) of the Catholic Church to urban popular movements. In Brazil the crucial date was 1974, after which time, according to Mainwaring, the easing of government repression and gradual political liberalisation (the *abertura*) provided more space for self-organisation (Mainwaring 1987: 134). In Brazil, as elsewhere in Latin America, there was also the spur of engagement by the forces of the left with the grass roots - particularly in leadership capacities - after the failure of militaristic strategies in the previous decade. Finally, in countries such as Chile, social movements emerged in the 1970s precisely because of the degree of repression by the state - both in order to play a defensive role in the one area left for political self-organisation, and out of practical necessity due to the retreat of the state from its role as service provider. Across the region, and at root, 'these organisations represented a collective response to the economic, political, social, and cultural exclusion imposed on the popular sectors by the military regime[s]' (Oxhorn 1994: 57). The severe restrictions placed upon political activity of the traditional kind led some to the discovery of new forms of 'doing politics' and, by extension, to new definitions of the political itself (Chinchilla 1992: 38). At the point when all grand political projects seemed unworkable and utopian - when political expression itself seemed impossible - simply *participating* in collective movements, however limited their agenda, became a highly valued activity.

There were also other, structural, factors at work that help explain the explosion of grass-roots movements from a more long-term perspective. Foremost of these was the exhaustion of "development" in the region - such that traditional party systems and populist or corporatist mechanisms of incorporation, were breaking down (Alvarez and Escobar 1992: 318). This process created both the space and the need for "new" forms of collective organisation amongst the popular classes, even in countries where military repression was less fierce. Yet as Alvarez and Escobar point out, structural factors are insufficient in explaining the emergence of new organisational and ideological resources within these movements (1992: 318). Indeed, it is precisely the emergence of these apparently non-instrumental types of resources that direct us to look at the self-understanding of the grass-roots activists themselves.

(i) The Dissemination of the Discourse of Civil Society to the Grass-Roots
While a distinction must be made between the self-understanding of movement leaders and of grass-roots participants generally, what is remarkable is the degree to which

movement leaders seemed to have knowledge of the wider debate about NSMs and their 'alternative' politics:

> All of the movements have some leaders who can discuss the global nature and goals of the movements and can articulate a sophisticated vision of society and social transformation, including an awareness of the movement's importance in the contemporary Western world (Mainwaring and Viola 1984: 31).

As NSM leaders were usually of the left, many of them had been in exile in Europe - which was where they had experienced at first hand the feminist, ecological and other 'New Left' movements with whom they sought to retain contact after returning to Latin America (Mainwaring and Viola 1984: 34).[1] Yet where Latin American activists seemed to add something distinctive to their conceptualisation of 'new' social movements was in describing themselves as part of 'civil society':

> The Zapatisatas in Mexico make it clear that they considered themselves a 'civil society organisation'; in Guatemala, the 'Civil Society Assembly (Asambla de la Sociedad Civil) brought together many organisations trying to influence the peace process in that country. The concept is mentioned in nearly all the literature emanating from these and many other popular organisations and NGOs working throughout Central and South America in these years (Pearce 1997: 66).

The key 'civil society' theme which movement leaders emphasised was that of autonomy from the formal political sphere - specifically the state, but including political parties as well. Explanations for this shift in thinking cannot be reduced to the fact that links with political society were severed for many popular organisations after the imposition of military rule. If this were so, then such thinking would not be found even in countries like Mexico, where no coup occurred: 'What we reject', said one leader of the *coordinadora* movement, referring to the main political parties of the left in Mexico, 'are attempts by parties to manipulate the CNPA [National *Plan de Ayala* Coordinating Committee]. They see us a "booty" and want to take advantage of our strength, something we will never allow... the vanguard of the left is among the masses, not in the parties or in the Chamber of Deputies' (quoted in Hellman 1992: 53).

Feminist movements and women's groups were amongst the most consistent in their calls for autonomy across the region. Alvares claims that in Brazil no less than seven women's groups had raised the issue of autonomy by 1979 (1994: 60n). In Chile too, 'Most of the

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[1]Alvarez gives the example of the return of exiled feminists who 'literally flooded feminist groups in Sao Paulo' on their return after the Brazilian regime's (1979) concession to opposition demands for political amnesty. '[The] *exiladas* [returning exiles] shared their experiences of feminist activities unheard of in Brazil until the late 1970s...[They] elaborated on the concept of movement autonomy, one that readily caught on among Brazilian feminists struggling to define their relationship to the political opposition as a whole' (Alvarez 1994: 30).

women's groups active in the 1980s were cognizant of the tendency of political parties to co-opt women's struggles. For this reason, movement autonomy was one of the most important issues for the Chilean women's movement during the pre-transition period' (Chuchryk 1994: 82). Also in Peru, the Coordinating Committee of the five feminist groups circulated a document in the late 1980s in which they argued for feminist autonomy from the political parties (Barrig 1994: 159); and '[there was] an intense discussion within Nicaragua and within the Central American women's movement (the latter encouraged by Nicaraguan feminists) about the meaning and importance of autonomy for feminism' (Chinchilla 1994: 191).

The issue of autonomy was not restricted however to what might be seen as non-class actors. In a case study of the 1980 metalworkers strike in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Nico Vink recalls the stress placed upon the autonomy of the unions by one of their leaders, Lula: 'The ex-union leader is very proud of the autonomy of the S. Bernardo union. It has no ties with the church, the government, employers, communist Party nor other leftist organisations. The only responsibility is to the working class, which elected it' (Vink 1985: 117). Vink noticed the influence of the Catholic church's liberation theology on Lula's ideas and also that the general attitude towards the state was antagonistic, though not clearly elaborated (1985: 120). What he didn't comment upon, but which is perhaps as interesting, was the antipathy from a labour movement towards traditional parties and organisations of the left; clearly the priority of the movement over the party form was as important for these Brazilian workers as it was for activists elsewhere in Latin America and the West. Indeed, even for those under-resourced organisations of the urban poor for whom total disengagement with political parties (and from their patronage) was a less realistic option, movements were deemed sovereign. For example, Francisco Saucedo, a leader of the Asamblea de barrios in Mexico City, stated that:

> The movement is very important to the party and it is the movement that moulds the party which, in turn, serves as the political instrument that the people require. We have to play an active role in the party so that it will be permeated by the movement and so that it will be the people that shape its program (quoted in Hellman 1992: 59).

However, the importance of autonomy for Latin American social movements during the 1970s and 1980s was not simply a matter of creating an alternative political identity (as it was for some of the European NSMs). For workers in particular, autonomy meant the right to determine appropriate political organisation and strategies (Keck 1989: 254). The neo-Gramscian idea of creating a popular hegemony meant that for many (leftist) Latin American social movement leaders, asserting a plurality of identities was not an end in itself - these identities were important rather to *collective* autonomy from the state. For example, a male leader of one of Lima's neighbourhood organisations was

highly critical of the demands by women's groups for autonomy from other popular movements such as his own:

> I have seen conflict between neighbourhood organizations and women's organisations... since the beginning of the 1980s. One thing that bothers me is this business of autonomy... Its been taken up so strongly that it has become autonomy against the whole world. In my view... we need to distinguish who we need to be autonomous against, who we need to coordinate with, and how we gain hegemony. They are two distinct things: the autonomy we want is against the state... But between the organizations in the popular sector, we need coordination (in Jaquette 1994: 229).

The concern with creating a popular hegemony - of great importance to Latin American social movements, but much less so to their European counterparts - goes to the heart of the difference between these two sets of movements. For the latter, self-organisation centred around 'postindustrial' or 'postmaterialist' issues of consumption, lifestyle and identity such as relations between the sexes, ecology, and the *extension* of democratic space through participatory practices (Mainwaring and Viola 1984: 35). For Latin American participants, however, the bulk of social movements - particularly the base communities and neighbourhood associations - constituted a response to primarily material needs. To the extent that this involved focusing on the realm of consumption rather than production, then there were similarities with western movements, but a fundamental difference remained (Hellman 1992: 53): While participation was seen by Latin American theorists-activists as an end in itself, it had also a much more instrumental value than in the West. This helps to explain the heated debates over the degree of autonomy movements should have from each other, since it was recognised that some form of popular hegemony was necessary in order to democratise the state. Deepening democratisation through the development of a plurality of alternative lifestyles and identities was not sufficient.

That the ends of Latin American NSMs can not be directly compared to those of NSMs in the West, again raises the question of what was 'new' at all about the Latin American movements. Organising for basic economic and political needs is hardly without historical precedent. Thus it is to the organisational and ideological 'newness' of the Latin American movements that we must return. It is already clear how important autonomy was to the self-description of many different kinds of movements. This was certainly a new ideological emphasis, even if it reflected the reality of the decline or destruction of political society. Many of the movements also seem to have been characterised organisationally by a significant degree of internal democracy: including 'participation by the grass roots, open meetings, collectivization and rotation of leadership, and absolute administrative transparency' (Borda 1992: 304-5). For societies

traditionally characterised by authoritarianism in every sphere of social life, these ideological and organisational changes were alone sufficient to deserve the title 'new'.

(ii) The Brazilian Debate on Urban Social Movements

The original academic debate concerning the significance of social movements in Latin America took place in Brazil during the late 1970s (Assies 1994: 82). At a time when many on the left were still wedded to Marxist-structuralism, the debate at this point continued to centre around the Marxist concern with resisting capitalism as the answer also to the problem of state authoritarianism. Yet faced with the failure of orthodox Marxism to identify agents of change in a Latin American context, some Brazilian theorists began to focus on what they termed 'Urban Social Movements' (hereafter USMs) as the potential bearers of a renewed anti-capitalist project. In more general terms, the USM debate fell within the boundaries of the left's increasing acceptance of the neo-Gramscian view that the contradictions of capitalism created a plurality of social subjects (Chinchilla 1992: 44). In particular, the contradictions of *peripheral* capitalism were seen as being manifested in the inability of dependent States to secure the urban services that private capital was disinclined to provide (Mainwaring 1987: 140). Given this structural weakness, the struggle between urban social movements - neighbourhood associations in particular - and the state over basic material conditions was seen as the new site for a broader class struggle located at the point of consumption (or reproduction) rather than production.[2] Indeed, the capitalist state, and not the employer, came to represent the enemy in this scenario (Assies 1994: 83) - as it had done already for theorists of dependency and bureaucratic authoritarianism.

Based on this analysis, the view of Brazilian theorists such as Castells, Borja, and Lojkine was that 'the orthodox view of urban struggles as secondary to class struggles should be rejected for its Eurocentrism' (Assies 1994: 83). Somewhat along these lines, Kowarick argued in 1985 that there was, as Hellman summarises it, 'a direct and logical link between the struggles of workers in the realm of production and those of neighbourhood groups concerned with consumption issues... The Brazilian "miracle" rested on a strategy of exploitation of labor in the factories *and* the limitation of collective consumption goods and services available to the urban poor' (Hellman 1992: 57). Indeed, this analysis seemed to Kowarick and others to be justified by the 'new situation of frontal opposition to the state', whereby neighbourhood associations, previously successfully coopted by the state, now pursued a 'radical anticapitalist, antigovernmentalist and autonomist discourse...' (Assies 1994: 84).

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[2]In a context where the working class formed only a minority of the popular sector, workers were more easily copted by the state, as had historically been the case in Latin America. Thus the search for a more radical agency always needed to move beyond Western Marxism's focus on the working class.

The Brazilian debate on USMs fed into the later NSM debate in important ways.[3] This strengthens the argument that the Latin American version of this wider debate on NSMs had its own distinctive characteristics, and was not simply a spin-off from post-Marxist currents in the Western academic community. Assies shows how the significance attached to neighbourhood associations by the USM debate 'greatly enhanced' the attention given to social movements, and thus contributed to the growth of the NSM debate in Latin America itself (1994: 96). Evers, himself a key NSM theorist, was also explicit about the degree of continuity between the NSM debate and earlier USM thinking:

> Alongside points of rupture, there appear to be lines of semi-conscious continuity in our ways of thinking [which]... look more like an opening up of old concepts rather than their suppression. The 'recognized' list of political actors and forms of action organised around the state and the sphere of production receives the important addenda of 'civil society' and of 'social movements'.. With this, *cultural* production as well as the whole sphere of reproduction are accepted as valid political fields (Evers 1985: 47).

Although the original focus of the USM model was that of overcoming capitalism through a broader class struggle, in effect it shifted this struggle to non-class actors. Thus even the increasingly doubtful prospect of a transition to socialism meant that only political tactics had to change; the subjects of a new political project (social movements) had already been identified. Mainwaring claims that the USM approach, in this unintentional way, actually contributed to the decline of class-based analyses per se:

> While correct in asserting the heterogeneity of the class base of urban social movements, paradoxically the Marxist literature exaggerated this point such that class conflict ceased to be a fundamental concept of analysis. Whereas they saw the labor movement in terms of class struggle, Lojkine (1980), Castells (1974; 1980), Evers et al. (1981), Borja (1975), and their Brazilian adherents generally saw the main struggle in urban areas as the "people" (an undifferentiated category) versus the state... These authors influenced, and virtually shaped, Latin American thought on... social movements (Mainwaring 1987: 155n).

In support of Mainwaring's claim, examples of a less class-based approach can be seen even in the more 'Marxist' NSM literature on Latin America. Most of the contributors to

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[3]Although USM type analyses do linger on. The Peruvian leftist, Guillermo Rochabrum, writes: 'NSMs are more a continuation of, than a break with, the struggle for "class political autonomy" of the previous decade. The deepening of the economic crisis made the defence of wages based on the trade unions insufficient or inoperable, while wages themselves dropped below the value of labour power. This made it necessary to extend the efforts of survival to other economic activities (self-employment), and other arenas (in particular, the neighbourhood) in which the struggle to obtain what is necessary takes other forms. Situated outside of the arena of work, in general they face "circumstances" and not a personalised "enemy". This forces them to create solutions that they then carry out themselves, rather than in conflict with the capitalist or the state...'(Silva 1988: 92).

one influential volume (Eckstein 1989) state their continuing commitment to the importance of class analysis, but *individual classes* are in fact subsumed under the broader, more pluralistic notion of a popular hegemony (Slater 1994: 12). Thus classes are seen as working in alliance in the formation of 'fronts' (Alves 1989), or as constituting a "multiclass base" (Garreton 1989: 260). Similarly, Marxist theorist/activist Roger Burbach and Sandinista Orlando Nunez, refer to the revolutionary agency of a 'third force' that, 'unlike propertyless wage labourers, is not a new class or even a consolidated class but a category made up of diverse groups and social movements that are more defined by their social and political attributes than by their relationship to the work-place' (1987: 64, in Chinchilla, 1992: 45).

Another similarity between the USM and NSM paradigms was their shared bias against the state (Assies 1994: 87). Though viewing the state in a more structuralist light than later NSM accounts, the idea of dual power was already present in the USM model in terms of the alleged 'class autonomy of the social movements from bourgeois politics' (Assies 1994: 87). This notion of dual power, 'declassed' even further, reached its peak in the NSM literature, usually under the slogan 'civil society against the state'.

Yet in other ways the NSM discourse departed significantly from its USM predecessor - the first and key difference being the abandonment of the Marxist teleology (though not of socialist principles) which was still present for USM theorists. For NSM theorists, the importance of social movements in the transition to socialism was their ability to bring about radical democracy at the grass-roots level in the present, rather than popular power in the state at some point in the future (Assies 1994: 97). While engagement with neighbourhood associations and the like had been seen within the USM school as instrumental to revolutionary change at the state level (as 'the second front of struggle'), in the early 1980s the 'politics of everyday life' came to be seen as an end in itself. According to NSM theorists, the state (though still the enemy in a more general sense) no longer constituted a wholly necessary or legitimate target for the popular forces.

Second, the USM account of social actors as, in the final analysis, 'support structures', was substituted for a more voluntarist account in the NSM literature. This was a 'shift [which] accompanied the international trend toward non-Marxist and post-Marxist perspectives and the international new-social-movement literature' (Assies 1994: 85). The most significant consequence of this shift was that whereas the USM literature was not overly concerned with the internal dynamics or ideology of the movements in question (since they were seen as greater than the sum of their parts), NSM theorists have often focused exclusively on this issue. Assies (1994: 86) gives the example of Mainwaring and Viola's attempt to distinguish between 'old' and 'new' movements in Brazil, on the understanding that the latter are characterised by 'affective concerns,

expressive relations, group orientation, and horizontal organisation' (Mainwaring and Viola 1984: 19-20). On this understanding, the burgeoning neighbourhood associations of the 1970s which the USM theorists concentrated upon, do not even count as 'new' for Mainwaring and Viola: an inclination towards material concerns, instrumental relations, the state, and vertical organisation, justifying their exclusion (1984: 20).

(iii) The 'New Social Movements' Debate and the Civil Society Concept

The epitome of the early, optimistic, application of the NSM paradigm to Latin America in the early 1980s, is Slater's (1985) volume of collected works. Slater identifies 'three constitutive components' of the novelty of NSMs: 'First... the emergence of new forms of struggle in relation to new forms of subordination and oppression in late capitalist society... Secondly... [in agreement with Laclau's thesis] the autonomization of the various positions of the social subject and the absence of any previously-constituted schema for the historical situation of a given subject position... Thirdly... the values of 'basis democracy' [and] the importance given to high levels of participation' (Slater 1985: 6-7). In applying this schema to Latin America, Slater argues (perhaps influenced by the earlier USM literature) that the first condition, that of new forms of struggle against oppression, can be found in the movements confronting 'the state's incapacity to provide adequate services' - which shifts struggle to the sphere of reproduction (1985: 8). Turning to the second and third 'constitutive components', Slater simply claims that the second - what might be termed the 'fact of pluralism' - has universal scope, and that the third, 'which concerns the question of "basis democracy", the search for autonomy, the deconcentration of power, the construction of a new political morality and the fight against all forms of oppression... would also seem to inhere in the new social movements at the Latin American 'periphery' as well as at the European and North American 'centre'' (Slater 1985: 11). Similar conceptions of what constitutes the 'newness' of Latin American social movements are found everywhere in this literature; for example in Mainwaring and Viola's focus upon groups 'inclined towards affective concerns, expressive relations, group orientation, and horizontal organisation' (1984: 19-20).[4] As Jelin observed, the increasing attention to these types of social movements constituted a 'search for evidence of a profound transformation of the social logic. What is at stake is a new form of doing politics and a new way of sociability' (in Escobar 1992: 80). Of course, as Jelin implies, the assumption ought not to be made that the search for this kind of evidence was motivated solely by a 'new politics' on the ground; the 'new politics' of the New Left in the universities was clearly just as important.

Yet the argument that the Latin American version of the NSM paradigm emerged only through the slavish imitation of developments in western thinking, is too simplistic. The

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[4]Both Slater and Mainwaring and Viola, exclude USMs from the category of 'new' social movements on the strength of these principles (see Slater 1985: 20; Mainwaring and Viola 1984: 20)

self-transformation of the Latin American Left's theory-praxis (see above), indicates that European intellectual developments were adopted only syncretically - in as much as they contributed to understanding developments in Latin America or overlapped with experiences there. This syncretism has a long history in Latin America. Latin American Marxist-structuralists were foremost amongst those who created the Dependency paradigm in order to explain what European Marxism couldn't about underdevelopment; and Latin thinkers such as Cardoso and O'Donnell inverted the European Marxist understanding about the role of the state to make it more applicable to the periphery. So too then, it might be imagined, would Latin Americans engage only critically with the NSM paradigm. Indeed Hellman, though suspicious of the fact that NSM analysts were often foreign to the settings in which movements unfolded, admits that much of their observation was participatory and highly sympathetic to the self-understanding of the movement participants themselves (Hellman 1992: 54). Escobar, going further, points to the influence that Latin American developments had on the NSM paradigm *from the very start*:

> Does [the application of the NSM paradigm] reinforce... "intellectual dependency" on Europe and North America? Such thought arises from a relatively conventional reading of the nature of the social movements research area. Why not admit, on the contrary, that for authors like Touraine, Castells, Laclau, Mouffe, Evers, and Slater - all of whom have had very significant experience in Latin America, usually spanning many years - Latin America has become a "center" of theories and insights (Escobar 1992: 81).

Thus the surge during the early 1980s in NSM-type accounts of Latin American associational life, reflected the sense that something new *was* emerging in these societies. 'Who or what is moving in the so-called new social movements in Latin America?', wrote Evers, 'How? Why, and where? Our doubts have multiplied alongside the multiplication of these new social groupings' (Evers 1985: 43). Similarly Mires (1987) must have been suitably impressed by changing events on the ground, since he went as far as claiming that the new movements were bringing about a 'social reconfiguration' (in Escobar 1992: 80). Certainly, empirical studies were done which seemed to demonstrate the validity of this kind of observation. Mainwaring and Viola, for example, based their claim that 'new' movements existed on the basis of the consistently democratic, participatory practices of the five different types of movements that they studied (ecclesial base communities, neighbourhood associations, the women's movement, ecological associations and human rights organisations) (Mainwaring and Viola 1984: 36-7). In another empirical study, Mainwaring found that movement autonomy vis-à-vis political parties in one poor Brazilian city near Rio de Janeiro, had increased substantially in the post- 1974 period, when compared to the pre-1964 period (Mainwaring 1989: 189). The neighbourhood associations that Mainwaring was studying in this city were also exercising more

coordination between groups, and there was evidence of far greater grass-roots participation within them (192-3). Mainwaring concludes: 'neighbourhood associations are not new... Nevertheless, the character of the post-1974 movement...has changed in relation to the pre-1964 movement in several important ways' (1989: 189).

The overall tone of the early NSM literature, particularly in social science journals and alternative newspapers *within* the region (Escobar and Alvarez 1992: 2), was highly optimistic. Latin America's social movements were discovering a 'new' politics; their radically democratic, participationist practice held out the possibility of a 'third way' for a radical transformatory project from 'below'. The most commonly referred to attribute of the Latin American social movements was that of movement autonomy - both from the state and political parties (c.f. Evers 1985: 45; Mainwaring and Viola 1984: 28; Mainwaring 1987: 149). Indeed, the emphasis placed on the autonomy of the social movement (see above) is one feature that has endured beyond the optimistic analyses of the early 1980s into the later - more sober and reflective - literature on these movements (c.f. Escobar and Alvarez 1992: 10, 322; Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna 1992: 22; Chinchilla 1992: 47; Hellman 1992: 54; Cardoso 1992: 300).

(iii.i) Antipolitics and Antistatism:

Also present in the NSM literature, and linked to the privileging of movement autonomy, is an antistatist, almost 'antipolitical', critique of power. Evers, revealing his own utopian agenda more than empirical reality, saw this feature as constitutive of Latin American NSMs:

> It is my impression that the 'new' element within the new social movements consists precisely in creating bits of social practice in which power is not central (Evers 1985: 48).

> ...social movements are not questioning a specific *form* of political power, but the centrality of the power criterion itself (1985: 61).

The rejection of the power criterion by these movements, Evers also claimed, could not be reduced to specific political circumstances (such as the military dictatorships), since he found similarly persuaded movements in countries like Venezuela where liberal institutions continued uninterrupted, and in the West as well. Evers therefore concluded that such movements owed their existence to 'something very much rooted in the present day social development of capitalist societies' (1985: 49), a teleological assumption which perhaps explains his utopian vision of an end to power.

Evers's enthusiasm for 'antipolitics' was, along with most theorists of a similar persuasion, directed mainly at the state as the main locus of power in Latin American societies:

> ...could it be that the historical contribution these [Latin American] movements are about to offer does not consist in enhancing the political potential of a revolutionary left, but on the contrary in rescuing fragments of a meaningful social life from the grip of politics (including that of the left)? In other words: are these movements 'new' insofar as they are aimed at reappropriating society from the state (Evers 1985: 49)?

Mainwaring and Viola, though in a more prosaic manner, also contrasted 'new' with 'old' movements on the basis that the latter make demands on the state while the former 'focus to a large extent on social relations, sometimes to the point of being relatively apolitical. To the extent that they deal with the state, the demands are frequently symbolic and non-negotiable... [This is] an "apolitical" way of doing politics' (1984: 20). In a similar vein, Orlando Borda's initial (1986) analysis of 'new' social movements was that they came close to anarchism.[5] Of this feature Borda was sympathetic, though not to a 'red' anarchism which seeks to do away with all government, nor to the Marxist idea of the withering away of the state:

> More than anything, my position involves a different way of conceiving of and understanding power, as is suggested by some movements, albeit still rather timidly... [F]urther inspiration [may be derived from]... contemporary critics who tend to rescue from oblivion the function civil society has performed...(Borda 1992: 312).

Borda's views are fairly typical of the attention paid to civil society in the NSM literature in terms of a model of dual power between state and society. Another good example comes from Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna, who write of the great thematic of the day being 'the tension between an ageing state and a society that wants to grow. Essentially, there is a terrible tension between society and the state...'(1992: 24-25). Such a zero-sum conception of the relationship between civil society and the state leads inevitably to a deep ambiguity as to the role of the state at all:

> When society is suffocated by the state, it seeks a mechanism of defence and different ways of coming together; in the process, it makes actors of those who try to affirm themselves, to define their identities apart from and in spite of the state. Do we face an obsolete Latin American state? Do we want to reconstruct it? Or will it, instead, be necessary to replace it? But why should we want another state (Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna 1992: 24).

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[5]Carr makes the same observation about Mexican NSMs: 'While the new social movement[s]...clearly form part of the Left, ideologically they are very diverse, drawing on anarchist and syndicalist traditions...'(Carr 1993: 86).

Intimately linked to suspicion of the state in the Latin American NSM literature, is the idea that the popular forces would do well not to seek power within it. The idea of self-limitation in order to prevent the revolution 'devouring its own children', though accepted, is less clear-cut than in Eastern European debates - the emphasis being more on the unlikelihood of the state ever furthering the radical democracy of civil society. On this analysis, the call for the seizure of power is a smoke screen which obscures the real need for participatory democracy at the grass roots, and not the 'democracy' of a Leninist elite:

> ...these movements have learned an important lesson: that the seizure of power in itself is not the whole answer [since] it runs the risk of continuing the violence that preceded it or indefinitely reproducing the warlike tendencies that were rife during the process of struggle. The model of the Jacobonic seizure of the Winter Palace in Petrograd as a requisite for successful revolution has been largely dispelled. Hence, there is an insistance on putting democratic forms of authentic participation into practice right away...(Borda 1992: 311).

> ...there is a need to sow, from this very moment throughout civil society, the ideological seed of respect for life, the environment, and cultural diversity - to obtain life's fruits, in the form of better social bases and more consistent leaders of movements, without waiting for these movements "to seize power" (Borda 1992: 313).

Thus turning away from the state is not only a response to 'totalising' politics - as it was under 'totalitarianism' in Eastern Europe - but more a redefinition of how and where the political should be enacted. This reflects the fact that it was not just the *presence* of a police state that was the problem for Latin Americans, but also its *absence* from any welfare provision. Collective responses to this political vacuum at a local level necessitated more, not less 'politics':

> By...reclaiming politics as a constituent element within social life and not separated from it, th[e] socio-cultural potential of the new social movements may turn out to be not less, but more political than action directly orientated towards existing power structures (Evers 1985: 51).

NSM theorists quite simply did not perceive the state as the most important unit of social life (Mianwaring and Viola 1984: 41). Corragio, for example, stated:

> ...the liberation project of the people cannot be reduced to the idea of 'seizure' of governmental power by a given oppositional social entity; rather it presupposes a permanent *revolution of civil society* and thus a continuous *transformation of the subject*, that is, the people (Coraggio 1995: 206).

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Similarly Quijano, another NSM theorist, wrote:

> The identities in gestation begin to develop new forms of understanding and
> questioning the state, not from the vantage point of the power of the state, but,
> on the contrary, form that of the construction of a different social power. To this
> extent their goal is not to replace the state but to construct an alternative society
> (1986: 186, in Escobar 1992: 81).

All of this is very reminiscent of the anti-statist vision of a 'third way' democracy found in
Eastern Europe at around the same time. The Latin American NSM literature was,
however, more directly linked to the wider New Left debate on radical democracy, which
was consistently critical of the capitalist market as well as the state. Thus we find Evers
commenting that:

> By creating spaces for the experience of more collective social relations, of a less
> market-orientated consciousness, of less alienated expressions of culture and of
> different basic values and assumptions, these movements represent a constant
> injection of an alien element within the body of peripheral capitalism (Evers 1985:
> 51)

Evers goes on to say that this perspective is what sets NSMs apart from the ultra-liberal,
Friedmanite anti-statists, who are concerned only with individual freedoms in the market
sphere. '[F]or the counter-foundation elements within the new social movements, it is
precisely the non-market elements within social relations that are being reappraised; and
so is human expression in all aspects *except* that of buying power' (Evers 1985: 64).[6]
Indeed, the NSM theory of a 'third way' democracy is often articulated as being the best
of all worlds, both communitarian/anti-capitalist *and* liberal-individualist:

> What I propose is that today in Latin America the dominated masses are
> generating new social practices founded on reciprocity, equality and collective
> solidarity as well as on individual liberties.... Latin America... is the most apt
> historical terrain to achieve the articulation of what until now has been separated:
> the happiness of collective solidarity and that of full individual realisation
> (Quijano 1988: 68, in Escobar 1992: 69).

> The central role of civil society, the criticism against statism, and the respect for
> individual rights... were in the past great banners of liberal thought. Now they
> have been recovered from the neglect they suffered in current times thanks to a
> variety of anticapitalist struggles inspired, to different degrees, by the realization
> of the socialist utopia (Boron 1995: 245).

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[6]Mainwaring and Viola had claimed early on (1984) that a critique of capitalism on the grounds of its
propensity to promote inequality and individualism was articulated by the more sophisticated movement
leaders (1984: 40).

(iii.ii) Post-Structuralism:

The types of political project outlined above, though utopian, were no longer understood as being built upon objective historical processes. NSM theorists were much too influenced by 'post-structuralism' for this to be the case. Slater, for example, claimed that Latin American NSMs were 'subvert[ing] the traditional "given" of the "political"' (in Pearce 1997: 63). The post-Marxist, even post-modern, idea that social formations are autonomous from social structure (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) clearly had an enormous impact on the NSM literature in Latin America, not least because of Laclau's engagement with it. Laclau places Latin American social movements squarely within his theoretical construction (Artz 1997: 92). This construction, most clearly outlined in his work with Mouffe (1985), denies that there is any 'logical connection whatsoever' between class position and political action (Artz 1997: 92). 'Subject positions', for Laclau and Mouffe (in what Artz terms 'the inflation of discourse'), are in fact entirely dependent upon situational discourse; thus ends cannot be known outside of these discourses since there are no objective interests for them to be rooted in. The inherent relativity of each subject position therefore invites a radical pluralism, a process which Laclau elsewhere claimed was occurring in Latin America:

> What is particularly new and striking in the social movements which have emerged in Latin America in the last twenty years is that - perhaps for the first time - th[e] totalising moment is absent, or at least seriously called into question. Popular mobilizations are no longer based on a model of a total society..., but on a plurality of concrete demands leading to a proliferation of political spaces (Laclau 1985: 41).

Laclau's post-modern, or radically pluralist, vision of a movementist democracy is present everywhere in the Latin American NSM literature, though to different degrees. Slater goes no further than accepting Laclau and Mouffe's assertion that there can be no *a priori* 'link between socialist objectives and the positions of social agents in the relations of production' (Slater 1985: 14). But Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna are more determinedly post-modern:

> We know for certain that the analytical instruments at our disposal, as well as the rationality that drives them, yield an insufficient understanding of the multiple and versatile manifestations and orientations of today's collective actors and the multiplicity of meanings of the internal worlds of these protagonists (1992: 26).

Escobar, though aware of the utopia of the Latin American post-modern, is also convinced of the utility of 'postmodern critiques of certain types of rationalism, theorizing, and political practice..., [particularly] the reworking of the concept of class to

take account of the salience of cultural production and social heterogeneity (1992: 68)'. For Escobar, social movements are primarily cultural struggles - that is struggles over meanings as well as material conditions. 'Are economies not cultural forms, anyway?', he asks (1992: 69). In agreement with this line of argument is Kowarick, who states that 'the praxes of struggle have widely disparate trajectories, pointing to impasses and solutions for which objective structural conditions are merely an enormous backdrop' (1985: 81). Going further still, Evers claims that the Marxist identification of social subjects with *a priori* objective interests, needs to be rejected in favour of the view of the subject as *entirely* self-realising: 'in other words, a subject that will not exist at the beginning, but will only appear at the hypothetical end of the process' (Evers 1985: 59).

For other NSM theorists, of course, the rejection of the Marxist notion of objective classes was prompted, not by epistemological considerations, but by empirical research. Quijano observed of the Andean world that:

> Rather than a massive proletarianization, the main feature of social life in Ecuador is the multiplication of identities of social groups. *Pobladores*, women, the young, indigenous groups, regions, etc., construct themselves under other types of political parameters and other forms of addressing the instances of power (Quijano 1986: 186, in Escobar 1992: 81).

Similarly, it is empirical observation which prompts Mainwaring's criticism of the Marxist tenet that material conditions determine consciousness; and he is no more satisfied with the revisionist version (by which he presumably refers to Althusser's thought) which says that this is so only in the final instance (1987: 144):

> ...poor people, like others, do not define their needs strictly along material lines. Affective needs, for example, are an important part of popular family lives, and the pursuit of fulfilling affective needs often takes priority over political activity designed to obtain material benefits (Mainwaring 1987: 141).

(iii.iii) The NSM model of civil society:

What model of civil society are we encountering in this NSM literature? The generally accepted understanding, though vague, is that 'social movements... strengthened a civil society that had always been dominated by the state' (Mainwaring 1987: 132). In other words, civil society represents society's potential for self-organisation. It is therefore conceived of as a 'space' for the popular forces to seek to occupy and enlarge: 'Latin America is witnessing a reappraisal of civil society as an ordinary labensraum, reflected in the growing importance of the micropolitics of everyday life...'(Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna: 30); social movements are 'try[ing] to recover some of the space lost because of the closing of civil society' (Mainwaring 1987: 33). Yet, importantly, this 'space' of civil society was not to be found in the market, as it had been classically in Western political

theory. It was to be the location of a more democratic, communitarian and participationist politics than the market could ever provide. Indeed, civil society came almost to represent a collection of republican public spheres, somewhat reminiscent of Arendt's 'oases in the desert':

> Often working at the margins and in the fissures of peripheral capitalism, social actors of various kinds take space away from capitalism and modernity, and they hint at different ways of seeing the relationship between capital, the state, culture, and economy... As these groups come together in networks or national arenas, they also foster the formation of public domains that are quite different from the social domain associated with the state (Escobar 1992: 68).

These public domains were to be found in the new social movements, which together pointed to a 'field of construction of democracy that, in the first place, is important in itself, that of the social relations of daily life' (Jelin 1987b: 11 in Escobar 1992: 70). Yet the idea of the importance of the politics of daily life was not meant to imply an individualistic civil society. On the contrary, 'the most important goal' of the movements of civil society 'is the creation of a *popular collective* capable of constantly redefining itself through action (Quijano 1986: 187, in Escobar 1992: 81).

It is in this emphasis on a collectivist civil society in which social movements *together* form a broad front of the popular forces, that the importance of neo-Gramscian categories can be seen in the NSM literature on Latin America. Groups in civil society are not understood as merely representing particular interests at a micro-level, but rather as the agents of a counter-hegemonical project somehow greater than the sum of its parts.

> ...the political significance of an ecological struggle or of a regionalist social movement, or of a local community struggle is not pre-given; rather it depends on its hegemonic articulation with other struggles and demands (Slater 1985: 15).

As this quote from Slater illustrates, the liberal belief in the existence of *a priori* interests is rejected - yet not in favour of a communitarian relativism. Despite the influence of post-structuralism, the neo-Gramscian notion of a hegemony of different movements is not appropriated as a celebration of difference as such, but rather as a condition for a successful popular struggle. Slater, for example, uses Gramsci's concept of a 'war of position' as directly relevant here:

> [With a war of position] we have a close link with many aspects of the new social movements, since in a war of position we are referring to wide-ranging social organization and ideological influence whereby the struggle for popular hegemony on these fronts makes possible or conclusive a frontal war of movements against capitalist state power. In countries like Brazil and Argentina

with relatively densely structured civil societies a war of position is indispensable and the radical democratic struggles of the new social movements provide a crucial contribution to just such a 'war' (Slater 1985: 18).[7]

In the same volume of works, Evers writes:

> Under the category of 'hegemony', it is accepted that within the perspective of an anti-capitalist movement a multi-issue reality (Gramsci) and a multi-class identity (Laclau and others) is not only inevitable, but positively indispensable (Evers 1985: 47).

Interesting here is Evers's choice of wording. The pluralism he refers to is described as *indispensable*, suggesting again that it is primarily intended to serve some further purpose. If pluralism per se had been the object of his analysis, then it would have been described as desirable, not merely indispensable. Clearly expressing Gramscian sympathies, Evers goes on to make it abundantly clear that the 'pluralism' of civil society is largely instrumental; instrumental that is to a political (popular-collective) agenda, rather than an identity-based (communitarian) one:

> Even though we talk of *social* movements, we are obviously not interested in new *social* agents emerging from them, but in political ones; we are not paying attention to new ways of 'doing society', but of 'doing politics'. In one word, our agenda continues to be that of *power*. What do these practices represent, converted into the universal currency of power? (Evers 1985: 47)

Civil society, in these neo-Gramscian formulations, remains in some ways attached to a revolutionary agenda, and not just to a radically democratic one. However, this is no longer in terms of the direct seizure of state power, but rather of transforming structures of power *throughout* society. A more directly revolutionary approach can be seen in Coraggio's contribution to Slater's volume (in which he focuses on the Nicaraguan revolution). Coraggio claims that the 'multiplicity of determinations' by the 'people', while desirable, still requires synthesising for effective political action (as a 'hegemonic system') by a revolutionary party (1985: 204 and 225). However, even for Coraggio, 'power relations are not reduced to relations between the State and Civil society, but are... present in various instances and institutions of society as a whole' (1985: 206). This analysis leads Coraggio, despite his slightly different terminology, to accept, along with Gramsci, the need for a revolution in civil society as well as the state (1985: 206).

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[7]This quote illustrates how the Latin American NSM debate did not go along fully with Laclau and Mouffe's 'post-structuralism'. While for Slater and others writing in a Latin American context the 'war of position' had discernible political ends, for Laclau and Mouffe political struggle itself is nonsequential. Thus their '"war of position" is only between antagonistic meanings - a process of semiotic disruption and change' (Artz 1997: 94).

In summary, the NSM debate on Latin America looked upon civil society in a more 'political' way than did the Western-orientated version - as the location of a broad struggle in society rather than of alternative identities and lifestyles per se. Although there are elements of Laclau and Mouffe's post-structuralism, particularly in terms of the rejection of class-centric analyses, this feature was to some extent *already* present in the Brazilian USM dialogue of the 1970s. In other words, the acceptance of a pluralist civil society was not seen by most theorists as the end-point of political life, but was tied rather to neo-Gramscian notions of building a popular hegemony with which to resist authoritarianism. This reflected the fact of the fight *for* democracy, and not just its deepening. Yet NSM theorists mostly abandoned the ideal of seeking power in the state; and they rejected the party form for overriding and distorting the practice of the popular classes. So their focus shifted to the politics of everyday life - to the building of a deinstitutionalised 'third way' democracy in the here and now. The agents of this political project were the social movements which resided in civil society, and their usefulness lay in the provision of the participatory spaces and collective solutions which were seen as the substance of that civil society.

(iv) Problematising the NSM Conceptualisation of Civil Society in Latin America

Despite the uniqueness in some areas of the Latin American debate on NSMs, there is a wider sense in which there was an assimilation of Latin American reality to Western trends in theorising (Assies 1994: 86). Alain Touraine, one of the founders of the NSM model in Europe, has written that his categories do not apply to Latin American social actors, given their more 'political' character (Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna 1992: 32). Addressing social identities and meanings, European movements have 'extend[ed] the political space available to citizens, bringing into the public realm the concerns of everyday life and of the personal' (Hellman 1992: 53). This contrasts with the struggle for the very creation of a public sphere in Latin America, which is a struggle for *control* of the political, rather than its redefinition as such. Bearing in mind these differences, the early NSM literature in Latin America shows a tendency to lump together many different types of movements in an undifferentiated manner and to attribute to the majority of these (including for example the basist and communitarian CEBs and neighbourhood associations) the new practices and ideological affinities of a more 'European' minority (for example feminist groups, with their 'non-material' demands). There have in fact been a number of studies in more recent years which reveal the extent to which movements - although growing in number during the early 1980s - were not qualitatively different from those that had gone before. Included in these studies is Hellman's analysis of Mexican 'new' social movements, where she characterises many of these as 'falling squarely into the logic of [traditional] clientelism' (1994: 127). For Hellman, it was 'a lack of historical perspective' which 'led some analysts of these movements to see the current challenges facing these groups as quite new' (1994: 131).

Also critical of the lack of historical perspective within the NSM model are Alvarez and Escobar, who recognise that movements were not and are not 'equally radical or potentially transformative' (1992: 327). To characterise quite diffuse movements as in some intangible way greater than the sum of their parts, is to uncritically view them 'as a step in the inevitable rumble of history towards human emancipation' (Alvarez and Escobar 1992: 325). The utopian voluntarism of some Latin American NSM theorising is taken up further by Melucci, who criticises it for regarding contemporary phenomenon as constituting a unitary empirical object. Melucci argues that, 'underlying this limitation is a conception of social movements as "personages" moving on the historical stage... [which] hides the changing character of collective action at the level of orientations, meanings, levels and historical systems (summarised in Escobar and Alvarez 1992: 7-8). Escobar and Alvarez see here the influence of 'post-structuralist' theoretical influences on the Latin American NSM debate. This post-structuralism has encouraged the substitution of understandings of 'the concrete practices, constraints, and possibilities of the movements' (associated with resource-mobilisation theory) for identity-centric approaches. Yet '[n]ot only have "new identities" been celebrated prematurely, the presence of old features within them has also been over-looked' (Escobar and Alvarez 1992: 5).

The lack of attention paid to the 'old' features of social movements - to elements of historical continuity as well as change - has left the NSM paradigm theoretically exhausted in the face of the well-documented decline in these movements. From the late 1980s onwards, as political transition was experienced across the region, social movements were once again eclipsed by the traditionally dominant political society - by direct state incorporation (for example populism in Argentina and clientelism in Brazil), or through absorption by political parties (Chile) (see Pearce 1997 and Oxhorn 1994 with regard to Chile; Cardoso 1992 for Brazil; and Canel 1992 on Uruguay). What NSM theorists shrank from was an analysis of the role of movements in political democratisation - restricting their concerns to movements in the 'social', 'cultural', or 'civil society' spheres (Assies 1994: 86). This turning away from the state set up a binary opposition between state and civil society, even where this was not strictly intended (as with those theorists who wanted to emphasise the political in the social). In fact, the Latin American state proved more flexible in its response to movement demands than NSM theorists had allowed for, especially when the transition to civilian governments changed the whole dynamic of state-society relations. Thus the idea of a binary opposition between a highly differentiated but unified civil society and a monolithic and essentialist state, appeared oversimplistic and unable to guide political action under the new realities (Assies 1994: 88). It was suddenly apparent, as Ruth Cardoso had observed as early as 1983, that there had not been any serious analysis of the state since

the demise of Marxist theory, and certainly not by the NSM paradigm. Also revealed in the stark light of day was that it was the military regimes which had fostered a common interest amongst otherwise different movements (the need to oppose the state). After transition, previously united movements - that is movements united both internally and through links with other movements - became divisive in the face of the need for real policy decisions, alliances and trade-offs. (Mainwaring 1989: 198). In short, the NSM literature's account of the state and civil society looked neither familiar or useful anymore.

That the NSM discourse had seen any direct engagement by movements with the state or political parties as demobilising, also obscured the distinction between the outright cooption of movements 'from above', and the development of movement strategies in accordance with complex realities:

> What is sometimes portrayed as cooption may be good judgement on the part of movement leaders in accepting a party or state position that will enable them to more effectively realize the same political goals they pursued in the movement... A discussion of autonomy/cooption should therefore focus on trade-offs rather than simply the question of "autonomy" in some undifferentiated sense (Mainwaring 1989: 188).

According to Hellman, these realities - especially the need to democratise the state - necessitated many movements allowing themselves to be drawn into a broader struggle articulated especially by political parties (Hellman 1992: 56). Hellman senses an 'antiorganisational bias' in NSM suspicion of these tactics:

> Without entering into the shadowy area of speculation about the psychological predisposition of scholars, we may find it difficult to understand the manifest preference of some analysts for the small, weak, isolated, and powerless community movement over the same group of people once their demands have been met (Hellman 1992: 56).

Hellman is wrong to give the impression that NSM theorists did not look for a more broadly articulated struggle in civil society. However, in so far as they did not foresee political parties achieving this, there was never any clear sense of how it might actually come about - of what type of agency was necessary to it.

Another consequence of this strategic vagueness was that the NSM literature did not adequately address the question of democratic control of the state. As Assies sees it, concern with the expressive dimension of social movements overwhelmed any sense of their instrumental purpose (1992: 87). In a similar manner to Hellman, Assies therefore misses the extent to which NSM theorists *did* see social movements as instrumental; yet

this instrumentality was directed away from the state, towards the achievement of a radical, deinstitutionalised, hegemony of the popular forces. This utopia of a civil society fully autonomous from and antagonistic to the state, 'encouraged an ingenuous belief in the democratic character of civil society and a conjuring away of the issue of power altogether' (Assies 1994: 87).

From a more orthodox Marxist perspective, the idea that a transformatory politics need only be based in civil society - in 'everyday life' - 'requires the assum[ption] that politics can be based on partial social relations, which is a theoretically erroneous position':

> Dazzled by the democratic practices that they observe within [NSMs], [analysts] infer that they are a step forward in the democratization of society. They lose sight of the fact that the greatest obstacle to that democratisation is the ruling class... They do not perceive that the NSM does not seek to alter the distribution of social power... (Silva 1988: 92-93).

Worse still, social movements, on this analysis, actually function to preserve the system which they refrain from direct confrontation with. They fulfil the state's role as service provider as it increasingly retreats from or fails in this capacity. Thus, 'by relieving potentially explosive problems, they function more as a safety valve than as a source of unrest for the established order' (Silva 1988: 92-93).

Finally, from a liberal perspective also, the NSM perspective falls short. This time it fails to privilege 'modular' associational life with its voluntariness, instrumentality and limitedness. 'The totalizing nature of social movements - their non-negotiable, utopian goals and their promotion of solidarity rather than interests - may mean such movements adapt best to corporatist forms of democracy than to interest-group pluralism' (Jaquette 1994: 232). Furthermore, if, as in liberal theory, the desired end of politics is that of the freedom of the individual human agent to pursue his or her pre-given interests, then, necessarily, 'the opportunities faced by any particular agent...should not be determined by his or her inclusion in a certain group or category - that is, by the factors of ascription... Under such restrictions, the opportunities for general social interchange and social promotion that are opened up (or closed) to the members of society do not...depend on individual characteristics or efforts' (Reis 1996: 125). Behind this characterisation of the individual agent, and in contradistinction to the more communitarian vision of the NSM debate, looms the figure of *Homo economicus* - a strangely universalised and socially unencumbered figure located in the market sphere (Blaug 1996: 50). Here the NSM debate cannot be criticised for not being liberal enough without first acknowledging the profoundly different ontological perspectives informing these two views of associational life and of politics in general.

The perennial liberal fear of the rule of the 'mob' is visible in another type of critique of the NSM dialogue. This critique points up the way in which NSMs can lead to an 'over-mobilised' society. Weyland, for example, writes of the need for 'encompassing organisations' in order that the number of important actors is reduced, 'thus mak[ing] it much easier to reach binding agreements and to ensure compliance through mutual monitoring' (Weyland 1995: 136). This desire to 'manage' at a macro level the messy, agonistic and invariably open-ended features of high levels of political participation (which, for Weyland, is essential to the 'defragmentation' of societies which would otherwise fall prey to populist cooption again), misses the point of the NSM critique itself - a critique which emphasised that institutionalisation was part of the problem for a participatory politics, not part of the solution.

In his work on El Salvador, Foley introduces another related problem with high levels of participation, which is that 'In general, the "dense web of civil associations"...has not been notable either for reducing tension or promoting reconciliation. At times, indeed, the very fact of organisation has tended to lead to conflict' (Foley 1996: 89). Foley himself believes that this is no bad thing, since, 'in any society, genuine grievances must find organisational expression before they can be addressed constructively' (1996: 89). Again, though, this is to reduce the issue of civil association to an account of how association at the micro level can effect changes in extant political systems. The NSM debate was at once more radical and yet more grounded than this. For as well as desiring radical change (not merely inclusion) at a system level, NSM theorists and activists began to see the grass roots differently. Thus in a context where other models of political practice (whether liberal or Marxist) effectively passed over the issue of solidarity in favour of some more 'effective', 'rational' or scientific' goal, the NSM discourse began to articulate a more communicative, and less instrumental, rationality. As such, this discourse, self-consciously in only a few cases, was in the forefront of what is now seen as the 'post-modern' fight-back against the de-humanising elements of a modern project as distorting of radical politics as of any other.

3. Conceptualisations of Civil Society in the Literature on Democratisation in Latin America

In this section I look first at the decline of the radical model of civil society within academic debates on democratisation in Latin America. I briefly explore explanations for this decline and also ask what it implies about the relationship between the idea of civil society and the political context within which it is articulated. Second, I focus upon the virtual disappearance of the category of civil society within the elite-centric literature on Latin America's democratic transitions (which dominated discussion in the late 1980s and which remains prominent in deliberations about transition to this day). Third, I investigate the literature on Latin American democratisations more generally, in particular the debate about democratic consolidation, and expose how (especially since 1989 and the collapse of the communist bloc) liberal democratic conceptualisations of civil society now dominate the field. Finally, I look at the understanding of democracy underlying these various conceptualisations of civil society in the literature on democratisation in Latin America, outlining how normative democratic theory in fact determines how civil society is imagined even within an empiricist field.

(i) The Decline of the Radical Model of Civil Society
The rather prosaic reality of democratic transition in Latin America during the course of the 1980s, far from actualising the political vision of radical civil society theorists, involved the slow and cautious move away from political authoritarianism through the granting of significant concessions to the old political, economic and military elites - who mostly retained some form of political power. The civil society of the grass-roots had not gained significantly more autonomy, and in many cases even lost what autonomy it did possess through the reassertion of 'politics as usual' - that is, the politics of patronage and populism which works by coopting and effectively demobilising much associational life. This was of course a severe blow to the radical model of civil society as a vision of the political future and as a realistic political project.

More importantly, however, the material context within which radicals had articulated their original models changed dramatically. In short, because radical civil society theory had been decidedly anti-statist, it was rendered obsolete for many of the radicals who now found themselves in positions of political power within newly legalised political parties or even within the state itself (if these parties had won power in elections). Taking the example of Chile, we see that, even as early as 1983:

> ...the attempt by left political leaders to reconstruct an 'ideological,
> 'counterhegemonic' project became overshadowed by day-to-day tactical
> struggles. The focus on tactical manoeuvring and on an alliance with the
> dominant Christian Democratic Party limited much of the rethinking of a

democratic socialist vision... Today [many of the leaders of the Chilean left from 1968-90] hold top positions in the Chilean executive or legislative branches of government, as well as in their political parties. All claim to be heirs of the left tradition, yet the contemporary expression of that tradition varies enormously (Hite 1996: 302).

This transference of the Latin American left's leadership from 'civil society' to the state (in Brazil also, recall Cardoso's increasing involvement in party politics and concomitant deradicalisation - see chapter 3) is one very important reason why radical models of civil society have largely disappeared from academic discourse. Quite simply, the people who once articulated these radical models are mostly not engaged in academia any more. Also, left discourse per se is no longer cohesive enough to generate ideas in fusion, the concept of civil society included. While the radical, neo-Gramscian, model of civil society won widespread acceptance for a time, its opening up of the Latin American left to burgeoning post-Marxist thought was always likely to send theorists down different theoretical avenues, and thus to pluralise and increasingly problematise a once unifying idea (recall, for example, how a relatively straightforward NSM discourse was fragmented by Touraine and Laclau's post-structuralism).

Overall, the decline since the mid 1980s of the radical model of civil society suggests that this model only makes sense in authoritarian political contexts. Given that authoritarian enclaves still abound in Latin America, the concept in its radical guise may still carry some weight at the grass-roots. But within academic circles, concerned mostly with the macro-level, a generation of previously anti-statist radicals now faces the problem, not of how to avoid the state, but of how to reform it from within. That is, now that democracy in the state has been achieved to some degree, the question of an autonomous sphere of democracy in civil society seems incongruous with present realities. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the radical model of civil society was always only an immanent critique of a particular type of authoritarianism, rather than a transhistorical political project.

(ii) The Emergence of the Transition Debate

The democratic transitions that swept away military regimes throughout Latin America in the 1980's caught academic observers by surprise. Previously, these observers had had to explain the *failure* of democracy in the region, rather than its apparent success (Remmer 1991: 479). Consequently, dominating the field were a whole range of structuralist models which accounted for Latin America's authoritarian politics as variously due to: low levels of modernisation in the region which therefore had a weak middle class (see Lipsett 1959); authoritarian values inherited from Iberian colonialism and Catholicism (see Almond and Verba 1963); excessive political demands from the popular forces in the absence of developed institutions (see Huntington 1968); and

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economic dependency between core and periphery (see above) (Remmer 1991: 479). When democratisation occurred without any of these structural conditions changing to a significant degree, structuralist paradigms were at once robbed of their predictive power and also rendered obsolete for the new task of explanation.

There were, then, essentially two responses to the paradigm crisis within the mainstream political science literature on Latin America. The first of these, which Remmer characterises as 'burying one's head in the sand', was to explain the new events according to the old paradigms (Remmer 1991: 480). Typical of this approach is Stepan's appropriation of O'Donnell's long-standing economic-structuralist account of the failure of parliamentarism (which said that the military took power throughout Latin America due to the 'exhaustion' of a stage of economic development), except that this time it is used to explain the breakdown of military rule and, in a negative sense, the arrival of democracy:

> ...if the 1960s was the decade of the exhaustion of the easy import substituting industrialization and parliamentary democracy in the southern cone, the 1980s appears to hold the promise of the "exhaustion" of the [Bureaucratic Authoritarian regime]. These regimes are currently beset both by problems of political legitimacy and by an apparent inability to deal with the international economic context of the 1980s (Stepan 1985: 318).

However, a far more widespread response to the breakdown of the structuralist paradigms in the mid-late 1980s was 'the retreat into voluntarism' (Remmer 1991: 483). Instead of trying to explain democratisation in terms of long-term processes of change, this portion of the literature, particularly O'Donnell, Whitehead and Schmitter's seminal volume *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (1986)[1], disavowed determinism in favour of an open-ended account of the role of 'key actors' during the transition period:

> [Transition] is that terrain where the unpredictable combination of *virtu* on the part of leaders, and *fortuna* in the combination of circumstances, may make the crucial difference (O'Donnell, 1986: 17).

Within this largely voluntarist literature on Latin America's democratic transitions, there was little enthusiasm expressed for civil society per se. Of course, this lack of enthusiasm reflected that the institutions of civil society, however defined, were not of paramount importance to theorists with an elite-centric focus. Non-state actors, on this account, merely form the backdrop to transition, as can be seen when O'Donnell and Schmitter begin their chapter entitled 'Resurrecting Civil Society (and Restructuring Public Space)' by claiming:

[1]Following O'Donnell, Whitehead and Schmitter in this approach, for example, were Kaufman (1986), Przeworski (1986) and Stepan (1988).

...elite dispositions, calculations, and pacts... *largely determine* whether or not an opening will occur at all and...they set important perimeters on the extent of possible liberalisation and eventual democratisation. Once something has happened [within the elite]...a generalised mobilisation is likely to occur, which we choose to describe as the "resurrection of civil society". (1986: 49 - emphasis mine)

The understanding of civil society as a generalised mobilization which only appears after transition, began to be found everywhere in the literature on Latin American transitions. Stepan, for example, also wrote of 'the civil society that emerge[s] once liberalisation beg[ins]' (1989: vii). This understanding of civil society as a 'popular upsurge', or as 'pressure from below', was an instrumentalist one. The associations and movements of civil society were not seen as important in themselves - for example as mini 'public spheres' for popular participation - but only in as much as their 'heroic, exemplary actions' provide the conditions for elites (or rather for reformers within elite circles) to negotiate transitions to political democracy:

> The importance of civil society's resurrection cannot be exaggerated. This mobilization and the intense demands it places upon all political actors greatly strengthen the position of the democratic opposition (O'Donnell 1989: 67).

The link between instrumentalist democratic theory (democracy as the means by which to control the state) and an instrumentalist view of civil society is clear. In another classic example of this, Linz and Stepan write:

> Democracy is about an open contest for state power by means of elections and the oversight and control of state power by the representatives of the people... Therefore, by definition, civil society must consider how it can make a contribution to the democratic control of military, police, and intelligence systems (Linz and Stepan 1989: 51).

Understanding civil society's contribution as that of a 'popular upsurge' means that while it is heralded as vital to opposition, there are doubts expressed about its uses after transition. Analysts of the transition, like the elite-democrats which they mostly follow (see section iv), fear that 'excessive' political mobilisation by the popular classes would be damaging to the political stability of the new democracies:

> historical experience in Latin America underscores the importance of.. demobilization [of mass actors], given that "no stable political democracy has resulted from regime transitions in which mass actors have gained control, even momentarily, over traditional ruling classes" (Karl 1990: 8). The double paradox that emerges from this pattern of mobilization is that the political significance of the popular sectors may actually be greater *prior* to the restoration of a

democratic regime - and this may actually be good for democracy! (Oxhorn 1994: 50)

O'Donnell is another who, for the sake of democratic 'consolidation', does not regret the 'demobilization of society' and the reemergence of parties 'as the main interlocutors of the government' (1989: 72). Since O'Donnell does not see political parties as part of civil society, there is a sense in which the category of civil society ceases to be of any importance for him post-transition. In short, commentators on transition such as O'Donnell are interested more in the consolidation of liberal political institutions than in the general mobilisation which is seen, by Huntington and the Political Development school, to have led to earlier breakdowns of parliamentary democracy (Hagopian 1993: 480). According to this model, the only tangible contribution that civil society can make to democratic consolidation is by restraining its demands (Pearce 1997: 60).

Another implication of this model is that the character of civil society groups themselves are of little or no interest to theorists of transition so long as they can provide a 'general upsurge' during transition and acquiescence during consolidation. This is a purely strategic approach to civil society; its nonstrategic potentialities: solidarity, association and communication, are overlooked (Pearce 1997: 61, after Cohen and Arato 1992: 80). Thus as Pearce points out:

> 'Civil society' is not conceptualised in relationship to democracy itself, as in any way necessary to it, and there is no apparent reason why associational, organisational and movement life amongst the population should be conceptualised as 'civil society' at all (Pearce 1997: 62).

Where the associations of civil society are seen as a good in their own right in the transition literature, it is less in terms of their potential to increase participation, but rather their supposed ability, in a Tocquevillian sense, to foster a democratic culture of cooperation and compromise and also to nurture new leaders. O'Donnell, for example, commenting on the importance of grass-roots movements in the emerging political culture of the transition, writes: 'There are suddenly a multitude of popular forms - however ephemeral some of them may prove to be - in which the exercise and learning of citizenship can flourish in deliberations about the issues of everyday concern' (O'Donnell 1986: 53). In a similar manner, Levine analyses Venezuelan civil society according to Tocqueville's account of the associational basis for 'shared norms about leadership and legitimate political action' (Levine 1989: 279).

Given their thesis that civil society only emerges 'once something happens' within the existing authoritarian elite, O'Donnell and Schmitter, typically of elite-centric theorists, actually have difficulty accounting for the origins of transitions at all. In a somewhat

contradictory manner, O'Donnell and Schmitter attempt to get round this problem by pointing to the importance of civil society's role in eroding the normative and intellectual basis of authoritarian regimes (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 51). In effect, they appear to admit the importance of regime legitimacy or, rather, its absence. But ultimately, as Przeworski observes:

> The "loss of legitimacy" theory is an "up" theory of regime transition in the sense that it postulates that the regime first loses its legitimacy in the civil society; only when this loss is somehow manifested and recognised as such does the ruling bloc respond. From the empirical point of view, this theory has the virtue of providing clear predictions: if this theory is valid, one would expect to observe mass unrest or at least mass non-compliance *before* any liberalisation occurs.' (Przeworski 1986: 50)

This is certainly a problem with O'Donnell and Schmitter's analysis of civil society (1986), and it comes from their refusal to allow for instances where popular pressure itself leads directly to a process of liberalisation. In arguing that civil society only 'resurrects' 'once the government signals that it is lowering the costs for engaging in collective action and is permitting some contestation on issues previously declared off limits..' (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 47-49), civil society is conceptualised as purely reactive. The best that can be said for it is that it 'performs the role of pushing the transition further than it *would otherwise have gone.*' (1986: 56, italics added).

Essentially, the problem is one of the narrow focus - that of the transition period alone - that these theorists have. If civil society is primarily experienced as a 'popular upsurge', then it should be unsurprising that we find it taking place when the state begins to liberalise. But this is to ignore the fact that in at least some countries in the region (e.g. Chile), the movements and associations which are recognised as carrying out the 'upsurge', were formed long before transition and indeed arose during the period of severest repression. It is the apparent indeterminacy of the transition period which encourages this exclusive focus on the *outcomes* of upsurges; exploring the conditions necessary to the emergence of groups and movements which actually carry them out would require the reintroduction of structural variables. Yet voluntarists, whether they know it or not, *are* dealing with structures, since they:

> ...implicitly hold constant those structural features of the situation that do not actually change during the period of observation... It is for this reason that process-oriented historical studies - even if they transcend sheer narrative and are conducted with theoretical, explanatory intent - often emphasize the role of voluntary decision and tend to play down - by taking them as givens - structural constraints that limit some options of historical actors and encourage others (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992: 33).

In the final analysis, the indeterminacy thesis has been dominant in accounts of Latin America's democratic transitions because theory-building has been thrown into crisis by these very transitions themselves. An unkind reading would be that the description of events as entirely undetermined is tantamount to an admission of theoretical inadequacy: 'We describe events as unpredictable, random, and idiosyncratic when we have no way of explaining them' (Remmer 1991: 485). In keeping with this paradigm crisis, civil society is not adequately theorised by the analysts of the transitions. For they evade their inability to explain where the civil society that they identify came from, by bringing their elite-democratic biases to bear and largely ignoring it.

(iii) The Debate on Democratic Consolidation

The literature on democratic consolidation in Latin America contains more references to civil society than the literature on transition, dominated as this is by the elite-centric perspective. However, despite this 'reappearance' of the category of civil society, it is just as true of the literature on consolidation that civil society is seen as instrumental to liberal democracy.

Diamond and Linz provide a typical example of how civil society is understood as having an important role to play in achieving democratic consolidation:

> Just as democracy requires an effective but limited state, so it needs a pluralistic, autonomously organized civil society to check the power of the state and give expression democratically to popular interests...there is a strong correlation between the strength and autonomy of associational life and the presence and vitality of democracy (Diamond and Linz 1989: 35).

This positive view of civil society is echoed by Jelin, who argues that 'the hard task of demanding, persuading, prompting, and policing [the state] falls to the makers of civic society' (Jelin 1995: 92). Although civil society is here celebrated in a way that it was generally not in the transition literature, it is nonetheless utilised only in relation to the state - all of the strengths of civil society listed by Diamond, Linz and Jelin relate to its role in either balancing the state or increasing the state's efficacy in representing interests. In short, these authors are a long way from the self-management agenda of the radical theorists of civil society.

Moreover, the positive approach to civil society in the literature on consolidation, although it includes the call for civil society to police the state, strongly implies that civil society activity should not be system threatening. Valenzuela, for example, although he agrees with O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) that restraint by civil society is useful for transition, does *not* call, as these authors do, for civil society effectively to be demobilised post-transition. In fact, he sees pressure from civil society as desirable for

democratic consolidation. However, this pressure should, according to Valenzuela, fall within the 'demand-processing-settlement' criteria. This is:

> the establishment, expansion, or recreation of popular and other associations to voice demands and negotiate some resolution to them, with leaders who have the necessary legitimacy and support to be able to call off demonstrations and other collective actions (Valenzuela 1992: 86).

In other words, Valenzuela is willing to support demands coming from civil society, but only to the extent that they cause no disruption to the status quo (for example, through mass action). Indeed, Valenzuela continues by arguing that 'these settlements are most adequate to facilitate democratic consolidation when they are perceived by all those concerned to operate with a minimum of politicization' (Valenzuela 1992: 86). This anti-radical model of civil society sees it as having a purely technical function. It is also elitist:

> In brief, democratic consolidation is favoured if social conflicts and demands are handled through predictable and broadly accepted procedures that are inclusive of all the relevant groups but are, at the same time, insulated within the narrowest possible boundaries in terms of the specificity of the issues and the state, political and social actors who are involved (Valenzuela 1992: 86-87).

The idea that the contribution of civil society is to further interest representation in the state is by far the dominant one in the literature on consolidation. Schmitter, in a recent collection on the consolidation of democracy in Latin America, doubts whether social movements have 'determined either the degree of consolidation or the type of democracy'. What he will allow, though, is that, 'nevertheless [these movements] have broadened and complicated the policy agenda of most new democracies' (Schmitter 1995: 24). Schmitter believes further that many social movements will decline as their demands are met and also because they will 'have trouble focusing on subsequent issues' (Schmitter 1995: 24). He seems entirely unaware of the non-instrumental nature of many NSMs from the 1970s and 1980s which, if they have declined (or are going to), will do so for very different reasons from the ones he identifies.

A striking feature of the instrumentalist view of civil society is that it overlooks the possibility, held up by the radical model, that civil society can provide participatory spaces and, indeed, itself constitutes the public sphere. The idea that publicity might be fed from the 'grass-roots' upwards escapes most theorists of consolidation. The editors of one volume, for example, ask if 'civil society is adequately connected through political parties and other channels of representation to the evolving political debates' (Mainwaring et al 1992: 4). The implication here is that publicity occurs in the state and that civil society, unless otherwise connected with this, the 'true' public space, is

relatively apolitical.[2] Again, the assumptions of the radical model of civil society are here turned on their head.

(iv) The Minimalist Approach to Democracy in the Literature on Democratisation

Why then do analysts of Latin American democratisations have little time for civil society in their accounts of transition, and why do they offer a purely instrumentalist conception of civil society's role in democratic 'consolidation'? In their defence, it could be argued that these theorists have been influenced in restricting civil society's role by the theory of moderation, which has grown out of events in Latin America such as Chile in 1973, where unmoderated, radical popular action apparently provoked a reactionary backlash. Yet this is still a subjective reading of historical circumstances,[3] and it is actually necessary to look no further than these scholars' democratic theory in order to explain in large part their conceptualisations of civil society.

It has already become clear that little is now said about civil society as a democratic space due to the growing dominance of liberal democratic theory and the formal or institutional view of democracy that attends it. The one thing that most accounts of transition and consolidation have in common is a minimalist and highly tautological notion of democracy as a form of government constituted by institutions extant in western liberal-democracies. Of particular significance to these theorists is Dahl's notion of 'polyarchy' (Pearce 1997: 59). Defined by Dahl as the 'highest feasible attainment of the democratic process in the government of a country' (1989: 222), polyarchy expects no more than that there be a universal spread of citizenship rights - these being identified narrowly as 'the right to oppose and vote out the highest officials in the government' (1989: 220).

The degree of acceptance of Dahl's 'proceduralist' or 'institutional' model of democracy is remarkable. Diamond, Linz and Lipset, for example, use 'polyarchy' as the bench-mark for the democracies studied in their volume on Latin American transitions (1989: xvi). Similarly, Whitehead, claiming that 'Dahl's observations apply with special force to Latin America', identifies his 'litmus' test for democracy as captured by the questions: 'How does a purportedly democratic regime treat those held in its prisons?' and 'Would we

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[2]Even where civil society is seen as a space for citizenship in the literature on consolidation, it is often defined, as by Reilly for example, as only constituting 'secondary citizenship'. Thus while, in a Toquevillian manner, 'opportunities for negotiation, competition, contained conflict and the search for consensus' (Reilly 1995: 264) are found in civil society, these experiences implicitly count only as a 'dry run' for politics proper at a state level. Here the emphasis is upon the contribution civil society can make to a democratic political culture, not to participation for its own sake. Put another way, civil society is to be supportive of citizenship, and is not seen as the space for citizenship in the first place (as with the radical model).

[3]Bermeo argues that, if theorists of the Latin American transitions had looked further afield to Portugal and Spain, they would have seen that transitions *can* survive radical pressures from below and even radical provisional governments (Bermeo 1997).

describe the regime as sufficiently democratic to qualify as a leading western democracy' (Whitehead 1989: 77). In the same volume of works on Latin America, Huntington - announcing that the ultimate cynic of 'democratic' theory, Schumpeter, 'has won' - celebrates 'the prevailing effort...to make democracy less of a hurrah word and more of a common sense word. Democracy has a useful meaning only when it is defined in institutional terms... The key institution [being] the selection of leaders through competitive elections' (Huntington 1989: 15).

Also in the literature on consolidation, we find, for example, a major collection which contains in its introduction the following: 'The essays in this book attach their conception of democratic consolidation to a minimal and procedural definition of democracy' (Mainwaring et al 1992: 5). Similarly, Valenzuela's work on 'Consolidation in Post Transition Settings', begins with a defence of Dahl's definition of democracy, arguing that: 'the notion of democratic consolidation should...be linked...to a minimalist, not a maximalist conception of democracy'. Drawing also on Schumpeter's notion of competitive democracy, Valenzuela debunks 'participatory' models as simply 'inadequate' (Valenzuela 1992: 60). Mainwaring, in the same volume of works on consolidation, also accepts that Schumpeter's focus on electoral competition amongst political elites and parties has 'prevailed'. Mainwaring adds only universal suffrage to this Schumpeterian framework (which he terms the 'participation' element), arriving at Dahl's definition of polyarchy whereby democracy is defined less (if at all) in terms of its outcomes, and more (if not entirely) according to the rules governing politics (Mainwaring 1992: 297). An extreme version of this refusal to focus upon democratic outcomes as long as democratic procedures are in place is offered by Valenzuela:

> ...without...formal democratic procedures at the nation-state level a democracy cannot be said to exist no matter how egalitarian the society, how progressive the social policies, how advanced the democratic procedures at the subnational level (Valenzuela 1992: 61).

In fitting with these kinds of approaches to democracy, more substantive definitions are rejected in the democratisation literature for applying democracy in spheres where it does not belong. 'Democratization', claims Stepan, 'refers fundamentally to the relationship between the State and civil society' (1989: ix). For Pastor, '[d]emocracy is impossible if the government exercises complete control over the economy' (1989: 18). Diamond, Linz and Lipset also see democracy as strictly 'political':

> We use the term "democracy"...to signify a political system separate and apart from the economic and social system to which it is joined... Indeed,...[we] insist that issues of so-called economic and social democracy be separated from the question of governmental structure (1989: xvi).

Because of the emphasis on a strict separation of spheres, the vision of a 'grass-roots' democracy is viewed with suspicion:

> [S]ubstantive views of democracy...often appear associated with more or less utopian conceptions of "participatory" democracy, aiming to replace or subordinate representation to a more "authentic" expression of the people's will (Lamounier 1989: 150).

At points, this antipathy to a more direct democracy manifests itself to extraordinary degrees. Mainwaring's anti-substantive notion of democracy is such that it comes much closer to liberal theory than democratic theory. Indeed, Mainwaring seems so concerned with protecting 'political expertise' and property, and with warding off the 'tyranny of the majority', that he basically ends up writing out majoritarian decision making from his vision of a democratic polity. Criticising Przeworski's claim that democracy represents 'institutionalised uncertainty', Mainwaring raises the spectre of workers, for example, voting to nationalise the means of production:

> However, even if workers did vote to nationalise the means of production, this fact in itself would have no legal effect...in democratic regimes, because it is not generally workers who make this kind of decision, but rather executives and legislatures functioning in well-defined institutional and legal structures. Workers help elect those who decide, but modern mass democracy is representative democracy, not direct democracy (Mainwaring 1992: 313).

More typically, the issue of democracy at the grass-roots is simply deemed unimportant to political democracy:

> I do not [believe] that associations... are models of participatory democracy. Nor do I believe that small-group democracy is necessary to maintain democratic politics on the national level (Levine 1989: 280).

What stands out in all of these accounts of democracy is that little significance is attached to those democratic practices which the radical model of civil society claimed as its own. That is, the focus has shifted away from the practice of democracy outside of the state; consequently, civil society theory has been rewritten in order to assess its significance for formal political democracy rather than republican, grass-roots democracy (which is why it is so instrumentalist). Of course, there are enough streams within classical civil society theory for this not to be a matter of making a completely fresh start. Yet what is significant here is the dramatic rupture with the earlier, radical discourses on civil society which were connected with Latin America. While the radical vision of civil society may live on among Latin American political activists and some intellectuals, mainstream political science has almost entirely forgotten it. In its highly ideological pursuit of a value free 'science of the possible', elite-democracy and a demobilised civil

society, are paraded as the only form of democracy and civil society on offer. Indeed, a field more saturated by the thesis of an 'end to history' would be hard to find

Finally, as with the contemporary discourse on civil society in relation to Central-Eastern Europe, even those more radical conceptualisations of civil society that do exist in the literature on democratisation in Latin America seem to have lost touch with earlier radical models. Przeworski, for example, adheres to the Gramscian notion that loss of legitimacy for the powers in the state only comes about through the organisation of counter-hegemony ('collective projects for an alternative future') (Przeworski 1992: 107). Nevertheless, Przeworski still talks of civil society exclusively in terms of the 'transition game', never mentioning the model of civil society that looks to democracy outside of the state. In this sense, Przeworski retains an orthodox approach to Gramsci's categories in contrast to the radical theorists of civil society. That is, he focuses on how civil society can overthrow existing powers in the state, rather than at the organisation of a counterhegemonic civil society as a permanent political project.

Huber is similar to Przeworski in adopting (by her own admission) a Gramscian definition of civil society as: 'the totality of social institutions and associations, both formal and informal, that are not strictly production-related nor governmental of familial in character' (Huber 1995: 172). Yet although she is influenced by Gramsci's understanding of civil society, Huber is cut off from earlier radical models because she has an institutionalist conceptualisation, rather than seeing civil society as a grass-roots democratic *process*. So despite viewing the density of civil society as reflecting the extent and degree of autonomy of the subordinate classes (any other form of 'civil society', for Huber, is just a 'conduit for the dominant ideology' (1995: 173)), Huber, defines civil society only in relation to the state - that is, as deciding the extent to which the subordinate classes have power vis a vis the state. Put another way, although Huber sees democracy as necessitating a strong civil society, this is more to enhance the legitimacy and capacity of the state (in relation to 'subordiante classes'). Thus Huber, like Przeworski, does not conceive of civil society as substantively autonomous; she continues with Gramsci's approach rather than, as with the earlier radicals, using Gramsci's political method (counterhegemony in civil society) to move beyond Gramsci's more Marxist concern with achieving power in the state.

CHAPTER 4

The Sub-Saharan African Discourse

The task in this chapter is a somewhat different one from that of the previous two chapters on Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America. This is because, unlike in these two regions, discourses on civil society involving African or Africanist intellectuals *prior* to the emergence of the liberal-democratic model in 1989, are entirely absent. A number of important characteristics to post-1989 disputations on civil society amongst Africanists flow from this. First, the idea of civil society arrives within African studies attached to a largely liberal body of theory (although, as will be seen below, precisely because of this, the liberal model of civil society is then contested far more vigorously than in the post-1989 literatures on civil society in either Central-Eastern Europe or Latin America). Secondly, radical-leftist accounts of civil society within the Africanist purview remain far more orthodox than in the other two regions of study, where it was actually leftists who first redefined the concept. This is so in two senses: (a) radical debate about the meaning and significance of civil society in application to Africa prior to 1989 was non-existent; (b) consequently, radical Africanist models of civil society *post 1989* are largely (with the notable exception of Bayart) an orthodox-left response to liberal versions of civil society. In other words, the understanding of civil society advanced by radical Africanists involves returning, broadly speaking, to the Marxist critique of civil society, and *not* the development of new and positive approaches to the concept such as radicals sought in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America. It will be argued, therefore, that radical Africanist models of civil society are best defined as socialist, in order to distinguish them from the radical models already identified for the other two continents. These models, in contrast, engaged innovatively with the idea of civil society rather than borrowing Western-European versions.

In order to demonstrate the validity of these hypotheses for the post-1989 discussion on civil society amongst Africanists, it is necessary first to enquire into the nature of pre-1989 political thought in relation to the region. In the second and main section, the post-1989 dialogue on civil society will be examined in detail. This examination will proceed by way of a classification of the key ideological approaches to the concept of civil society,[1] and through an exploration of the implications of these for the overall coherence of the concept in African studies. The thrust of the chapter in general is that civil society theory within the African context reads as a more imported ideology and one less in touch with popular political thinking than in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin

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[1]This is the best way of approaching the material in this chapter, because the Africanist debate on civil society is largely an academic (and western-based) one. Therefore, the key distinction is not between national models (as in Central-Eastern-Europe), of which there are none anyway, nor between time-zones (as in Latin America), since civil society theory is absent in the African context prior to 1989.

America (where, originally at least, the idea of civil society was tailored to fit regional circumstances by theorists directly involved in the politics of these regions).

1. The Pre-1989 Context

In general terms, political studies of the third world prior to the late 1980s focused exclusively on states and elites. In African studies, this is reflected in the elite-centric literature on the independence period in the 1960s, and in the statist/developmentalist focus of works from the 1970s. Thus the societal sphere was left largely to anthropologists to study. This observation was made by Zolberg as early as 1966:

> ...in order to obtain a more general understanding of African politics, we must examine what occurs at the more intimate and more particular level of the local community. What is involved is less the study of local government (in its institutional sense) than the study of "government locally," or, to use another phrase, the study of "micro-politics."... In the field of African studies proper, the past division of labour between anthropologists and political scientists led the former to concentrate almost exclusively on the traditional political systems... Political scientists, on the other hand, have tended to devote almost their entire effort to the study of the centre... (Zolberg 1966: 153).

Although Zolberg seems to be optimistic at this early stage about the prospects for political scientists interested in Africa to study something approximating 'civil society', there is little evidence that such a project ever gathered momentum until the 1980s. By the 1980s, Africanists assessing the likelihood of democratisation in the continent were beginning to talk about the role of 'pressure groups' such as the churches in challenging the state;[2] but this was still a minority concern and one which remained largely un-theorised. Certainly, the concept of civil society was nowhere to be found.

What though of the left? After all, it was on *this* end of the political spectrum that the idea of civil society reemerged in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and early 1980s. The answer, in short, is that Africanists on the left were no more interested in, or excited by, 'civil society' than their orthodox political science counterparts. For this African left, differently from many leftists in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America at around the same time, there were still strong hopes for revolution, which was partly a reflection of the weaker state in Africa, and even some continuing optimism about 'progressive' military regimes. That the perennial weakness of the African state had sustained the faith for orthodox revolutionaries is illustrated by the ongoing commitment to revolutionary strategies in Africa throughout the 1970s and 1980s (at a time when many Latin American revolutionaries were becoming disillusioned

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[2]See, for example, Lunga (1985) on the churches, press and labour as 'critical observers in the Zambian one party state; and Belfiglio (1983) on various views on the prospects for majority rule in South Africa.

in the face of much more effectively repressive states). This continued attachment to traditional revolutionary praxis was the story of Marxist guerrillas in countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Ethiopia and Namibia. Even in South Africa, where the apartheid police state was much more fearsome, post-Marxist theorising (the rejection of revolutionary violence and the 'discovery' of civil society) did not seem to penetrate the Marxist opposition, the ANC, in this period. And in the 1990s, opposition movements in Rwanda and Zaire have continued to illustrate that a non-civil society strategy of seizing power in the state is an attractive option for as long as it is viable.

On the level of political discourse also, thinking was not much more developed. In an interesting summary of a decade of leftist thinking from the Review of African Political Economy's inaugural year in 1975, a 1985 ROAPE editorial unintentionally reveals the continuing dominance of the Marxist view of civil society. Looking first at the 'Dar es Salaam Debate' (a key centre for radical debate in 1970s Africa) and the role of leftist intellectuals in Tanzania, the editorial comments upon the dominance in the late 1970s of debates on 'imperialism and the national question, the relationship between the economic base and superstructure, the neo-colonial state, and the classes in the neo-colonies... The central theme in all these contributions is that in the struggle for socialist construction in neo-colonies, it is essential to identify which classes constitute friends and enemies of this revolutionary process' (Cliffe and Ishemo 1985: 6). The obvious comparison to make here with leftist debates in Latin America and Central-Eastern Europe occurring at the same time, is that the African left, on this account, is still talking exclusively of class as political agency and of violent revolution as political process.

It is also revealing that the fundamental question of these debates, as Cliffe and Ishemo point out, concerns which strata control state power (Cliffe and Ishemo 1985: 6). Alternatives to the strategy of seizing state power are not proposed. Furthermore, in contrast to many left theorists in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America - for whom the exigencies of political praxis were as important as universalist critique - the Dar es Salaam fraternity 'fail[ed] to make concrete analyses of concrete situations in the neo-colonies'; indeed, 'to talk of concrete strategy and tactics alarm[ed] [them]' (Cliffe and Ishemo 1985: 7-8). Even where the editors celebrate the 'new mood' of the (early) 1980s, which was not to ignore 'everyday political activity', this was seen as involving intellectuals acting as a 'left' within the Tanzanian single-party (the CCM) (Cliffe and Ishemo 1985: 8). A more distant strategy from that of the post-reformist Central-Eastern Europeans and the anti-party Latins could hardly be imagined. While for these theorists political change demanded that civil society come first, for the Dar es Salaam school, given the continuing dominance of Marxist theory, civil society as a new form of praxis would have been anathema. Clearly they were not grappling with the problem of

which tactics to use against the one party state, which, for them, was not the central concern, or even of concern at all.

The ROAPE editorial goes on to look at the more general 'left experience' in Africa in the early 1980s. Here it becomes clear that the African left was at the time uncertain about what to make of 'progressive' military take-overs in Ethiopia, Ghana and Burkina Faso. It was certainly not clear to them whether opposition to the state was the right tactic. Alternatively, without Soviet might (as in Eastern Europe), revolutionary take-over *was* feasible. Neither the corruption nor the might of single-party and/or military regimes was as self-evident to African leftists as it was to the Latin American and Central-Eastern European left. Hence African leftists were not driven to look for non-violent solutions with their backs to the state. The motto that the revolution devours its own children was not one that stood out for them yet.

Finally, the ROAPE editorial surveys the Nigerian left debate concerning what the attitude of socialists should be to political parties. Faced with a return to civilian rule, the question being asked was whether socialists should form their own party or associate with one of the existing parties? Issues were raised within this debate about the very real problems with both strategies - the latter requiring embroilment with the politics of patronage, and the former running the risk of marginalisation. Yet neither side to this debate seems to have questioned, as did many Central-Eastern European and Latin American leftists, the legitimacy of the hierarchical party form per se. The furthest they seem to have got in this direction is the questioning of traditional party politics.

Overall, the ignorance demonstrated by African leftists about left debates on civil society going on in other regional contexts is a noticeable feature of the pre-1989 context in African studies. Michaela von Freyhold, in a 1987 article entitled 'Labour Movements or Popular Struggles in Africa' comes close the radical model of civil society already identified in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America. Von Freyhold argues for a popular, multi-class movement against the state that 'makes room for democratic reorganisation from below' (Von Freyhold 1985: 31) and which is non-violent:

> It may be important to remember that [popular African] struggles have very often focused on the contradiction between the state and the common people rather than on the contradiction between capital and labour and that they have had a lot to do with human and civil rights, with human dignity... Popular struggles are necessary that aim at and succeed in reducing the violence and power of the state... Only where the rules of the game are changed between state and society, is there a chance for material demands to have a lasting impact. 'Revolution' as such is not the answer as long as 'revolutionary' or 'socialist' regimes are not more open to popular pressure than others... To some, this emphasis on democracy, self-organisation and on the right of people to protect [themselves] in a struggle

between state and society may sound familiar. There are similar concerns in the new social movements in Europe (Von Freyhold 1987: 30-31).

Yet despite parallels between Von Freyhold's thinking and that of radical theorists of civil society from outside of the Africanist context, her revisionist Marxism seems to come from E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, and she in fact makes no reference to the term civil society or to any of the radical theorists who had so recently revived it.[3]

Thus the idea of civil society in African studies pre-1989 is noticeable only by its absence. Indeed, only one theorist provided an exception to this rule, the left-wing Africanist, Bayart. Bayart introduced the concept of civil society to the African context in a chapter on 'Civil Society in Africa' published in 1986. Significantly, this chapter appears in a book entitled *Political Domination in Africa*, and Bayart is particularly interested in applying to Africa the Gramscian model of counter-hegemonical struggle by civil society against the state. There is no doubt that Bayart adopts the concept of civil society straight from the pages of Gramsci's work. This is seen clearly when he defines civil society as: 'the process by which society seeks to "breach" and counteract the simultaneous "totalisation" unleashed by the state' (Bayart 1986: 112). Also, in the French version of *The State in Africa* (1989), Bayart writes: 'A[n]... advantage is gained by progressing from the Marxian definition of "civil society" to Gramsci's distinction between this category and "political society"' (Bayart 1989: 162).

Yet it is not clear that Bayart's application of the category of civil society to Africa was much noted until the arrival of the concept in force post-1989 (see below). Furthermore, he, like Von Freyhold, seems not to have encountered the Polish civil society theorising (which has clear Gramscian overtones), nor the more explicitly Gramscian model of civil society found in the Latin America context. Indeed, Bayart is explicit as to where (apart from Gramsci's work) he received the inspiration to reapply the concept of civil society: 'I follow Robert Fossaert, who defines his research interest as "civil society"', he wrote in 1986 (Bayart 1986: 112).

2. The Post-1989 Context

The explosion of references to civil society in the post 1989 literature on African politics has been a remarkable and well noted phenomena - the concept being central to attempts to describe and explain the wave of democratisation experienced in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa during the early 1990s. Yet because there has been no earlier radical

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[3]Although she does mention Ernesto Laclau's analysis of a counter-hegemonical strategy based on, in Von Freyhold's words, '[the] effort to realign social forces and to change the contract between state and society' (Von Freyhold 1987: 30).

discourse on civil society in the African context, there is a distinct tendency for the ideological content to civil society theory to remain obscure. Thus even though the notion of civil society in African studies is deployed primarily as a putative description of sociological reality, it is, I contend, distinctly normative or value laden.

In this section I identify and critique two principal ideological backdrops to the civil society debate, one liberal and one Marxist-socialist, which I suggest largely inform how and why the concept of civil society is used in the literature on Sub-Saharan Africa. I also outline the critiques provided by certain Africanist scholars regarding the supposed inability of the concept, in its various Western guises, to capture important facets of political and social life in the continent. Included at this point are some of the more 'Afrocentric' versions of the civil society concept which these critics supply. These formulations are interesting because they provide the only real examples of a more contextualised model of civil society such as could compare with those found in Latin America and Central-Eastern Europe prior to 1989; yet they too are found wanting.

I conclude the chapter by arguing that nearly all versions of the civil society concept in Africanist studies - whether they be primarily liberal, Marxist-socialist, or 'African' - fall down methodologically by mixing up their accounts of what is, and of what ought to be, regarding civil society. In other words, the civil society concept in African studies is caught somewhere between facts and norms. Like theorists of civil society writing on Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America since 1989, analysts who comment upon civil society in Africa often seem unaware that they are not merely reporting events 'on the ground' but are actually engaged in privileging both a particular democratic teleology and the agency that is supposed to bring it about. It is therefore my task in this section to reveal that contestatory ideas about the meaning of democracy is what is *really* at stake when civil society is discussed by Africanists.

It is the apparent 'political renaissance' of African societies which forms the background to the debate on civil society in Africa. The remarkable democratic transition processes experienced throughout much of the continent since 1990 have forced scholars to look at the role of 'resurgent societies' in achieving such transitions. This goes some way in explaining the comparative absence of the elite-centric perspective in the literature on African transitions when compared, for example, to the literature on Latin American democratisations. African transitions had their origins, at least in part, in social protest, and usually not in regime splits along the lines of hard-liners and reformers (see Bratton and van de Walle 1994). Africanist scholars have thus been generally critical of the elite-centric model which, claims Africanist Eghosa Osaghae in reference to O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), 'posits a vanguardist role for elites as innovators of change in the development process' (Osaghae 1995: 183). This model, in turn, owes much to the elitist

conception of democracy which - harking back to the political development school of the 1960s - views popular participation at any stage in the transition processes as problematic: in the early stages due to the threat of a reactionary backlash, and later on because of the expected overload of demands on nascent democratic institutions. But it was precisely popular pressure which sparked off and sustained many African democratisation processes, which seemed to suggest that other models, apart from the (then) dominant elite-centric one, were required for the task of explanation:

> This formulation [O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986] depicts the relations of civil society to the state as being far too passive and reactive... Indeed, the dynamic of political transition can only be fully apprehended when the lens of analysis is widened beyond inter-elite relations to focus also on state-society relations. In recent African cases of political transition, the "popular upsurge" preceded elite concessions and was an important factor driving African political leaders to open the door to liberalization (Bratton 1994: 63).

Similarly in the French literature on Africa, according to Monga, societal activism, or 'the implosion of political space and the rupture of social stability which has characterised the course of African history in recent years', led to an increasing awareness that focusing only on 'institutions, structures, and politicians' is inadequate: 'This is largely the reason for the current interest in the notion of 'civil society", he writes (Monga 1995: 359).

Given that 'societal activism' occurred within authoritarian political systems, and given its widespread effectiveness in bringing down autocracy, Africanist scholars 'of all persuasions agree that civil society organisations latently and manifestly provide a countervailing force to the overbearing power of the state' (Osaghae 1995: 193). Yet as White points out, individual accounts of civil society in Africa make the 'more or less implicit argument that only *certain types* of civil society can perform th[e] role [of counterbalancing or 'disciplining' the state], namely those that emerge from a process of modernisation (if you happen to be a modernisation theorist) or those that emerge from the spread of private entrepreneurs or the bourgeoisie (if one is a liberal or Marxist political economist). This ties the question of the variable political functions of civil society to a basic theory of socioeconomic transformation' (White 1994: 383, italics added).

Taking up White's insight further, we see, for example, neo-Marxists and other radical scholars claiming that 'civil society gives democratisation the proper bearing in terms of the role the people can play to ensure that democracy serves their interests' (Osaghae 1995: 193). For liberals, on the other hand, one of the advantages of civil society is that it lays the foundation for a shared political culture from which pluralist, rather than class

(as in Osaghae's formulation), politics ensues.[4] Ultimately, both these conceptions of civil society - or rather the ideologies that inform them - are tied to different democratic teleologies - the former, in a Gramscian manner, sees civil society as the arena in which popular forces can contest power for themselves through a counter-hegemonical struggle; and the latter, reminiscent of Tocqueville, looks to civil society both to ward off the 'tyranny of the majority' and to counterbalance the power of the state. Clearly, though, as will now be shown, theorists holding each of these normative models of democracy are able to coopt the civil society concept for their own purposes, and are able to select different theoretical streams within the history of civil society theory to back up their accounts if necessary.

(i) The Liberal Model of an African Civil Society

(i.i) The Urban Bourgeoisie as Democratic Agent

There is little doubt that an essentially liberal vision of civil society has so far been the dominant one in the literature on African democratisations. This is not surprising since, as has been shown in the previous two chapters, most of the academic literature on civil society emanating from the West since 1989 is of a liberal persuasion (and with earlier radical models becoming increasingly unknown). The various aspects to this liberal perspective include, firstly, the often exclusive focus on the urban bourgeoisie as the group or class that is behind political liberalisation and democratisation. Thus, for example, Dwayne Woods writes:

> Bratton states that "the absence of a true bourgeoisie has blocked the emergence, not only of capitalism in Africa, but also of democracy". This may no longer be the case. There is a growing belief among many intellectuals and the urban middle class that the best way to advance their interests is to promote opportunities for political competition (Woods 1992: 95).

Most frequently, the emphasis on the urban bourgeoisie is implicit - revealed as it actually is through conceptualisations of civil society that exclude 'traditional' groups (such as ethnic associations) and opt instead for 'modern' groups such as professional associations or economic interest groups. The driving force behind this delimitation of what civil society is and is not, is linked to an awareness (or idealisation?) of the role that the bourgeoisie played in early-modern Western Europe, and to a desire that it might do the same in Africa. The Western European bourgeoisie are described as having enshrined 'universal' liberal values such as individualism and the rule of law - values which were then used in the project to discipline and limit the power of the state. The general acceptance of this modernisation thesis goes part of the way in explaining the

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[4]As an example here we might include Azarya's definition of civil society as 'a sense of reciprocal obligations and expectations that prevail among groups in society' (Azarya 1994: 91).

repeated calls in much of the literature for civil society in Africa to develop a common normative framework in order to transcend centrifugal forces in society and to cohere around an anti-authoritarian project. Woods, for example, claims that: 'The kind of universalism that came to characterise normative claims in the Western European tradition are often undermined in Africa by cultural and ethnic particularism' (Woods 1992: 97). According to Monga, in order that this particularism be overcome and that civil society acquire ethical objectives, it is necessary for a better educated middle class to emerge, 'since its members are in the forefront of those fighting for political space' (Monga 1995: 378). Thus instead of pursuing narrow, negative-sum political agendas, 'Associations must forge common ground both organisationally and programatically around a series of civic demands', writes Peter Lewis, before going on to outline these demands as a list of liberal rights (Lewis 1992: 54).

The emphasis on the role of civil society in creating 'integrating' or 'civic' political norms as in the West, reveals itself even more explicitly when it is used in order to define civil society in the first place. For example, Victor Azarya writes: 'The essence of civil society is...a commitment to take part in the establishment of a common order and a voluntary compliance by its rules...(Azarya 1994: 91). John Harbeson also states that civil society typically refers to the points of agreement on what the working rules of the political game should be. 'In spatial terms...civil society...is confined to associations to the extent that they take part in rule-setting activities' (Harbeson 1994: 4). Similarly for Naomi Chazan, the importance of civil society in contemporary Africa is for 'the construction of new, reliable and trusted frameworks of interaction between state and society'. Indeed, continues Chazan, 'this has become the prime precondition for democratization in Africa' (Chazan 1994: 88). These various formulations all emphasise that civil society is the realm of civicness, a unitary and reciprocal order in which - providing that the 'rules of the game' are observed - there need be no irresolvable divisions of interest. Here, modern politics - as befits those with a liberal viewpoint - is viewed as rule based and procedural; and it is the lack of such politics, or the 'fragility of state-society relations', which 'accounts for the profusion of political outlooks and world views' that has made politics in Africa so fractious' (Chazan 1994: 60). In sum, civil society is seen here as providing the political culture which turns divisively pluralist societies towards benign, even democratic, forms of competition between groups.

(i.ii) The Separation of Spheres

The second tenet of the liberal Africanist version of civil society is the clear separation of state and society. Again, this is closely related to the civil society narrative of Western European liberalism. Central here is a concern with the development of a 'public sphere' within which individuals and groups in society have space - free from state coercion - within which to influence 'the forms and content of the polity' (Lewis, 1992: 32). In the

contemporary Africanist debate, the use of the civil society concept has often become illustrative of a similar desire for the development of a public sphere separate from, and authoritative over, the state. Placing himself in agreement with Chazan, who has noted that associational groups in Africa have increasingly taken on the role of purveyors of public opinion (Chazan 1982: 173), Woods writes:

> The structure of a public sphere in Africa is similar at this point to the amorphous character of the European public sphere at the end of the 18th century. Clubs, literary associations, popular art, high rates of utilization of the press and especially of radio, and sophisticated informal networks for information exchange have become the means by which a public sphere seeks to limit the arbitrary nature of the state... This public in many African countries is attempting to articulate a principle of political accountability that is binding on the state elite (Woods 1992: 95).[5]

Parallel to the view that sees civil society as carving out a necessary 'public sphere', is the idea that a set of institutions must be established so as to protect this sphere and strengthen its ability to influence state action. Indeed, the institutional imperative to the liberal civil society agenda has led some commentators to prefer to use the term 'institutionalism' as a label that more accurately captures what is consistent within this approach. One example of an 'institutionalist' agenda is provided by Peter Lewis:

> The organisations and groups [of civil society] are not always in the vanguard of the democratic opposition, but they are the leading elements in delimiting and defending the autonomy of private interests against the hegemony of an authoritarian state. In most African countries, these institutions are fragmented, weak, coopted or disaffected. The consolidation of institutions *within* civil society is the primary task in the construction of a public sphere (Lewis 1992: 51).

In part, liberal theory here as in Latin America post-transition, is concerned with the institution-building side of civil society because it does not wish the 'public sphere' to become a forum for the aggregation of popular demands on the state and for 'excessive', 'over-politicised' participation - leading to a potential 'rule of the mob'. Lewis says as much when he argues that 'Civil society is not synonymous with political opposition, and the disposition of activists and incumbents toward an arena of private interests will be crucial to the future of the polity' (Lewis 1992: 50). Thus although civil society is seen as synonymous with the creation of a unified public sphere in Africa, this public sphere must also contain diverse groups or associations. In other words, this notion of civil

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[5]In its extreme formulations, although these are probably more libertarian than straightforwardly liberal (Hutchful 1995: 60), the emphasis on a civil society distinct from the state leads to highly anti-statist characterisations of civil society. Patrick Chabal, for example, wants to define civil society as 'a vast ensemble of constantly changing groups and individuals whose only common ground is their exclusion from the state, their consciousness of their externality and their potential opposition to the state' (Chabal 1994: 83).

society expresses the pluralist vision of social space. First, political participation, though important, should be indirect - mediated through various secondary associations. Second, and also as a function of the plurality of associations, political programmes should be disaggregated; being, in other words, only partial and cross-cutting rather than 'totalising' and reinforcing of other political affiliations (leading to a radicalisation of politics). This more instrumentalist understanding of the life of civil society, built on a deeper liberal notion of politics as competition between different interest groups in society, is expressed by Monga under the heading 'informal political markets'. For Monga, public opinion has little to do with the formation of a 'general will', being instead about groups 'increasingly expressing the desire that their interests should be represented' (Monga 1995: 360). These groups, unlike in Marxist/radical accounts, are not analysed according to their class character or power over resources, but are seen as legitimate as long as they observe the rules of the liberal-democratic game - that is that they be politically self-limiting, not seeking absolute power in the state. This is what Donald Rothchild and Lititia Lawson mean by their proviso that although 'civil society is made up of publicly active groups', this only applies to those 'that implicitly recognise the legitimacy and authority of the state' (Rothchild and Lawson 1994: 256). Since she excludes revolutionary groups from her definition of civil society, such thinking is also beneath Chazan's claim that 'civil society is separate from but addresses the state' (Chazan 1994b: 256).

Thus civil society, in its liberal formulations in Africanist studies as elsewhere, is concerned as much with privacy, with the limitation of 'politics', as with publicity. The connection made between civil society and a liberal, rights-based polity hinges upon the understanding that conferring fixed rights upon the citizen body 'gives substance to the notion of a delimited private realm'. It creates citizens, and the subsequent extension of this citizenship 'not only augment[s] the political community, but it also sets explicit limits to the exercise of public authority' (Lewis 1992: 43). This political project is closely connected with liberal individualism. Indeed, as Mahmood Mamdani points out (though not himself a liberal), the creation of political rights for the individual in Western society, 'was a phenomenon that went hand in hand with the development of a social space defined by contractual relations between juridicially free individuals...'(Mamdani 1990: 359). Although most liberals are usually less than cognizant on this point, essentially they see civil society as involving the stabilization of a system of rights which constructs *individual* citizens, both as citizens in relation to the state *and* as legal persons in the economy and the sphere of free association. While civil society represents simply the sphere of free association in most liberal accounts of civil society in industrialised societies, in application to 'underdeveloped' societies it becomes the rubric for a modern, liberal polity per se.

(i.iii) Civil Society and the Market

This private, individualistic civil society is also understood as being dependent upon the market sphere. At its crudest the relationship is seen, especially within the financial and governmental institutions in the core countries, as a simple one: the ascendancy of market relations - and attending private ownership rights - is believed to provide the material basis for the constitution of multiple power centres outside of the state which balance the state's power. Most Africanists, however, see that where demands for 'economic democracy' parallel those for 'political democracy' in Africa, '[this] is not so much a demand for a laissez-faire economy, but rather for the establishment of non-arbitrary rules against the incessant political and personal intervention in the economic affairs of African businessmen' (White 1992: 95). Harbeson does claim that it was the philosophically neo-liberal campaigns by the Western financial community for economic structural adjustment in Africa (dating from the early 1980s) that were partly responsible for the reemergence of the idea of civil society - 'in that the concept grew out of a resurgent faith in the validity and indispensability of the private sector to a country's political and economic health'. 'But', he continues:

> ...the use of civil society in such discourse has been reductionist, in effect *equating* civil society with the market in ways more reminiscent of the Hegelian than the liberal tradition. What is lost in such a formulation are the critical *political* roles of civil society...which are rooted in liberal philosophy... (Harbeson 1994: 9).

Nevertheless, property rights and the crucial role of the market are not by any means erased from liberal conceptions of civil society in Africa. For those Africanists, such as Woods, who build their model of civil society upon the western experience, it is important to recall that the gradual emergence of the bourgeoisie in Western Europe - and therefore of the public space of civil society - was inextricably linked to the rise of the market principle:

> ...the market contributed an organisational principle to the construction of a viable civil society. Karl Polanyi points out that "economic liberalism was the organising principle of a society engaged in creating a market system. Born as a mere penchant for non-bureaucratic methods, it evolved into a veritable faith in man's secular salvation through a self-regulating market" (Woods 1992: 80; quoting Polanyi 1944: 135).

This identification of the market principle with civil society remains even more explicit elsewhere. Peter Lewis, for example, states that: '...guarantees to property and the consolidation of an efficacious realm of private accumulation will be essential to the construction of civil interests and social differentiation' (Lewis 1992: 54). The emphasis here is again on the (liberal) division of the private from the public spheres; and the

market economy is seen as the means by which to achieve this in its apparent separation of economic from political power and in its dispersal of ownership and resources.

(ii) The Neo-Marxist Model of an African Civil Society

Initially, it is important to be clear that radical Africanists who engage with the concept of civil society are involved in a very different project from the radical theorists in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America identified in previous chapters. Broadly speaking, the radical Africanist model of civil society identified here is based upon an orthodox Marxist account of civil society as a realm to be applauded for its 'modernising' potential (indispensable to the socialist challenge of overcoming want), while at the same time being criticised for its own inequalities of freedom and power. So radical Africanists do not redefine civil society as unquestionably positive for democracy and freedom in the way that radical Central-Eastern European and Latin American civil society theorists tended to do. In this sense, radical Africanists who write on civil society (with the exception of Bayart) might be better understood as providing a *neo*-Marxist model of civil society, in order to differentiate their approach from that of the largely *post*-Marxist radicals from the previous two chapters.

What unites 'socialist' scholars working on civil society in Africa is not necessarily their understanding of civil society, but that 'they define the nature of democracy and thus the process of democratisation in terms which go well beyond the liberal model, stressing the need to democratise society as well as the state' (White 1994: 387). Osaghae, for example, writes that, for many Western scholars, 'a focus on civil society is aimed not at the benefits of democracy to ordinary people, but at its consolidation' (Osaghae 1995: 193). Thus for neo-Marxists, the liberal model of civil society, as will be explored in the sections below, is itself part of the problem with regard to an adequate understanding of what democratisation in Africa must involve.

(ii.i) The Neo-Marxist Critique of the Liberal Model's Account of Democratic Agency

The first bias that is seen to invalidate broadly liberal conceptions of civil society in their application to Africa, is the narrow focus on a purely urban bourgeois agency within the civil society democratisation project. In contrast to Latin American radicals, many of whom were at the same time abandoning the primacy of class (something which Central-Eastern European theorists had done even earlier), Neo-Marxists in African studies still look at civil society primarily in terms of class. Thus they question both the exclusion of non-bourgeois elements even where these are expressing legitimate popular aspirations and, more fundamentally, the failure to disaggregate associational life in terms of class power and material circumstance.

There is no denying, as Robert Fatton points out, that associational life has usually been characterised by its bourgeois make-up. Thus the struggle to democratise African regimes 'cannot be equated with radical change' in any straightforward sense (Fatton 1992: 5). As far as the popular aspirations of those classes who are perennially excluded from the political process are concerned, associational life does not necessarily engender substantive political change in terms of access to and control over resources, even if it does represent the possibility of a formal (and often superficial?) democratisation process. Furthermore, there is every reason to expect that African societies are even less likely to be radically transformed by resurgent associational life, given conditions of greater material scarcity:

> To participate actively and effectively in voluntary organisations requires relatively high levels of education, easy access to financial resources, and free time - all attributes of upper-class lifestyles. Moreover, voluntary associations are most easily constituted when they comprise small groups of individuals who are conscious of their special interest and of their capacity to effect desired changes (Fatton 1992: 5).

For those, like Fatton, who insist on a class account of African civil society, the very fact that a 'true economic bourgeoisie' is either largely absent or weak and unconsolidated, means that liberal democracy in Africa is by no means assured:

> In fact, the growth of civil society may contribute to an extension of existing inequalities. In all likelihood, it will be led by...and accrue to the advantage of, social classes well positioned to exploit economic opportunities in a capitalist economy...The expansion of civil society offers no assurances of flourishing democracies and better times (Fatton 1992: 114-15).

Making a similar point, but from a non-class perspective, Mamdani points to the way in which an urban, bourgeois civil society, despite its undoubted ability to pursue formal democratisation at a state level, does not achieve democratisation for the rural, peasant majority:

> Civil society politics where the rural is governed through customary authority is necessarily patrimonial: urban politicians harness rural constituencies through patron-client relations... Confined to civil society, democratization is both superficial and explosive: superficial because it is interpreted in a narrowly formal way that does not address the specificity of customary power - democratization equals free and fair elections - and explosive because, with the local state intact as the locus of a decentralized despotism, the stakes in any multiparty election are high. The winner would not only represent citizens in civil society, but also dominate over subjects through the appointment of chiefs... (Mamdani 1996: 289).

The African state may also be able to demobilise bourgeois civil society elements in ways not foreseen by the liberal model of democratisation premised upon the Western experience. Those 'modern' associations that occupy the civic public realm and which liberal theorists depend upon to 'contribute toward generalised definitions of personal freedom and individual liberty in Africa', are actually the very associations 'that are within easy reach of the state because they operate in the public sphere that it controls and claims to own. They are therefore the most exposed and weakest of the associations of civil society in Africa' (Ekeh 1992: 208). Materially speaking, while many of those elements in society pushing for democratisation may develop organisational autonomy, they often lack material autonomy from the state (Hutchful 1995: 70). Yet from a neo-Marxist perspective, even to continue the discussion in this way is at once to obscure, as does the liberal model of civil society, that it is not merely the state, but also civil society itself, which is a site of power and domination (Hutchful 1995: 65). This analysis leads neo-Marxist scholars to question to what extent civil society can really be understood separately, as is outlined in the next section.

(ii.ii) The Neo-Marxist Critique of the Liberal Separation of Spheres

The liberal separation of spheres between state and civil society is countered by another tradition of civil society theory, stemming originally from Hegel, through Marx, which sees no absolute distinction between society and the state, and which in fact posits a necessary overlap between them (Woods 1992: 81). For radical Africanists, given their Marxist heritage, the liberal notion of a unitary, 'civic', civil society (i.e. one in which there can be an affinity of interests if not a 'general will') is an ideological mystification of the realities of power and coercion throughout the social body, of the 'political' in the social:

> Rather than embodying a coherent social project, civil society tends to be a disorganised plurality of mutually exclusive projects that are not necessarily democratic... To transform it, as Naomi Chazan does, into an exclusive realm of civility...is to do violence to its very essence... The concept of civil society in the plural offers a better explanatory framework of the dynamics of political struggle rather than the rather simplistic and undialectical notion of a single unified civil society (Fatton 1995: 77).

Bjorn Beckman is another Africanist who seeks to criticise what he sees as the highly ideological and contradictory basis for the state-civil society division prevalent within neo-liberal orthodoxy. He calls for 'actually existing' civil society to be recognised over and above the 'civil society yet to come' of the idealising liberal discourse. This includes seeking a more positive role for the state, which Beckman sees as inextricably linked to popular demands, and thus also to civil society. Indeed, Beckman's starting point is the recognition that those groups which play a leading role in the articulation of popular

demands on the state in Africa are actually those within and around the 'public service nexus' - the teachers, students, doctors, nurses, lawyers and journalists who are the most active in articulating 'the defence of the autonomy of civil society vis-à-vis the state' (Beckman 1993: 30). In other words, contrary to the neo-liberal thesis regarding the need to 'roll back the state' in order for civil society to flourish, civil society in Africa actually does not and cannot exist independently from the state. Arguing that the neo-liberal project *itself* relies on massive use of transnational[6] and local state power, Beckman points to the inconsistency which results when 'actually existing' civil society, with its concern in influencing the state to which it is intimately linked, is dismissed from the category civil society because of its 'vested interest':

> The hypocrisy of this ideological construct...is that the beneficiaries of neo-liberal state intervention are as profoundly dependent on state promotion and protection, including the state enforcement of their own type of property rights. The neo-liberal project successfully exploits the radical and populist critique of the bad state but ignores that such critique is based on radically different expectations about what the state could and should do for the people. (Beckman 1993: 30-31)

According to Chris Allen, one mistake frequently made by the liberals who privilege African civil society over the state is that the state is 'confused with particular political systems, and even particular regimes' (Allen 1997: 336). Thus instances of civil society opposition to specific regimes, which take different forms, are confused with civil society hostility to the state per se. In other words, contextualised political opposition to authoritarian elites is disingenuously read as illustrative of a wider anti-state and pro-market agenda (Allen 1997: 336). Neo-Marxist theorists in general make the point that the burgeoning of voluntary associations does not originate from the 'crisis' in the African state as much as it does from the attempt to fill the social vacuum which the absence of the state creates for many Africans.· This was an argument made also by the Latin radicals, although they were not so dismissive of the 'state problem'. Certainly, neo-Marxist Africanists are right to point out that liberals cannot have it both ways: If civil society is merely a negative project of disengagement from the state, then any connection made between civil society activism and an expanded public sphere would prove unsustainable (Hutchful 1995: 59).

From this standpoint, a related problem with the liberal idealisation of civil society and demonisation of the state, is that the abandonment of statist politics in highly diverse and underdeveloped societies means (at least in principle) throwing out the baby of a

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[6]Of course, the exclusive focus on the state-civil society dichotomy in liberal accounts anyway obscures the possibility of external impediments to socio-political change. As Hutchful points out, very few Africanist accounts of civil society in Africa include, as did Bayart in his original study, the factors of imperialism and dependency (Hutchful 1995: 65). To this extent, much talk of civil society in Africanist studies is remarkably ahistorical.

collective politics with the bathwater of authoritarianism. The fear is of a civil society characterised by privatism in which, for example, non-payment of taxes (in order to reduce the amount of national wealth finding its way into Swiss bank accounts) becomes a general principle of civil society. In this instance it hardly needs pointing out that a progressive politics becomes all but impossible and, inevitably, both the public authorities *and* civil society are undermined in such a scenario. It appears to be forgotten that the state, even in liberal-pluralist accounts, plays the vital role of regulating competition between groups which might otherwise fall into a 'war of each against all'. As Lloyd Sachikonye puts it, 'without the protective, redistributive and conflict-mediating functions of the state, struggles to transform civil society become "ghettoised, divided and stagnant, or will spawn their own new forms of inequality and unfreedom" (Sachikonye 1995: 8, quoting Keane 1987: 15).

The equation of civil society with a state-minimising project is seen as even more mistaken once it is realised that, 'while the ruling classes are predatory and have totalitarian ambitions, *they* [*also*] aim to reduce the state' (Fatton 1995: 67, author's italics). Being *in* civil society (cf. Marx), the ruling classes want private property rights enlarged and social expenditure costs reduced by privatisation etc. In other words, it is often the state elites themselves who want to set limits on the state. The majority of the victims of state abuse (for whom the central problem is neglect), on the other hand, actually wants its growth in terms of the maintenance and expansion of welfare policies. *They*, contrary to liberal assumptions, set limits on antistatism.

(ii.iii) The Neo-Marxist Critique of the Market Model of Civil Society

Important at this point is the neo-Marxist critique of the place of the market in the liberal version of civil society in Africa. In the terms of those who want to talk about 'actually existing' African civil societies, there is little doubt that much associational life has stemmed from the shrinking of the state's commitment to public welfare in the face of economic crises; and the concomitant forced re-structuring in favour of the market has also driven many Africans into the 'private' arena of self-help and/or complete withdrawal. But equally, this is seen to have little if nothing to do with prospects for meaningful democratisation on the continent. While in the West the anti-absolutist bourgeois class had a commercial interest in establishing the rule of law and a rights based political authority, for many economic elites in present day Africa it is the control of the state apparatus which provides the conditions for their successful accumulation through the mechanisms of the market (and this too in formal democracies). Therefore, 'how public spaces [as opposed to private coping strategies] emerge when the main holders of economic and political power have no impetus to create them,' is a question which demands that we look beyond the formal logic of the market for an answer (Pearce 1996: 29).

Even if the liberal model is not mistaken in recognising the material possibilities that the market provides for the emergence of non-state associational life (which may contest the state's hegemony in the long run), neo-Marxist theorists criticise it for not recognising the hierarchical structuring of these associations that results due to the inequalities which people, and especially communities, bring with them to the market place. In general, then, 'civil society is constructed as a hierarchy of unequally valued persons [and groups], and, consequently, unequal capacities for self-realisation, despite the formal recognition of equal rights and equal personhood [that the market allows]' (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 9). It is for this reason that, while admitting that civil society in a market context may well be better able to push for political democratisation, the question still remains as to whose democracy is being talked about.

Blaney and Pasha also make the point, seemingly not recognised by the liberal model with its largely exclusive focus on the state-society nexus, that 'civil society must be established in relation to a market and social division of labour embedded in a wider global capitalism' (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 10). Thus, even within the terms of liberal theory, the inability of African societies to compete within a capitalist world economy must have serious implications for the establishment of civil society in the first place:

> ...the failure to generate wealth internally hinders the state in securing the welfare of self-seeking individuals, inhibiting attempts to stabilise rule, as well as a system of rights proper to civil society and the democratic procedures linking civil society and the state. Therefore, the very conditions taken as definitive of the Third World seem inconsistent with even the emergence and, certainly, the long-term stabilization of a sphere of civil society (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 10).

The crux of the matter is whether or not the liberal model's conceptualisation of the various processes immanent to the market in the West historically are accepted as universal categories. For Mamdani, as for other neo-Marxist scholars, the idealised thesis about the market, even if it were accurate, can only be applied to Africa 'because of a blindness to the very context...a concrete reality where both the market and civil society are at most partial constructs' (Mamdani 1995: 612).

(ii.iv) Neo-Marxist Models of an African Civil Society

Having looked in some detail at neo-Marxist Africanist critiques of the liberal model of civil society in Africa, it is now necessary, in turn, to examine the model of civil society provided by neo-Marxists themselves. It needs to be made clear that there are fairly striking divisions within the neo-Marxist 'model'. For the more class-based accounts of civil society in Africa, there is an overlap with the liberal model in terms of the importance attributed to the rising bourgeois civil society elements, which are seen as

pushing for society's independence from an overbearing state and for the negotiation of new rules of interaction between them. For example, Robert Fatton writes:

> ...the petite bourgeoisie (comprising the professional and commercial elements operating relatively autonomously from the reach of the state) has played, and continues to play, a fundamental role in the resurgence of civil society. Members of the petite bourgeoisie have found a privileged niche in the rapidly growing sector of nongovernmental (NGOs) and voluntary associations through which they are staking their claims for positions of influence and power. They have assumed leadership of the "multiparty" movement and organized themselves within civil society to bargain with the state about the rules of the process of democratization and privatization (Fatton 1992: 5).

Apart from his emphasis on class structure and the productive forces over the liberal emphasis on political institutions and political culture, Fatton's analysis differs markedly from the liberal account also in his focus on the tensions intrinsic to this process of democratisation *within* civil society. Unlike the liberal model, class-based accounts are generally keen to point out the highly contradictory and incomplete nature of class articulation in Africa - a situation which may render civil society a less than progressive force for political democratisation:

> Civil society is...potentially a highly subversive space, a space where new structures and norms may take hold to challenge the existing order. This is not to say that civil society is necessarily revolutionary; on the contrary, it may be the prime depository and disseminator of reactionary forms of knowledge and codes that confine subaltern classes either to old, unchanging behaviour, or to ineffective, disorganised patterns of collective resistance (Fatton 1992: 6)

In other words, where there are 'successes', these are not seen as generic to civil society, but instead reflect the use by the *bourgeoisie* of civil society organisations in order to bring their political agenda to bear on the state. On this reading, middle-class yet statised democratising elements are actually engaged in a form of class politics - seeking, that is, to control, rather than to reform, the state: 'The rise of civil society should thus be seen as the result of secondary contradictions within the elite structures of society' (Hutchful 1995: 70). However, despite the class focus of accounts such as these, what remains consistent with the liberal model is an underlying assumption (although this time an explicit one) that it is bourgeois sectors in society that are pushing for political democratisation. Other elements, which Fatton summarises as 'the traditions of the dead generations [which] are still very much present in the world of the living' (Fatton 1992: 7), are part of civil society in practice, but, ultimately, it is the growth of a 'nascent bourgeois' which results in the development of the protected private sphere on which both civil society and liberal democracy rest (Fatton 1992: 114). Within the Marxist

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tradition, of course, this intimate relationship between bourgeois society and civil society is not a new one.[7]

In a manner similar to Fatton - though more explicitly - Blaney and Pasha see civil society as essentially linked to the process of class formation and structuring. Again, as in the liberal model, civil society is about the establishment of 'modern' social relationships, specifically those between the state and society, which presents the possibility of democratisation. Unlike the liberal model though, and like Fatton's, the portrayal of civil society as a unitary space consisting of an unproblematic pluralism is precluded by awareness of the class contradictions within civil society itself (which in fact make its existence in Africa problematic in the first place). For Blaney and Pasha, then, capitalism or capitalist development are 'both a precondition and an aspect of civil society' (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 8):

> While the realities of uneven development make the attribution of civil society to the African political-economic context problematic...the major barrier to the fruitful use of civil society as a heuristic device in African studies is the tendency to ignore its theoretical and historical specificity as a sphere within certain (modern) forms of social life...[T]he identities necessary for the mutual recognition entailed in civil society and the democratizing project [are often] taken as given rather than as the result of definite processes of social development (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 11).

Blaney and Pasha go on to argue that the weakness of capitalist development on the African continent renders it largely pre-bourgeois - a situation which hinders the sort of social integration brought on by the development of the division of labour and the spread of exchange relations. This in turn explains the lack of 'modern' forms of social life with which to transcend the 'discontinuities' within African social formations and thereby make possible a sphere of civil society. One implication of this essentially modernising thesis for the understanding of civil society in Blaney and Pasha's work is, unsurprisingly, that civil society is viewed teleologically. First, they believe that 'the stabilization of civil society is a precondition for both the practice of even minimal democracy as well as the historical possibilities of further democratization' (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 17); and second, they therefore agree with Bayart that African autocracy is best understood in relation to 'this absence of substantial civil societies' (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 11).

In summary, class-based accounts of civil society understand it as built upon capitalist development - that is on the delineation of a 'new' social space or, more specifically, of 'modern' bourgeois society (as in the West). Therefore, on the one hand it is characterised as only partial in Africa while, on the other hand, it is still considered to be

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[7]For a Marxist critique of the idea of civil society in Southern African discourses, see Nzimande and Sikhosana (1995).

essential for democratisation. This analysis therefore uses the same universalist language as that of the liberal model, and indeed makes the same predictions regarding the need for civil society to replace 'traditional' social relations in a process of democratisation built along the lines of the Western example. It differs only in its awareness of the class character of civil society (civil society as a function of capitalist development rather than simply 'modern' in an institutional sense) which, in keeping with the Marxist tradition, sees civil society as itself the site of power and domination. Therefore the idea that civil society is synonymous with a democratic society, or with 'civicnes', is viewed as naive. Instead, civil society is analysed as presenting nothing more than the *possibility* of further democratisation in terms of the ability of popular forces to exploit the new social spaces that the growth of civil society has opened up.[8] In short, civil society is seen, at best, as 'a framework that has the imminent possibility of becoming more democratic and whose norms call for democratization' (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 8).

Ironically, therefore, the liberal-Africanist and neo-Marxist-Africanist accounts of civil society differ fundamentally only in their respective conclusions. For the former, civil society is a democratic end in itself, for the latter, it is merely a means by which popular forces in society may potentially further the democratisation process for their own ends. But, in either case, as White observes:

> Implicitly or explicitly, there is an *underlying historical hypothesis*: of a transformation from a previous political situation characterized by state dominance and 'traditional' social relations (pre-modern or pre-capitalist) to an emergent or established situation in which new forms of civil society, reflecting a new pattern of socio-economic relations and institutions, serve to transform the state and their relations with it (White 1994: 388).

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[8]Discernible here is a Gramscian understanding of civil society, although Gramsci's work itself is rarely alluded to in the Africanist literature (as it is for example in the Latin American debate about civil society). Although civil society is seen in the Africanist literature as less involved in the State's hegemonic project than it is in Gramsci's writings, which were applied to Europe, there is common ground in terms of the potentially counter-hegemonic project that civil society organisations are identified with. The most commonly found and superficial way in which Africanists adopt a Gramscian approach, is in their conceptualisation of civil society as primarily a matter of political agency rather than structure (what Hutchful terms the 'political' definition of civil society (1995: 58)). An example here would be Bayart's definition of civil society 'as the process by which society seeks to "breach" and counteract the simultaneous "totalisation" unleashed by the state... It is not so much a structural set of institutions, but the "social space", large or constrained, as it is shaped by historical forces' (Bayart 1986: 11-12). More explicitly Gramscian is Fatton's definition of civil society as embodying 'the private sphere of material, cultural, and political activities [which] resist the incursions of the state and emasculate exclusive monopolies of power. [However] it is contradictory - it is portentous of both democratic and undemocratic elements' (Fatton 1992: 103). Fatton, following Gramsci, thus sees the interaction between state and civil society as dialectical. While the state penetrates civil society through, amongst other things, its 'ideological interpolations', 'civil society penetrates the state through the creation of protective trenches against coercive abuse, material extraction and political compliance' (Fatton 1995: 67). This formulation is pure Gramsci.

(iii) Africanist Critiques of a Eurocentric Civil Society Concept and the Search for an African Civil Society

For some Africanists, particularly those who are Africans themselves, applying the idea of civil society to African politics must inevitably lead to Eurocentric analyses. Their suspicion is that a concept steeped in European history and normative political theory can not be used to interpret African experiences without excluding all sorts of relevant phenomena and distorting whatever phenomena are included. Especially with regard to the liberal idea of civil society, critical Africanists argue that there is a modernisation agenda at work which involves the universalisation of the Western liberal-democratic experience. An example here, though admittedly more explicit than most, is Woods account of the similarities between civil society in early modern Europe and civil society in present day Africa - a claim based upon the supposedly shared experience of resistence to the patrimonial state (Woods 1992). Mamdani terms this approach 'unilinear evolutionism':

> The central tendency of such a methodological orientation is to lift a phenomena out of context and process. The resulting bias lends itself more to description and speculation than to concrete analysis. In as much as it privileges the European historical expression as its touch-stone, as the historical expression of the universal, contemporary unilinear evolutionism should more concretely and appropriately be characterised as Eurocentrism (Mamdani 1995: 608).

The liberal model of civil society is held to be only dubiously applicable to African circumstances for a variety of reasons. Firstly, while liberals idealise the separation of the state and society, public and private spheres, from an historical perspective any such separation is believed to be structurally very different, if present at all, in much of Africa. Peter Ekeh, for example, argues that the Western experience of a unified public sphere, which the state and civil society both occupy, is not reflective of an African social space. Here the authoritarian post-colonial state - identified primarily by its monopoly over the means of violence - has itself defined the political space it occupies in society in terms of which movements and associations it allows to coexist with it in that space (Ekeh 1992: 196). The truth of this claim is reinforced, as has already been seen, when looking at the closeness to the state - rather than separateness from it - of many of the groups engaged in African democratisation process.

Bayart is another who defines civil society's separateness not in the idealised liberal sense, which sees civil society as apart from yet addressing the state, but instead as 'society seek[ing] to "breach" and counteract the simultaneous "totalisation" unleashed by the state' (Bayart 1986: 111). This is because the African state is believed to have been explicitly set up against civil society - rather than evolving (as in the West) in continual conflict with it. Consequently, the nature of the post-colonial African state - with its

'hegemonic imperative' driving it to shape and control society - itself defines the nature of civil society as resistance to this project, rather than something more positive along the lines of the western model with its state building project.

For Ekeh, who deconstructs the unitary public sphere of the liberal model further, the post-colonial African state has not actually been successful in its hegemonic drive, so that the political space it occupies is by no means the only public space that exists in Africa:

> I contend that Africa's political spaces are segmented and that the state has only partial control over the space it claims as its own. The sphere of the primordial public occupies vast tracts of the political spaces that are relevant for the welfare of the individual, sometimes limiting and breaching the state's efforts to extend its claims beyond the civic public sphere (Ekeh 1992: 196).

The implications of this analysis for the way in which civil society in Africa is related to democratisation are substantial; for it follows that many of the institutions and associations usually characterised as belonging to civil society operate 'outside the presence and attention of the state.' Therefore, it also follows that these elements of civil society are in no sense straightforwardly significant for the rise of political democracy:

> This is because civil society in Africa is largely indifferent to the affairs of the civic public realm over which the state presides. Civil society in Africa is content to look after the affairs of other segments of the public realm out of the reach of the state or those about which the state shows little concern. This is a matter of grave importance and marks a dramatic difference between Europe and Africa in the conception of civil society. (Ekeh 1992: 197)

What then is the importance of Ekeh's 'actually existing' African civil society for democratisation? Clearly, it is not that it induces formally democratic institutions. Instead, consistent with a more radical or popular conception of democracy, identifying civil society is perceived to require a much needed focus on the relevance of non-elites and their struggles for liberty - primarily from the constraints of material want. As Osaghae remarks, western scholars who have focused only on those organisations with a capacity to challenge the state - and who thus 'exclude rural and kinship/ethnic associations from the relevant civil society' - thereby 'underplay the relevance and roles of the social movements of ordinary peoples, especially those in rural areas, whose primary objective is not to antagonise the state but which are organisational expressions of unsatisfied needs' (Osaghae 1995: 194). For Osaghae, this relates historically to the difference between a European civil society's search for space free from the state, and the African experience of civil society evolving as a 'shadow state' in order to fulfil social welfare functions neglected by the state (Osaghae 1995: 194). In other words, while the presence of the state defined the struggle for civil society in the West, it has often been

its *absence* which has shaped African associational life. As Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba have pointed out, 'social movements can [not] be presumed to...be the agents of a transhistorical agenda' (Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba 1995: 10). When they are seen in this light, then we find what Osaghae terms the 'periodic' view of social movements, which abstracts away from unique and determinate structures at work in each society in ways that 'erode the past and construct the future' (Osaghae 1995: 187).

Relevant at this point is the question of the place of individualism in any African version of civil society. While the universalist, or 'transhistorical', liberal model of civil society would see it as built upon the 'free, self-determining individual', it is often argued, from a more communitarian standpoint, that 'the autonomous agentic individual freed from communal, ethnic and class loyalties is nowhere to be found in Africa' (Fatton 1995: 73). Here, civil society represents the realm of 'collective solidarities' rather than the idea of the individual 'as an ethical and moral entity'. Thus the individual actor is seen in Africa... 'as firmly embedded within communal, mostly primordial attributes that define the individual in his or her opposition to the State' (Seligman 1992: 202-3, in Fatton 1995: 73).

A good example of this more communitarian definition of civil society is provided by Monga, who, though a liberal, understands the collective solidarities of his home continent:

> The fact is that we cannot define a specific African civil society without reference to either its particularities or the context in which it has emerged...African societies were able to generate their own networks of communication and forums for discussion within which it was possible to express collective fears and dreams. For me, the term 'civil society' refers to those birthplaces where the ambitions of social groups have created the means of generating additional freedom and justice (Monga 1995: 363).

Essentially, the more 'Afro-centric' approaches to conceptualising civil society shift their focus away from a unified public sphere made up of individual citizens onto those actually existing groups and movements which define African 'publics' (whether or not these include the state or respect some abstract notion of the individual human agent). On this understanding, as Ekeh sees it:

> Africa has a great deal of civil society - referring to associations and institutions that enhance the prospects for individual liberties and personal freedom by operating outside of the state's control and that possess the capacity to confront the state when these liberties are threatened. Those...who see an impoverished associational life in Africa have unfairly focused their research lenses on the civic public realm which more easily parallels the arena for civil society in the West...Beyond [this] realm,...there are vast networks of associations of civil

society whose capacities have hardly been measured in academic research. (Ekeh 1992: 207)

This concern with what might constitute 'actually existing' civil society in Africa as opposed to the nascent civil societies of the other two 'European' accounts is shared by Osaghae. Osaghae sees the civil society perspective as providing 'a very important framework for factoring the ordinary peoples, their demands, actions and orientations into the transition process' (Osaghae 1995: 193). Similarly, Ekeh, arguing that it is insufficient to say that the mere presence and even further growth of civil society will help the development of democracy in Africa, calls for proper attention to be paid to the 'norms of democracy that are informed by the values of civil society' as it already exits: 'Democracy endures... because it responds to certain *local* values and norms which enable its operators to accommodate *local* traditions (Ekeh 1992: 198 - author's italics).

One problem with this very understandable and necessary attempt to redress the balance of civil society theory from an African perspective, is that it ends up being a very general account of civil society which seems insufficiently distinguished from 'society' *tout court*. Furthermore, if civil society is only concerned with local conditions and practices, then it is not clear what role it can play at the level of the state. While the state may be seen as an inappropriate level of analysis with which to begin to work out a substantive model of democracy for Africa, it is indisputable that, in the modern age, the power and resources available to all but the most 'collapsed' of states necessitates maximising democratic control of its apparatus. The popular, movement-based democracy that this model of civil society upholds seems to pay insufficient attention to the institutionalisation of democracy at the level of the state. Olaitan's approach is illustrative of this common failing:

> The sustenance of democracy in any society is therefore dependent more on the readiness of the members of the civil society to enthrone and preserve democracy in that society through struggle. The civil society, in a sense, determines the extent of democratic possibilities in any society through its activities and resilient demand for democracy (Olaitan 1992: 427).

This conceptualisation of civil society as the bearer of popular demands for 'democracy' pitted against the state (which Callaghy criticises for equating civil society merely with a 'resurgent society' (Callaghy 1994: 238)), has the problem of stripping the concept of its theoretical specificity. Blaney and Pasha, for example, claim that where it is defined in this way, then civil society can be characterised as emerging everywhere - since resistance to the state in one form or another is ubiquitous (Blaney and Pasha 1993: 17). For Blaney and Pasha, this makes a nonsense of the rootedness of the concept in descriptions of social relations unique to the market economy and the capitalist division

of labour. It could also be added that, defined simply as political opposition to state authoritarianism, the concept is rendered irrelevant to political analysis of the post-transition. For example, Kunz's definition of civil society as 'an aggregate of groups and activities, whose presence is measured in its cumulative impact on demolishing autocracy' (Kunz 1995: 187), says nothing about the role of civil society in sustaining democratic practices and institutions *after* the autocrats have been deposed, or of its possible contribution to deepening democracy even after a measure of stability has been achieved.

There are further problems with an undifferentiated 'grass-roots' conceptualisation of the life of civil society. Hutchful points out that if civil society is identified with the spaces that the 'traditional' or primordial sphere undoubtedly provides for 'participation, accountability and consensus regarding rules, [then] precolonial Ashanti would have been a civil society' (Hutchful 1995: 64). In short, when characterised in this manner the concept can appear tautological, for 'if civil society has "always been there" then it obviously loses much of its analytical force as an explanation of recent political change' (Hutchful 1995: 76).

Another problematic tendency with the more 'African' models of civil society, and in this there is consistency with the Eurocentric models, is that of unproblematically linking civil society and democratisation. Even if civil society is redefined loosely as grass-roots political agency pitted against the authoritarian state, then it still has to be demonstrated accurately that this phenomenon has been the deciding factor in the arrival of political democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. The standard of evidence necessary to this claim has by no means been achieved. Indeed, as Hutchful observes, even superficial empirical evidence 'demonstrates only too well that the success or otherwise of democratic transitions seems to be relatively independent of the strength or intensity of resistance of civil society' (Hutchful 1995: 66). Even where pressure from below does appear to have played a major part in democratisation in African countries, Allen reminds us again that associations do not 'lie undifferentiatedly behind democratisation' (Allen 1997: 332). Most research seems to demonstrate that a relatively small number of associations (especially lawyers' associations and other professional bodies) have played a disproportionately large part in most African transitions.[9] This would seem to raise doubts about any connection made between a civil society designated simply as 'grass-roots associationalism', and political change in the continent.

Also seemingly obscured by the 'grass-roots' version of civil society in Africa are the deeply undemocratic practices of many groups in African society, groups which display

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[9]Although there are dissenting voices regarding this thesis. Monga, for example, claims that the urban/professional bias is more apparent than real and that the 'spirit of opposition' originated in rural areas (Monga 1996: 28-29).

'gender-chauvinist, gerontocratic, authoritarian and fundamentalist characteristics' (Hutchful 1995: 66). The non-individualist, communitarian, conception of civil society which is being advanced does not necessarily equate with a peaceful, harmonious, associational pluralism. *This* pluralism is based, differently, upon the instrumental, and therefore cross-cutting, model of collective action encountered in liberal theory. If built on a solely communitarian account of collective action, 'African' civil society could instead be seen as 'conflict ridden and prone to Hobbesian wars of all against all' (Fatton 1995: 73). As even Ekeh admits, 'many primordial associations...in Africa are exclusively concerned with the welfare of their own and have not helped in the crystallization of a generalised conception of the human person and individual liberty that transcends ethnic boundaries' (Ekeh 1992: 208). To obscure these uncomfortable realities is ironically to make the same mistake as the liberal-libertarian model of civil society which, in its demonisation of the state, is also guilty of misrepresenting society as the realm of virtue and civil society as unquestionably civic.

The main argument made in defence of those who wish to include ethnic, religious, or other 'communitarian' groups in an 'African' version of civil society, is that the inclusion/exclusion of specific types of groups 'is a purely empirical question that cannot be answered in advance on the basis of purely formal criteria' (Hutchful 1995: 73). In other words, using a broadly Gramscian approach, it needs to be asked what political role (in this case hegemonic or counter-hegemonic) groups are playing at a particular time and in a particular place. For example, while in some contexts the hierarchy of the Catholic church has been solidly hegemonic as far as traditional power holders are concerned (e.g. Zaire before 1992), in other contexts they have been decidedly counter-hegemonic (e.g. Malawi from 1992-1994). Making the same point in reference to the emergence in Uganda of 'significant compromises' (over the process of constitutional debate and political transition) which were brought about with the re-emergence of the traditional kingdom of Buganda, Simba Kayunga writes that:

> to treat ethnic or religious movements and civil society as opposites underestimates the former's capacity to enter into alliances, coalitions and federations with other social groups which are considered to be truly operating in the public sphere (Kayunga 1996: 12, in Oloka-Onyango and Barya 1997: 117).

In summary, Africanists suspicious of the civil society concept question why, 'like other historical constructs - democracy, nation - civil society cannot develop under a different set of historical conditions?' (Mamdani 1995: 604). Leaving this possibility unexplored means, according to Mamdani, that debate on civil society invariably falls back on the European experience: 'Whatever their differences, all are agreed that African reality has meaning only in so far as it can be seen to reflect a particular stage in the development of European history' (Mamdani 1995: 608). It is this element to both liberal and class-based

accounts of civil society that demonstrates itself in their universalist language and prescriptions, and also in their teleological view of how civil society relates to democratisation. All such models, Mamdani believes, exclude concrete African social processes and struggles from the analytical view-finder. This they do by arraying civil society on the side of the polarity accorded universal status (whether 'modernity' or 'capitalism'), while its binary opposite - community - is seen as enveloped in tradition. 'It is this uncompromising modernism of 'civil society", writes Mamdani, 'that reveals [those who use it] as parochial' (Mamdani 1995: 614).

(iv) Can There Be an 'African' Civil Society?

Following Mamdani and other critical Africanists, the liberal and neo-Marxist models of an African civil society are seen here as deeply flawed. It is not that the themes raised by either model are inapplicable to Africa but, rather, that both tend to converge ultimately on a modernisation account of democratisation. Thus there is the assumption that democratisation will be along the lines of the Western model and that actually-existing liberal democracy (either as the end of democratisation, or as a necessary staging post to 'real' democracy) is therefore the only form of democracy on offer.

However, in disagreement with Mamdani and other critical Africanists, the concept of civil society is not held to be amenable, as perhaps the idea of democracy is, to tailoring to suit specific contexts. The idea of civil society *can* be used as a purely normative category (as it was, for example, by sections of the Eastern European and Latin American Left in their articulation of a new form of political praxis during the 1970s and 1980s), but in the largely academic or explanatory - rather than political or mobilising - Africanist literature on the subject, it is always used, in the final analysis, to point to some sociological reality, to something that exists 'out there'. While democracy is, at least in its most coherent formulations, a normative concept which can find various institutional expressions, civil society, in the Africanist literature, is inescapably about institutions as well as norms. As Allen perceptively observes, to see civil society in terms of associational life of any kind (and we might include here all of the models outlined above), far from resolving the question of the political significance of associationalism, 'continually requires one to ask what are [civil society's] boundaries: which associations, when, and under what conditions [do they] act in ways supposedly characteristic of civil society?' (Allen 1997: 334)

In as much as the civil society concept constantly calls for a delimitation of what *kind* of associational life 'counts' and why, Africanist models of civil society - whether they be essentially liberal, neo-Marxist, or 'African' - are drawn into the methodological pitfall of conflating normative and empirical accounts of civil society. For example, some Africanists want to utilise what they see as the civil society concept's analytical power,

while neutralising its Eurocentrism, through using it 'in a very restricted sense relating to the emergence of norms defining a "civil sphere" '(Callaghy 1994: 235). According to Callaghy, this method makes possible a focus upon a civil society defined in its historical context. But does it? Understanding and describing embedded political norms can only be made more difficult by starting with a concept that, whatever the good intentions of those using it, demands that normative judgements (concerning the identity and usefulness of a 'civic sphere') be made from outside of the context being analysed. Actually, as Hutchful points out, the question 'of whether a new and coherent political morality is emerging in Africa is at the moment unanswerable, since we have little insight into the actual discourses and agenda of these groups' (Hutchful 1995: 71).

Getting entangled with a civil society that seeks to be both 'factual' and normative is a problem that besets even those Africanists, like Bratton for example, who start out with the intention of using the concept purely as a 'conceptual construct' which does not 'pre-judge the nature of state-society relations' (Bratton 1989: 417). For it is enlightening to observe that, despite his initial concern to ensure the concept's neutrality as an analytical tool, Bratton, in a later piece, ends up claiming that 'the contours of civil society are shaped by the social groups and classes that come out openly in favour of political liberalisation' (Bratton 1994: 60). This delimitation of what civil society consists of draws criticism from Ekeh for its Eurocentrism - for resolving the question of 'what types of associations qualify for inclusion in the conception of civil society' by falling back on the western model (Ekeh 1992: 194). Yet Ekeh too, despite his 'African' version of civil society, must also make value judgements about associational life based on an analytical framework that is no more sociological (though it might be less explicitly 'European') than Bratton's. Thus although Ekeh understands the concept of civil society as pointing towards the ubiquitous values of individual liberty and personal security (Ekeh 1992: 189), which thereby allows him to look for social qualities rather than particular social institutions, ultimately he too begins with a normative conception of civil society before searching for evidence to uphold it. So it is that very few, if any, of those using the idea of civil society are able to stay with just a concept or, alternatively, with just an empirical description (civil society seen simply as associational life). For those conceptualising civil society, empirical evidence is necessary to illustrate the efficacy of their normative model; for those describing civil society, some sort of a priori normative 'hunch' is necessary to know where to begin fishing in the vast sea of facts. In other words, far from helping us to describe 'new' forms of political discourse and political praxis in Sub-Saharan Africa, the category of civil society may be part of the problem in our even hearing what Africans are saying, and seeing what they are doing, in the first place.

Also noticeable is the way in which the Africanist contribution to the debate on the character of civil society is much less substantive than that of the Central-Eastern

European and Latin American discourses. Firstly, Africanists, with the exception of a few 'Afro-centric' scholars, have mostly borrowed the concept of civil society from existing western models, rather than seeking to innovate their own versions in accordance with African circumstances. This is in large part because the Africanist discussion on civil society, as has been shown, has taken place exclusively post-1989. Thus the task of working out political models in authoritarian contexts, which radical Africanists, prior to 1989, carried out in the absence of any civil society categories (relying largely on orthodox revolutionary praxis), has been supplanted by the need to analyse democratisation processes both in terms of explaining their occurrence and also the prospects for their consolidation and deepening. This being the task in hand, it is unsurprising that the concept of civil society has arrived in African studies in its liberal-democratic guise. Burgeoning explanatory work on democratisation from within orthodox political science circles was already incorporating the idea of civil society in the fields of Eastern European and Latin American studies, and the concept was therefore ripe for use in a similar fashion in African studies. This must also form part of the explanation as to why radical models within the Africanist debate have been largely reactive (redeploying the Marxist critique of the liberal ideology of civil society) rather than proactive (supplying radical alternatives to the liberal model that yet see civil society as an end in itself and not merely as functional for 'modernisation' and as a vehicle for popular power).

So if Africanists are to be commended for their contribution to civil society theory, then it is surely not for the provision of new models of civil society. What does stand out more favourably is that, at present, it is only within African studies that the growing hegemony of the liberal-democratic model of civil society theory is being actively challenged by radicals who remain socialist. Precisely because they remain socialist, these theorists are not a priori in favour of civil society. This is an increasingly rare position to take, radicals not excepted, so it is all the more important to a balanced debate. Yet the tendency of radical Africanists to think little beyond class-type analyses means that their idea of civil society often appears Eurocentric, teleological and monist. A model of civil society that applies to Africa while yet retaining something of the concept's rich history, seems no closer at hand.

CHAPTER 5

Comparisons and Contrasts

Providing an overview of discourses on civil society relating to the three selected regions, helps to answer the questions: who was using the concept?, when and where were they using it? and why were they using it? Taken together, answers to these questions provide the bedrock for a critique of contemporary civil society theory, which is provided in the next chapter. While each 'regional' set of debates on civil society is understood as having certain unique characteristics, it is important to be reminded at the outset that these break down into further, more specific, discussions which are often quite distinct from each other.

Specifically, this chapter centres around the question of how to categorise the different discourses on civil society, both within and across regions. It will be argued here that there are broadly two sets of discourses, between which a number of distinctions can helpfully be drawn. The first distinction between these two sets of discourses on civil society, to be covered in the first section, concerns differences in *why* the concept has been redeployed. This is the most crucial distinction, and it relates to whether, on the one hand, the idea of civil society is used to articulate a radical, 'third way', democracy within the social sphere, or, on the other hand, whether it is seen as instrumental to the institutions of liberal democracy. In short, here the concern is with identifying the separate political projects held by protagonists of civil society. For radical theorists of civil society, civil society itself should be democratic,[1] and indeed is the site of any substantive democracy. For liberal democrats, civil society itself need not be democratic, since democracy is a mechanism for controlling the state - something which civil society helps to do quite apart from its contribution to direct, participatory, forms of democracy.

This ideological distinction between models of civil society also relates closely, as will become clear in section one, to the question: *when* has it been used? Ideas about civil society prior to the democratic transitions in the communist bloc during 1989 (specifically from the mid-late 1970s to the early-mid 1980s), are primarily of the radical variety, in that they are more concerned with meeting the conditions for a substantively democratic society, than with analysing the possibilities for liberal democracy (which was not yet seen as 'the only game in town'). After 1989, by contrast, most talk of civil society has centred around the task of explaining the 'third wave' of democratisation, and

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[1]For example, the Charter 77 theorist, Uhl, writes: '...both the quality of the alternative associations of today (their inner *democratic* and anti-authoritarian structure) and their orientation towards creative work and working relationships are immensely important' (Uhl 1985: 195).

with wondering how the new liberal democracies might be consolidated.[2] It is suggested that this post transition shift in civil society theory in part reflects what has happened within political science generally. For, with the demise of the communist model of 'democracy' and the apparent triumph of liberal democracy, political science has become largely hegemonised by the liberal democratic model.

In the second section, methodological distinctions relating to the different models of civil society outlined in the first section will be explored. Methodological distinctions between dialogues on civil society are parasitic upon the model of democracy being assumed. Radical democrats have what might be termed a 'political' or mobilising approach to the idea of civil society, because the democracy that they want has been ephemeral and is nowhere firmly established. Liberal democrats, by contrast, see civil society as an analytical concept, since the democracy that they envisage is already present in many contexts, such that its presence or absence is what needs to be explained, not how it could be different in the first place. Put simply, these differences relate to *how* the concept is used - i.e. whether it is seen as a normative-political model which anticipates a better, but not yet existing, society, or as descriptive of a set of institutions which reinforce normatively desirable, yet extant, polities (liberal democracies). *Both* these methodological approaches are of course backdroped by normative ideas about what democracy is or should be, yet 'political' models are concerned less with specific institutions that are already known, and more with the practice of a 'new' kind of politics which we can only be anticipated.

1. Discourses on Civil Society and Perspectives on Democracy-Democratisation

Since the various models of relevant civil society theorists have been explored in detail in each of the preceding chapters, they will only be reviewed in general terms below. The main focus will be upon the wider picture of patterns of convergence and divergence between the different understandings of democracy and democratisation.

(i) Within Pre-Transition Discourses

(i.i) Poland

Turning to the earliest debates on civil society from Central-Eastern Europe, it is informative first to compare these between countries. For the Polish theorists of civil society - particularly those grouped around the KOR - the importance of the idea of civil

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[2]In the Latin American context, where some (liberal democratic) transitions occurred in the mid 1980s, this distinction is slightly less clear cut and also, of course, begins a little earlier. However, debates about the meaning of civil society within the Latin American context were much influenced, as elsewhere, by the events of 1989. Therefore, from here on the dividing line (which in Central-Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa occurs in 1989 and in Latin America a little earlier) will be described as falling between the pre and post-transition periods.

society was precisely that it focused attention upon the social sphere, the sphere of everyday life of ordinary people, rather than upon the state or official sphere. Relatedly, democracy is conceived by these theorists as primarily a way of life, as direct and participatory, rather than as institutionalised and procedural. Procedural models, as they saw it, restricted democracy to the level of the state alone and were therefore alienated from citizens' real concerns.

For Michnik, for example, 'every act of defiance helps...build the framework of democratic socialism, which should not be merely or primarily a legal institutional structure but a real, day to day community of free people'. One thing stands out here, as it does for all of the Polish theorists from this discussion on civil society: The democracy articulated by Michnik is understood by him as being radical or socialist. The term which most often expressed this vision, a term tied closely to that of civil society (defined by Nowak as the sphere of civil autonomy) and sometimes used interchangeably with it, was that of 'self-management'. For all the Poles, local self-management - whether economic (worker or factory councils) or political (grass-roots autonomy from centralised power) - was the very substance of democracy. This was true to the extent that the utopia of a stateless society, one in which the administration of things supersedes the administration of people, was never far away from the Polish model of civil society. Kuron, the most radical theorist, was explicit in privileging the participatory activism of civil society over and above institutional mechanisms for preserving political accountability in the state.

However, in the final analysis, the Polish theorists of civil society did recognise the need for interest representation and thus for pluralist institutions in the state along the lines of the liberal democratic model. This they conceded because of their rejection of the Marxist doctrine of the existence of a universal interest, or of a universal subject, in society. In other words, now that ends were no longer known, these theorists accepted the need for pluralism to feature as a permanent feature of democratic politics - and thus also for a state to enforce a structure of law and rights. For Michnik and Nowak in particular, democracy required a 'legalised arena' within which to 'institutionalise the autonomous sphere of social life'. If the democracy of civil society was to mean anything, if it was even to survive, then state-civil society mediations were needed in the manner of formal political democracy.

Michnik's idea of a 'new evolutionism' sums up how it was envisaged that a 'society first', or civil society, programme could be compatible with a wider democratisation process. The idea of 'evolutionism' was intended as a critique of revisionism, in which concessions and rights are granted 'from above', rather than being appropriated 'from below'. In other words, the self-organisation of society (i.e. building civil society) was seen as exerting its own relentless pressure on a system which, ideologically, could not be maintained

without preserving the illusion of a basic unity between state and society. Revisionism, on the other hand, in its search for favourable circumstances at a state level, was constantly in danger of being derailed.

Yet this undoubtedly combative model of democratisation was, crucially, not intended as a prelude to some form of revolutionary overthrow of the existing authorities. Both the idea of 'evolutionism', and also of the 'self-limiting revolution' (Kuron), involved 'going beyond' classical revolutionary theory with its violence and its totalising ambition to seize power in the state. The Poles were convinced that 'the revolution devours its own children', as each new power in the state consolidates its position to the exclusion of others. Thus they talked of 'self-limitation' as being a permanent feature of their political programme, and therefore of the construction of a democratic civil society (or autonomous societal sphere) as being an end in itself - regardless of whether or not the state was ever successfully democratised.

(i.ii) Czechoslovakia

The Czechoslovakian theorists around Charter 77 displayed a similar understanding of democracy. Even Havel, whose thinking was less directly 'political' than that of the Poles, adopted a broadly socialist or 'third way' model of democracy (for example, his call for 'self-organisation' included within it the principle of self-management in the economic sphere). Indeed, Havel was so critical of representative democracy, of its institutionalisation of 'mistrust' instead of cooperation, that he coined the term 'post-democratic' in order to extol solidarity and fraternity over all formalised and ritualised ties (presumably whether they be state-socialist *or* liberal-democratic).

Like the Poles, Havel was dismissive of a 'democracy' which remained the sole preserve of 'professionals', and his version of 'self-management' is developed under the title 'self-constitution'. Again like the Poles - though perhaps more so given the critique of modernity which Havel provides, which is absent from the Polish theory - the role of the state in a democratic polity is viewed as at best ambiguous. The 'lifeworld', collectively expressed as civil society, is the only sphere of true human existence, and so democracy is also about resisting the state, and indeed all forms of modern mass society, in order to recover human action and the genuinely 'political'. Indeed, in more recent utterings, Havel outlines his key theme of 'living in truth' as something akin to republican or civic virtue.

For many of the other Chartists, comparisons with the Polish approach to democratic theory are even more direct. Despite their many differences, none of the Chartists advocated liberal democracy in any straightforward sense; and what unites radical Catholics, existentialists, and socialists of various persuasions, is a basically 'third way',

radical, even socialist, model of democracy. All emphasise self-management, and most include economic self-management in this as well. The attachment to direct democracy also demonstrates itself in the widespread concern with political alienation in capitalist liberal democracies, and in the disquiet about their lack of consensual politics or substantive (i.e. 'socialist') citizen equality. These shared concerns lead most of the Chartists to emphasise the need for a public sphere - an arena wherein top-down politics can be replaced by self-articulation, and where public policy can be debated and formulated openly and collectively.

However, as with the Poles, while one or two of the Chartists anticipated the withering away of the state as 'the parallel polis' (read civil society) absorbs the 'official sphere', most recognised this vision as dangerously utopian. What sets the Chartists (even the radical socialists amongst them) apart from earlier socialist thinking, is their concern with legality, with civil and political rights. It is this which leads most of the Chartists to advocate the institutional mechanisms of formal-legal democracy, and thus also to the acceptance of the need for a state within a democratic polity.

In terms of how likely democratisation was, and how it could be achieved, the Czechoslovak theorists were generally less optimistic than the Poles. However, while some Chartists such as Havel tended to emphasise the moral aspect of resistance (for example, Havel characterised democratisation as a largely invisible process in the realm of social consciousness), they retained nonetheless a highly political model of democratisation.

Similarly to the Poles, the Czechoslovaks sought to break with dissidence, which they saw as only reactive, in favour of a more proactive opposition that would create public space. The strategy of seeking democratisation in the state directly should, they felt, be postponed indefinitely, but what could be done was to democratise social structures through the expansion of self-management, or of civil society (see Battek). Going further than the Poles, the self-defence of society against the state was seen by many Chartists as a timeless democratic project, whatever the character of state power. Benda's essay, *The Parallel Polis* (1978), is the most well known example of this thesis. Here, Benda argues for organised activities to parallel the state or 'official' sphere and for these various activities to coalesce around a broad, unlimited association of people - a polis. Certainly, the term, 'Parallel Polis', unlike the Polish term 'New Evolutionism', does not imply that the project of 'civil society against the state' represents only a stage of political development.

Like the Poles, most of the Chartists are explicit in their rejection of traditional 'power-politics', especially of the project to gain power in the state. Thus democratisation was

seen not in purely strategic terms, but as constituted by the development of a new way of doing politics itself - 'apolitical politics' as Hejdanek termed it, anticipating Konrad's 'antipolitics' thesis in Hungary. Although this new way of doing politics was to be highly 'political' - in the sense that every free act was a direct challenge to 'the system of the lie' - it was not to be at all totalising, or caught up with oppressive modernist ideas about the inevitability of progress or expansion (see Benda and Havel). Again, the 'new' politics of the parallel polis was seen as an end in itself. Any outward pressure on the 'official sphere' would, as with the Polish idea of 'evolutionism', be slow and incremental. For the Chartists also feared that any violent revolution, even if successful, would 'devour its own children' by obliterating the 'other' defined in relation to itself.

Thus most differences between the Chartists and the Poles merely reflect a situation of much less flexibility in Czechoslovakia than Poland at the time. While in Poland the 'parallel polis' for a while became reality in the form of Solidarity, the Czechoslovaks had to be content with slowly chipping away at the structures of power through a dual process of holding 'power' to it own account, while simultaneously undermining its claims to specialist knowledge through 'living in truth'. Though this may seem a less radical, or political, model of democratisation than the Polish one, it is clear that the thinking was the same, only less was possible in practice.

(i.iii) Hungary

Bernhard describes the ideas associated with the Democratic Forum in Hungary as yet another instance of 'third way' thinking - this time of a 'garden Hungary' including a multiparty system and a mixed market economy, but with a much greater stress upon local and economic autonomy (i.e. cooperatives, workers councils, local self-government etc.) than in the liberal democratic model. Konrad, given his conflation of civil society with an 'antipolitical' (basically antistatist) project, is explicit about the need for factory and city self-management over and above 'mere' Parliamentary democracy. He provides a somewhat Rousseauian account of the inadequacy of voting only once every four years, when the substance of democracy is all about 'workplace and local community self-government, based on personal contact, exercised daily...'. When we add to this Konrad's critique of western liberal democracy as simply dividing 'the political class into two or more party leaderships' - we find a classical defence of a radical, republican democracy against the 'representative' democracy which, in practice, merely circulates elites.

Although less extreme than Konrad, other Hungarian theorists of civil society, as with the Poles and the Czechoslovaks, also say little directly about Parliamentary or representative democracy. However, again there is an awareness, as for example in Kis and Bence's 1977 essay, of the need for institutionalised interest representation, which

was seen as vital if the state was to be made accountable and for civil society to survive and maintain its influence. Even Konrad admits that multiparty, parliamentary democracy might be a condition for society's self-defence.

Nevertheless, when it came to strategies for democratisation, the Hungarian oppositionists shared with the Poles and the Czechoslovaks (from as early as 1978 in the case of Kis and Bence) the post-reformist belief in a 'society-first' programme. Bence, the Hungarian philosopher, spoke for many oppositionists when he lauded the Poles for demonstrating that while the idea of 'a great democratic transformation' should no longer be clung to, it was still possible to envisage 'an area for democratic autonomy'. To Bence, this was a highly political stance which yet was not a power project, but 'counter-power'. Similarly for Kis, a 'third way' for democratisation was now possible in which the classical alternatives of reform and revolution could be surpassed by way of 'a narrow road' consisting of 'promoting limited changes sustained by autonomous organised forces independent of power'.

Yet despite their widespread acceptance of the insights contained within the 'Polish model', Hungarian theorists around the Democratic Forum re-shaped it to fit their own circumstances. The Hungarian opposition was less cohesive and mobilised than the Polish one, and the Hungarian regime more reformist. Thus the model of the 'Social Contract' was worked out which sought to make the most of movement by the party-state towards quasi-constitutionalism or legality. In consequence, the Hungarian model of democratisation evolved into a much less confrontational, or 'political', one than in Poland. Hope was placed, not just in the 'autonomous life of society', but also in the seeming 'modernisation' of the Hungarian polity towards a more market-based system, and thus of a civil society evolution akin to that believed to have occurred in the West. Despite his radical politics, even Konrad accepted that 'the Hungarian way is more the way of social change, while the Polish way was more of political change'.

(i.iv) The Latin American Left

Closely mirroring the Central-Eastern European approach to civil society, those on the Latin American left who initially engaged with the concept were inclined towards a 'socialist', rather than a liberal, reading of democracy. That they were dealing with democratic models at all reflects the rejection by these leftists of class reductionism and orthodox revolutionary theory, in recognition of pluralism and the 'autonomy and validity of th[e] dimension of society'. Both of these convictions were expressed by way of the concept of civil society. As with the Central-Eastern European theorists, Latin American leftists developed 'a democratic project advocating the weakening of all bureaucracies and the establishment and strengthening of spheres of autonomous public life' (Munck).

Something of the closeness between these two models of a self-managing democracy is suggested by Cardoso's characterisation of the early Latin American discourse as a fusion of lay anarchism and Catholic solidarity thought - two of the themes most significant also for the Central-Eastern Europeans. Arising out of this fusion, for the Latin dialogue as much as for the European one, was a collectivist notion of civil society, and thus also of democracy. For these theorists, the democratic freedom of civil society was not represented by individual choice in the market place, as is typical of the liberal-democratic model in some of its forms, but in the autonomy of communities, social movements and work-places from the system of 'power'. Democracy, in this vision, has antipolitical overtones, overtones which were most clearly revealed in the frequent claim that state power and democracy were in fundamental ways incompatible. Moulian, for example, wrote that the democratic state represents a 'contradictory realisation of liberty' whose particular forms of domination, though they are not exposed by the generic category of dictatorship, are real for all that. Boron similarly saw 'real' democracy as requiring the complete resocialisation of state power to civil society.

The utopia of a fully autonomous society, such as Weffort also alluded to for example, was usually a function, as it was also for the Central-Eastern Europeans, less of an explicit denial of the possibility of a democratic state, and more of a certain perspective on the meaning and significance of democracy. This emphasised, indeed made imperative, participation from below - which was why the civil society concept became important, in order to articulate this 'new' sense of democracy in the face of liberal models. Thus detailed consideration of the nature of formal democratic institutions in the state gave way to an exclusive concern with the organisation of civil society. This deinstitutionalised vision of a grass-roots democracy was expressed by Lowy in his assertion that democracy is not a matter of 'political form' or 'institutional superstructure', but is a 'social formation' in which 'the people exercise power'. For a continent in which Parliamentary democracy had historically proved so partial and ineffectual, the democracy of everyday life, of human action, was deemed preferable to the democracy of a distant institution and of a formal procedure.

Although they did not use exactly the same language as the Central-Eastern Europeans, the Latin American left also came to many of the same conclusions about the best programme for democratisation. Of particular importance was the rejection of orthodox revolutionary practice due to its violence, and for its emphasis upon a Leninist vanguard intended to seize power in the state. Vanguardism was now seen as only reinforcing the elitist, hierarchical and militaristic culture of the right. In their own way, then, the Latin American theorists of civil society also arrived at the belief that the 'revolution devours its own children' - a fact attested to in their now consistent denial that the 'civil society' project was about the seizure of state power.

The sections of the Latin American left who adopted the idea of civil society were also much influenced by events in Europe during the 1970s, which sets them apart somewhat from the largely inward looking Central-Eastern Europeans. This difference is explained to some extent by the presence of many Latin leftist exiles in Europe at this time. From the European context, the Latin American left took note of the success of parties of the left in mainstream politics, and also of the non-violent democratic transitions in Southern Europe.

When these experiences were allied to the failure of state-directed strategies back in Latin America, and also to the degree of success that the military regimes had had in disbanding existing opposition organisations, then the Latin American left came to their own 'society first' programme. This programme reflected the Central-Eastern European one in its focus upon a gradualist and sustainable strategy of democratisation, and also in its aspiration to build a society-wide alliance against the institutions of power through the creation of spaces for autonomy (civil society).

Here the Latin American theorists tended to use Gramsci's ideas about building a popular counter-hegemony, yet these ideas were not essentially different from those advocating a broad-based 'parallel polis' in Central-Eastern Europe. Both approaches looked to an inclusive front in the struggle against authoritarianism, and understood democratisation as primarily a defensive strategy with regard to the state. Indeed, to the extent that democratisation was little, or not even at all, conceptualised in relation to a programme to democratise the state, there was a remarkable affinity between the debate of the Latin American left and those from Central-Eastern Europe.

(i.v) The Latin American New Social Movement Discourse

NSM theorist-activists were generally just as suspicious of the distant institutional forms of political democracy as the leftist theorists of civil society, who were by now generally part of the NSM scene themselves. Many of the new movements practised elements of direct democracy - seeking to develop, as Mainwaring and others have recorded, participation, open meetings, collectivisation, rotation of leadership and administrative transparency. Thus democracy for these activists and ordinary people was indisputably about 'the social relations of everyday life', rather than something to be realised at the system level where they had only known coercion, cooption and manipulation. Even within the earlier, and more Marxist, debate about Urban Social Movements, the ideal of grass-roots democracy gained legitimacy over orthodox visions of seizing popular power in the state.

As categorised by theorists such as Slater, the ethos of the 'basis democracy' of the NSMs (or at least that of the *theorists* of the NSMs) was defined by 'the search for autonomy, the deconcentration of power, the construction of a new political morality and the fight against all forms of oppression'. Again we find a view of democracy as involving the appropriation of sovereignty (the right to self-management) from the state. On this understanding it is not surprising that the concepts of civil society and democracy often appear to be conflated, or used interchangeably. Both the ideas of civil society and democracy implied the creation of non-hierarchical, autonomous, spaces within which to experience collective social relations. To the degree that these spaces were understood in the plural, then so too was this notion of democracy pluralist. Yet ultimately, this is a republican democracy - individual citizens do not figure prominently within it. Nevertheless, as with all other such discourses, this 'socialist' model of democracy does not show the lack of concern that its earlier variants did for civil and political rights.

In this sense, the NSM approach to democracy was typically 'third way', seeking to bring together insights from the liberal and socialist political traditions. 'What I propose', wrote Quijano, epitomising this approach, 'is that today in Latin America the dominant masses are generating new social practices founded upon reciprocity, equality and collective solidarity as well as on individual liberties... [We want] the happiness of collective solidarity and that of full individual realisation'.

The programme for democratisation outlined by NSM theorists was also essentially the same as that arising out of the overlapping leftist debate. Where the NSM discourse was particularly emphatic, however, was in its rejection of party-based programmes. Because democracy was conceptualised in terms of autonomy and self-organisation, democratisation could hardly be advanced, on this view, by devolving decision making to party elites. That this view was held strongly by many NSM activists is demonstrated by their rejection even of traditional parties of the left (which, of course, were as hierarchical as any other parties).

However, there were heated debates about the extent to which movements should have autonomy from each other. Autonomy on its own, it was recognised, was insufficient for a broader democratisation programme in that it would lead to the fragmentation of the popular forces in the face of a violent and coercive state. The autonomy sought was autonomy from the state, but in order to achieve this, individual movement autonomy would have to be compromised. Again, this reflects some of the discussions from the Central-Eastern European context - particularly concerning Polish Solidarity, which had a hegemonic role within the opposition. No movement comparable to Solidarity arose in Latin America, yet the tension between the model of democracy as autonomy and self-

management, and the exigencies of democratisation as necessitating a united, popular front against the state, was nowhere stronger than within the NSM dialogue.

Essentially, democratisation came to involve two quite different political projects for theorists within this discourse. First, there was the attempt to extend democratic space within society through the provision of a multiplicity of movements and associations which would provide fora for participation and self-management. Second, there was the inescapable fact of the coercive state, and the need to act collectively to at least resist its incursions. Democratisation was therefore conceived, at one and the same time, as both a pluralist and a collectivist programme, with little attempt being made to describe how these two aspects might relate in practice. Particularly with regard to political action on the macro-level, the rejection of the party form made it difficult to envisage how it could have been coordinated.

(i.vi) Comparing Models of Democracy from Pre-Transition Discourses on Civil Society

How do the discourses outlined above compare? Most noticeably, there is a broadly 'socialist' conception of democracy as concerned, at least to some extent, with economic and social equality, and with maximising popular control over productive activities. For if state-socialist 'democracy' was condemned for obliterating civil and political equality, liberal democracies were just as heavily criticised for their social and economic inequality, and for their distance from ordinary citizen concerns. In other words, a critique is provided of existing democracy, as well as of existing socialism.

This feature is not altogether surprising, given that most interlocutors within these pre-transition disputations on civil society were on the left. This was particularly the case for the Latin theorists, yet, despite their wholesale rejection of 'real socialism', also held true for the European theorists. The idea of civil society was important to this 'socialist' model of democracy in that it articulated the importance of the social sphere, of the more localised activities of community members and producers. Statist democracy, in contrast, was seen as excluding from democractic control the real conditions under which people lived and worked.

By extension, participation was a central value arising from these debates. However, the emphasis on participation did not have the same underlying cause or purpose for these theorists as it does for the New Left, who see it as equally important. For New Left theorists, participation is celebrated primarily for its 'developmental' characteristics - that is, for helping to deepen the democracy already on offer through adding value to citizenship. For theorists from the radical debates, however, participation was not a 'problem' for their democratic theory in terms of needing encouraging and theorising. Of course, theorists such as Havel *were* concerned at the lack of collective participation due

to the socially atomising impact of 'totalitarianism'; but there seemed to be an underlying assumption that, once these barriers were removed or ways found round them, people would rediscover their 'true' nature as participators. This Aristotelian ontology, the sense that active self-management is what is naturally desired in all places and at all times, runs as a common thread throughout the radical discourses on civil society.

This different understanding of the meaning and significance of participation also reflects the less individualistic, or 'liberal', reading of democracy within these dialogues than within western New Left discourses. For the former, the imperative of participation was more about the political-material benefit of self-management in workplaces and communities, rather than psychological development. Here again, the more socialist roots of these theorists are revealed. They did not articulate an individualistic politics precisely because their central concern was the societal atomisation which authoritarianism had wrought in their regions. *Communities* needed rebuilding and empowering - individual emancipation, if mentioned at all, was seen as dependent first on this.[3]

The most evident feature of the 'third way' model of democracy from across the radical, pre-transition discussions was its antistatism or 'antipolitics'. The key to understanding this feature lies with the notion of autonomy. Both the Central-Eastern Europeans and the Latin Americans were instinctively aware of something akin to Michel's iron law of oligarchy - that any significant levels of political organisation seemed to hollow out democracy by creating new hierarchies, as had often happened in Latin America with the cooption of the popular forces from above by political parties, and also in Central-Eastern Europe where the growth in 'totalitarianism' paralleled the development of party-state bureaucracies. Thus while democracy was conceptualised as being about local autonomy, civil society was conceptualised *as* local autonomy. Both civil society and democracy, apart from becoming at times indistinguishable from one another as concepts, are therefore relatively deinstitutionalised. Indeed, nowhere in any of the pre-transition debates about civil society are detailed procedures for democratic politics at any level laid out. Democracy was not seen as procedure but as autonomy, as human action, as a way of life. Indeed, it was a republican democracy that these theorists had in mind.

Why then was the term civil society so central to these discourses? After all, were not these ideas present already in political theory? This may indeed be so; yet civil society theory did more than merely reiterate democratic-socialist or left-libertarian positions.

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[3]The only exception to this is the more individualistic emphasis to Havel's thought; although he too is ultimately interested in the freedom of the community as a whole, and sees individual 'living in truth' as strategic to this end.

Uniquely, when compared to earlier socialist or syndicalist models of democracy, these theorists of civil society finally engaged, if only inconsistently, with liberal theory. Indeed, the concept of civil society itself, as we shall see in more detail in the next chapter, was a vehicle for this encounter.

The main step towards engagement with liberal ideas, and thus towards a genuinely 'third way' approach to democracy, came with the acceptance of pluralism as a fact of politics, and also of the need for the management of pluralism through the formal institutions of liberal political democracy. To be sure, the degree of acceptance of pluralism was uneven. For some theorists across all these early discourses, local self-management, or civil society, was by its very nature diffuse and therefore sufficient to pluralist politics. And for many of the Latin theorists, the so called 'fact of pluralism' came less from a positive reading of the liberal notion of politics as competing interests, and more from a negative reading of the Marxist assumption of a universal historical subject. Nevertheless, nearly all of the theorists of the different pre-transition dialogues on civil society accepted, if only implicitly, that the representation of interests was a permanent feature of politics. In other words, contrary to the Marxist assumption that civil society would wither away along with differences of interest, civil society was now conceptualised as necessary to democracy in the first place.

There also exists a remarkable degree of common ground between the various pre-transition discussions on civil society concerning how to achieve democratisation as a practical political programme. Central here is a shared concern with what the Poles termed 'the self-limiting revolution', with a radical alternative to orthodox ideas about revolution which yet avoided the retreat to a purely reformist strategy. Although the Central-Eastern Europeans made more of the critique of reformism - since it figured prominently in previous attempts at democratisation in the region - the Latin Americans, with their rejection of the party form, were no more amenable to it in practice. For both sets of theorists, conventional reformism was unsuitable given that its horizons were limited to politics in the state (and, for the Central-Eastern Europeans, also because of the situation of ideological hegemony).

Traditional revolutionary practice was denounced because, given the critique of statism in all its forms, it was now seen as self-defeating to focus upon the seizure of state power, which would only continue the cycle of hierarchical, top-down politics, albeit under a different banner. Revolutions built upon the model of 1789 were in addition violent, and thus self-defeating also with regard to the type of politics they practised. Non-violence was a consistent principle of all the early debates, though it was perhaps more prominent in Central-Eastern Europe where the threat of Soviet intervention raised the stakes considerably. However, for the Latin American left also, attempts at violent

revolution were understood as merely reinforcing the culture of militarism which was itself the main obstacle to democratisation.

Despite their ambiguity towards democracy as something that could exist at a system level or in an institutional form, theorists from the various pre-transition discourses on civil society were not entirely disinterested in the question of how the state was to be democratised. How could they be when, in both regions, the state presented such a formidable barrier to their hopes and dreams of a democratic society? Therefore, across all of these discourses there was a shared understanding that, if the state was to be democratised, then it would be in a gradual, evolutionary manner as an increasingly democratic and autonomous society hollowed it out and stole away its functions. There were to be no direct confrontations, the 'society first' programme would find its own solution to the problem of the state through democratisation 'from below'. This perspective goes some way to explaining the lack of detailed consideration, even from those theorists who recognised that the democratisation of the state was important, of what a democratic state might actually look like.

Finally, why was a radical model of civil society absent from the African context prior to 1989? The answer to this question, it appears, has much to do with the lack of post-Marxist theorising there. Radical Africans seem to have been insulated from this ideological development, which was so important in the Central-Eastern European and Latin American contexts. Even post-1989, radical Africanists are best described as adopting a neo-Marxist approach to civil society because, despite including the 'popular forces' within it (thereby moving beyond the wholly negative equation of civil society with market relations of classical Marxism), they are still thinking in terms of class as the central cleavage in African societies, and also remain broadly statist. In holding on to these modes of analysis, the Africanist radicals who now engage with the concept of civil society could not accurately be termed post-Marxist.

That post-Marxist theorising did not successfully penetrate the African left is reflected in contemporary African studies, where a radical model has not emerged that compares directly with those from the Central-Eastern European and Latin American contexts. Yet why this should be the case is not altogether clear. As was demonstrated in chapter four, African and Africanist radicals in the 1970s and 1980s appear to have been completely unaware of developments in Marxist thinking elsewhere. In particular, there is no evidence that the seismic shift that was Eurocommunism had any impact on them in the way that it did on many of the Latin American left. This must have been in part because when African radicals faced exile from their own countries, they naturally gravitated towards those with Marxist governments (such as Tanzania) in the same continent; in short, they were simply not exposed to Eurocommunism. Also, as was

argued in chapter four, the success of Marxist guerrilla movements and the relative weakness of the state in Sub-Saharan Africa, engendered much less disillusionment with orthodox left strategies than in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America. In these two regions, of course, it was post-statism that actually opened the doors to post-Marxism, rather than the other way round.

Having looked at pre-transition debates on civil society from the period before 1989, let us now look at how these compare with debates that have taken place *since* the watershed of 1989.

(ii) Within Post-Transition Discourses

(ii.i) The Literature on Central-Eastern Europe

The post-transition literature on civil society in Central-Eastern Europe sees the civil society concept used to describe and explain democratisation based on the largely unquestioned assumption that democracy is liberal democracy. Democratisation is therefore viewed primarily as the process of transition to multiparty systems that occurred in the region in 1989. Civil society is viewed as an important category in understanding these transitions through factoring the role of pressure 'from below' in the collapse of the communist regimes.

From this perspective, the concept has other uses in analysing democratisation. Having accounted for transition (as partly due to 'civil society' seen as citizen's protests), theorists are keen to use ideas about civil society to explain how and why some countries consolidate their liberal-democratic regimes more successfully than others. In these instances, civil society is related to associational life, the presence of which, it is held, is indispensable to democratic consolidation. This is because a 'civil society' supposedly prevents the state from becoming over-powerful, and because it apparently fosters a democratic culture of pluralism and compromise. The very fact that these types of accounts use the term 'democratic consolidation', demonstrates that their authors view democratisation not as an always incomplete journey towards the realisation of democratic ideals, such as citizen equality and control over decision making, but as a process for institutionalising the procedures of liberal democracy - i.e. consolidating multipartyism and free and fair elections.

It is not surprising that, given this view of democratisation, civil society is often viewed as purely instrumental. In other words, the associations of civil society are seen as important because of their contribution towards the institutionalisation and routinisation of liberal-democratic politics, and not because they provide spaces for democratic participation and autonomy. Indeed, these latter goods would actually be seen as quite dangerous in undermining nascent democratic systems. An interesting insight into this

utilitarian understanding of civil society is gained when we consider that an association such as Solidarity for example, which did not fulfil many recognisably liberal-democratic functions and which was not directly connected to transition, is usually excluded retrospectively from the category civil society. Similarly instrumentalist is the commonplace description of the citizen 'upsurges' which led directly to transition (such as in Czechoslovakia and the GDR for example) as 'civil society'. Yet in the absence of the demobilisation of these 'upsurges', what had been seen as 'civil society' would now be characterised pejoratively. Here the fear is the classical liberal one of an 'over-mobilised' or 'politicised' society. This approach also involves privileging liberal (i.e. strategic) associations over collectivist and republican associations (such as Solidarity), which are seen as over-politicising society and as dangerously raising citizens' expectations within the new democracies. In short, associationalism is praised for its pluralist representation of interests within liberal democratic systems, and not because it offers spaces for democratic participation and deliberation.

(ii.ii) The Literature on Latin America

Also within the Latin Americanist dialogues on civil society in the post-transition era, there is a determined bias towards liberal-democratic models and hence towards an understanding of democracy as a solely meta-political mechanism. For this literature, Dahl's notion of polyarchy is influential in terms of its exclusive focus upon voting rights and multiparty elections. As in the literature on Central-Eastern Europe, while the civil society concept is operationalised in order to describe and explain democratisation as a process of regime transition, it is no longer used to conceptualise some idea or principle seen as central to democracy itself. This is civil society for positivists, analysts who have stopped asking why democracy should correspond with their description of existing 'best practice'.

Stepan asserts that democratisation 'refers fundamentally to the relationship between the State and civil society'. And as Levine puts it, seemingly attacking earlier, radical models of civil society, 'I do not [believe] that associations...are models of democracy. Nor do I believe that small-group democracy is necessary to maintain democratic politics on the national level'. Both Stepan and Levine are representative of the literature here: democratisation is seen as something which happens in the state, not as a property of civil society.

The literature on Latin America noticeably does not concern itself with the idea of civil society to the extent that the literature on Central-Eastern Europe does. This is probably because of the absence of anything quite like the citizen upsurges of 1989 in Central-Eastern Europe occurring in Latin America, where transition appears to have had far more to do with elite pacting and negotiated transitions. However, particularly amongst

theorists of transition, the understanding of civil society as a generalised mobilisation is present, although this time, in accordance with the belief that democratisation is an elite-led process, it is characterised as something that only happens 'once liberalisation begins' (Stepan). Within the literature on consolidation, civil society is treated as a more permanent feature of the political landscape, but is still presented as strategic to the institutionalisation of liberal democracy through the focusing of interests on the state.

The understanding of civil society as either a 'popular upsurge' leading to a specific kind of regime transition, or as a mechanism for interest representation, is just as instrumentalist as in the literature on Central-Eastern Europe. Although these definitions allow room for a model of democratisation which recognises the importance of the popular sectors, civil society is generally understood as simply providing the conditions for elite reformers to negotiate transitions to political democracy, or as an institutionalised arena for the consolidation of this democracy. Either way, any positive role which civil society might have after transition does not include the continuation of its earlier activism. Especially in a Latin American context, where the dominant classes in alliance with the military have proved that they will not tolerate 'excessive' popular pressure, the primary aim of democratisation, according to most theorists, is to consolidate liberal democratic regimes, not to encourage participation which may actually be inimical to their survival.

(ii.iii) The Literature on Sub-Saharan Africa

This literature is different from the Latin American and Central-Eastern European literatures, because here the liberal model of democracy is not as hegemonic. While a bias towards liberal democracy is undoubtedly dominant within the Africanist dispute about the meaning of civil society, this bias encounters fierce opposition from neo-Marxists and from alternative 'African' accounts. For theorists from the former camp, faith in formal liberal democracy - especially the liberal idea that a pluralist associational scene, or 'civil society', is the key to democracy in Africa - reveals exceptional naiveté in the face of the huge inequalities of wealth and power characteristic of Africa. (Neo)-Marxists see a continent where capitalist development has not progressed far enough for citizens to be created in the first place; associationalism is therefore not politically significant in the same way that it is within 'modernised' societies. Alternatively, for theorists of an 'African' model of civil society, the liberal democratic model, with its exclusive focus on state-society relations, misses the much more important grass-roots associational scene. This scene, which often has little to do with the state, is understood as much more significant for African democracy in the sense of being participatory and orientated towards the solution of collective problems.

Reflecting the presence of alternatives to liberal democracy within Africanist debates on civil society, different conceptualisations of democratisation as a political project also abound. For those theorists looking for liberal democracy in Africa, as in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America, democratisation is what happens in the state when various institutions such as multipartyism and free and fair elections are established. In this context, the civil society concept is used to analyse the wave of transitions which spread throughout Africa after 1989. It is seen as especially useful in highlighting the role of popular pressure, which played an important part in these transitions.

On the question of democratic consolidation, liberals again understand it to be closely tied to the rise of civil society, except this time understood more narrowly as urban or middle class groups (the earlier and more broadly based 'upsurges' having dissipated, their one role in triggering transition now over). The privileging of these groups is implicit in the identification of civil society exclusively with voluntary groups such as professional associations. These associations are seen as important to democratisation along the lines of the model of democratisation from the West (as this is read by these theorists, that is), where the rising bourgeoisie increasingly constrained the power of the state, given their interest in the rule of law and predictable government. Voluntary, or middle class, associations are also seen as representing 'universalism' in the face of tribalism. Of course, most voluntary associations are only formally universal or open, since their membership, as with professional associations for example, is constituted largely according to the material base. Yet this is not apparent to most liberal-democrats, given the exclusion of material variables from their conception of the political.

For neo-Marxists, however, democratisation is viewed as the part ordinary people can play, acting collectively, to meet their needs and advance their interests. In other words, democratisation is not only a function of changes to the political organisation of the state, but is a process rooted in society. Democratisation along the lines of the liberal democratic model is seen as woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the rural majority, since it is a formal, institutional process that leaves material considerations to one side. For neo-Marxist theorists, democratisation, if it is to mean anything, actually requires a more positive role for the state in meeting people's material needs. Thus if civil society is to count for 'real' democratisation, it is only in the sense of freeing space which the popular forces then need to exploit for their own purposes. Civil society and democratisation are therefore only indirectly related on this account, if they are even related at all.

Finally, those Africanists arguing for a specifically 'African' version of civil society, in a manner interestingly reminiscent of earlier radical debates from Central-Eastern Europe

and Latin America, equate civil society with grass-roots autonomy and self-management, though this is little theorised. This notion of civil society is also closer to earlier radical discourses, and distinct from either of the other two models from the Africanist discourse, in seeing civil society as an end of democratisation rather than only its means.

(ii.iv) Comparing Models of Democracy From the Post-Transition Discourses

The obvious question to ask at this point is why the liberal democratic model is largely hegemonic within post-transition discourses on civil society in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America, yet not within the Africanist discourse? Of course, as has been shown, Africa did not have an earlier, 'radical' discourse on civil society (in part due to the lack of penetration of post-Marxist theory). Thus radical Africanists can engage with the concept as something of a *tabula rassa* within the confines of their own field. For students of Latin America and European post-communism, by contrast, the concept seems exhausted of its earlier, progressive, potentialities given the continued absence of the radical democracy envisioned by previous theorists of civil society (see more on this in chapter 6).

Yet, as chapter 4 shows, radical Africanists - unlike their counterparts in Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America whose work on civil society came earlier - have also had to compete with alternative, specifically liberal democratic, models of civil society. Most likely because the concept has arrived within African studies as part of a package of liberal assumptions about African politics in the wake of the so called democratisations of the early 1990s, African radicals have had to return to their Marxist theory in order to recall the most powerful critique of the liberal model of civil society: namely that it only reinforces class inequality if left to its own (market) devices. This essentially negative reading of civil society led, in chapter four, to radical Africanist models of civil society being termed 'neo-Marxist', in order to distinguish them from the radical models from Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America, which were largely positive and therefore definitely 'post-Marxist'.

The fact that it was largely external scholarship which led to civil society theory arriving in African studies may also explain why, of all the *post*-transition dialogues studied here, it is only the Africanist discourse that contains arguments made in favour of a specifically regional model of civil society - as if in defence against colonisation by western scholarship. This echoes something of the approach of the radical *pre*-transition theorists from Central-Eastern Europe, who made certain arguments for Polish, Czechoslovak, or Hungarian exceptionalism. Indeed, in fending off an apparently alien western concept by completely changing its meaning, 'Afro-centric' theorists of civil society reflect the long history of pan-Africanism amongst a certain section of African scholars.

However, apart from the Africanist debate with its more contestatory character, post-transition debates on civil society in the other two regions share for the most part a liberal notion of democratisation. Democratisation is something which starts and finishes in the state with the institutionalisation of procedures such as multipartyism and free and fair elections. Hence civil society (however it is defined) is conceptualised as significant for democratisation to the extent that it contributes to the establishment and preservation of political democracy. Gone is the radical notion of the participatory nature of civil society, and of its contribution to autonomy and self-management, since neither of these processes are unambiguously supportive of liberal democracy. This perceived ambiguity flows from the liberal emphasis upon representation - an institution which suggests that participation should be only indirect and that the professional political class should be allowed a certain degree of independence.

If civil society is to be activist, then this too is only seen as legitimate when it is supportive of liberal democratic institutions - i.e. as leading directly, though through non-violent means, to the collapse of authoritarianism. High levels of activism beyond this point are liable to be condemned as representing something other than civil society, which should now routinise its role of representing interests In this capacity, it is assumed that civil society will contribute to the consolidation of democracy, which is viewed as a very different process to that which achieved democratic transition in the first place. Democratisation, on this account, is not a universal political project which will always and everywhere be incomplete, but a series of distinct stages in the transition from one kind or regime to another. Within these different stages, civil society has quite different roles to play, for it is not an end in itself, but a means to a wider end - liberal democracy.

2. Comparing Radical and Liberal-Democratic Models of Civil Society for their Methodologies

The most significant methodological divide separating different discourses about civil society lies between the 'political' method of the radical theorists, and the 'descriptive' or 'analytical' method of the analysts of liberal democracy. This distinction is not straightforwardly that between 'activists' and 'academics', but between (radical) theorists who use the idea of civil society to explicate a 'new' politics for the future (i.e. there is a critical project concerning existing political arrangements within these accounts), and theorists for whom civil society consists of particular institutions that are found in the present.

While all discourses on civil society are 'ideological', only radical discourses on civil society explicitly politicise the concept through self-consciously privileging the conceptualisation of a new form of democracy over and above the description of existing democratic 'best practice'. On this understanding, the classical Marxist notion of civil society is 'political' (though negative for all that), as too is Gramsci's formulation (although this time more positive), and for our purposes, the early dialogues on civil society in Central-Eastern Europe and in Latin America.

The radical discussions took place within authoritarian political contexts and were directly concerned with working out models of political praxis for these contexts. Yet their notion of civil society, as we have seen, was also built around the normative critique of *all* extant political institutions and practices, whether from East or West, North or South. Their project was not to describe what constituted civil society in the societies within which it supposedly existed, but to disseminate the *idea* of civil society as a means to mobilise in new ways in the (seemingly to them) *global* struggle against an alienated form of politics.

Thus civil society could reasonably have taken many institutional forms for the radical theorists, for it was the politics of civil society, not its exact sociology, which animated them. This goes some way to explaining why there was so little mapping out of actual institutions by radical theorists of civil society. For, given their action-orientation, they were looking for the realisation of a political-ethical agenda across society (or societ*ies*) as a whole; an agenda which, in their eyes, could only be narrowed and rendered hierarchical and partisan by institutionalisation. In short, they used the concept of civil society as activists, in some ways avoiding the analytical requirement for definition altogether, which is why we might reasonably see their models as more political.

'Political' discourses on civil society are clearly very different creatures from 'analytical' ones. The critical project present for the former is largely absent for the latter. It is true that sections of the post-Marxist western left continue to engage with the concept of civil society as part of their ongoing critique of capitalist liberal-democracies.[4] However, discounting for the present the place of the New Left discourse, in general terms it still holds true that, since 1989, models of civil society do not contain, and are not themselves part of, a critical project. For these theorists, the point of civil society is still that it helps to describe the world, and not so much that it envisages changing it.

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[4]However, these theorists are not really in the business, as were the radical theorists, of proposing an alternative democracy. In this sense, the New Left discourse on civil society represents something of a 'half-way house' between the 'political and 'analytical' methodologies isolated here.

Indeed, the very earliest versions of the idea of civil society from the Scottish Enlightenment fall into this category - in their attempts to describe and explain the transition from feudalism to capitalism through the rise of market society. Although the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment were concerned with the normative question of how commercial society - with its individual freedoms, utilitarian ethos, and increasing division of labour - might hold together, they saw civil society in contradistinction to less developed 'barbaric', or 'rude', societies and thus within an evolutionary schema. In this sense, their theories were most certainly descriptive-analytical rather than political (though they were, of course, highly normative).

In a similar manner today, the 'analytical' work on civil society seeks to account for political change, except that this time the phenomenon to be explained, as we have seen, is the so called 'Third Wave' of democratisation dating from the mid 1980s in Latin America and from 1989 in Central-Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. For these post-transition discourses, given their social-scientific or analytical project, the concept of civil society is often presented as a neutral 'tool' with which to describe and explain democratisation, and therefore as primarily 'scientific' rather than normative. Although this self-understanding should not be accepted uncritically, here the important point is the decisive break with earlier 'political' discourses on civil society, which, perhaps uniquely in the history of civil society theory, were unashamedly normative, and which indeed saw talk of civil society as inescapably *about* norms.

CHAPTER 6

Towards a Critique of Contemporary Civil Society Theory

Working on the basis of the two models of civil society identified in the previous chapter, in this chapter I set about, firstly, investigating what can explain the timing of the return to the idea of civil society in the first place. What needs to be accounted for here is why the concept reemerged when it did in its radical guises, and also why this version of civil society theory has subsequently declined.[1] Secondly, I turn to the question of whether the two models of civil society outlined in the previous chapter contain ideas or themes that are common to both. Or, conversely, to what extent are interlocutors in different discourses talking irreconcilably about different civil societies? Addressing both this question and the question of timing is intended to aid understanding of whether these new ideas about civil society possess any overall coherence, and, relatedly, of the exact nature of their contribution to democratic theory now and in the future. These issues are discussed in detail in the third and final section of this chapter.

1. The Timing of the Rediscovery of the Idea of Civil Society and the Decline of the Radical Model

Having already established (in chapter 5) the close connection between the liberal democratic model of civil society and the growing hegemony of liberal-democratic theory-politics in general since 1989, it is not difficult to see why *this* idea of civil society is presently ubiquitous. However, a number of other questions remain unaddressed. Firstly, why did the concept reemerge when it did initially - i.e. in the 1970s and 1980s, *before* liberal democracy began to be defined as the 'only game in town' and prior to all but three of the 'third wave' of democratic transitions (in Southern Europe)? Secondly, why has *this* model of civil society (the radical one) now largely disappeared in academic debate? To begin to answer these questions is to better understand what contribution, if any, civil society theory can make to current democratic theory. If the conditions leading to the concept's original reappearance and subsequent usefulness are now absent, then we might be forced to conclude that it no longer serves any worthwhile purpose.

(i) The Significance of Timing

Arguably, the radical discourses came about when, at a particular stage of their evolution, various opposition forces in authoritarian countries became aware of the analytical and political utility of the idea of civil society. This much is suggested by the shared timing (mid-late 1970s - early 1980s) of the radical discourses in Central-Eastern

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[1]The Africanist contribution does not feature in the section of the chapter dealing with these issues, since it did not possess an earlier, radical discourse on civil society.

Europe (particularly Poland) and Latin America (particularly Brazil), even though there is no evidence that these two discourses originated within the same body of theory, or that their respective interlocutors were even aware of each other. Although the influence of revisionist Marxism was something they had in common, for the Poles this came from amongst their own ranks - particularly the exile Kolakowski; while for the Brazilians, Gramsci and Eurocommunism were crucial. What then can explain the shared timing of the rediscovery of the mobilising potential of the idea of civil society in the battle against authoritarianism? After all, the military-bureaucratic regimes in Latin America were very different creatures from the party-bureaucratic ones in Central-Eastern Europe.

One likely explanation is that the idea of civil society present within Kolakowski's revisionist ideas, and also within the neo-Gramscian Eurocommunist thinking, were similarly useful resources for a radical critique of statism (which now seemed indispensable, given that state-socialism had had a generation to prove that its pathological tendencies were not mere growing pains). Previously, a received body of work on the problem of statism and bureaucracy was absent from the left-socialist canon (see Lefort 1986), since, classically, Marxist theory had not yet been applied as political practice within any state. As socialists of various persuasions, interlocutors in the early dialogues on civil society in communist Europe and Latin America were always likely to make the most of this new thinking from within their own camp. Existing liberal theory on the problem of statism, by contrast, was not sufficient for these theorists given that their rejection of liberal-capitalist forms was at this stage every bit as definite as their rejection of statism.

The only difference between the Polish and Brazilian debates then, becomes that each radical critique of statism upon which they drew was simply the one most suited to their needs. For the Poles, Kolakowski's (1974) sophisticated demolition of the unity of civil and political society in orthodox Marxism (as leading inevitably to bureaucratic domination) was clearly ideal as a model specifically designed to offer an alternative to state-socialism. For the Brazilians, on the other hand, Gramsci's ideas about the counter-hegemonical potentialities of civil society within capitalist systems seemed perfect for a situation in which it was the authoritarian-capitalist state 'sitting upon' society, rather than the forced unity of state and society, which was the problem.

The timing of the earlier, more radical discussions on civil society is therefore explicable in the (political) terms of the struggle against authoritarianism, and by the shift in leftist thinking on the problem of statism. This explanation seems even more likely when we observe the decline in influence on both continents of these earlier debates following the demise of authoritarian rule. Models originating from these debates are now largely forgotten by current consumers of the idea of civil society operating within liberal-

democratic systems. Concurrently, the crisis in leftist thinking, following the events of 1989, has led to all previous socialist models, even if they themselves represented critiques of pre-1989 'socialist' politics, being declared obsolete. In Latin America, this disenchantment was of course less extreme; yet the failure of the Latin American left to achieve political change in the continent (it had to wait for elite concessions in the face of more diverse and less politically committed coalitions), allied to awareness of the European context, has also led some there to abandon earlier socialist thinking. Thus the 'loss of faith' in socialism is a shared feature to the decline of the early, radical discourses on civil society in both continents.

Arguably, this 'loss of faith' in socialism in part *began* with the turn towards the idea of civil society. For another explanation of the timing of the initial engagement with the concept by some on the left, as we have seen in chapters 2 and 3, was the increasing disillusionment with the apparently undemocratic character (or at least the undemocratic outcomes) of orthodox left models. Thus civil society theory was useful for leftists, not only for its provision of a radical critique of statism, but also as a vehicle for the encounter with democratic theory per se. Relevant here is the way in which leftists in both Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America, via their debates on the meaning of civil society, began to raise issues such as the value of the separation of spheres and the limited, liberal state. These issues, central to democratic theory, but largely unimportant or obscurantist in the eyes of orthodox left theorists, permeated the radical dialogues on civil society - which goes to show how significant the concept was to the sizeable shift in leftist thinking regarding the value of democracy.

(ii) The Decline of the Radical Model of Civil Society

Why then has the radical model of civil society all but disappeared?[2] Firstly, as argued in chapter 2, the introduction of the idea of civil society into the left's political debates placed the issues of the separation of spheres and the liberal state unavoidably on the agenda. This undermined, through rendering somewhat incoherent, the original intention of these theorists to rearticulate a socialist self-management project. For a time, radicals' sought to hold together the liberal and socialist elements to their new democratic model. But the absence of any detailed consideration of how these might be made compatible in practice, and not just in theory,[3] left tensions unresolved which led to the virtual demise of radical models of civil society in academic discourse even before the watershed of 1989 (see section 3.ii of this chapter for an extended discussion of these claims). This dynamic may also explain the apparent shift in much of the opposition

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[2] I make this claim with regard to mainstream academic discourses, *not* with regard to what has happened to the idea of civil society 'on the ground', about which I am uninformed.

[3] After all, as was shown in the last chapter, these theorists were using the idea of civil society primarily for 'political' or mobilizatory purposes, and did not approach it, as is now common, as an analytical instrument with which to address such questions of detail.

debate (in both Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America) from an initially socialist position (i.e. self-management in all spheres), to a still radical but less socialist standpoint (i.e. a continued emphasis upon democratic autonomy and participation but with little or no attention to the place of the economic base in these schemas). This was especially characteristic of the progression in Latin American dialogues on civil society, which moved from being initially anti-capitalist to a position of virtual silence on the question of capitalism.

Since 1989, of course, radical political models have been far more seriously discredited - especially in Central Eastern Europe, where all left-leaning politics has been weakened by its connection with the experience of state socialism. This disenchantment with the left has also occurred in Latin America, though to a lesser extent. Here, the failure of the left's political strategies led to a general decline of leftist politics as traditionally constituted. And if Petras is to be believed, the increasing dependence of many Latin American intellectuals on U.S. funding and institutions ever since the military take-overs, has also contributed to research agendas being driven by orthodox political science concerns rather than by radical politics (Petras 1990). Certainly, radical theorists appear either to have abandoned their earlier standpoints, in which case their approach to civil society and democracy came into line with liberal democratic models, or to have retained their radical critiques while dropping what now appeared (in the light of actual transitions) as the utopia of a grass roots democracy and thus of civil society itself.

Finally, radical models of civil society have also struggled to hold their own because they definitely contained utopian elements. None of the civil society projects envisaged by the Central-Eastern Europeans or Latin Americans came true or proved sustainable. In Central-Eastern Europe, for example, the discourse of 'antipolitics' was unable to survive the 1989 revolutions, since, as Jorgensen points out:

> ...the opposition were no longer restricted to acting within the 'parallel *polis*'...but were occupying the *polis* itself. The fission of the economic-political-cultural totality into traditional subsystems, each characterised by a relative autonomy, resulted in new conditions... Anti-politics as a critique of fusion became increasingly irrelevant' (Jorgensen 1990: 53).

Thus the strength of an apparently universal critique of politics became, with transition, ironically its central weakness - that is, it increasingly seemed only conditional and particular. Once some form of separation between spheres had been achieved, any further 'anti-politics' was clearly going to be at worst reactionary and, at best, rather unhelpful to the new task in hand - that is, to the consolidation of a more differentiated and less monolithic form of politics.

2. The Search for Settled Ideas About Civil Society

It appears from the preceding discussion that, in getting down to either radical or liberal democratic discourses on civil society, ideas surrounding the concept are reducible no further. Yet before concluding thus, which would be the same as saying that the civil society concept is now an essentially contested one, it is worth exploring in some more detail to what extent there might be common ground, if only indirectly, to the insights contained within both sets of discourses. In the absence of any such ground, we must conclude that there is little or no overall coherence to the concept of civil society in contemporary political theory.

In the face of an over-simplistic distinction between radical models of civil society in non-western contexts, and what is characterised as the liberal democratic approach of western scholars, it should be emphasised that there are distinct similarities between the non-western radical debates and the western New Left debate on civil society. Much like the New Left in the West, the radical theorists from Central-Eastern Europe had a model of civil society that was differentiated from the classical model based exclusively upon a society of bourgeois property owners (a feature illustrated, for example, by the Polish sense of civil society as 'citizens society'), and from the Marxist conflation of civil society with the economy.[4]

In Latin America too, the same shift in relation to classical civil society theory occurred. Most radicals were explicit that civil society did not denote for them an individualist, marketised society such as it did within classical liberal theory. As such, they were equally adamant that Marx's pejorative account of civil society, criticised by him for possessing these characteristics, was not warranted. For them, following Gramsci and paralleling the New Left, civil society resided in the realms of culture, not those of economics. In other words, as for the New Left, the various radical versions of civil society were meant to imply a society of free citizens, rather than a society of economically 'free' property owners in the market sphere.

A number of other complementary themes are worth pointing out. First there has been a shared acceptance by the New Left and radical theorists that movements for democracy cannot be successful merely through the popular seizure of power, since in this case there is nothing to prevent the emergence of a new ruling class as anti-democratic as the first. Neither is the replacement of the dominators by the dominated seen to lead to the dissolution of the state, since the abandonment of the utopia of a revolutionary end to

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[4]Analysts of Central-Eastern Europe writing in German, had to transpose the now different sense of the term into the German debate by introducing *Zivilgesellschaft* to replace *burgerliche Gesselschaft* (bourgeois society) - the latter being 'semantically bound' to the capitalist economy (Krizan 1987: 100).

power signifies an acceptance of conflict at the heart of politics, and of the need for its limitation and arbitration by state mechanisms. Second, if revolution is eschewed by both the New Left and the radical theorists, then so is an uncritical adherence to its classical alternative, reformism. Reformism, like revolution, focuses upon the state, instead of seeking decentralised and self-managing forms with which the citizen body can maximise its democratic power. Civil society, in this schema, is an end in itself - committed to the autonomy that would be denied to it by any state-centric strategies, be they exclusively party-based, reformist or revolutionary.

There is plenty of specific evidence of the overlap between the New Left conceptualisation of civil society and the radical model. One example can be found in Cohen and Arato's earliest collaborative work on Central-Eastern European civil society theory, which, they claimed, was leading to the creation of 'a post-bourgeois, democratic, civil society' such as they themselves were by this time theorising (Cohen and Arato 1984: 266; see especially Cohen 1983). Also, in a 1984 overview of new theories of state and civil society within the western academe, Pierson observed that:

> ...insofar as it is possible to establish a leitmotif for recent [post-Marxist] theory, it is almost certainly to be found in the widespread attempt to redefine the relation of state and civil society... [T]his implies a quite radical re-evaluation of the category of civil society and a decisive breach with the Marxian expectation of 'True Democracy' as the collapsing of the distinction between civil and political society (Pierson 1984: 566-7).

Pierson, who could equally well have been writing about the civil society model from Central-Eastern Europe, noted that the new civil society theory of elements of the western left espoused the view (1) that civil society must be the site of a *plurality* of groups and subjects; (2) that the anticipation of the end of politics is utopian and that therefore 'an (extended) set of civil and political rights, and the state as legal guarantor of these rights, is indispensable'; (3) that emancipatory struggles are *not* reducible to class struggle, and instead require an alliance 'of liberating forces within a popular-democratic struggle' (Pierson 1984: 568).

(i) Non-Violence

Is there more universal agreement upon the theory of civil society than merely that which is found between the New Left and the radical theorists? One area where shared understandings suggest themselves across all the discourses on civil society, concerns the issue of acceptable limits within which democratisation should be pursued as a political project. While there appears to be no agreement on democratisation as a process, or of democracy as an end point, the idea of civil society in all its guises is allied to the principle of non-violence which the very term (*civil* society) itself suggests. All of the

Central-Eastern European discussions on the subject of civil society were explicit in their denunciation of the spirit of 1789. Even the heroic Hungarian revolution of 1956 was held up as a model of political opposition that was no longer desirable, even though this was undoubtedly also because it was seen as unworkable. Similarly with the Latin American dialogues on civil society, the option of violent revolution was seen as part of the problem, and not as the solution, to authoritarianism. In both these regions, though especially in Latin America, the idea of civil society was popular because it suggested that some distance had been put between new leftist models and earlier ones with their seeming disregard for human rights.

In different ways, though usually not directly, current liberal-democratic debates on civil society also exclude violence from the sphere of civil society, by identifying it only with associations that are freely chosen, rather than ascriptive, and accepting of pluralism, rather than fundamentalist or 'totalising'. This set of assumptions is typical of the post-1989 literature on civil society in Central-Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa. Indeed, in the Africanist literature, probably because transitions have often been more violent there (if only in terms of violent street protests and looting for example), liberal theorists such as Chazan make a big point of excluding 'violent' groups, and the politics of 'the street' in general, from civil society. Overall, however, the theme of non-violence is now less strong than it was for earlier radical theorists of civil society, since the concept is being used as an analytical category, rather than to articulate a model of political praxis. Neo-Marxists within the Africanist discourse, who are perhaps the only leftists still engaging critically with the liberal-democratic model of civil society, are cynical of what they see as the move to delegitimise the weapons of the weak. Although they are mostly not engaged in giving legitimacy to orthodox revolutionary strategies, these scholars are not about to exclude violence as a legitimate strategy for civil society per se. However, on this point they stand alone; and besides, their understanding of civil society is mostly pejorative in the first place.

(ii) Self-limitation

Secondly, and related to the emphasis on non-violence, there appears to be a settled sense between discourses on civil society regarding the importance of the 'self-limitation' of the forces of civil society, however defined. Here it is implied that civil society should not seek absolute power in the state, whatever the good intentions of those seeking it. The Poles termed this the 'self-limiting revolution'; the Czechoslovaks similarly accepted that the opposition 'polis' should only 'parallel' the state sphere; and the Hungarians sought merely to hold the state to its own legality. All the Central-Eastern European discussions contained the idea that 'the revolution devours its own children' by replacing one unaccountable power in the state with another. Likewise, the radical Latin American debates on civil society all contained explicit denials of any intention to seek absolute

power in the state, even though - as also in Central-Eastern Europe - this seems sometimes to have been motivated by the hope that the state would one day simply 'wither away'. Yet regardless of what motivated it, all of the radical discourses were variously critical of strategies for seeking 'power' because of their totalising nature, and because they negated the imperative of local self-management. In a sense, the common core here is an anti-paternalist emphasis on the importance of democratic autonomy - which can only be preserved if 'self-limitation' is adhered to.

Of course, given their liberal starting point, liberal-democratic discourses on civil society in Central-Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa are also much concerned that civil society be 'self-limiting'. In this instance, civil society is seen as necessarily pluralist since it is held that there is no one model of the good life that can be rightly privileged over others. And although there is much debate about whether political parties are a part of civil society (a possibility that would have been mostly denied by interlocutors within the radical debates since parties by definition seek state power), even if they are included, then obviously it must be in a multiparty context whereby all sides accept the rules of the democratic game (the possibility of defeat). Liberal-democratic discourses on civil society therefore only identify 'self-limiting' groups as part of civil society. This means, for example, that groups serving an instrumental purpose, such as trade unions and business associations, are taken as internal to civil society, while 'totalising' groups that do not accept political 'self-limitation' - whether they be Islamic fundamentalists seeking to impose Sharia law, or revolutionary groups seeking to impose the dictatorship of the proletariat - are excluded. The notion of the importance of 'self-limitation' therefore has some currency within both radical and liberal democratic discourses on civil society.

Neo-Marxist Africanists are again the partial exception to this rule. Given that they recall the Marxist concern that a civil society left to its own devises will lead to inequality and exploitation, they temper the orthodoxy of self-limitation with their insistence that the popular classes *need* to get the state to intervene in civil society to enforce redistribution in favour of the popular sectors who are excluded within 'bourgeois' civil society. Emphasising that popular control of the state will have its own pathologies in the absence of liberal safeguards (such as the institutionalisation of a limited state) seems to these theorists to be a second-order issue, especially within poor societies. As they see it, the very possibility of substantive democracy requires that there be statist intervention.

However, as with the theme of non-violence, it is not clear that neo-Marxist Africanists wreck the current consensus that civil society be self-limiting. This is because they, unlike all those who would hold to this idea, are not really advancing an idea of civil

society at all, but are only responding critically to perceived weaknesses in the dominant liberal model.

(iii) The Critique of Statsim

Thirdly, and parallel to this shared reading of the positive benefit of 'self-limitation', is a common belief in the negative consequences of statism which civil society supposedly mitigates. This critique of statism was motivated by the desire for equality, autonomy and self-management on the part of the radical discourses, and by the liberal critique of the inefficient, unresponsive and overbearing state within liberal democratic discourses. From the radical discourses came the idea that civil society should resocialise many of the functions performed by the modern state in order to end the alienation present in modern politics. In short, resocialisation is seen as negating 'power politics'. For interlocutors in the liberal discourses, civil society better identifies interests and meets needs than bureaucratic state mechanisms can. On a crude account, it must grow if the state is to be as limited as possible and the (market) realm of freedom and opportunity maximised.

(iv) The Value of Democracy

Fourthly, all contemporary discourses on civil society use the language of democracy, and see political legitimacy as stemming from democratic practices alone, however defined. This has been most significant with regard to the transformation in leftist thinking - in most contexts even before the revolutions of 1989 finally suggested the political demise of socialist alternatives to democracy. From the 1980s onwards, many theorists on the left who talked of civil society, far from it denoting the sphere of capitalist exploitation that it once did for them, now saw it as necessary to democracy. Indeed, for many of these theorists, the civil society debate itself has been an important vehicle for the rehabilitation of democracy as a political value on the left. Thus despite the widely differing conceptualisations of democracy that separate discourses on civil society contain, as a whole civil society theory reflects the emergence of democracy as *the* political value of our times, as well as the lack of alternative values for the legitimation of modern politics

(v) Addressing the Tension Between Liberal-Individualism and Collectivism

Finally, there is something about the civil society concept in all of the discourses examined here which is concerned with resolving the tension between collectivism and liberalism. While most radical theorists weigh in on the side of community and liberal democratic theorists on the side of the individual, there remains a sense in which both these polarities are avoided wherever civil society is talked about. For the Central-Eastern Europeans, the community of the 'parallel polis' or of 'the self-governing republic' was not emphasised to the complete exclusion of any concern with individualism or

plurality. This was demonstrated most clearly in the concern with legality and a structure of rights, and also through the rejection of the idea of a universal subject.

Similarly for Latin American radicals, the self-managing communities or 'new social movements' were central to talk of a popular-based civil society because of their perceived contribution to collectivist politics in the face of anomie. Yet at the same time there existed the recognition that a plurality of subjects exists as a permanent feature of any political project. The idea of civil society in its neo-Gramscian formulations represented precisely the attempt to adopt Gramsci's ideas on the formation of a popular, counter-hegemonical, 'front', while at the same time ditching Gramsci's instrumentalism - which said that the coalition of different movements in civil society would last only until capitalism had been overthrown and all differences of interest overcome.

Within liberal-democratic debates on civil society, despite their opposite bias towards liberalism, the concept of civil society is seen as helpful because it acknowledges the importance of associationalism. It is recognised that the individual pursuit of self-interest in the market place can no longer be assumed, as it was amidst very different circumstances during the Scottish Enlightenment, capable of resolving the problem of the break-down of community to which it itself contributes. Within these discussions, the idea of civil society represents the desire for individual freedoms to be married to some form of mutuality through the existence of a free choice between different and overlapping associations. While this represents only a small move away from liberal individualism in the direction of communitarianism, the important point is that the concept of civil society is used to try to find some reconciliation between the two, albeit on terms advantageous to the former of these goods.

In short, it appears that Jenny Pearce (1998) is right when she claims that debates about civil society have always and everywhere been about the attempt to manage the tension between community and individualism in the face of modernity and the ever-expanding market. For the radical theorists of civil society, particularly in Central-Eastern Europe, it was certainly modernity - via its relentless 'power projects' in both state and market - which was throwing up the problem of how to achieve free association. The liberal democratic theorists of civil society are generally less cognisant of this tension within modernity. However, they too are essentially pointing to the growing importance of the 'social glue' which associationalism apparently provides for a world where organic ties continue to decay under the influence of global market-capitalism.

Relevant at this point is Adam Seligman's (1992) analysis of the idea of civil society as orientated around the problem of trust in society: of how to assert civil life which recognises the individual as autonomous moral agent while yet transcending purely

individual existence. So the importance of civil society really does become one of its civility. This emphasis arises, as Seligman sees it, from the origins of the concept in the Scottish Enlightenment, a movement which provided perhaps the earliest systematic attempt to deal with the question of how the individual pursuit of interest could be made compatible with the greater good of society. Thus, to reiterate Pearce's point, civil society theory appears to share a common concern across *all* temporal and spatial divides: to reconcile the relationship between individuals and communities in such a way that does not deny the legitimacy of either. Even Marx, for example, with his uniquely pejorative account of civil society, was concerned with how individuals could be truly, that is creatively, free through the rediscovery of their collectivist 'species being' (the free development of each was to be the condition for the free development of all). He despised the civil society of capitalism precisely because of its failure to reconcile individual freedoms with the greater good.

3. Assessing the Contribution of Contemporary Civil Society Theory

The key question, then, is what contribution, if any, do recent ideas about civil society have to make to democratic theory? Clearly, there is not much sense in which any one set of discourses relating to a particular region has anything more to offer than in relation to any other region. A more accurate division, as we have seen, is between radical and liberal democratic discourses *across* regions. Having said this, there has been no radical dialogue on civil society in relation to pre-transition Sub-Saharan Africa, which seems to support the notion that the concept is particularly alien there. This may well be because the idea of civil society is at root concerned with processes distinct to modernity; that is, as outlined above, especially with the tension between individualism and collectivism. This is a tension which is less paramount within African social formations, given that organic ties (though increasingly under threat) are still much stronger. In some more detail, individualism arises chiefly because of the increasing mobility and division of labour characteristic of industrialised societies, which leads to the dissolution of traditional communities (those defined by kinship and geography) as well as to an increasing role for a more powerful state. While Africa is just as much a part of 'modernity', and quite as affected by it, as any other region, it is nonetheless true that the modern systems of states and markets are more fragmented and incomplete in Sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, the concept of civil society seems to miss large areas of African social life, such as peasant society for example, which do not face the problem of free association in the same ways as industrialised societies which are more fully integrated by developed states and markets. In the latter, the fact of integration is often

the central problem for democratic autonomy; for the former, the constraints of material want and the *lack* of societal integration are arguably more, or at least as, pernicious.[5]

(i) The Contribution of the Radical Model

Radical discourses on civil society, whatever else their weaknesses (see below), can be identified with a broadly coherent political and analytical project. The Polish civil society debate, in particular, was clearly crucial to the reemergence of the concept in Central-Eastern Europe and beyond during the 1980s, especially by way of Arato's characterisation of the Polish theory-praxis as 'civil society against the state'. As a category that had previously been seen to lack any significance in situating a radical, transformative politics, the alleged significance of civil society within the Polish context - as the site of political opposition and democratisation - gave the concept a new lease of life in political theory. The more Gramscian sense (though without Gramsci's Marxist teleology) of civil society, as a potentially autonomous sphere inhabited by counter-hegemonical forces, began to appear everywhere from this point on. As such, the whole meaning of the concept shifted. Denoting originally an unwilled, non-purposive arena of human interaction for the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers in their description of commercial society, civil society had been reborn as the political, agential locus of change familiar to readers of the current literature on democratisation (Pearce 1997: 58).

In these oppositional contexts, the idea of civil society was also operationalised in order to conceptualise a radical politics which took seriously the democratic deficit of orthodox-left models. But was this strictly necessary? After all, a democratic theory outlining the importance of: rights; of associational life outside of the state; and of non-violence and self-limitation, already existed within the liberal canon. Could oppositionists not simply have turned to this body of theory and practice which, although emanating from the west, had itself been worked out through centuries of political struggle against authoritarianism? In this case, the renewed idea of civil society would still have played a useful function as an umbrella concept under which these themes could be drawn together. But it would not have contributed anything substantively new as political theory.

This critique could be maintained were it not for the genuinely innovative inclusion of the self-management agenda within the radical model of civil society. Of course, the emphasis upon self-management was already present within libertarian-Marxist and anarchist theory. Yet what was unique about the radical approach to civil society was that it brought notions of self-management together with aspects of liberal theory. The model emerging from what was effectively a dialogue between socialist-libertarianism

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[5]This is not to deny that the African state has had integrationist ambitions, but, generally speaking, it has not possessed the capacity to carry this project out.

and liberalism was in many ways confused, but none the less original for all that. In essence, it expressed a republican notion of politics. This is explicable in terms of the intensely 'political' contexts within which radical models were articulated, and also by the presence of the imperative to act. Here, the idea of civil society represented the vision of a 'new' politics of genuinely free association between genuinely equal citizens.

This republican emphasis to the radical model of civil society actually sets it apart to some extent even from the western New Left civil society theory. For the New Left, the separation of spheres between state, civil society and economy, is central to any account of civil society. This makes their version of civil society uncompromisingly modern, since these *differentia* coincide with the rise of the nation-state and capitalist economy (Ely 1992: 186), which must therefore be embraced. Yet from a republican perspective, the rise of the modern state has actually been the most significant threat to the space of civic association. Havel's writings against the politics of modernity come closest to this position, but all of the radical theorists are to some degree anti-statist, and seem unsure about granting 'power' autonomy from the self-management project in civil society. They remind us starkly, in a way which the western New Left largely have not since the time of the Frankfurt School, that the modern state (indeed, modernity itself) has never been, and never will be, anything other than ambiguous with regard to freedom.

Republican theorists such as these, contra the New Left, are not a priori hostile to 'non-modern', undifferentiated forms of free political association. For it is exactly 'the harsh logic of differentiation' as one republican theorist sees it, which means that '*demokratiia* is seen as the antithesis of civic entitlement and of civilization itself' (Anderson 1996: 114). Certainly, none of the radical theorists of civil society studied here, given that the ideal of self-management animated their work, would have concurred with Habermas' imperative that 'the public opinion that is worked up via democratic procedures into communicative power cannot "rule" of itself, but can only point the use of administrative power in specific directions... Read in procedural terms, the idea of popular sovereignty refers to a context that, while enabling the self-organisation of a legal community, is not at the disposal of the citizens' will in any way' (Habermas 1994: 9-10). This statement would have been anathema to the radical, republican theorists, as also would Cohen and Arato's standpoint, as articulated by Ely, that the 'pure republican' formation of political will by elements of the public sphere, 'are only *catalysts* and not the end results of political action' (Ely 1992: 178).

Providing, inadvertently, one further explanation as to the decline of the radical model of civil society from *outside* of the West, Ely goes as far as to claim that, for New Left theorists such as Habermas, Cohen, and Arato, this hostility to the republican/self-

management agenda actually motivated their turn to the concept of civil society in the first place:

> At a time when "socialism" and the critique of capitalism had suddenly come into disrepute... [t]his move was not merely "tactical". The concept of "civil society" systematically turned *libertarian* into *liberal* ideas (Ely 1992: 177).

To summarise, perhaps the most significant contribution of the radical model of civil society (especially in the case of the renewal of the totalitarian paradigm by the Central-Eastern Europeans), was that it helped both to conceptualise and also to apply to political practice, a left theory of the State. This, as Lefort observed when it was first happening, was previously lacking:

> Why, I asked, was the Left reluctant to employ the concept of totalitarianism?... I would now dare to say: because the concept is political and the Left does not think in political terms. Socialists are determined advocates of state intervention in every domain of social life in order to diminish or suppress the inequalities that arise in the context of civil society (Lefort 1986: 277).

This type of attitude towards civil society, as Lefort saw it, was where the Left became blinded to the essence of totalitarianism, 'to the idea of a state that aspires to be omnipresent through its bureaucratic network' (Lefort 1986: 281). It was the contribution of the radical theorists of civil society to bring this analysis of totalitarianism to bear on traditional Left-socialist categories. For them, civil society did not constitute the realm of unfreedom and inequality awaiting political neutralisation, as Marx had originally described it. Turning Marx on his head, civil society came instead to represent the realm of freedom which the very annexation of civil society by the state, and the subsequent 'totalisation' of 'politics', had precluded. The Marxian defence of the oppressed of civil society through the state had become the defence of the state-oppressed through civil society.

(ii) Problems With the Radical Model

As Arato concluded in his original analysis of the Polish model of civil society, it appeared that 'the Polish democratic movement ha[d] placed the programme of a *socialist* civil society, suspended as a result of 1968, back on the agenda of Eastern European alternatives' (Arato 1981: 47). Yet the socialist character of the radical theorists' models of civil society (from Poland and elsewhere) was never unambiguous. Undoubtedly these theorists *were* socialist in orientation originally - hence the initial equation of civil society with self-management, with direct democratic control of all spheres of social life. However, there was clearly also a strong liberal strain to the radical vision of civil society, which sat uneasily with the self-management project overall. This was so particularly with regard to the acceptance of the inevitability of

societal conflict based on the denial of any general will, which seemed to necessitate some kind of distinct state mechanism; and also with the absolute primacy given to 'societal' autonomy from 'totalising' politics, which implicitly privileged the liberal separation of spheres over all attempts at overcoming the alienation of political power through the resocialisation of state functions (which would politicise society all over again).

Thus a central weakness of the radical model of civil society in its various forms was that there was little sense provided of how the self-management project could relate to the modern state and to the market in the long run. With regard to the possibilities for self-management in the market sphere, radical civil society theory reflected (and probably suffered from) the wider failure of theories of market socialism to adequately specify the forms of social ownership (Pierson 1995). In a summary of Pierson's critique of market socialism, Goldblatt raises much that is pertinent also to the radical model of civil society, with its one-time dream of democratising production while at once retaining a state-free market:

> Aside from failing to properly specify the forms social ownership might take, the market socialists have consistently evaded the question of the allocation of capital. Workers may manage their enterprises but they still require capital to prosper. Is capital to be distributed on market principles and if it is by whom? If not by private banks then by collectively owned investment banks and who, if not the state, is likely to take control of these? By what calculus could the state allocate capital? If not the same ruthless calculus of profitability that contemporary capitalist economies run then how? If the state is to have that much power how on earth is it to be brought within the bounds of legitimate democratic control? (Goldblatt 1996: 968)

With the onset of liberal democracy in both Latin America and Central-Eastern Europe, it became apparent that the radical model of civil society was not sophisticated enough to think the unthinkable - that is to recognise (as, for example, critical theorists in the West have) that the state and the market are permanent features of modern politics, and that their destructive effects upon free association will not be overcome merely by seeking to enlarge the realm of civil society itself. In other words, political projects have to be worked out that can deal with the state and the market directly and to some extent on their own terms, not by effectively ignoring them.[6]

This lacuna within the radical model of civil society relates to a wider failure by radical theorists of civil society (including the western New Left) to build upon their normative models by providing practical advice to institution-builders. Across all the radical

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[6]This general hostility to the state in particular, means that many radical theorists 'endow civil society with a deceptive aura of moral purity and disinterestedness' (Mische 1993: 246).

discourses on civil society, there has been a tendency to describe civil society as pure, unmediated agency.[7] Yet it can be argued that the radical vision of a democratic, republican civil society is inseparable from a process of institution building in the first place. Thus Blaug's animadversion of critical theory's conceptualisation of the public sphere could reasonably be applied to all radical models of civil society:

> Talk of the public sphere never quite comes down to earth...[This] alert[s] us to just how little actual crossing over from normative theory to empirical institutional design is attempted by Habermas' commentators. There seems, therefore, to be a kind of missing tier of theory - this being an account of what normatively grounded institutions might be like and how they might actually function (Blaug 1997: 112).

Returning to the topic of agency within radical civil society theory, a central weakness is that the *democratic* agency of civil society is taken as relatively unproblematic. The assumption seems to have been that once political space was opened up by the 'parallel polis', the democracy of the grass roots would spring up almost as a matter of course. Yet this is a very weak account of agency, if it is an account at all. Are we to believe that all non-state actors are animated by democratic sentiments and by these alone? This is clearly absurd; at the very least, such a proposition would need to explain in sociological and psychological terms why people who participate in politics outside of the state are engaging with 'the political' in a qualitatively different way. The hint of utopianism here seems to support the notion that the radical model of civil society was anti-political. Certainly, the belief in an arena for collective action in which a democratic way of life is observed without deliberate design, implies that decision-making within this arena is always positive-sum. This echoes the anti-political utopia of Marxism, with its confident prediction that communist society can move humanity beyond the realms of scarcity and competition, and therefore beyond politics itself.

However, to suggest that the radical theorists of civil society had no account of agency at all would be to over-state the case. It is more accurate to say that these accounts are underdeveloped and also somewhat contradictory. The first discernible agent identified within radical civil society theory was the working class, which reflects that these radicals were still very much socialists when they initially rediscovered the category of civil society. This is evident for the Central-Eastern European theorists in their early proclamations on self-management, which emphasised heavily the self-organisation of workers in workers councils, that is, at the point of production (cf. Michnik, Kuron,

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[7] In this sense, such approaches are, interestingly, opposite to Gellner's (liberal democratic) reasons for preferring the idea of civil society over the idea of democracy. Gellner sees democracy as misleadingly implying an 'underlying model of society which is a fruit of the will of its participants and members'...'Civil society is greatly preferable, [it does not] ignore the fact that institutions and cultures *precede* decisions rather than *follow* them' (Gellner 1994: 184-5).

Konrad). Also amongst the Latin American Left, in the early days of their discourse on civil society and social movements, urban social movements were prioritised due to their location amongst working class communities. For the Latin American theorists, these USMs had a different identity to orthodox Marxist working class agents in that they were contesting the power of the capitalist state at the point of consumption rather than production. Nevertheless, this is still a working class agency.

Alongside working class praxis, however, there began to appear a new sense of agency for radical theorists of civil society. This had a number of dimensions to it, incorporating into civil society 'the people' (Poland), those who would 'live in truth' (Czechoslovakia), the 'popular forces' (Latin America), and the 'new social movements' (Latin America). Taking these in turn: In Poland, it became increasingly clear that the boundaries of the idea of civil society had been widened by the Solidarity experience to include the whole Polish nation in opposition to the 'foreign' Soviet puppet state. Theorists such as Michnik, though they started out with a universalist account of civil society agency as basically incorporating the working class, ended up speaking in much narrower terms of resistance offered in the 'Polish way', for example by the Catholic church. This is a non-transferable model of civil society agency, which no doubt explains in part the decline of civil society theory in the Polish context after 1989.

In Czechoslovakia, however, particularly for Havel, civil society denoted a more universal, republican agency (which is probably why Havel is the only radical theorist of civil society who mentions the concept after 1989). Agents were understood as citizens or activists within the 'parallel polis'; they were not a pre-defined class of people, but identified themselves in context as those who sought publicly to resist the 'normalising' techniques and disciplines of the 'totalitarian' regime (and indeed of mass politics in *all* its forms). It is worth recalling here Havel's assertion that the line between the independent citizen and the 'automated' one 'runs de facto through each person' (Issac 1998: 117). In other words, this is an existential rather than a psychological model of agency, and although it has often been attacked for its apparent elitism, it is clear that Havel is not *ex ante* excluding anyone from it.[8] The 'islands of civic engagement and solidarity', while they will always be small in relation to the sea of apathy and quietism, are open to all who see the need to alight on them (Isaac 1998: 117). Any exclusions from this republican agency are, at least in principle, entirely self-chosen.

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[8]The same debate surrounds Arendt's conception of citizenship within her 'elementary republics'. While Arendt clearly sees these republics as being fenced-off from 'the mass', this is not an aristocratic elite (as can be seen in her celebration of workers councils in revolutionary Russia and, later, in Hungary) but an action-oriented one. The only criteria for membership of an 'elementary republic' is the possession of a 'public spirit' (Issac 1998).

Meanwhile, in Latin America, the radical discourse on civil society moved away from the more Marxist emphasis upon USMs towards a neo-Marxist or Gramscian concern with a coalition of the popular forces. Civil society agency here is inclusive of all the *politically* dispossessed, those who are victimised by the state, and is not so focused upon economic injustice and the agency that comes with it. In its turn, though, this model of agency collapsed from a neo-Marxist into a post-Marxist position. Important here was the post-structuralism of theorists such as Touraine and Laclau, for whom agency is not pre-given, but, in a process of self-constitution, is defined through collective action wherever and whenever this occurs. This position is closer to the existentialism of Havel than it is to Marxism with its structural explanations of agency. Thus for the post-structuralists of the NSM discourse, democratic agency is entirely contingent, which makes it even more puzzling that it is generally treated by these theorists as a latent feature of the grass-roots. Also, since they avoid reductionism on one level (for example, in rejecting a purely class account of agency), it seems inconsistent to then reduce democratic agency simply to civil society. Undoubtedly, this inconsistency for radical theorists is symptomatic of the desire of post-Marxist's to hold on to the possibility of progressive politics, which demands that some form of agency exists. The problem, however, is one of the loss of any clear sense of which issues agents are to organise around. Since the identification of a single social cleavage and thereafter of a unifying struggle is no longer deemed legitimate, agency appears fragmented. Yet the model of a democratic civil society must make some overarching claims about agency; the problem is with the mode of justification for these claims. It is therefore unsurprising that often the problem of identifying agents is simply avoided in the first place.

Another major problem with the radical model of civil society is one that it shares with the New Left. It stems from the identification of civil society with a society of free citizens, rather than a society of economically 'free' property owners in the market sphere as in the classical theory. One consequence of this de-economised version of civil society is that the relationship between civil society and the market - so important in the classical theory and for orthodox Marxism - was little theorised by radical theorists, just as it is passed over by the New Left in their overly-conceptual tripartite separation of state, market and civil society. Neither set of debates properly accounts for the structural-historical relationship of civil society to the market, a lacuna attested to by the absence of any detailed consideration by the radical theorists of the role of the market in the life of civil society; and by the solely normative and therefore voluntarist claim, in the case of the New Left, that the market and civil society spheres simply have different 'logics'. Both radical civil society theorists and the New Left have therefore failed to identify how the undemocratic market sphere of capitalism might in practice be resisted by the 'public sphere' of civil society, and of who the agents are that could do this. By effectively abandoning the Marxist idea of overcoming the market sphere altogether,

these theorists leave civil society relatively defenceless. Although he by no means wants to go back to Marxism, this is what Keane argues when he criticises the artificial separation of civil society from the economy:

> First, civil society, because it is defined so narrowly, is left economically passive, and deprived of any property resources which would enable it to defend or enhance its power. Second, civil society, the realm of (potential) freedom, is viewed positively, while the economy is implicitly viewed negatively, as a realm of necessity in which only money speaks (cf. the neo-conservative view). The material conditions of life in civil society are degraded to a mere instrument for the ends desired by civil society - just as the classical concept of civil society rested upon the salience and unfreedom of the *oikos* (Keane 1988b: 86fn).

From a more Marxist perspective, the exoneration of civil society from its status as a site of economic oppression, and its transformation into a realm of putative democratic autonomy, obfuscates capitalism - 'as the sphere exerting a systematic compulsion over all other spheres' - altogether:

> Here the danger lies in the fact that the totalising logic and the coercive power of capitalism become invisible... [The] effect is to conceptualise away the problem of capitalism, by dissagregating society into fragments, with no overarching power structure, no totalising unity, no systemic coercions - in other words, no capitalist system, with its expansionary drive and its capacity to penetrate every aspect of social life (Wood 1995: 245).

Continuing this attack in the face of the commonplace response that other spheres, apart from the economic or structural, self-evidently exist, Wood writes:

> This argument is circular and question begging. To deny the totalising logic of capitalism, it is not enough merely to indicate the plurality of social identities and relations... But 'civil society' arguments (or, indeed, 'post-Marxist' arguments in general) do not typically take the form of historically and empirically refuting the determinative effects of capitalist relations. Instead...they tend to proceed as abstract philosophical arguments, as internal critiques of Marxist theory, or, most commonly, as moral prescriptions about the dangers of devaluing 'other' spheres of human experience (Wood 1995: 246-7).

Of course, focusing upon constraints to action, and of how these are widely ignored by radical theorists of civil society, need not take the form only of a Marxist critique. Agnes Heller, for example, has made a strong argument that, given their often relentless privileging of 'the political', radical political models *tout court*, tend to exclude too many issues of importance for a proper understanding of modern politics (Heller 1991). Heller looks in particular at the work of philosophers such as Havel and Arendt (the former being a theorist of civil society) where, in particular with Arendt, everyday issues are written out of the realm of the political. Arendt's critique, and desired exclusion from

political life, of the 'rise of the social', is well known. The radical theorists of civil society mostly did not make such a strong case for the elevation of an action-orientated politics, yet a similar conception of the political is there in the background for many of them, if only in their highly republican emphasis upon participation and self-rule as the essence of politics itself. Certainly, the dismay which Havel and many of the other Chartists displayed towards an increasingly technical politics in both East and West, revealed their sense that political action was about self-presentation and concern with the substantive goals of life and polity. Yet this undoubtedly powerful rejection of utilitarian politics in favour of deliberation and consensus, prioritises action without signalling where it might be thwarted by bureaucratisation, market-capitalism and patriarchy, to name but a few possible obstacles to a revival of 'the political'. Perhaps even more importantly, neither do radical models of civil society provide accounts of how deliberation and consensus-building in the 'parallel polis' is potentially distorted, not only by external constraints, but by power *within* the polis itself. That is, unequal resources and patriarchy, for example, are problems that affect fair deliberation in the first place.[9] The inequalities within civil society, therefore, cannot be bracketed out of the 'parallel polis' simply because it lies outside of formal power structures; power is too ubiquitous for this to be possible, and any definition of the political that fails to recognise this is ultimately too narrow.

Heller herself concludes with a somewhat different (though compatible) emphasis here - looking instead at the everyday concerns of ordinary people. For her, radical conceptualisations of the political, although they come to the rescue of political philosophy with its usual excesses of science and realism, are narrow for not including 'mere daily practices'. Therefore, while theorists such as Arendt and Havel manifestly do not intend to exclude groups or opinions from their theory, they do exclude issues (Heller 1991: 336). Adding Heller's critique to a concern with the structure of power in society, we might fruitfully question whether the exclusion of issues does not also imply the exclusion of groups of people themselves. Therefore, to the extent that the 'parallel polis' of civil society is concerned only with goal-oriented debate that is 'world disclosing', to what extent can ordinary citizens hope to influence technical decision making, the outcomes of which might concern them far more?

(iii) The Uncertain Contribution of the Liberal-Democratic Model
Despite the obvious failings of the radical model of civil society, on the evidence of the preceding discussion it appears that there is a sense in which the radical discourses had more to offer, at least within their context, than do liberal democratic ones. If the radical model of civil society brought together previously separate insights from different

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[9]For those with a post-modern conception of the political, privileging deliberation itself structures power to the advantage of already dominant groups. They would prefer an agonistic form of politics based on display. Ultimately, debates about the meaning of the political are ontological.

streams of democratic theory, the liberal-democratic model has mostly coopted the idea of civil society into its existing tenets, and it is not clear why it needs such a concept at all. The point is, crucially, that liberal-democrats, unlike radicals, have not used the idea of civil society as a vehicle for substantive engagement with new or alternative political ideas. Thus the notion of civil society must achieve something else for them, but what?

Firstly, the understanding of civil society as merely associational life outside of the state (the terms are often used interchangeably in this body of literature) leaves unresolved the question of 'uncivil' society, which, ironically, cannot in any systematic way be excluded from civil society understood thus. In other words, if civil society does not itself have to be democratic, then what criteria are to be used in order to define it more exactly? One answer to this problem has been to differentiate between voluntary and ascriptive associations, with civil society being restricted to the former. Yet uncivil associations are just as commonly voluntary as not (e.g. Neo-Nazi groups), and in the West, the near demise of asscriptive associationalism has not solved the problem of incivility.

Secondly, the liberal-democratic consensus is that civil society denotes associations that further pluralist interest representation and which balance the power of the state. But then it is unclear why liberal theory, which has long been aware of the importance of these roles, suddenly needs to call it 'civil society'. The term 'associational life' would suffice. Liberal thinkers such as Tocqueville described these types of processes without having to resort to the label civil society.

Thirdly, in seeking to deploy civil society as an analytical tool by which to account for the success or failure of liberal democracy, the liberal-democratic account blunts the radical concern with how civil society theory calls into question *all* existing political systems. It stifles critical insights into what alternatives to liberal democracy, or significant improvements upon it, might look like. If only implicitly, it further reinforces the dangerously complacent and wrong-headed assumption of an 'end to history'.

(iv) Gender Exclusions Within Both Models of Civil Society

For feminists, the problem with models of civil society is that the line drawn between public and private does not take gender divisions into account. This has been well documented with regard to liberal theory (see Pateman 1988 and 1988b), although the relevant arguments will be reviewed below. However, much the same concern applies also to radical models, which, since they have not been critiqued as systematically from this perspective, will form the main focus of this section.

The gendered understanding of the division of civil society and the state within liberal theory is most basically that the state or government is seen as constituting the public

sphere, while civil society is understood as a realm of private association. Thus the patriarchal character of civil society, which ensures that women often do not make it into the public domain and that this domain itself is skewed towards male needs and aims, are in the main deemed not a matter of public concern. Furthermore, the site of many women's work - the family - is not even included in civil society itself. This obscures that the negative freedoms of the liberal individual in civil society are dependent on domestic reproduction. Many feminists indeed suggest that the autonomous, unencumbered liberal individual in civil society is really a man, rather than some universal citizen.

Excluding the family from civil society in fact removes women from the public sphere in a number of ways. First, as seen above, their domestic labour, apart from being overlooked and undervalued, also precludes their entry to the public spaces of civil society and the state. Second, male domination within the family is regarded as an essentially private matter, with all the implications that this has for the reproduction of patriarchy with the State's tacit consent. Indeed, it is not immediately apparent how liberal theorists can move legitimately from a conception of privacy as attached to individuals, to one which identifies the sphere of non-intervention with the family. After all, many women experience the family as an oppressive social institution; there therefore seems to be no good reason why liberal theorists of civil society should not match their commitment to individual freedoms with the acknowledgement that the public might legitimately involve itself in certain aspects of family life. But for as long as the family is not included as part of civil society, where at least private association between individuals is regulated to prevent the causing of harm, this will not happen.

Where, though, does the line of gender exclusion fall for the radical, republican model of civil society? As with the liberal model, the problem begins with the invisibility of the domestic sphere within it. Athenian democracy depended for its high levels of (male only) citizen participation on the domestic work of women (as well as slaves). The radical models of civil society, while none excluded women explicitly from 'citizenship', were consistent in giving little or no consideration to the means necessary for the high levels of participation desired within the self-managing sphere of civil society. Consequently, the application of any of these models in practice would mean that women's socially attributed responsibilities within the domestic sphere would effectively marginalise their input into, or control over, the self-management agenda.

A further problem with the these models from a feminist perspective is that, in seeking to overcome the totalitarian implications of the obliteration of the public-private distinction, women's problematic position within liberal society is reintroduced by the back door. Mische points out that this renewed commitment to a separation of public and private spheres has often been symbolic for radicals (e.g. Havel wants to protect a realm of

privacy in order to reconstitute civic action and publicity - i.e. public and private are linked for him), yet the problem remains of redefining a private sphere which in practice does not end up once again including the domestic sphere such that women continue to be effectively excluded from the public. This is why the failure of most radical theorists of civil society to conceptualise what an alternative, gender equal, private sphere might look like is a negative, rather than a neutral, feature of their models. Even where the private sphere is re-imagined in more detail, gender awareness is apparently absent. Havel, for example, although he is a long way from liberal-individualism (which concentrates upon the market sphere), conceptualises the private sphere in ethically individualistic terms. Thus he is just as guilty as liberal philosophers of missing the domestic sphere and is also akin to them in assuming that the individual is constituted prior to relationships of dependence within this sphere. Indeed, collective responsibility, for Havel, begins only in the 'public sphere' of civil society; the domestic sphere, as for the Greeks, appears as a realm of mere necessity far from the 'transcendent' political concerns of civil society. Ultimately, then, since he does not include the family in civil society, the implications for gender of Havel's model are not essentially different from those of many liberals. For, as Pateman has noted, 'unlike republican critics who seek only to reinstate the political in public life, feminist critics insist that an alternative to the liberal conception must also encompass the relationship between public and domestic life' (Pateman 1987: 120).

A further problem regarding the place of women within the radicals' civil society, is that the anti-statist character of these theorists' models leads to the notion of formal politics as compromised and ineffectual. In radical civil society theory, state institutions do not constitute a legitimate public sphere, and the problem of publicity will be solved within civil society itself. Yet in the real-world absence of the republican public spheres of civil society so defined, the boundaries between public and private are reinforced even further for women through the delegitimisation of institutions that may actually constitute the only 'public' on offer.

CONCLUSION

Civil Society and Democracy

I have shown in this thesis that there have been essentially two sets of discourses on civil society since the concept's reemergence in the late 1970s, leading to substantially different models, one radical/republican and the other liberal-democratic. The first set of discourses had a leftist character to them, took place within authoritarian political contexts, and used the idea of civil society in order to mobilise politically and also so as to conceptualise a 'third way' for politics and democracy. This set of discourses took place amongst Central-Eastern European oppositionists before the 1989 transitions, and also amongst Latin American leftists and 'New Social Movement' activists before the transitions in their continent. Since 1989, they have all but disappeared. The second set of discourses on civil society, emerging mostly since 1989 and largely within the western academe, have shaped the concept's current character in a very different manner. These discourses, rather than seeking to mobilise political change or to articulate a 'new' model of democracy in the manner of earlier discourses, instead use the civil society concept to explain political change - that is to account for the so called 'third wave' of democracy. This social-scientific literature on civil society also describes it as merely instrumental to the consolidation of liberal democracy. Thus the role of civil society as an institutionalised arena for interest representation and also as a check on state power, is emphasised to the complete exclusion of earlier concerns (from radical theorists) with democratic participation and even self-management at the grass-roots. The concept loses the radical, republican character it had within opposition discourses and becomes part of the increasingly hegemonic liberal-democratic narrative.[1]

Thus this thesis establishes a decisive break, from the standpoint of democratic theory, between these two different models of civil society. Crucially, it is not possible to talk of one 'civil society', or to be neutral and 'social-scientific' about its relationship to democracy. In the final analysis, the idea of civil society is a category of political discourse - having, that is, both an account of agency and a particular telos according to the political project (in this case, democratisation) in question. For the radical theorists

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[1] A partial exception here is that understanding of civil society in certain post-Marxist circles as a public sphere, a lifeworld setting (i.e. a relatively informal space, separated from the market and from administrative systems) for discourse ethics, and hence for democratic legitimation per se. However, as I have argued at points throughout the thesis, I do not believe that this approach to civil society represents a fundamentally different category. This is, first, because, in practice, civil society is used to refer to the sphere of independent (non-state) associations by these theorists too; that is, civil society is understood institutionally rather than procedurally. Second, although there is something of the radical/republican model for post-Marxists (that is in their understanding of democracy as a process originating with publicity in civil society, rather than with formal institutions in the state) they would wish to seriously restrain the self-management project within a more differentiated democratic polity whereby civil society cannot 'rule'. Ultimately, then, most post-Marxists have a liberal-democratic, rather than a radical/republican, vision of civil society.

of civil society, democracy is social, a form of self-determining praxis which is therefore located *within* the sphere of civil society itself; for liberal-democratic theorists, democracy is political, and civil society therefore plays a *supporting* role for a democracy which is essentially a mechanism for legitimating state power through programming it in society's interests. Since this is no less than a fundamental shift in the understanding of politics itself, it should come as no surprise that civil society theory cannot be fixed at any point between these two positions. Radical-republican theorists have a model of politics in which the citizen as actor is constitutive; liberal-democrats understand politics as activity which is organised around, and directed towards, the state. Radical-republicans are therefore in a sense pre-programmed to see civil society politics as relatively deinstitutionalised and separate from the state - in as much as the (modern) state institutionalises politics, thereby undermining the action imperative which is apparently its very essence. Liberal-democrats, meanwhile, cannot envision politics in the absence of institutionalisation. For them, this is no less true of civil society politics, which, while it must have roots outside of the state, cannot be understood apart from its links with it.

The thesis also indicates that the liberal-democratic model of civil society should be rejected as surplus to requirement, since in this guise it tells us little or nothing more than existing liberal theory, with its emphasis upon the separation of spheres, a limited state, and associational life outside of the state. In short, the liberal-democratic literature on civil society is 'reductionist'. The term civil society is often deployed as little more than a description of associational life, being downgraded in the process from an *idea* of political theory, which it had always been previously, to a mere addendum to the liberal vocabulary on governance (specifically the separation of powers and the control of power). Furthermore, it is not too much to say that liberal-democrats, specifically academic analysts of democratisation, have appropriated the idea of civil society for reasons that they cannot truthfully claim are those that have previously marked it out. In its classical versions, the concept of civil society (as was explored in chapter 1) fell squarely within the boundaries of liberal theory. Its concern was with the creation of a dynamic framework for individual freedom and autonomy (the free market) in the face of restrictive feudal society, rather than with the democratisation of the state as such. So liberal-democrats are not returning to the Enlightenment idea of civil society. Neither, of course, are they in keeping with those theorists who most recently revived the concept in the 1970s and 1980s, where it was not the formal democratisation of the state that took precedence, but the opening up of democratic space in society itself. Here, as 'classically', civil society denoted a process and not merely a set of institutions as in the liberal-democratic model.

There is simply no good reason why academic analysts of democratisation should use the concept of civil society at all. If they mean to refer to associational life outside of the state, then why not say so? This would be distinctly preferable, since by conflating civil society and associational life, liberal democratic theorists end up using a rubric that suggests that all associational life is civil - that is, democratic and open - which it clearly is not. Alternatively, the idea of civil society could be narrowed down to refer only to those associations that really are 'civil'. Then, however, liberal-democrats would be muddying the waters, since their *theory* of civil society (whether or not they define the *term* more coherently) is actually limited to highlighting the role of associations in representing interests and limiting the power of the state. While it might be favourable to imagine that all associations which play this role are civil, there seems to be no clear reason why they must be in order to be effective in the way that liberal-democrats want them to be. That is, to redefine the term civil society in this way, liberal-democrats would also have to redefine their theory of civil society.

Of course, the same argument could be made about the radical model of civil society. After all, radicals in the 1970s and 1980s completely reworked the concept from its classical format, and could have used a term such as 'democratic society' to express the idea that they were seeking to capture. Yet semantics aside, does the radical model of civil society have anything more significant to contribute to democratic theory than the liberal democratic model? This thesis has demonstrated that it does not. The marriage under the umbrella term 'civil society' of democratic-socialist and liberal ideas about democracy and democratisation, like most declarations of a putative 'third way', left too many questions of detail unanswered.

Firstly, how in practice was the self-management agenda to coincide with a wider framework of law and rights? Secondly, accepting that self-management within society could be a reality, how was this to be co-ordinated and administered without effectively restoring full sovereignty to the state? Thirdly, how was democratic control of the economic sphere to be increased even while market mechanisms remained in place? Was it to involve a mixture of private and collective ownership in a framework of factory and workers councils located within a market economy? In this case, how was the power of capital to be regulated - such that cooperatives and councils could appropriate property in the first place and then hold on to it - without ceding excessive power to the state all over again? Fourthly, how was the participatory democracy of civil society to address the exclusion of women due to their unequal role within the domestic sphere, and to redefine the private sphere in a way less disadvantageous to women in the first place? Fifthly, in what form were participatory practices to be made workable and how were they then to be preserved from harm and decay; i.e. what institutional structures were needed for ongoing participation?

Thus although the radical model of civil society undoubtedly points to worthy values for political discourse - i.e. self-management, grass-roots participation and post-statism - it is too vague about how they can be instantiated; that is, of how we can move from articulating these values in discourse to realising them in practice. After all, such values exist already in political thought, so it is not enough for radical civil society theory merely to bring them together; the question is what to do in order to see more of them in the real world? Unfortunately, this is precisely the question that remains unanswered and even largely unexplored by radical theorists of civil society. With few exceptions, radical models of civil society (including those of the New Left), leave us no closer to providing a renewed democratic project that attends to the means for its own realisation.

As uncovered in the thesis, this weakness also relates closely to the inadequate account of agency provided by radical theorists of civil society. Liberal-democrats can account for agency in their interest-representing civil society associations because it is premised upon the self-interested individual. This individual, being rational, recognises the need to act in concert with others if her interests are to be maximised. Radicals, on the other hand, seem to assume that people in civil society are democratic - eager to participate and possessed of 'civic virtue' - without providing any reasons as to why this should be so. Initially, when radical civil society theory was concerned primarily with working class praxis, identifying the motivation for grass-roots democratic agency was not such a problem. In this instance, it was simply a matter of workers gaining more control over their lives, and receiving more of the products of their labour. However, once the working class subject was dropped in order that the idea of civil society might become more inclusionary and less historicist (accusations against Marxist agency which radicals were anxious to rid themselves of), the identification of a new subject became problematic. To replace one exclusivist agency with another was obviously not coherent, yet the problem remained of explaining what it was about people in civil society that would make them democratic. For as long as the state was the great oppressor in both Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America, then the democracy of civil society could always be explained as entirely rational as far as human agents were concerned. But in the aftermath of the democratisation of the state, it has become hard to contend that civil society is populated with democrats as a matter of course. On the contrary, many of the former radical civil society theorists now bemoan the privatism, loss of 'civic virtue' and 'war of each against all', that they claim to discern in contemporary 'civil society'.

Notwithstanding individual models of civil society, what is the contribution of recent civil society overall? On the evidence of this thesis, it is not a lasting one. Where there is common ground between discourses on civil society, the resultant propositions are

simply too vague to offer substantively new categories to the field of democratic theory. Non-violence, self-limitation, and the critique of statism are themes in which theorists of democracy are already well versed.

The one noteworthy contribution of the concept of civil society in the contemporary era seems therefore to be a contextualised, rather than an ongoing, one. This thesis has identified that the reemergence of the idea of civil society was closely connected with the political shift amongst sections of the left in both Central-Eastern Europe and Latin America during the authoritarian era. In these contexts, civil society was expressive of new thinking about how to continue opposition in the face of awesome state power without abandoning democratic principles. It was argued under these conditions that civil society was an end of opposition and not only its means. In other words, a programme for democratisation required going 'beyond' the classical alternatives of reform or revolution, since both these strategies limited their horizons to the state and therefore only reinforced the structure of power most inimical to democratic autonomy and self-management in the modern era. The relevance of this 'civil society first' model for post-transition contexts is dubious, since it does not explore how the state and civil society might relate positively to one another. Yet as a normative banner and as an analytical tool for these ultimately successful struggles against authoritarianism, its significance should not be underestimated.

On a more general level, this thesis has also generated a number of new insights into (1) the status of contemporary civil society theory when compared to the 'classical theory', (2) the changing nature of liberalism as a political theory, (3) the decline of left-radicalism, and (4) the relationship between political ideas and their political 'base'.

Turning first to the status of contemporary civil society theory, this thesis demonstrates how closely it is tied to democratic theory. Since the concept reemerged in the 1970s and 1980s, it has been linked either to radical notions of social democracy, or to liberal notions of political democracy. For the former, civil society constitutes the space for democracy, for the latter it is an indispensable support structure for democracy. Yet from either side, civil society is articulated exclusively in the varied language of democratic theory. For radicals, their model of civil society could not begin to be conceived without concepts such as self-management, participation, political equality, subsidiarity, deliberation, publicity, openness; in short, the building blocks of the idea of democracy. Similarly for contemporary liberals, the idea of civil society is parasitic upon notions such as control of power, accountability of rulers to ruled, popular access to government, separation of powers, and the conviction that the political agenda should flow from the bottom of society to the top, rather than vice versa. Liberal civil society theorists too, then, are indebted to the conceptual language of democratic theory.

Yet in its 'classical' formulations (i.e. prior to its contemporary reemergence), civil society theory was not connected to democratic theory. For Marx, of course, civil society was the antithesis of equality and freedom. Yet even for the liberal theorists of the Enlightenment, civil society was not directly political, and was certainly not concerned with collective decision making in society. Representing as it did the arena of market exchange, civil society was rather about the desired relationship between individual freedoms and social cohesion. Arriving at publicly binding decisions or at the common good (where this does not arise out of the aggregate of individuals pursuing their private interests) is that aspect of the social which is not resolved by the operation of the market and is territory that democratic theorists have sought to claim as their own. Yet *this* territory was not deemed the preserve or concern of civil society at all for classical liberals. Thus the now central notion of 'civil society against the state' would have been meaningless to theorists who either did not see civil society as a matter of willed human organisation or, even if they did (Hegel), who wanted the state to be entirely sovereign over it.

This, then, is a crucial shift in the history of civil society theory. A concept that was once only connected to liberalism (ignoring for the moment the Hegelian contribution), is now connected mainly to democracy. That is to say, although liberalism is still central to much civil society theory (see below), the political problems that this theory is now called upon to resolve, are problems of democracy, rather than, as previously, problems of liberalism. Although the central concern with resolving the tension between individualism and collectivism is a theme that runs throughout the history of civil society theory (see chapter 6), this is directed by the classical theorists towards the arena of the market, and by contemporary theorists towards the arena of 'the political'. In the former of these scenarios, civil society is concerned with the sum total of *private interactions*, in the latter scenario with *public action*. Thus it is only in recent years that civil society theory has come to be about democracy.

Secondly, this thesis has highlighted a facet of the history of liberal ideology which helps us to understand how this ideology as a whole has changed. The history of the concept of civil society mirrors the transformation of liberalism from its original status as a radical political philosophy in the early modern period, to the contemporary form of liberalism as the defender of liberal institutions, or, in other words, the status quo. The earliest liberal notions of civil society from the eighteenth century posited civil society as the realm of equality in contrast to medieval paternalism and dependency. It was a radical idea for the times, questioning as it did hierarchies of birth and therefore recognising merit alone in the allocation of social goods (at least in principle). Of course, this equality was to be constituted within the market, and the vagaries of this burgeoning sphere of exchange

became increasingly apparent during the course of the nineteenth century and beyond. So in allowing their commitment to the institution of the market to trump the earlier liberal tenet of equality of opportunity - even now that the market was seen as a radically incomplete means to this form of equality - liberalism, at least in the latter part of this century, has become partially reactionary.

This critique is well known, at least to those who accept it, yet this thesis has added to it the parallel story of civil society theory. For just as liberalism has lost its original radicalism, so also has the once radical liberal idea of civil society collapsed into orthodoxy. An interesting facet of this decline is that just as liberalism is by now primarily institutionalist (emphasising the market and the limited state), so too is the liberal-democratic perspective on civil society. Gone is the sense of early-modern liberals that civil society represents the *process* by which individual freedom and autonomy is enhanced (although this sense of civil society was deployed by liberal democrats in opposition to communism, it has never been used critically by them in relation to liberal democratic societies themselves) and in its stead are found a plethora of *institutionalist* accounts of the role of non-state associations in liberal-democratic politics. Just as liberalism is now in danger of supporting liberal institutions almost regardless of whether they help realise key liberal goals, so liberal-democratic civil society theory celebrates non-state institutions as good for democracy without ever asking whether in their present form they are in a position to further the democracy that we already posses. In both instances, something like 'the end of history' is being accepted, and political thinking is caught in a state approaching tautology as a result. Nowhere is this clearer than in the field of civil society theory.

Thirdly, this thesis has provided a new perspective on the way in which left-radical theory has faced decline in the last few decades, even across widely differing political contexts. One contribution has been to show that the Marxist approach to civil society as the structural realm of market exploitation has been largely abandoned by leftists. Even those more resilient members of the Left, for example radical Africanists, now seem to accept the superstructural Gramscian model of civil society as a matter of course. Yet Gramsci reworked the orthodox Marxist approach significantly, not least in rendering it suitable for the construction of a multi-class opposition in the face of ruling-class hegemony. This political, agentic, model of civil society, replacing Marx's structural account, mirrors the demise in general of determinism and historicism on the left, with an emphasis upon political action and the contingency of history emerging in its place. Hardly anyone on the academic left now thinks that civil society, reflecting a certain point of capitalist development, contains the seeds of some inevitable revolution, but many still hope that, given political organisation, popular forces in civil society can muster enough strength to create public space in a wide range of polities.

The recent history of leftist civil society theory also sheds further light on the extent to which the Left has abandoned its statism. This is why civil society became so important to sections of the Left in the first place. Previously, the Left had thought exclusively in terms of capturing the state, yet the seeming impossibility of this happening, given the strength of the late-modern leviathan, shifted attention to other spaces where the goals of the Left could be realised. In addition, the increasing sense that they had been betrayed by an earlier adherence to Jacobin politics, caused many leftists to denounce any projects to abolish the separation of civil society from the state. Moving in the opposite direction, many on the left now called for as much separation as possible, almost to the point where they came full circle back to the cause of unification (except this time with civil society as the victor). Crucially, however, the previous method for the achievement of unification - violence - had now been abandoned.

However, all in all, leftists who engaged with the category of civil society moved so far away from orthodox left tenets, that the distinctiveness of their position has to be called into question. It is perhaps no surprise that, at present, the field of civil society theory is occupied by non-radical (that is, liberal democratic) models of civil society. For once they had abandoned the call for the separation of spheres to be overcome, and even for an enlarged state, there was little of substance to separate left models of civil society from liberal-democratic ones. In principally calling for the separation of powers and for control of (state) power, leftists moved onto liberal territory. Their continuingly radical emphases, such as the call for the democracy of civil society, are increasingly read as constituting variations on the liberal theme, rather than radical alternatives to it. In this story of civil society theory we see reflected the wider picture of the de-radicalisation of Left theory, and the growing hegemony of liberal theory. At root, this is because, despite their call for political action, radical theorists of civil society have accepted the key liberal tenet concerning the primacy of the social. Ultimately, and despite occasional appearances to the contrary, this tenet blocks any attempt to reintroduce politics as the central form of the good life. Political action in civil society, though it might be seen as an end in itself, is therefore clearly delimited.

Finally, this thesis generates some new data on the relationship between political ideas and political praxis. As far as recent ideas about civil society are concerned, where these were developed in the cause of opposition in authoritarian political contexts, then there seems to have been a dynamic, two-way relationship between discourse and praxis. The line of causality, first, from discourse to praxis appears to be a clear one, for example, in the case of Solidarity. As was demonstrated in chapter 2, Solidarity's political agenda was heavily influenced by the discourse of civil society, or more specifically, by the idea of the 'self-limiting revolution' (the notion that violent and totalising means would

corrupt non-violent and pluralist ends). Similarly, NSMs and many other leftist organisations in Latin America took on board the discourse of civil society and, in internalising some of its key principles, adapted their political strategies accordingly.

Yet this is only half of the picture. In the first place, it is easy to object that praxis did not follow discourse but merely responded to the same set of circumstances. In other words, it could be argued that Polish workers did not advocate 'self-limitation' because the discourse of the KOR altered their perception of what was politically possible and desirable, but because it was as self-evident to workers as it was to KOR theorists that direct challenges to the state would not work. From this perspective, any affinity between KOR and Solidarity thinking was generated by their shared context, not because the KOR discourse provided qualitatively new concepts for Solidarity to work with (though it may well have done a better job of articulating these). Indeed, this thesis has found that direct experience of the political base *was* crucial in the development of new categories of political thought for the key theorists of radical models of civil society. The example of theorists on the Latin American Left is apt here. Many of them were unequivocal (e.g. Weffort) that it was their experience of political violence at close hand, just as much as the influence of discourses such as the neo-Gramscian one, which motivated their turn towards new forms of political action.

Probing the connection between discourse and political base further, political networks (for example KOR, the Chartists, The Latin exiles and NSMs) seem to be the spaces where discourse and 'base' come together. Although these networks were primarily discursive rather than directly political, they were clearly shaped according to the exigencies of the political base in the first place. Thus the Latin exiles were brought together by the authoritarian character of the military regimes from their home region; the Latin American NSMs in part because of the withdrawal of public provision and security by these same regimes; and the Chartists and KOR because all other forms of political involvement had been precluded under 'real-socialism'. In specific networks such as these there is actually no way of resolving the question of whether political discourse or political context did the most to determinate praxis. Since actors are constituted socially, to separate these two factors out would create a false dichotomy.

Indeed, what this thesis demonstrates on a wider scale is that discourse analysis, while it is a necessary condition for inquiry into political thought, is not a sufficient one. Political discourse, while it indisputably has an influence upon the course of political activity, is strictly bounded by its relevance to the political base. That is, political discourse does not generate praxis in a vacuum, and is not itself hermetically sealed. Far from being entirely self-referential 'language games', political discourses must make some sense of 'objective' social conditions and must go on from here to develop efficacious modes of

praxis. When this praxis fails or becomes a victim of its own success (thus not being directly relevant any more), then the discourse(s) in question will themselves break down if they do not change accordingly.

In the rapid decline of the radical discourses of civil society since 1989, we find a good example of this process. Radical ideas of civil society were worked out within authoritarian political contexts and, accepting that authoritarian structures were likely to remain long into the future, these ideas led to models of political action that took hostility from (and to) the state as given. Therefore, for as long as this hostility continued, radical civil society theory, or the model of an autonomous civil society, was the most realistic and therefore the most effective political praxis available. But with the transition to political democracy, the state was no longer the enemy as such. Now, forms of political praxis were needed that enabled engagement with the state and which traded the democracy of civil society for apparently valuable efficiency gains. It should therefore come as no surprise that the radical discourse of civil society was quickly abandoned under these new conditions.

What all this goes to show, is that political discourse does not generate praxis in isolation from the political context. Such discourses must be highly sensitive to the political base if they are to thrive. Therefore, even if it could be argued that the radical discourse on civil society *itself* generated the new forms of political praxis which in turn reshaped the political base, then, on the evidence of the subsequent decline of this discourse, it still has to be accepted that the base is important.

Thus the radical idea of civil society has largely not survived the changes to the political base that the 'third wave' of democracy has brought to pass. It has much less to contribute in a liberal-democratic context. And it has also been thrown into the shadows by the realism on offer from liberal-democratic theorists of civil society who, given the positivism which characterises political studies generally, seem confident in their ability to produce a supposedly value-free 'science' of civil society. Precisely because such theorists are not concerned with identifying new forms of political praxis - since they basically see nothing wrong with liberal democracy - civil society theory has become increasingly moribund. Though it does a reasonable job of telling us what we already know about life under liberal democracy, and of how this might be further improved, it does not even hint at alternatives to it. The idea of civil society has indeed moved a long way from the radicalism which characterised its revival just a few years ago; its effective demobilisation as an idea oriented towards change appears to be complete.

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