Chapter 3

Civil Society as an Agent of Change

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A random choice of indicators may provide ample evidence that the 21st century is marked by exceptional and substantial societal change:

- the revolution in communication,
- the supposed takeover by secret and artificial powers beyond our control,
- the shift of political and economic power away from Europe and North America,
- the surging worldwide interdependence of the human race,
- population growth,
- the fact that our planet might become uninhabitable,
- the resurrection of the individual, not least in a gender context, and
- the reintroduction of religion into public discourse.

These indicators are not necessarily coherent with each other; on the contrary, they appear to represent a mounting uncertainty regarding all our traditions of living, learning, and governing. To add to this, the 2020 COVID-19 crisis will most certainly lead to a fundamental reassessment of the very fabric of society. Our social order is crumbling. Yet, those creating models and plans for innovation tend to focus on technical issues, hoping that the fabric will remain the same. However, a realistic assessment of the world will necessarily produce the result that social change without a change of fabric cannot be sustainable. We should be addressing three issues that determine the public sphere:

- (1) the crisis of capitalism,
- (2) the crisis of democracy,
- (3) the crisis of the nation state.

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And if this were not enough, a growing divide between privileged and under-privileged members of society at large and of nearly every national and regional community leaves these communities with insurmountable problems of social unrest and indeed of survival. The legitimacy of any form of governance is at stake (Aziz, 2020, p. 60), and preserving this legitimacy and reinstating trust is certainly not made easier by the COVID-19 crisis and the way some governments have been handling it.

Most recently, the majority of the British and American people and increasingly substantial minorities in France, Germany, Italy, and many other European countries have demonstrated that all this is not really true. They lament the disappearance of the way of life of a bygone age, wish to hang on to customs of old, and fail to realize that preserving essentials will require a number of fundamental changes. Most people would be at a loss to say what merits saving and what must undergo a change so substantial that one cannot even imagine the outcome. What is certain is that political leaders are failing to face the real issues, resorting instead to mistrust and control mechanisms—although they should be aware that no society can be based on mistrust, and that more controls precede going under. The demise of East Germany in 1989/90 is a case in point.

Although Western theorists in the 1990s were quick to proclaim “the end of history” (Fukuyama, 1992), representative democracy and statehood of the type developed over the past 300 years seem to have had their day. The combined overbearing power of state bureaucracies and multinational corporations needs to be replaced by some kind of post-democracy, as some would argue, or by a more participative, citizen-orientated system. The dignity and uniqueness of the individual is endangered by menacing collectivities; encouraging and nudging these individuals to think in categories of *we* rather than of *I*, to put some brakes on excessive competitiveness, might provide a sensible way forward. The snag is that a market economy that relies on competition has proven to be more successful in supplying the citizens with goods and services than a government-organized non-competitive economy. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that governments are regularly underperforming,

today many scholars still hold that political boundaries are the most fundamental man-made lines on the map due to a bias toward territory as the basis of power, the state as the unit of political organization, an assumption that only governments can order life within those states, and a belief that national identity is the primary source of people’s loyalty. (Khanna, 2011, p. 46)

Even in the inner circle of governmental responsibilities, supra-, trans-, and international governance structures have taken over as decisive players in a global governance system, as have regional and local communities, international corporations that are seemingly more and more successful in evading government supervision—and communities of choice, which are attracting more loyalty and are seemingly crowding out communities of fate in determining people’s more-often-than-not multiple identities.

Thus, village squares, debating networks of the metropolises, parliaments, and assemblies seem old-fashioned in an age where communication works by very

different rules. Raghuram Rajan, who argues in favour of “a devolvement in power from federal government through the regional government to the community” (Rajan, 2019, p. 325), is wrong in supposing that shifting executive powers from one level of government to another could solve the problem of how to remodel the public sphere. It seems highly doubtful whether any of this can prevent the fundamentals of society, democracy, human and civil rights, the rule of law, and cultural traditions being destroyed. The “Twilight of Democracy” (Applebaum, 2020) seems all too apparent.

All this could be seen as a gloomy picture. While we seem to know so much, we apparently do not know how to effect social change. Our governors firmly believe technical innovation will solve our problems and refuse to recognize the need for societal change. Think tanks abound—which in itself is a clear indicator that something must be wrong—and yet, although some of them aspire to tell us what to do, none seem to come up with *the* solution. And what is more: As Charles de Gaulle famously quipped, politics have become too serious a business to allow us to leave them to politicians—let alone to government officials!

While many ideas have been put forward over the past two generations, nothing substantial has been achieved in providing a practical solution to this fundamental dilemma. Habermas’ model of discursive democracy that connects democratic political processes to a normative concept of institutionalising the interplay between diverse societal arenas, has been widely received in academic circles, but seems to have had little impact on societal development, the crisis of democracy in recent years, and the slow erosion of traditional political processes (Habermas, 1994, pp. 361–363).

In reviewing this set-up, I will look at societal forces that for the last few centuries have been crowded out by domineering nation states, and that are now reasserting their right to be actively involved in shaping society. In particular, I will focus on the role of civil society, and discuss to what extent civil society players may be instrumental or at least helpful in developing a new world order. In so doing, I will need to sum up the knowledge base regarding the potentials and limitations inherent to civil society, and examine the ways by which interplay between civil society, the state, and the market may be improved.

The Domain of Civil Society

Over the past generation or so, the existence of civil society as an arena of collective action in the public sphere that will cooperate or compete with players in the state and market arenas has become blatantly apparent (Dahrendorf, 1995). The civic space, on occasion but not always used as a synonym of the space for civil society, has seemingly grown considerably since Arato and Cohen argued that “the concept of civil society is more than a mere slogan” (Arato & Cohen, 1988, p. 40). Clearly, the notion of a civic space touches on the human and civil rights of individual citizens as much as it does on those of associative bodies and philanthropic institutions.

But the unclear definition also shows how much nearer the citizen is to civil society than to the modern state, notwithstanding the fact that political theory defines liberal democracies as ruled by the people. It is therefore reasonable to assume that civil society is in many ways the civic space, provided spontaneous civic action and individual public-mindedness are counted.

Civil society has existed in one form or another at least since the time of “The Great Transformation” (Polanyi, 1944), the “Axial Age,” elaborated by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers in 1949 (Jaspers, 1953) to mean a period between the eighth and the second century B.C., when a worldwide, nearly simultaneous transformation of thought and subsequently of society took place. However, over the past two generations or so, a novel concept of civil society has emerged that differs from previous concepts, including the one put forward by Adam Ferguson (1767/1995). It may be seen today as an arena of collective movements and organisations, which are in many ways hugely diverse, but do bear some common traits that allow us to distinguish them from organisations and institutions that form part of the state or the private business sector. If, contrary to Margaret Thatcher’s famous quip (Keay, 1987), society is something that exists and is not synonymous with the state or the nation, relevant collective action takes place in all three of these arenas, the term “arena” being preferable to “pillar” as it denominates areas of movement, action, and change.

Civil society may be described as the place where citizens engage by their own free will, participate directly in affairs to do with the common good, and voice their concerns, ideas, criticism, and agreement. For the purposes of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, Lester Salamon and his colleagues defined a number of principles by which one may decide whether an activity, a movement, an organization, or an institution should be considered part of this particular arena (Salamon, Anheier, List, Toepler, & Sokolowski, 1999, pp. 26–28)¹:

- Access should be voluntary.
- The organisation should not be engaged in core government business.
- Profit should not be a prime objective.
- The governance structure should be autonomous.
- Any profits accruing may not be distributed to members or owners.

Though civil society organisations (CSOs) command a considerable full-time and part-time workforce, the arena as such is based and relies heavily on volunteerism, and thus on philanthropy in its widest sense. Philanthropy in the true sense of the word is not just what donors of funds are practising, let alone what foundations do; philanthropy is the spirit in which gifts of empathy, time, ideas, know-how, reputation, and financial resources are put at the disposal either of individuals in need, or of organisations deemed able to use these gifts to perform their self-allotted tasks. In philosophy, the first mention of philanthropy is most probably found in

¹ Salamon and Anheier offered a definition to be used more or less internationally throughout the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector project. This has since been expanded and undergone certain variations, but may still serve as an acceptable working base.

Plato, who, in his dialogue “Euthyphron” (1924), lets Socrates call himself a philanthropist because he lets others partake of his wisdom free of charge. In 1960, the French political economist Francois Perroux (1960) described giving as the attribute of what we call civil society, whereas force is associated with the state, and exchanges are associated with the market.

The division between civil society, the state, and the market is necessarily conceptual (Anheier & Seibel, 1993), and overlaps and unclear edges exist in reality. In 1999, Salamon et al. concluded there was a

vital need to improve the general awareness of . . . [the nonprofit sector] in virtually every part of the world, and to monitor the trends affecting it on a more pervasive, and more sustained, basis. The existence of a vibrant nonprofit sector is increasingly being viewed not as a luxury, but as a necessity, for peoples throughout the world. Such institutions can give expression to citizen concerns, hold governments accountable, promote community, address unmet needs, and generally improve the quality of life. Putting this sector firmly on the mental map of the world is therefore a matter of some urgency. (1999, p. 38)

While many people believe civil society can achieve what the public and the private sector cannot, that they are destined to be agents of change, this proposition will be refuted by others—particularly those in government and business. They will receive academic backing from traditional economists who firmly believe in the power of the market, and will rely on the state’s superior power and vastly superior financial resources to demonstrate its ongoing position in the driver’s seat. However, Amitai Etzioni, one of the forefathers of civil society research, was certainly right in saying: “Actually, this third sector may well be the most important alternative for the next few decades, not by replacing the other two, but by matching and balancing their important roles” (Etzioni, 1973, p. 318).

Both academia and public opinion, and not least the agents of civil society in the field, have continued to engage in a discussion over definition. This is decidedly unfortunate, as it renders it more difficult to make a conclusive case for civil society as an arena and most particularly for the involvement of this arena in discussions over societal development and change. Even the pioneering work undertaken by Salamon and his many associates since the 1990s in mapping the empirical evidence in a comparative fashion worldwide, while highlighting the sheer size of civil society, has not achieved one of its purposes—that is, presenting a standardized and universally accepted notion of what civil society is, and who is part of it.

Since the American economist Richard Cornuelle first spoke of an independent sector beyond the state and the market in 1965, the discussion about the overall function of this sector or arena has never stopped. Cornuelle (1965) argued that associations of volunteers could effectively solve social problems without recourse to heavy-handed bureaucracy, whereas governments would commonly prefer to see these associations and foundations support their own work in a subservient fashion and neither question government decisions nor adopt any degree of independence. Little wonder that service-providing and intermediary organisations are popular with governments, while the self-help, self-fulfilment, and community-building roles are habitually overlooked and advocacy, watchdog, and political discourse roles are viewed with suspicion. Responding to pressure from the citizens, advocacy

has found its way into tax exemption, and the watchdog role has gained acceptance for watching over excess market behavior. But Colin Crouch's (2011) insistence that given the parliaments' failure in fulfilling that role, civil society's main task is to act as watchdog in public affairs, has not to date made government theorists and practitioners rethink the interplay between the various contributors to the development and execution of policy. On the contrary, the public sector, and, somewhat strangely, the media, tend to belittle the role of civil society and use arguments to do with the rank of representative democracy to enhance their own role, at the same time accepting the private sector—business—as a driving and quite regularly decisive force in determining policy.

In the eyes of those caught up in the present system of government, the most obnoxious role models of civil society are those demanding to be heard as contributors to public discourse—with one notable exception: In countries whose governments are seen as undemocratic in the sense that they have not taken on and/or said goodbye to principles Western democracies uphold, civil society that opposes the government is hailed as the expression of the people's will. We have seen this happen in the past, not least in the Central and Eastern Europe transformation process in the late 1980s. To put it very bluntly: Civil rights fighters in China are considered heroes, while civil rights protests in Hamburg at a G20 conference are seen as a criminal disruption of public order, and civil liberties activists in Catalonia are quickly labelled as terrorists (Strachwitz, 2018, pp. 17–30).

Though philanthropic giving is by no means the prime source of civil society funding, it is most certainly a major driving force in empowering its agents. Empowered in this way, as Albert Hirschman rightly established (1970), CSOs may engage in tasks that support existing societal systems (“loyal”), may distance themselves from mainstream society (“exit”), or become an opposing force (“voice”). Under all three of these headings, we may see eight distinct role models; many organizations are active in more than one (Strachwitz, Priller, & Triebe, 2020, p. 4 *et passim*):

- service provision,
- advocacy,
- watchdog,
- intermediary,
- self-help,
- community building,
- political discourse, and
- self-fulfilment (personal growth).

The last two are perhaps the most interesting. Whereas Europeans have long argued that enabling personal growth, self-fulfilment, and a fulfilled and happy life is arguably the prime obligation of any community to its members, Asian political theorists would challenge this view, contending that society takes precedence over the individual. Yet, even then, civil society is probably the arena where personal growth through voluntary involvement may be achieved. That civil society should have a permanent and undisputed seat at the table when matters of society at large

are debated is far from universally accepted, notwithstanding the lip service those in power pay to the importance of civil society when it so pleases them—most commonly when these debates take place far from home. Habermas and others have argued the necessity of a “deliberative democracy” to explain the existence of an arena beyond the state and the market (Habermas, 1994, p. 363). These role models have developed over the past thirty years or so, both in practice and in theory, and obviously, many civil society players follow several role models simultaneously. This entails not only having a problem of defining civil society itself, but also one of defining its activities—a fairly academic debate when it comes to deciding whether a hospital managed by a not-for-profit organization is part of civil society or not, but a very real issue when talking about terrorism, civil liberties, and indeed social change.

The resources in volunteer work and donations that civil society can command are near to nothing compared to what governments obtain from the citizens by way of taxes, and what the business community makes by selling goods and services. In this respect, civil society, while being responsible for a considerable portion of any country’s gross domestic product, is yet the smallest of the three arenas; this will not change in the foreseeable future. What, then, can civil society bring to the table?

The Unique Contribution

Beyond any doubt, a sizeable number of CSOs today have an important public function. Sports clubs, welfare and health organisations, protest movements, and watchdogs are part of societal life, and their members have learnt to voice opinions in the public sphere. They can on occasion be extraordinarily powerful in setting the agenda, moving issues, nudging lawmakers, or restraining them. Some find this easier than others. Traditional CSOs tend to be caught up in a neo-corporatist arrangement with the state and depend on public money to perform their services. They find it more difficult to shed their subservient attitude than do the younger advocacy organisations that rely on the support of their members and donors. The power of example is nudging more and more citizens everywhere in the world to actively contribute to public affairs and to do so in more ways than just by going to vote for a political party or leader once every few years. “Much of what Tocqueville saw as the reasons for modern democracies being lively and diverse and having the potential to integrate (the importance of associative life, of a community culture, and of religion) is just as important in 21st century society as it was then” (Kronenberg, 2013, p. 6).

This is because empathy, friendship, and engagement with emotional needs are at the very core of what constitutes a healthy societal arrangement. Communities depend on emotions, which modern governments horribly fail to convey. The sentiment of compassion, as described by Adam Smith (1759), is often connected to the solidarity deemed to be essential to keep a community together. Be this as it may, the failure of the state is not restricted to the examples chosen from serious

deficiencies in pursuing the day-to-day business of government, but should be seen as a general systemic phenomenon that requires corrective action.

In some instances, the growth in coherence, power, and strength that civil society has accomplished over the past generation or two, its ability to post societal needs and drive the issues, has been decisive. Care for the environment, gender issues, individual liberties, and indeed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the process of transition in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989/1990, were driven by civil-society action, by determined activists and philanthropists. This will most certainly happen again. The Fridays for Future movement, started by a single teenage Swedish girl, is a case in point. The heterogenous, heterarchical, and more often than not overtly chaotic structure of a CSO may on occasion be better suited to become a hotbed of new ideas and both creative and potentially disruptive innovation than an orderly government agency and/or corporation.

Beyond these narratives, civil society's impact and legitimacy rest on a normative theory. Evaluators need normative principles to decide whether or not an organisation may be considered "good" or, in other words, acceptable to society. Among them, one may determine some very general ones, such as

- a basic belief in the human being as the supreme principal of society,
- respect for other human beings, their distinct and possibly very different ways of life and convictions,
- adherence to basic societal principles such as human and civil rights, the rule of law, and government by the people for the people, and
- a belief in a pluralist society that allows for each and every individual to lead the life she or he wishes, provided this does not infringe on the life of others.

Furthermore, some principles are specific to civil society, for example:

- a fundamental empathy for fellow men and women,
- a strict priority for ideals and ideas rather than for personal material gains,
- a commitment to accountability to the citizenry at large,
- an acknowledgement of everyone's right to assemble and associate, and
- an endorsement of a political role for civil society.

Civil society is by no means inherently good. Just as there are good and bad governments, and honest traders and crooks in business, there exist, of course, CSOs we do not approve of, be this in a fundamental sense or simply because they have differing views. The Ku Klux Klan, the National Rifle Association of America, and, to name a German example, Pegida, are examples of the first, whereas a plethora of associations and foundations whose goals do not correspond to other people's may be among the second. This will not allow us to simply disregard or disqualify organisations the views or goals of which we do not approve of. On the contrary, respect for others carries the obligation to listen most carefully to opposing statements and to consider positions we do not embrace. Furthermore, this respect will make us exercise caution and restraint when it comes to playing the power game. Large foundations and other CSOs face a particular challenge here. But in doing so, they will join an ever-growing number of smaller, very often minute CSOs and

become what in other arenas is proving to be virtually impossible: agents of change. Agents of change—and indeed all CSOs—are never legitimized by size, nor by election procedures. They are legitimate by the quality of their proposals. A fairly novel and increasingly important and attractive subsector of civil society has proven to be particularly well suited. It is what may be termed informal civil society, movements without much—or even any—structure. They convene around one issue, one thought, one philanthropic impulse. During the refugee wave that hit Germany in 2015 and 2016, it was individuals who assembled their friends, small groups of volunteers called up over social media, responsible citizens who, in the light of a failing government bureaucracy, lived up to Angela Merkel’s famous “Wir schaffen das [We can do this].”² It was they who enabled Germany to cope with one million refugees in less than six months. It is they who will most probably be the most influential agents of change.

It seems that governments are losing their monopoly of the public sphere, are trying to save what they can, and are leaving the possible outcome to providence. They profess to be set on innovation, and refuse to take into account that innovation in technical matters implies an innovative solution to the dilemma of an antiquated political order. Whether this solution can be disruptive and at the same time evolutionary rather than repeating the mistakes of the 20th century and attempting to create a *new man* by way of revolution, remains an open question. It will depend on how widespread a readiness for change may be, and on how many centres actively develop models and ideas for a new order. It is a total misconception that new orders have come about as a result of a singular revolutionary act and an ensuing one-off brainstorming session. In each and every case, new arrangements had a longish history of preparation, of civil society at its very best designing and discarding competing ideas to a point where consensus could be achieved over a compromise. In this sense, more than in any other, civil society may truly be considered an agent of change. Taking to the streets can be extraordinarily effective, and is a civil right as much as it is a civil society prerogative. But moving issues by convening and debating is arguably the more sustainable contribution that civil society can bring to the table.

The Trust Issue

All this said, there exists a highly relevant caveat to be considered. For social change to be sustainable, it seems all-important that it should be underpinned by trust. This alone presents the present Western political order with a considerable dilemma. In Europe and North America, the majority of citizens do not trust political parties, the government, the state as such, business corporations, or large institutions in general.

² German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel first used this phrase on August 31st, 2015, at a press conference following a visit to a refugee camp near [Dresden](#) where local opponents of her refugee policy booed and heckled her.

This has much to do with the fact that “the system” has actively engaged in a growing mistrust of its citizens. Rules and controls have crowded out all previously entertained conventions of interaction between citizens and public bodies. For many, the logic is clear: If they are not trusted, why should they trust others? The downside of this is that “findings suggest that individuals who distrust and fear to be exploited show self-serving, and hence untrustworthy, moral cognition themselves” (Weiss, Burgmer, & Mussweiler, 2018). The 19th Annual Edelman Trust Barometer (2019), while reporting an overall modest rise in the level of trust, shows it still to be far removed from satisfactory. In the “general population” bracket, 56% trust business and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and 47% trust government and the media. In the “informed public” bracket, the figures are 69% for NGOs, 68% for business, and 58% for government and media (Edelman, 2019, p. 5). One cannot envisage the roughly 50% of citizens who do not trust business, nor NGOs, nor the state becoming more trustful if these three arenas were to cooperate on a more level playing field. On the contrary, civil society in particular will have to be careful not to be seen as part of the system, or as having finally succumbed to government (and potentially business) pressure. Its reputation as the civic or citizens’ arena is at stake. If the idea of a new public sphere is to catch on, all concerned, and most specifically civil society, urgently need to improve on the trust placed in them.

Rebuilding trust may be seen as a prime goal to restabilize society. Society cannot possibly exist on the basis of control mechanisms, but needs to contain a core of mutual trust. Mechanisms to restore this trust have been put on the table; they need to be discussed and adopted (viz., Alter, Strachwitz, & Unger, 2019). The criteria were assembled in answering the question what value-added philanthropic institutions can bring to the table.

Strengthening the value-based approach of civil society implies respecting common societal principles such as the rule of law, human and civil rights, and democracy, as well as specific civil-society principles, such as respect for the individual, refraining from using force, accepting plurality, and others. Along with my colleagues Alter and Unger, I have developed a set of criteria that may act as guidelines in determining whether a civil society actor may be deemed to be trustworthy:

- a) Commitment: to address the question whether a CSO is living up to the essentials of the eco-system of civil society. Its underpinning qualities are compassion, understanding, and respect.
- b) Public purpose: to specify that action has to be tailored to principles of benefit to society. Its supporting qualities are goals, responsiveness, and integrity.
- c) Relevance: to underline the necessity that action is conducted to make a difference and leave a mark. Its underpinning qualities are sustainability, effectiveness, and impact.
- d) Performance: to refer to internal stakeholders acting in a professional manner. Its underpinning qualities are state-of-the-art practice, leadership, and stakeholder relationships.

- e) Accountability: to accentuate the existent consciousness of a responsibility to society. Its supporting qualities are transparency, responsibility, and compliance. (Alter et al., 2019, pp. 4–6)

If civil society is to perform as an agent of change, obeying these standards of a trustworthy movement, organization, or institution in a satisfactory manner is an obligatory prerequisite. If civil society is to make a difference, its behavior must be above reproach. The disruption affecting civil society, civic action, and philanthropy as much as other sectors of society is largely due to failing in this respect. Institutions of social interaction and participation, religious communities, trade unions, political parties, and other traditional membership organisations have lost critical ground.

The Iconic Turn

Disruptive dynamics have been accelerating since the end of the 20th century, producing significant transformations of social, economic, and political structures. Globalization, new communities of choice, and high-speed technological innovation are reducing the role of previously dominant actors, notably the state, whereas the private sector has become a major player in many sectors, from infrastructure and transport to pensions and health-care systems. Technological inventions have transformed the pace of communication, revolutionized the way one works, and individualized how one spends one's leisure time. Disruption as the new normal is here to stay.

In order to render a contribution of civil society to social change a viable and sustainable proposition, an “open government partnership,” citizen participation, and corporatist models of civil society involvement in public affairs most certainly will not suffice. To achieve a paradigm shift, “raising citizens” (Mounk, 2018, p. 245) rather than specialists is the essential first step. Adapting educational curricula to include the knowledge base for performing well in the public sphere is a precondition to changing attitudes. However, education alone is not enough—participation and finally responsibility must also evolve (D'Ambrosio, 2018, p. 44).

The survival of the fittest is as little suited to governing the market's contribution to society as are Friedman's notions of stakeholder value. Reining in extreme capitalism requires refocussing it towards stakeholder value, sustainable and responsible development, and measures to bridge rather than widen the divide between the rich and the rest of society. The expectation that the very rich “will transform the character of governments, shrinking the realm of compulsion, and widening the scope of private control over resources” (Davidson & Rees-Mogg, 1999, p. 256) cannot—and should not—persist.

Given the crisis of democracy, the failures of constitutional arrangements and procedures after long periods of seemingly good or at least adequate functioning, some are looking with interest at systems that combine a market economy with an authoritarian government. Little do they realize that a China-type political order

will not favor those who believe they can exert more influence in such a system. But to avoid democracy drifting in that direction, it must acquire a new licence to operate, a new lease of life.

The notion of three arenas into which the individual may move at his or her free will, to be part of whichever collectivity he and she wishes to belong for a certain task or time, is worth taking up for this reason if for no other. With it, one underpins the supremacy and unique dignity of the individual human being, while not forgetting each human being's responsibility for the community he or she happens to belong to by fate or chose to belong to by choice, and for society as a whole. According civil society adequate and permanent representation therefore seems to be a logical step, all the more so as civil society actors bring presents of empathy, ideas, know-how, reputation, time, and resources to the table. The state may well be expected to relinquish powers in favor of a level playing field that embraces non-governmental and non-business players.

Given the elements of a contemporary paradigm, it seems that a global world order is not to be avoided, even if many citizens feel terrified at the thought. However: "Globalization is almost always written about in terms of how it operates within the existing order, rather than how it creates a new order" (Khanna, 2011, p. 48). In order to be acceptable and indeed workable, the new global world order will have to contain a massive measure of subsidiarity, to read a very careful assessment of cultural differences and traditions, and a clear view as to which problem needs to be discussed, decided upon, and solved at which level of a multi-tier and multi-arena societal order.

All this said, there is a bright side to disruptive innovation. Civil society can and indeed should never be responsible for setting rules that affect every citizen. This is the government's core business, and in a liberal democracy, these decisions should exclusively be taken by those elected by the people as a whole. Indeed, this is what we pay our governments to do. The famous battle cry of "no taxation without representation" still stands today as it did in 18th-century North America. But if we can achieve a situation in which everyone realizes that taking the final decision is not the equivalent to preparing for them by offering analyses, ideas, arguments, and solutions, this would indeed be an iconic turn. There is no reason to assume that government officials—or indeed business executives—are any wiser than other citizens. If they could be made to realize that, on the contrary, social change emerges from chaos rather than from order, society could develop in a fascinating way.

We are seeing that some governments and most international governmental organisations are developing a taste for citizen participation, open government partnerships, and otherwise labelled formats of direct contact between rulers and the ruled. While this may be a good way of overcoming the increasing divide between a political class and increasingly frustrated citizens, it should not be overlooked that it may easily be manipulated in order to project openness and dialogue in public, yet using events with uninformed citizens to keep those who have real knowledge on particular issues out of the debate. It remains to be seen whether this policy will ultimately succeed or whether the citizens concerned will undergo a gradual

educational process and become an informal civil society movement and eventually a formalized CSO.

Issues of legitimacy and relevance are still being discussed—by professional politicians who continue to cherish the notion that they are in the drivers’ seats, by mainstream academia, by the media who still prefer to report on the occasional scandal or local events rather than offering civil society full participation in the debate on public affairs. If, however, we can consistently demonstrate that we will only reach striven-for goals by adopting principles embraced by civil society, it will become clear that, as Parag Khanna (2011) put it, the “dotgov-, dotcom-, and dotorg-worlds” will interact on a level playing field.

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