

**Civil Society, Social Capital, and Civil Culture:  
A Modern Project**

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## **Introduction**

Research on social capital has been proliferating over the last ten years. Robert Putnam's "Making Democracy Work" published in 1993 has attracted a wide readership and has been reprinted many times over. The reason is more than purely intellectual interest, as demonstrated by the examples of the wide-ranging debate raised in 1998 by the SCI (Social Capital Initiative) Group of the World Bank as a development support policy centered on this concept and the 2002 report on the "The Future of Civic Participation" by the German Bundestag's Enquete Commission to create in Germany a society based on voluntary civic participation, which has this concept at its center.

In these instances, it should be noted, the theory of social capital is at the same time treated as inseparable from the concept of civil society. Thus, the five action propositions for social development held by the World Bank's Social Capital Initiative include the following passage: "Bank programs avoid weakening existing, positive social capital (as they have sometimes done in the past), and identify areas where institutional (social capital) strengthening is needed." Furthermore: "Where possible, World Bank programs work with existing social capital, especially peoples' associations and organizations, for the design and delivery of projects. This has the potential to (a) improve beneficiary targeting, (b) reduce project costs, (c) enhance sustainability, and (d) strengthen civil society through strengthening these organizations." (World Bank 1998: 5, Miyakawa, Ōmori 2004: 37). Here the strengthening of social capital and the strengthening of society is used almost synonymously.

And the report on the "The Future of Civic Participation" of the German Bundestag's Enquete Commission under the Social Democratic Party-led G. Schröder administration, while the objective is to form an active civil society through civic participation, argues at the same time: "Citizens create solidarity, belongingness, and an environment of mutual trust. In essence, it is citizens who maintain and increase what today we call 'social capital'. That is, among the

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members of a society, social capital constitutes linkage, understanding, dependability of shared rules, norms and values, and of course trust in the systems of the state.” (Bürsch 2002: 8). Here, too, invigorating civil society is considered as inseparable from the formation of social capital. Obviously, these instances leave room for debate about the adequacy of the concept of civil society. If so, debate is possible, and necessary, also about the substance of social capital. However, precondition to entering into this topic is the realization that the invigorating or strengthening of civil society and the formation of social capital are considered to be indivisible.

Specifically, the concept of equating civil society with social capital is understood as follows: “Alongside activities of associations, groups, churches, charities, and other not-for-profit organizations, it includes the cooperation of voluntary agents, movements that provide shelter facilities or food, self-help groups, neighborhood activities, and circles for the exchange of goods and services; furthermore, political participation through citizen initiatives, NGOs, submission of bills from the public, and such other forms of direct democratic civil participation, or activities in political parties and unions, and activities in voluntary services; especially activities inspired by not-for-profit objectives on the part of business enterprises and activities by groups with not-for-profit objectives.” (ib. 7-8). Here the equation of civil society with social capital is a design determined by the values and norms shared among the various entities that inhabit this specific relationship, that is, civil culture. In the following, premised on the relationship in which civil society, social capital, and civil culture form an equation, this paper considers the sometimes vague concept of social capital.

## **1. Civil society—social capital**

There is no shortage of definitions coined by just as many authors in order to come to grips with the vagueness of the concept of social capital. With regard to social capital equipped with certain communal characteristics and premised on its accessibility by the individual, these definitions are preceded by distinctions from the viewpoint of whether social capital has favorable or unfavorable effects on the individual, and from the viewpoint of whether it has favorable or unfavorable effects on society itself. Sakada, quoted below, takes up Coleman and Putnam as mutually distinct representative examples: “For Coleman, social capital belongs to the individual. The focus of his theory is the potential benefit obtainable to the individual through coordinated behavior within a small-scale network. Putnam objects to this, arguing that social capital is not a concept that explains the behavior of the individual but that social capital is to be understood as a measure for the ‘civicness’ of society.” (Sakada, Shozo 2001: 14)

Ostrom and Ahn, who differentiate their approach to social capital from the same perspectives, are less clear in distinguishing the methodological viewpoints of Putnam and Coleman. Ostrom and Ahn make distinctions between, on the one hand, a ‘minimalism approach’ that understands social capital as “access by the individual to a beneficial human network” and “belonging to the individual, a manifestation of a primarily potential supportive relationship

with others;” and on the other hand, an ‘expansionism approach’ represented by Putnam, “which on a much larger scale has widened the potential for the applicability of this concept to the examination of the operations of democratic governance.” Coleman, for that matter, is nonetheless positioned in the middle between those two approaches. (cf. Ostrom, Elinor, Ahn 2002). In the opinion of Ostrom, Elinor, and Ahn “the methodology of Coleman, whose topic is the various forms of social capital, i.e., trust and norms, attempts to bridge the gap between social capital’s originally narrow concept and the wider-cast understanding of recent years.” (Ostrom, Elinor, Ahn 2002: 40).

The view of Ostrom, Elinor, and Ahn would appear supported by the following argument of Coleman, whom they cite: “All social capital derives from several sides of society’s structure, and social capital encourages certain behaviors on the part of the individuals within that structure. In the same way as other forms of capital, social capital is productive and enables attaining objectives that could not be attained without it.” (Coleman 1990: 302, Japanese translation supervised by Kuji, Toshitake: 475). However, the social capital that Coleman raises as case examples, e.g., in New York the Jewish network of the diamond wholesale market held together by matrimonial bonds, in Korea the networks that result from progressive student movements based on a common native village, university, or religion; in Jerusalem the neighborhood relations where neighbors mind each others children, or in Cairo’s bazaars the insider group relations across different trades — all of these constitute tightly-woven insider relationship that cannot be called relationships of modern civil society. (Coleman 2006: 210-21; first published 1988).

Among the two approaches to social capital concepts, from the perspective of accessibility by the individual or the collective, and from the perspective of the utility obtainable from that access it would seem, as the result of an effort gone too far at creating a general theory, that social capital transcends time and (therefore different) societies. But social capital appears rather more of a context-sensitive nature with respect to time and society. Conceivably, social capital that at a given time facilitates the smooth functioning of a given society might in a different era and different society work as a hindrance to smooth functioning. Especially in the case here considered, where social capital is considered in conjunction with civil society and civil culture, this paper will look at social capital under the second approach, i.e., as an analytical concept for gauging the status of a given society. In this case, social capital according to Putnam will take center stage.

As is generally known, in “Making Democracy Work,” Putnam carries out a north-south performance comparison of the Italian public administration after the introduction of a state system in 1970, and notes that the northern part of Italy displayed efficiency, pragmatism, and the characteristics of democracy. Putnam ascribes the origin of the north-south discrepancy, i.e., the civiness of the civil community or ‘civil culture’ seen in Italy’s north, to that region’s 12<sup>th</sup> century tradition as an autonomous city state. According to Putnam, “The commune republic of medieval northern Italy achieved a large number of improvements with respect to both governance performance and economic life. This was possible because of the norms and

networks of active civic participation. From this special civic context, whose characteristic were horizontal bonds in the form of communal civic cooperation, there emerged groundbreaking changes in the various basic systems of politics and economy, with this political and economic progress subsequently strengthening the civil community.” (Putnam 1993: 129, Japanese translation: 156)

The tradition of this commune republicanism does not extend in a direct line to the present. According to Putnam, “The civic tradition of northern Italy, whose value has been shown earlier, is a historical treasure house of collaborative forms that can be put to practical use by citizens in dealing with new problems of communal action. Mutual aid associations were created on the remnants of crumbled traditional trade organizations, and subsequently communal organizations and political parties for the masses came to use the experience of mutual aid groups to good effect. To date, modern-day Italy’s environmental movement has relied strongly on this background.” (Putnam 1993: 174, Japanese translation 217) This is how Putnam sees the historical transformation. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Putnam identifies as the source of the characteristics of civil society today a civicness, i.e., civil culture, that goes back to the civic tradition of the middle ages.

Conceivably, Japanese readers will find it easy to relate to this line of thought. Putnam’s discourse may remind some of Gorō Hani in *Seiyō shimin ishiki no keisei*, 1949 (The Formation of West European Civil Consciousness 1949) and Toshi ronri, 1968 (*Urban Theory*), and others of Kiyooki Hirata in *Toshi shakai to shakai shugi*, 1969 (Urban Society and Socialism). However, what is there to prove that medieval civic tradition did indeed evolve into modern-time civil social capital? There is much reason to doubt that a connection can be established from medieval urban society to a theory of the urban society of modernity.

This is made evident in the civil society debate that started in the 1980s and specifically in the 1990s in Germany. Its development will be reviewed in the next chapter.

## **2. Traditional urban civil society or modern civil society?**

Two different viewpoints are juxtaposed, one that regards the concept of modern civil society as a continuation of traditional urban civil society, and another that regards traditional and modern-day societies as clearly distinct. The two views match insofar as they regard the civil society concept as a modern-day product distinct from the ancient status society. The first view is based on the following argument. The civil society concept as an ideology of pre-industrialization early liberalism, i.e., the idea of the ‘classless civil society’ predicated on an independent neutral status (the patriarch), attracted a cross section of citizens. However, industrialization resulted in progressing class formation, as a result of which the attractiveness to society at large was lost and the concept became an ideology for the self-justification of the propertied classes. Nonetheless, the sense of autonomy that was the tradition of medieval urban civic societies and that is contained in liberalism has been used by the participants of the debate in relation to modern-day self-governing local bodies. The second view, which clearly

distinguishes between the medieval urban civil society and modern civil society, is the concept of civil society as a 'modern project', of which the working class might become the basis. This theory has been finding increasing general acceptance. For us the utility derives not only from permitting the comparison with Putnam's view, but also from a methodological perspective on how to grasp civil culture as social capital. These two thoughts will be examined in more detail in the following.

In 1980, Lothar Gall of Frankfurt University authored "Liberalismus und „bürgerliche Gesellschaft“ – Zu Charakter und Entwicklung der liberalen Bewegung in Deutschland" (Liberalism and 'Civil Society' – Characteristics and development of the liberal movement in Germany) (Gall, 1980). In it Gall writes that due to the relaxation of the traditional status society from the end of the 18th into the early 19th century, in opposition to this traditional status society, a liberalist concept of social reform was formulated of "a classless society with a neutral status based on a patriarchal foundation organized according to trade or vocational status." According to Gall, in its time this concept attracted a vertical cross-section of society and acquired an effectiveness as a groundbreaking concept of liberalism, but as a result of the class differentiation brought by the industrialization in the second half of the 19th century, was through an ideological conspiracy turned into an argument that served for the protection of the interests of the bourgeoisie and subsequently lost its civic integrative power.

In Gall's concept of early liberalism, while the phrase "based on a patriarchal foundation organized according to trade or vocational status" in the first sentence has been largely ignored, the phrase "neutral-status, classless civil society" in the second sentence has been widely taken up. For example, as a specific historical manifestation, it spurred research of the German association movement which experienced a sudden rise coinciding with the era of early liberalism. In 1984, Otto Dann in "Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland" (Association movement and civil society in Germany) (Dann 1984) proposed research into associations as a specific manifestation relevant to civil society, which led to advances in association research by many young researchers.

Civil society research took off in the second half of the 1980s with projects respectively incepted by Jürgen Kocka, at Bielefeld University at the time, and Lothar Gall at Frankfurt University.

We will first review the characteristics of civil society research led by Jürgen Kocka. Kocka perceived the concept of classless civil society proposed by Gall as a 'modern project' and in 1982 gave it the following established form as an idea. "The vision of a 'civil society' whose actors are its 'citizens' has come into being, marking the genesis of the concept of a 'civil society' suited for a future order in which at some point in time the concept of the national citizen will be fully realized. It has come into being as a symbol of utopia and as a symbol for a model of an economic, social, and political order. This model seeks to establish the principles of individual freedom and equality by ending status privileges based on absolutism and birth and abolishing clerical supervision, ensure the mutualism of people based on the power of reasoning through principles of competition established in an equitable manner (in the economic

realm, the market economy), statutorily limit the power of the state in the sense of a liberal constitutional government and constitutional state, and function to as a model that connects public opinion, elections, representative institutions on the one hand and the will of adult citizens on the other.” (Kocka 1987: 29). At the same time Kocka asserts that because in Germany this ‘modern project’ was betrayed, perverted, obstructed, and in the most extreme of circumstances, seized by nazism, the laying open of this modern history of Germany, i.e., the particular path of Germany, and civil society research form inseparable aspects. This kind of civil society research projects was advanced by Kocka with topics such as its actors, citizens, and civicness (i.e., civic norms or culture).

Into the 2000s, Kocka began to use the term ‘Zivilgesellschaft’ (civil society) instead of the previously used ‘bürgerliche Gesellschaft’, falling in line with Habermas. At the same time, he accepted the idea of assuming the location of this civil society to be positioned between markets and politics, albeit without changing his original assumption of ‘civil society as a project’. Kocka accepts the current majority view of the concept of civil society as being positioned between markets and politics, that is, that “the Zivilgesellschaft is a civic independent organization situated in the space between state and economy on the one hand and privacy on the other; it is the space of associations, circles, civic relations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the space of public discussion, confrontation, and appreciation; the space of the independence of the individuals and groups; and the space of dynamism, initiatives, and innovation.” (Kocka 2001: 132.) Kocka does not miss pointing out that “at the same time, the Zivilgesellschaft is fundamentally the notion of a political objective and the central concept of the program.” (ib. 132) In this way, Kocka says civil society is a ‘modern project’ which he at the same time described as a civic, ‘descriptive, analytical concept’ and ‘civic independent organized space situated between state, economy, and privacy’.

As characteristic of Kocka one could mention, firstly, that the civil society of this ‘modern project’ is expressly segregated from the urban civil society formed by the pre-modern urban citizen stratum; secondly, the understanding that while its actors were initially the educated bourgeoisie and the property-owning bourgeoisie, owing to the class differentiation brought by the industrialization in the second half or the 19<sup>th</sup> century, actors shifted from crafts people, workers, and groups engaged in newly emerging services and tasks, back to groups and movements formerly excluded but now seeking entry, especially those constituted by women; and thirdly, while Kocka understands civil society as a space, he emphasizes the inseparable relationship between civil society and the state supporting it, which he refers to as ‘no civil society without the state’.

Subsequently, also the Frankfurt Project centered on Lothar Gall, through individual research topics almost identical to those of Kocka, added substance to his theory of “a classless civil society organized by trade and vocational status and predicated on a patriarchic platform.” However, unlike Kocka, who proposes modeling civil society, Gall’s concept proposes to research the lineage that connects German citizens with early liberalism, irrespective of the fact that the “classless civil society” project of early liberalism in the wake of the class differentiation

in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century lost the appeal it previously held for a vertical cross-section of society. Therefore, even if early liberalism was formed and carried in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the new civic strata of the educated bourgeoisie and the property-owning bourgeoisie, conceptually they are no clearly distinct from the pre-modern urban citizen strata, and depicted as successors to the autonomy perception of the traditional urban community. Apparently it is Gall's secret idea to connect this lineage of liberalism to modernity. This suspicion is by no means pure inference, because as the academic supervisor of an exhibition in commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution of 1848/49 Gall considered the lineage of the liberalism of 1848 as a continuous line running through the Weimar republic to modernity.

It is for this reason that Gall is critical of Kocka's proposition to establish civil society as a 'modern project'. According to Gall, the term 'bürgerlich' has been transformed into 'a type of meta-category' and become a 'certain ideal type that strongly depends, case-by-case, on the observer empowered to formulate a definition of what constitutes its content'. According to Gall, "This tendency is particularly conspicuous in the case of Jürgen Kocka. His concept of 'civicness' often bears the colors of a catalogue of ideal objectives and potentialities of aspirations." (Gall 1993: 2) Gall is critical of a situation where civil society and civil culture are arranged as one project while the scientist who does the arranging is at the same time able to inject "ideal objectives and potentialities of aspirations." This appears to be justifiable criticism.

Incidentally, the new civic strata which according to Gall's assumption gained mental and physical autonomy and became the actors a liberalism linked to the "tradition of urban republicanism" (ib. S.11), in the process of the industrialization lost their resilience vis-a-vis the state. As a specific case study, Gall has described this process by publishing as an example the biography of a given urban civic family (the Wasserman family resident in the city of Mannheim), adapted to the social changes during the period from around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This perspective of Gall finds indirect support from a member of Gall's camp, Dieter Langewiesche, a participant in the Frankfurt and Bielefeld projects, who criticizes Jürgen Kocka. He notes with regard to the civil society model and project proposed by Kocka that it deliberately disregards the fact that the model's proponents at the time of the model's inception in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., "those who inspired by a new type of civil society model demand relaxation of market-forming regulations in the contemporaneous economic order and the immediate dissolution of civic bodies, may put up resistance out of doubt over a liberalization of the system order." Specifically, this refers to the bureaucracy of the Prussian revolution. According to Langewiesche, ultimately "what Kocka put together in his definitions for his model of 'civil society' disintegrated among objectives that in actuality are often mutually competing. In spite of this, various 'civicnesses' are connected by the ideal of 'maintaining independence and its propagation of among as many people as possible'. In the sphere of life of the city of the Wassermans, Gall clearly shows this integrative power that inspires expectations more



effectively than the diffusional, juxtaposed relationships of ‘old citizens’ and ‘new citizens’. He also shows clearly that the integrative power of the image of civil society prescribed on the basis of civic accord faded in the 1840s and broke up in the revolution of 1848/49.” (Langewiesche 1997: 85)

According to Langewiesche, the clear distinction between ‘old citizens’ and ‘new citizens’ is inappropriate, while Gall’s research of the Wassermann family demonstrates not only that there was no antagonism between the ‘guilds and the property-owning bourgeoisie’ but also “tells of opposition to interpretations as hindrance to the progress of the traditional urban citizen stratum.” (Langewiesche 1997: 83)

Against this, Kocka levels counter-criticism at Gall, asserting that Gall’s elucidation on ‘the performance of the modernization of the state and interference with urban modernization’ was insufficient and that his elucidation on ‘the re-assessment of the city as the driving force of modernization and the downgrading of the evaluation of the state’ were excessive, and for emphasizing traditional urban citizens’ opposition against modernization. Kocka urges Gall also to reconsider his very view of urban elites, which were small to begin with, as the representative actors of the civil society project. According to Kocka, “This will have been useful as an ideology for the legitimization of a narrow stratum of society.” With these doubts, he suggests a focus on those (people from the lower social strata) who demand the universalization of that utopia. (Kocka 1993: 419)

In December 1999, at the final stage of the civil society debate between Kocka and Gall (and also Langewiesche), the German Bundestag's Enquete Commission “The Future of Civic Participation” was established under the Social Democratic Party-led Schroeder administration, and in 2002 a report was submitted. Along with the report, the Commission published an 11-volume library. The purpose of this commission consisted of “policy formulation concerning specific political strategies and measures to promote in Germany spontaneous civic participation aimed at public welfare.” In this case, civil society is understood as ‘a network of self-organized, voluntary associations’ situated in the middle ground of ‘state, economy, and family’, with the added importance of the role of the state in supporting civil society. The invigorating of civic participation “creates an environment of civic cooperation, belonging, and mutual trust. In essence, society maintains and increases what we today we refer to as ‘social capital.’ Therefore, civic participation constitutes a political virtue. This political virtue is what marks the ‘good citizen’. At the same time, it serves also as a measure for the democratic quality of a community.” (Bürsch 2002 :8)

Although this report was produced by a research commission under the coalition government of the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party, since the commission was a consultative body of parliament, the report carefully took into account multiple perspectives.

The report positions civil society as the place of civic activities in the middle ground of state, economy, and family, adding business enterprises to the actors of civil society and emphasizing the linkage with civil society and the democratic state supporting it, as well as highlighting the notion of respecting local civic communes. Hence, it incorporates in various

ways the results of the civil society debate that started in the 1990s led by Gall and Kocka and also integrates the social capital debate. However, while extolling the strengthening of ‘modern’ society and placing it in the middle ground of state, economy, and family, it is fair to say that the emphasis on the function of the state is more in the line of sight of Jürgen Kocka than Gall. As a matter of fact, Kocka was part of the writers’ team of the commission’s ‘library’, in which function he wrote a paper about the ‘civic stratum becoming the actor carrying civil society’. At the risk of stating the obvious, the following section provides an abstract of Kocka’s view. This paper presents in concise form the research compiled to date in the ‘library’ of the German Bundestag’s Enquete Commission.

The paper begins by breaking down the concept of ‘citizen’ into three patterns. First, there is the traditional urban citizen stratum, which lost distinct contours together with the dismantling of the status society. Second comes the bourgeoisie, in the sense of the middle class of civic strata. The bourgeoisie comprises the educated bourgeoisie and the property-owning bourgeoisie, the product of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, who characterize 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany with respect to economy, science, and culture, in contrast to its political influence, which was not great. And third, there is the concept of the *citoyen*, also a product of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the sense of the state citizen. These are concepts of equal individual rights bearers that continue to exist today.

Next, the concept of ‘civil society’ is broken down into two patterns. One is a normative concept for a certain project or idea. “It is a society of independent and free co-existence in association, where necessary decisions are passed in public debate, controlled by law and constitution, but without guidance by an authoritative state, equipped with pluralistic tolerance, and distinction of individual actions, without excessive social disequilibrium.” (Kocka 2002: 16.). The other one is the descriptive, i.e., analytical, concept of the social scientist, in the sense of “a civic space, i.e., the civic self-organized space between state, economy, and privacy. In other words, this a space of associations, circles, civic-welfare related, non-governmental organizations, a space for institutionalized initiatives and groups, whether few or numerous, related to the public debate an public welfare, and a space especially for civic participation in efforts that have an all-encompassing purport.” (ib. 16)

The civil society concept as a modern project was initially carried by the educated bourgeoisie and the property-owning bourgeoisie. Due to industrialization and modernization, these strata turned defensive, with a loss of the close link to the civil society concept, and with its actors shifting to the lower strata of craftspeople, workers, and women. Today it is no longer possible to clearly determine the contours of the civic strata. Kocka has in this way formularized the identification of the civic strata of modernity and the civil society concept, and the historical process of their linkage (and the dismantling thereof).

It should be added, however, that “the 20<sup>th</sup> century with its crises has demonstrated how the mobilization of civil society can be used for purposes that are not civic at all. For example, the nationalist, racist, anti-semitic movements during the Weimar era, the vying right-wing organization hostile to all alliances, communal bodies, circles, and the republic, all of them satisfied the formal standards of civic participation. These movements were voluntary, and

unrestricted by the state, not motivated by gain and personal advantage, who engaged in civic participation for the sake of general matters.” (S. 20) according to Kocka, who emphasizes the fact that depending on the context of the times also negative civil society participation is possible, which must not be left to uncritical glorification. In other words, for the formation of a sound civil society, a strong democratic state is necessary. In other writing from the same period, even more impressively, Kocka says: ”From a social democratic perspective, people will stress the following, namely, that a strong civil society needs a strong state, and the opposite is also true.” (Kocka 2001: 133)

This perception of Kocka that the formation of social capital and the strengthening of civil society through this kind of active civic participation requires a strong state as a guardian is exactly the basic understanding also of the German Bundestag's Enquete Commission. This is shown in one of the sections of the common preface to the volumes of the Commission's 'library,' where it says: “Civil society needs a state that supports it without restricting or obstructing civic participation through unnecessary bureaucratic conditions but rather to enable the protection of civic participation.”

It is not difficult to imagine that the Enquete Commission and the Social Democratic Party-led government led at the time, on the pretext of preserving the German welfare state, acted with the idea to invigorate civic participation in response to (read: to supplement) the rising fiscal burden faced by the very welfare state owing to a falling birth rate and an economy in recession. In this sense, “civic participation” also has a side to it that can emerge as the factual reality of a “cost to citizens” (e.g., the Harz IV legislation). Moreover, with the change of government in 2009, it is uncertain whether the ideas and proposals put forth by the Enquete Commission can be put to use going forward. However, it is significant that the civil society debate in Germany since the second half of the 1980s expanded in the 2000s into a public discussion surrounding the “strengthening of civil society.”

For Putnam's concept of social capital, clearly the linkage to modern civil society is the heart of the matter. However, he locates this lineage in the traditional urban communes since the middle ages. The civil society debate that has continued to date in Germany, while –as Putnam does – focusing on “modern” civil society, social capital, and civil culture, in this instances differs from Putnam in the distinction it makes against traditional urban civic societies. To begin with, considering that historically the civil society debate since Adam Smith has proposed a “new” social model as opposed to the traditional communal social relations, this writer has considerable doubts that there is a simple connection between modern civil society and medieval urban civic societies. Lothar Gall's method, even if it were applicable to Germany or elsewhere in Europe (obviously this would be contested by Jürgen Kocka), would then not spread in other areas of the world where there is no such tradition of urban civic societies. With regard to this point, the fact that, for example, the ‘strengthening of civil society’ can be set as a development aid strategy by the World Bank, the reason would appear to be precisely because civil society, social capital, and civil culture can be understood as universal values, different from traditional social relations, and bearing the characteristic seal of modernity

However, when the universalization of modern civil society is narrated without intermediaries, in the case of emerging countries directly confronted with reality, one can expect that his will immediately yield a variety of problems. This point will be considered in the next chapter.

### **3. A critical reexamination of equating modern civil society and social capital**

If civil society is understood as a 'modern project', social capital as the various social relations of the people forming that civil society becomes something that is endowed with an open and connective nature. Whether social capital is beneficial or not with respect to the effectiveness of the economy, society, and politics is not necessarily immediately experienced depending on whether social capital bears the stamp of modernity or not. However, for example, if civil society, social capital, and civil culture is seen as a yardstick for measuring the status of society, the question of whether this yardstick bears the stamp of modernity or not does become significant. The transnational comparison of different societies makes this evident. How are 'civil society, social capital, and civil culture' compared across different societies? To be more specific, in what way is the slogan of 'strengthening civil society' applied by industrialized countries to development aid projects in the developing world? This requires that first the conceptual significance of 'society, social capital, and civil culture' has its premises worked out. Hence, within the confines of the civil society debate as a 'modern project', it is essential, firstly, to re-examine that concept, and secondly to reflect on the difficulties presented by a comparison especially across different societies.

In 2004, two years after the publication in 2002 of the 'library' of "The Future of Civic Participation" by the German Bundestag's Enquete Commission, which through civic participation proposes the formation of social capital and the strengthening of civil society, "Civil society and Social Capital" (Ansgar Klein, Kristine Kern, Brigitte Geissel, Maria Berger 2004) was published, which strongly reflects the tenor of the 'library'. The writings compiled in "Civil society and Social Capital" are with regard to their attempt at a re-examination of 'civil society, social capital, and civil culture' contextually highly relevant to this paper.

The following will first review how "Civil society and Social Capital" performs a critical analysis of 'civil society, social capital, and civil culture'.

In the opinion of the contributors, Putnam's central contentions are the "formation of trust in voluntary associations, and the effects of that trust on civic and political integration," which are at the focus of Putnam's attention. Furthermore, they hold that "Putnam's view of the civil society consistently lacks a prominent dimension of the civil society, i.e., the dimension of a political society ... All of Putnam's conceptual problems reside in the for Putnam indispensable transition from non-political associations of leisure or sports to political trust. However, this is not a focal point. Greater significance should be assigned to a model of open participation in political and civic systems in order to facilitate political trust (Ansgar Klein, Kristine Kern, Brigitte Geissel, Maria Berger 2004: 9-11). According to the contributors, this is the view held by the German Bundestag's Enquete Commission.

Furthermore, in conclusion, “Firstly, the formation of a ‘good civil society‘ and ‘positive‘ social capital can occur in various contexts and in various shapes. Secondly, there exists no automatic connection between, on the one hand, participation in civic societal networks and associations and, on the other hand, civic and political integration; and thirdly, with respect to civic and political integration, there would appear to be particular significance in promoting associations that can form conduits among groups. The reason being that only under these conditions, the positive effects of social capital (mutual support, cooperative action, formation of trust, systemic effects) can be maximized and negative effects (formation of faction and sects, ethnocentrism, decay) minimized.” (ib.13).

In essence, according to the contributors, the auspicious connection proposed by Putnam from voluntary association to civic and political integration is not necessarily a general or automatic occurrence, but depends on the civic contexts. The central problem issue is perhaps the open political and civic systems in which participation occurs. To enable this, the contributors assert the significance of promoting associations capable of forming conduits between groups. If viewed in its entirety, it is apparent that the contributors did not from the beginning plan to develop an argument that completely rejects the theories of civil society and social capital. Nonetheless, they offer strong criticism of the topic’s modernistic drift of argument. “Civil society and Social Capital,” partly also because it is a German publication, contains large amounts of research into the civic and political integrative functions of ethnic groups as social capital, and research into the characteristics of the administrative actors of the former east German states. Rather than taking issue with the individual papers of the volume, the following section will present a bird’s view of the criticism leveled at the more general concept of ‘civil society‘, and based on that concept, criticism leveled at the methods of development aid.

One of the contributors, Detlef Pollack, in “Zivilgesellschaft und Staat in der Demokratie” (Civil Society and State in the Democracy) (Pollack 2004) re-examines the civil society concept. According to this findings, the following factors are behind the renaissance of the civil society debate of recent years, namely “in the advanced modernity, a retreating capability of political systems to exercise control; the civic state having reached the limit of its load carrying capability; the labor market being confronted with issues that are almost intractable; and democratic systems having lost their support and legitimacy. This has led to the assumption that civic participation, honorary posts, and civic activities are necessary for reducing the heavy load on the various systems that are overburdened with demands.” (ib: 23) Confronted with this situation, “communal responsibility and preparedness to engage in communal (Gemeinschaft) issues are indispensable preconditions if the functions of the civic state and democracy are to come to bear. Without the active usage of civic rights and civic participation, and without civic awareness and consciousness for public welfare, democracy cannot survive.” (ib. 23). Here the reader is reminded of the proposals of the German Bundestag's Enquete Commission mentioned earlier. ”The coherence of our society is renewed daily by the spontaneous participation of citizens in all areas of civic life. Citizens create environments of solidarity, belongingness, and mutual trust. In essence, citizens sustain and increase what we call today ‘social capital‘. In

other words, it is the bonding and understanding among members of a society, the trust in commonly shared rules, norms, and values, and naturally also the trust in state systems.” (Bürsch 2002: 8.)

Pollack expresses his opposition by way of reference to criticism brought by others. Pollack holds that “Civic participation must not be treated as an everlasting resource or civic capability (*Leistung*) as a rescue for the imperiled systems of the civic state and democracy plunged into crisis” (Pollack 2004: 24.), noting that “it would appear that there is little hope for fundamental systemic critique from the theory of the civil society” with respect to today’s progressing “instrumentalization of civic participation.” (ib. 25.)

Indeed, the representatives of the civil society debate (here Pollack will have thought of Habermas) “have not abandoned their criticisms of state, market, and system. In their theories, according to which for the democratic ‘*Gemeinwesen*’ (community) to function the participation from civil society is necessary, they do refer to system criticism.” However, the debate over the norms of civil society today “while attempting to maintain the original line of attack, has already half-way given up, in a prescriptivism derived from an enfeebled conscience satisfied with not acquiescing to the state and the economy becoming the sole forces of control.” (ib. 25-26). This much for Pollack’s sense of rejection.

In this way, parallel to the ‘instrumentalization’ of civil society by the system and contrasting the phenomenon of retreating force of system criticism from the proponents of modern civil society theory, Pollack seeks to re-examine the civil society concept. The civil society concept is nothing particularly remarkable, however. It forms a communal space separated from the areas of state and economy. In this space, various associations engage in activities that transcend individual gain and are conducted freely, that is, free from domination. These activities exert positive effects on politics and economics. This is the conceptual framework, which contains nothing particularly new. Emphasis is placed on central aims being positioned as autonomous of state, economy, and family, with multiple public actions. In this sense, Pollack highlights the role of the state supporting civil society, which differs from the stance of the German Bundestag’s Enquete Commission extolling the connection between state and civil society. Moreover, since the actions of civil society are multiple, obviously civil society is not meant as a unified body. That is, “Civil society does not form an integrated normative project” (ib. 30).

The important point about Pollack’s argument is to keep in mind what occasioned the system criticism of civil society. It is not that the framework of the civil society debate has undergone any particular change. Hence, when at the end the author refers to the potentiality of civic participation, as conditions for enlarging it, he mentions civic norms (tolerance, readiness to compromise, respect for others) and a liberal constitutional state. Ultimately, this is not different from the view of the German Bundestag’s Enquete Commission. However, with much of the recent civil society debate being about the effects of civic integration and the affinity to the state or tending to assume that the social capital debate is premised on a perspective concerned with the effectiveness of administrative and economic performance, the significance

should not be underestimated of re-emphasizing, as Pollack and “Civil society and Social Capital” do, the civil society debate’s original potential for system criticism.

“Civil Society and Social Capital”, which does not take civil society as an integrated normative project, conducts an exhaustive discussion of the multiple equations of civil society with social capital. Among the various contributions, Roland Roth’s “Die dunklen Seiten der Zivilgesellschaft – Grenzen einer zivilgesellschaftlichen Fundierung von Demokratie“ (Civil society’s dark side – Limits of a civic-societal foundation of democracy) (Roth 2004: 41-64) urges the reader to take note of the realities, including the negative sides, of the equation of civil society with social capital.

Roth raises the following issues. “Civic integration is promoted by relationships of trust and civic networks; it supports economic development through a spirit of cooperation and trust that is the objective of a contractual relationship. Moreover, self-systems, a sense of public duty, and political trust strengthened the democratic potentiality.” (ib. 42) according to Roth. However, social capital “does not necessarily cultivate trust in the political system. Here the new federal states may serve as an example of a case beset with problem issues. As a matter of fact, in the case of these states, post-unification there was a conspicuous increase in the number of associations and organizations, but civic and political trust experienced a drastic decline.” (ib. 44)

According to Roth, alongside the ‘good civil society’ of the social capital theory there is also a ‘bad civil society’. This reality is beyond the grasp of the dichotomy of Putnam’s ‘integration type’ and ‘conduit type’ social capital. According to Roth, a ‘bad’ civil society can occur also in the case of the conduit type. A civil society that connotes and promotes hatred, intolerance, racism, and anti-Semitism, existed in Germany not only during the Weimar period but exists also today. With this observation Roth conducts his study based on the assumed existence of an extreme right in modern-day Germany.

Moreover, Roth notes that the ‘good civil society’ as much as the ‘bad civil society’ are naturally the subject of influences from state, economy, and family. As Roth himself puts to inquiry, this observation appears also in the report on “The Future of Civic Participation” of the German Bundestag’s Enquete Commission, although in a sense different from that of Roth, with the emphasis on the close relation between a ‘strong state’ that guides and promotes civic participation, and civil society, while introduction business enterprises as additional actors of civil society.

Roth places wider emphasis on the capability to form social capital in civil society and in all other separate areas and the effects on civil society. For example, “Within the framework of ordinary labor conditions, stable employment normally promotes civic societal participation. By contrast, unemployment and poverty have destructive effects. The impact from these negative effects is partly mitigated by labor rights and social policies. Furthermore, guarantees from the state for civic, political, and social rights contribute to civic self-organization but limitations on civic rights for reasons of state security (for example, prohibition of congregations, demonstrations, associations, and organizations) can have destructive effects” (ib. 52), while in

the family context parental behavior has positive and negative effects on children.

Especially in the case of the Germany's extreme right as 'bad civil society', "the process of neo-liberal globalization and along with it the emerging social inequality have led to a significant increase in emigration and flight." At the same time, economic security and the social stability that comes with it have fallen under competitive pressures. It is not only potential losers calling for protection; a mentality of crowding-out others has reached the society's middle strata, amid spreading social welfare-chauvinism. This has created a sounding board for the political operators of neo-populism." (ib. 56). In this sense, Roth asserts that civil society and social capital are conceptually not the main objectives of state, markets (the economy), and family, and that the area of civil society is not the only one where, as civic societal capabilities, social capital and political trust are created.

Hence, according to Roth, for discerning the reality of civil society, "a perception is necessary that reaches as far as the transnational, one that takes a cool view of the framework of civil society's area itself, that is, tendencies civic and non-civic, or anti-democratic; and one that discerns the supporting and destructive effects (with respect to civil society) that come from the area surrounding civil society." (ib. 57)

This does not mean that Roth has no expectations regarding civil society and social capital. Roth's expectations of civil society are, firstly, when a "bad" civil society has emerge, that is acts as a movement of civil repair preventing excessive self-injury from the normative demands of the civil society, and the role of pushing back non-civic developments (ib. 58); and secondly, movements engaged in system criticism in the way of the protests of the opposition movements of eastern Europe and the radical reformist movements as new social movements. "It is essential to adhere to the basic requirements of civic equality and justice as well as civic, political, and social rights, because otherwise a democratic civil society is inconceivable." (ib. S.58) In the same way as Pollack does, as his central concern, Roth's expectations address civil society's potential for criticism.

#### **4. The difficulty of equating modern civil society with social capital**

According to Pollack and Roth, if civil society is not a unified normative project, a comparison of societies of different character based on the assumption of civil society as a unified normative project would not only be difficult, it would be meaningless from the start. Related to comparisons of societies of different nature, the second issue taken up in this section, the following focuses on a paper included in "Civil Society and Social Capital" which looks at an intriguing problem. As a contributor to "Notwendige Illusionen. Zur Rolle der Zivilgesellschaftsnorm in der internationalen. Entwicklungszusammenarbeit" (Necessary Illusions — Concerning the Role of Civil Society Norms in International Development Aid) (Heins 2004), Volker Heins is a political scientist who was asked by a German international NGO of christian affiliation to serve as a third-party member of an assessment commission for their partner NGO in India. The conclusion of Heins' analysis, based on local experience, is that



the concept of ‘strengthening civil society’ in emerging countries is an illusion.

Based on the author’s perception of local conditions, if ‘civil society’ is understood as “a public space wherein a minimum of autonomy relative to orders of the state is associated with the formation of civic consensus on basic issues of communal life and the use of effective tools of grants of authority of political decision makers” (ib. 90), the concept of this ‘self-described public activity in a strengthened democracy’ and the term ‘civil society’ have been changing to strategy concepts of development aid in the reports of the World Bank. As Heins ironically observes: “With neither the state nor the economy functioning, ultimately, there has been a change to a program formula of interventionism into geographic spheres where the issue of a public area supposed to be protected in a space between state order and economic order does absolutely not exist.” (ib. 86)

The German organization that asked the author to perform an evaluation of the local partner NGO was an opponent of the globalization of capital and its impact on the agriculture of developing countries, and full of good intentions in its objectives of ‘strengthening the civil society’ of developing countries and the ‘independence’ of their local partner NGO.

Heins doubts that these objectives are realistic, however. “The question remains of whether there can be real contributions from the countless NGOs in the south stirring a mixture that they hope will be the ferment of idealistic motives, civic bonding, and ideas of practical functionality that will unleash the driving force of democratic development expected to emerge from those countries.” (ib. 89). The author’s own answer to is pessimistic.

Heins speaks about his experience as a participant in meetings between members of the partner NGO and local farming communities: “There was a clear gap between, on the one hand, the cosmopolitan jargon of the ‘Netzwerk’ local partner NGO in its opposition to ‘globalization’ and the expansion of Western European patent and trademark rights protection into the large agricultural countries in the south, and on the other hand the exclusively male number of villagers that happened to be there (the only ones enthusiastic about supporting the fight against a major evil in a faraway country). According to Heins, “For many of these people, problems such as chronic water shortage and prices controlled by the buyers of their local produce were more pressing than the patent laws of international organizations.” (ib. 95). The personal experience of the author was that a higher priority than the ‘strengthening of civil society’ goes to finding in the international discussions a basic interest for, and provide relief of, phenomena such as above average illiteracy, open discrimination against women, and incompetence on the part of a feeble state.” (ib. 96)

Moreover, ‘independence’ of local NGOs, in the view of the author’s employer organization, means “firstly, independence between the state and groups with regard to decision rights on issues that are key to groups’ own existence.” Secondly, the term ‘independence of partners in the south’ refers to their identity, “meaning an identity protected from ‘west European’ influences, technology, and development models.” (ib. 93). If this definition applies, in the opinion of Heins it is again distant from reality. According to Heins, in the first place, “non-European NGOs prefer rather than the oftentimes far more disagreeable public agencies

of their own countries the external domination imposed on them almost deliberately by foreign sponsors, and say so in public interviews” (ib. 96). In light of this, it would be illogical for European NGOs to hope for the independence of their local partner organizations. Moreover, in the countries concerned, “power depends on factors such as personal authority, seniority, the loyalty of a large number of protégés, and skillful political manipulation from the background. A structural separation of state functions and civic functions as conceived by civic societal norms (as well as by political liberalism) will ultimately not occur in a society where all authority can aptly be called ‘quasi-state’ authority.” (ib., SS.96-97) This is Heins’ conclusion. According to Heins, a realistic assessment that the author included in the commissioned evaluation report fell victim to censorship somewhere along the way.

It is not without irony that, consequently, the strengthening of civil society that is precondition for the structural separation of state and society “could be attained by hurting the norms of civil society. The strengthening of civil society is not obtainable without strengthening the state, that is, without binding governance that reconstructs and preserves in these countries the fundamental ‘conditions of civilization’ based on the theory of the modern state. (ib. 98-99), which creates a paralyzing contradiction. This slogan of the ‘strengthening of civil society’ “is for us the impetus to get started on a task that cannot be ignored but is of intimidating magnitude. One could say that this definition serves as a the ‘necessary illusion’ for “emphasizing the functions of mitigating stress under difficult conditions and enabling brisk activity.” (ib. 98). And this is wherein lies the meaning of the term “Necessary Illusion” used in the title.

However, Heins does not therefore propose to walk away from “the civil society norm” itself. He closes his analysis with the following observation. “Those free of illusions are already today calling for the distribution of the greater part of the development cooperation budget toward achieving peace in crisis regions and for humanistic emergency aid for the forgotten poor. That is, first comes support for resolving the urgent problems of the developing world, and only then comes ‘strengthening of the civil society’ as a ‘motto for the next stage’. Borrowing an expression from the abstract of this paper, “A change of ‘civil society’ to a certain norm regulating the highly asymmetric communication among organization actors, irrespective of the ritualistic fiction, would likely contribute, for example, to a drawing together of problem interpretations and action prospects in separately existing parts of the world.” (ib. 283.)

With regard to the very strategy of ‘strengthening civil society’ in the developing world, even if acknowledged as a long-term objective, priority should be given to a realistic short-term solutions. Otherwise, as Heins observes not without irony, the ‘strengthening of civil society’ will constitute a ‘necessary illusion’. What analysis can be applied to Asian countries to make irony unnecessary?

Jürgen Kocka makes the following observations about the methodology for comparisons of east European civil societies. “Civil society (Zivilgesellschaft) has in the various cultures, countries, and regions assumed historical forms in respectively different modes, has been fought on various scales, and has always been threatened, in part, and sometimes into discontinuation

and retreat. Instead of declaring one road to civil society as the normal road and condemning others as deviations, ways to civil society must be analyzed typologically.” (Kocka 2000: 28) Looking at the specific conditions of social capital in east Asian countries reveals traditional civic relations (culture) of a completely different (or similar) nature from the civil society and social capital (civil culture) of the modern project, without that the symbols of civil society norms and the strengthening of civil society, with Heins’ sense of irony, should be approached as incompatible.

Asian countries have experienced rapid economic growth since the 1980s. This process has brought also significant political changes. Asian countries are on the way to become, sooner or later, civic societies. For us, it is necessary to recognize (a) the diversity of cultures and norms of different societies, (b) what meaning the hitherto traditional cultures and norms have for the transfiguration of politics and economy, or what meaning they do not have, as well as (c) whether on the way to the modernization of politics and economy there is a transformation in the meaning of social capital (in the background), and if so, how this transformation comes to pass. Analysis will be required, mindful of the reality of civil society and social capital, its transfiguration, and changing meaning.

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