

# Citizenship in Civil Society?

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**ABSTRACT** *This article seeks to provide a conceptual framework to complement and guide the empirical analysis of civil society. The core argument is that civil society must be understood, not as a category of (post)industrialized society, but as one of individualized society. Civil society is characterized by individualism that is sustained and protected by the civil values of autonomy and emancipation. This, accordingly, implies that empirical data of civil society can be understood most fruitfully within the framework of individualized society. Classical sociology, however, perceives this very individualism and its values as being antagonistic to its own civic vision. Hence, the crucial question is whether there can be any scope for citizenship, classically understood, within civil society. This article begins with the conceptual reconstruction of the social organization of civil society. Thereafter, two distinct civil society perspectives—mediating structures and Tocquevillianism—are explored to see how civil individualism and citizenship relate to each.*

**KEY WORDS:** bourgeois, citizenship, civil society, individualization, intermediary institutions, mind, social organization

## Introduction

In the past 20 years, civil society has become a popular and much debated topic. The idea of civil society was popularized when communist or totalitarian states collapsed in the 1980s (Cohen & Arato, 1992; Keane, 1988; Kumar, 1993; Walzer, 1992). It became the subject of extensive debate when it appeared that scholars theorized civil society in different ways, according to different intellectual perspectives and moral commitments (Chambers & Kymlicka, 2002; Hann & Dunn, 1996; Jensen, 2006; Taylor, 1995). Instead of arguing about the elements and boundaries of the social organization of civil society, discussions in the 1980s focused on the idea of civil society itself, as embedded in different currents of political philosophy (Heins, 2004). As a result, social scientists had too little grasp of “civil society”, and found it difficult to measure its key concepts that they believed to be “social capital”, “civility” and “trust” (Hearn, 2001; Kubik, 2005; Lewis, 2004; O’Connell, 2000; Warren, 1999). Furthermore, when several observers found that

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“civil society” failed to grasp Asian and African societal experiences (Mbaye, 2006; Obadare, 200; Pye, 1999), some scholars discarded the concept of civil society as “over-used, overrated, and analytically insubstantial” (Fierlbeck, 1998, p. 172) and held that “debating civil society is like trying to swim in the Dead Sea; the viscosity of the element soon brings one to a halt” (Benthall, 2000, p. 3).

In this article, I seek to provide a conceptual framework of civil society. I conceptualize civil society as a distinctive type of social organization that has been described by classical sociologists. In classical sociology there seems to be a widespread agreement about the elements and boundaries of civil society as a social organization. Although classical sociology does not offer one *unified* perspective of civil society, it is in agreement that the social organization of civil society is a category of *individualized* society that Ferdinand Tönnies typified as the *Gesellschaft*. Individualized society is composed of civil society, nation-state and market, which jointly open up the possibility for *emancipation* from communities such as the extended family, church and state, and for *autonomy* from hierarchy, enabling individual people to choose their own principles by which they want to live. The distinctiveness of the elements and boundaries of civil society may be interpreted in different ways (Burawoy, 2005, p. 288). In this article, two different civil society perspectives that dominate current discussions—mediating structures and Tocquevillism—are outlined. My argument is that, if it is accepted that civil society is a social organization of the *Gesellschaft*, then it must be concluded that civil society supports *individualism* (Sardamov, 2005). Being part of individualized society (rather than, for instance, industrialized society), civil society should be studied empirically by using the concepts of individualization.

A theoretical conceptualization is a prerequisite for the critical evaluation of the normative uses of the concept ‘civil society’ in science and policy. A sociological conceptualization of civil society as a social organization that accommodates individualism reveals a problematic relationship between civil society and citizenship, an antagonistic relationship that had initially been identified by Rousseau, a forerunner of sociologists. Within the context of the *Gesellschaft*, civil society, as one of the pillars of individualized society, paves the way for emancipation from the public domain into private life. Private life is a distinctively modern phenomenon that developed throughout 16th-century Europe, during the Reformation (Habermas, 2001, p. 11). Recent discussions in both policy and science concentrate on how to approach, study and use civil society. Several attempts have been made to equate citizenship with civil society membership, to consider associations such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as “civic initiatives”, to go “beyond the paradoxical conception of civil society without citizenship” (Ku, 2002) and reconcile autonomy with civic devotion to the public interest (Dagger, 1997). However, the argument of this article is that such reconciliations are not possible within the social organization of civil society as defined by classical sociology. What would be needed is a *civic* society organized for the sake of public interest, as propounded in the Tocquevillian perspective, not a civil society that is organized for the sake of the development of selfhood.

### **The Social Organization of Civil Society**

For purposes of empirical analysis, many social scientists define the social organization of civil society in such a way that it can actually be observed in facts. They define it as a

collection of grass-roots associations (GAs) (Smith & Shen, 2002) or as a third sector of non-profit organizations (NPOs) (Lewis, 2005); that is, as the entire complex of associations and organizations that are not part of the family, state or market. Such popular working definitions allow the construction of hypotheses and measurements, but fail to correspond to the idea of civil society rightly understood. As it happened, civil society was “commonly misperceived” (O’Connell, 2000, p. 472) as the synonym of the voluntary, independent sector in opposition the market and the state in national societies. If grass-roots associations and the non-profit sector are not distinctive features of civil society, how then can it be characterized and how is it to be studied empirically?

Classical sociologists have observed that civil society is a distinctive type of social organization in individualized societies, developed exclusively for the development of selfhood. Classical sociologists conceptualize civil society in terms of its distinctiveness, that is, ‘the civil’. In classical sociology, the distinctive feature of ‘the civil’ in particular, as contrasted with ‘the social’ in general, is the emancipation of members from the political community of citizens into the private domain. As Tocqueville (2000, pp. 482–483) explains:

*individualism* is a recent expression arising from a new idea. Our fathers knew only selfishness (. . .) Individualism is a reflective and peaceable sentiment that disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of those like him and to withdraw to one side with his family and his friends, so that after having thus created a little society for his own use, he willingly abandons society at large to himself (. . .) Selfishness withers the seed of all the virtues; individualism at first dries up only the source of public virtues; but in the long term it attacks and destroys all the others and will finally be absorbed in selfishness.

As Tocqueville describes it, individualism means withdrawal from the public domain. This institutionalized retreat into private life and the creation of a little society for private use are what constitute the voluntary associations of civil society. According to Tocqueville, civil society, precisely because it opens up the opportunity for emancipation from the political community, potentially destroys citizenship (that rules out such emancipation). By enabling and allowing citizens to retreat into the private domain and to become associates, civil society usurps the ‘political nature’ of the citizen.

Tocqueville, however, does not reject civil society. Although he conceptualizes civil society as embodying individualism, he also believes that civil society is the place where individualism is socially controlled. Civil society not only leads to emancipation from the political community of citizens, but is also a preparatory “school of citizenship”, that is, a (political) “science of association”. When Tocqueville criticizes civil society he deplores its individualism; when he praises it, he points at how it keeps individualism under social control. Tocqueville (2000, p. 492) perceives “the intellectual and moral associations” in American civil society as representing a civic vision within individualized society. These specific associations, that are of a moral rather than a socio-economic kind (unions or entertainment clubs), actually check or soften individualism. In these associations, associates learn how to understand their self-interest rightly, and how to cooperate or act reciprocally for civic purposes.

Tönnies (1955) equates the civil with the bourgeois, as the analytical antithesis of the civic. While Tocqueville stresses that certain intellectual and moral associations may

well socialize citizenship, Tönnies holds that civil society is, in its ideal, typical and therefore not realistic form, a *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, the opposite conceptual polar of the *Gemeinschaft*. Tönnies makes the idealist analytical distinction between civil membership in the *Gesellschaft* and civic membership in the *Gemeinschaft*. In these ideal types, deliberately designed to accentuate the differences between two types of social organization and grasp the meaning of individualization, it appears that civil association in unions and clubs, and political association in parties, are not substitutes for citizenship but rather its destruction. Tönnies' *Gesellschaft* is organized not for the establishment of civic and political bonds or the exercise of civic virtues, but for autonomy from hierarchy and emancipation from the political community into the contractual associations of civil society. In Tönnies' descriptions, associates do not have fellow citizens but partners, and their sisterhood and brotherhood do not extend beyond a small circle of family and friends. Civil and political associates have a wide variety of contacts and relationships, which constitutes a 'network', as a replacement for primary relations. An instance of such a primary relation is the liberating political bond of the New England or Puritan township that Tocqueville admired so much. For him, this township was a school of self-government, even though he saw Puritanism as the "religion of individualism".

In Tönnies' idealist theoretical image of the social organization of the *Gemeinschaft*, community members are defined by their political bonds *as citizens* because they share the same fatherland, the same traditions, habits and folkways—in other words, the same political destiny. In his concept of the *Gesellschaft*, the political bond that ties citizens is broken through civil war. Associates have emancipated themselves from their communities to enter civil and political associations in which they establish weak social ties *as strangers with strangers* from different backgrounds and bridge political differences (c.f. Keane, 2003, p. 12). Strangers do not share the same traditions, habits or folkways, but they may share the same ideas, social values and interests. In classical sociology, associations are understood as the collective representations of these: they are defined as fundamental social categories of the civil or individualized mind of the bourgeois (Durkheim, 1992, p. 36). The social bond between associates that Tönnies typifies as the *Gesellschaft* is contractual: it is a temporary partnership between associates who are, in the end, strangers. The modern nation-state, in particular the constitutional state (*Rechtsstaat*), is a necessary condition of sovereignty for civil society (Shils, 1997) and a key institution of individualized society. This seems a reason why the idea of civil society fails to organize Asian and African societal experiences: in many of these areas the nation-state, as a frame of reference for we-identity, appears as blank an area on the collective mindset as is citizenship.

In their empirical studies of civil society, classical sociologists enquire into the particular mind-set, "habits of the heart" (Tocqueville) or "collective representations" (Durkheim) of members who belong to a particular type of social organization. This type may be reconstructed realistically, and therefore abounds in contradictions, nuances and subtleties (Tocqueville's democratic society, Durkheim's individualized society) or it may be constructed idealistically (Tönnies' *Gesellschaft*). Civil society cannot exist in the social organization of aristocratic societies, feudalism, tribal or caste societies, agricultural villages or the *Gemeinschaft* (Habermas, 2001, p. 52), inasmuch as citizenship is impossible outside the *Gemeinschaft* or political community (Barber, 1984, p. 151; Heater, 1999, p. 52). The distinctive mind-set of the members of the *Gesellschaft* is socially organized for purposes of realizing selfhood. It is therefore very difficult to reconcile the *idea* of civil

society with citizenship and the state, as André Béteille (1999) and Agnes Ku (2002) propose. The civil mind is unable to think in terms of public interest and to accept the discomfort of preferring public interest to private interest. To understand why this is so it is necessary to compare the civic and the civil ways of thinking.

### The Social Organization of the Civil Mind

As stated above, citizenship and civil society memberships require two different ways of thinking which are developed for different purposes. The civic mind is formed within the institutional order of the political community, through political role-playing and the active exercise of civic virtues in the public domain. This order is transmitted to (future) citizens through political teachings that are part of a wider intellectual tradition (MacIntyre, 1981). In the *Gemeinschaft* in Europe this intellectual tradition is dominated by Aristotelianism, although different moral and political alternatives—different rivaling orders—prevail. Political teachings of citizenship derive their authority from an Aristotelian testimony of political wisdom: Aristotle is *the* philosopher of citizenship (Heater, 1999). In the political community, citizens are taught to examine their own political actions in the light of the political knowledge that they receive from the Aristotelian tradition, carefully guarded by the intellectual elite or the so-called ‘great books tradition’. The intellectual authority of Aristotle serves to protect citizens against the uses of arbitrary power, as no citizen ought to obey any political commandment that does not conform to political wisdom (Rommen, 1969, p. 116).

In the political community, citizens have the responsibility to consent to political wisdom, not because they are able to grasp the intellectual substance of Aristotelianism by their own autonomous reason, but because they believe in the legitimacy of the guardians. The guardians of Aristotelianism must know the mind of the citizens and the things that have to be done to give each citizen his due in the political community, while the citizens must recognize, through political teachings, the legitimacy of the intellectual hierarchy (Beer, 1986; Sennett, 1975). When the legitimacy of Aristotelianism, and the intellectual hierarchy that guards this political tradition, are questioned, the intellectual order of the political community differentiates and the cultivation of the civic mind becomes a partisan enterprise. The selection of authoritative sources of political wisdom becomes a matter of private choice, propelled by partisan associations, nationalist creed and ideologies. In Europe, when the legitimacy of Aristotelianism was publicly called into question, *common sense* became a more reliable guide to political action. John Locke was the new authority. He is *the* intellectual authority for the *Gesellschaft* (Bellah *et al.*, 1992).

Locke is not a teacher of citizenship and political bonds, but of individualism (understood as self-ownership) and civil peace. He teaches that, in civil society that he explicitly defines as “a state of peace” after civil war, associates do not need to obey any intellectual tradition, but are defined by their sceptical questioning of hierarchical authority and by the private choices that they are able to make in accordance with their own innate common sense. Locke teaches that, in civil society, the great books, and even revealed wisdom, are to be evaluated by common sense, without making any appeal to intellectual authority. In the *Gesellschaft*, the intellectual unity of Aristotelianism is substituted by a plurality of ideas, interests and values, which should be carefully calculated and neutralized (or de-politicized) for the sake of *civil peace* in a context of civil war. According to Locke,

only common sense proves powerful enough to stop the bloody horrors of the civil wars of the Reformation, in which political ideas, values and interests conflict, and to generate a decent condition of peaceful living, in which diverse ideas, interests and values can be accommodated and tolerated. The Reformation is the explosion of the *Gemeinschaft*, including its intellectual unity.

Common sense organizes civil experiences of autonomy from hierarchy and emancipation from community (Habermas, 2001, p. 56; Sennett, 1981). Common sense generates legitimate thoughts as causes of civil action (common sense is lost in violence and civil war) in such a way that ruling intellectual authorities are not required: common sense does not need the rule of the wise hierarchy (Beer, 1986). With common sense, no associate will need to question the self-evident fact that two and two make four, that violence is harmful, or that everyone needs to work to make a living. As associates are able to understand such conclusive evidence for themselves, they are capable of justifying and accounting for their actions. Common sense is what keeps associates autonomous and safe with unknown strangers in civil society. It enables them to foresee the possible consequences of their own choices and activities, so that they can be held responsible for their own destiny in civil society. In other words, the preference for common sense, *in opposition to intellectual tradition*, has important consequences for the authority structure of social organization. Citizenship cannot exist without the hierarchy that cultivates the civic mind; civil society cannot exist without the common sense of its members.

### **The Social Organization of Autonomy and Emancipation**

The social commitment to the actualization of the autonomous and emancipated self in civil society and the political commitment to citizenship in the political community of the state must be understood as two conflicting public moralities—as two distinct views of the good life which cannot be reconciled but can be pacified in civil society. The civil project of the self is different from the civic project of citizenship in the public domain (Bell, 1976, pp. 20–21; Habermas, 2001, p. 56). The development of the self, through associational membership and social participation, requires civil virtues that sustain autonomy from hierarchy and emancipation from the community into the constellation of civil society, the nation-state and the market. The development of citizenship, classically understood, requires civic virtues, or renunciation of the self, making self-government in the political community possible (Heater, 1999). Self-realization demands autonomy to choose the life associates want to live (Dagger, 1997; Eisgruber, 2002). Citizenship needs subsidiary authorities to cultivate civic virtues, for establishing or maintaining political bonds in the political community. Civic bonds are established according to the constitutive principles that define the public interest of the particular state or supranational arrangement like the European Union (Carozza, 2003, pp. 42–43; Donnelly, 1989).

Public interest is defined, maintained and developed through the social organization of civic virtues of self-governing citizens, in particular by the organization of prudence, justice, moderation and courage. These are the classical virtues that enable citizens to participate politically in the purposes of their political community—these purposes *are* the public interest. Through the cooperative efforts of the subsidiary authorities and the self-governing citizens, the public interest is guarded and the political liberty or self-government of the citizen is preserved (Dagger, 1997, p. 15). The very idea of political community is based on a shared vision of a political way of living, a fatherland, in

which citizens are united by their political bonds, despite their differences in identity and competing values and interests (Barber, 1984, pp. 117–118; Lasch, 1991, pp. 174–175). Without the political bonds that bind citizens in a political destiny, there can be no public interest. When citizens fail to establish political bonds—as is the case in civil war—they cannot govern themselves in the public domain and retire to the private sphere to live the life of an associate. As a result, the public domain becomes monopolized by the government which rules, through public policy, in accordance with the common welfare of its politically and geographically demarcated population (Marquand, 2004).

In the social organization of the *Gesellschaft*, the state is no longer defined by the political bonds of citizens but as a sovereign power that enforces civil peace and grants civil, political and social rights, but may turn parasitical on its own population. Associates do not establish political bonds but defend their own ideas, values and interests in their own associations, as a way of expressing themselves, in communication with others. To be able to actualize their selves, they need the civil virtues of benevolence, decency, punctuality, hygiene, conscientiousness, mutual recognition, philanthropy and promise-keeping, by which they are able to establish and sustain contractual ties. Responsible, decent, rule-abiding associates, who have learnt in their nuclear families, schools, neighbourhoods and churches how to recognize their own ideas, values and interests and those of others, maintain and develop civil society in accordance with the civil project of the self-realization, while maintaining civil peace with strangers.

Civil morality is grounded on the premise that each associate is a moral agent, fully capable of understanding, by common sense, the moral postulates on which contracts and partnerships rest; namely, that no harm should be inflicted upon the interests of others. Associates are not socialized to be responsible for others or to maintain the public domain, but they have learnt how to make their own autonomous choices responsibly, in cooperation or partnership with others. The capacity to choose requires a critical awareness of the choices available for the development of selfhood of alternatives among which can be chosen (Dagger, 1997, p. 38). Michael Walzer (1992) rightly stresses that, in civil society, social subjects also have the choice to acquire and exercise civic virtues and transform themselves into citizens. In his view, associates are autonomous in their choice of becoming citizens but they may also choose to refuse and, instead, take part in some sports, voluntary work or remain passive instead. Civil society does not exterminate civic virtues, but reduces them to one of the many moralities that are open to private choices. Citizenship is a role that associates may play in civil society—one among many other roles. Civil society leaves citizenship to the autonomous choice of its members.

In civil society, citizenship becomes a *republican value* that can be represented in civil society through associations such as republican parties, republican think-tanks, republican charities or republican media groups. Such contractual associations compete with others for members and donors. Such a competition not only involves a political struggle with political and moral alternatives (e.g. liberal or communitarian associations), but also with other types of associations, such as sport clubs, alumni associations, and business networks. Time can only be spent once. In other words, the full-time citizen role in civil society is difficult to fulfil, because citizens who find themselves in civil society are forced to play a plurality of roles in a variety of circumstances. They accordingly develop multiple identities (Barber, 1984, pp. 208–209). Civil society enables its members to define themselves according to the multiple identities they develop through

participation in their multiple memberships (Wolfe, 1989, p. 49). Respect for the autonomy of other associates in their making of the self is the core of civil morality. However, as all morality is guarded by some authority, respect for the civil value of autonomy requires from associates a loyalty to a specific type of ruling authority; namely, to civil authority.

### **The Social Organization of Civil Authority**

The authority model in the ideal type of the *Gemeinschaft* is the extended family, while the authority model of the *Gesellschaft* is the nation-state, in particular the constitutional state (*Rechtsstaat*) (Habermas, 2001, p. 53; Locke, 1963). In its ideal typical form, the political bonds between citizens in the *Gemeinschaft* are family bonds. The locus of the political bond is typically the fatherland. The leaders are identified typically as the fathers of the communities, and the founders of the communities are typically the founding fathers. The image of the father is, in this case, at the centre of all communities (Sennett, 1981; Wildavsky, 1984). In civil society, in its ideal typical form, the family is not invested with such extensive authority. Partnerships between associates are not based on kinship ties but are contractual and, accordingly, typically have legal consequences. What makes civil society possible is the social contract that relates all *Gesellschaft* members to the nation-state. The sovereign government is identified as the representative of “the people” who, in the *Gesellschaft*, is politically and geographically organized in a national population (Anderson, 1991, p. 22).

Civil society not only requires a nation-state with a constitutional state, but it also demands a particular family structure. The civil, nuclear family that is itself based on the principle of autonomy has the civil responsibility of inculcating its children with the same values. Civil society cannot thrive on vulnerable and dependent adults who are not able to associate with strangers. In the concept of the *Gemeinschaft* the family is undifferentiated, meaning that political, religious and economic lives are integrated within the (extensive) family structure. The father is a political, religious and economic authority: he brings up his children for the defence of State and Church and supplies the family with provisions. Hence, the paterfamilias wields *total* nursing authority: his word is law. Paternal authority declines when fathers are no longer able to carry their political, religious and economic responsibilities, when families are no longer able to protect themselves, but have to be protected by the sovereign (policy and army). Christopher Lasch explains that the extended family of the *Gemeinschaft* differentiates into the civil family when parents no longer possess the authority to determine the marriages of their children, who possess the autonomy to decide themselves; when parents no longer supply the housing but children, when matured, live elsewhere (Lasch, 1979, pp. 4–7).

In the social organization of the *Gesellschaft* children are, typically or conceptually, brought up with the belief that they have enough common sense at a certain age to think for themselves and act responsibly within associations and businesses so that they can realize their selves. From the moment that children are able to think autonomously and guard their own interests, parents relinquish authority over their sons and daughters and may become subjects of criticism (Locke, 1963). In the *Gesellschaft* parenthood and old age are no longer objects of status, so that obedience to parental rule can no longer be commanded when children, including girls, have enough common sense. Children have the right to maintenance and education at the expense of their family's



capital, while the parents have the duty to civilize their children in accordance with the Rule of Law (or what Weber typified as legal-rational authority), so that their children may own themselves, independently from the family or any other institution (Parsons, 1955).

In civil society, contracts, rules, compacts, codes and procedures typically provide associates with explicit guidelines of how to behave. In the *Gesellschaft* the nation-state grants autonomy to associates, as legal rights holders, on the condition that they promise to obey the established rules of civility and respect the status of contracts and legal rights, which alone enables them to think, feel and act as associates. Association operates through the autonomous self-enactment of contractual rules designed to discipline the free will, to ensure peace and decency. Civil society can exist only when its members are able to discipline violent impulses by themselves, through a social process of inner compulsion that Norbert Elias calls *Selbstzwang*. Associates may feel hatred and contempt for another in civil society, but they know that they ought not to translate such brutal feelings into illegality. According to Elias, *Selbstzwang* is the most important element of the social organization of civil society and a precondition for common sense and civil peace.

*Selbstzwang* is a necessary condition for a peaceful civil society but, in its control of political passions, including the passion for freedom, it destroys citizenship. In civil society, associates must hold themselves in check, discipline their passions, in order not to violate the established rules of civility. Citizenship, on the other hand, classically understood, does not demand control, but cultivation or the civic ordering of the passions. The ordering of the passions in oneself is a civic act that is brought about by the political education of the passions, in conformity with the pursuit of the public interest. This is an emotional ordering, that is primarily accomplished through the cultivation of patriotism (MacIntyre, 1981). This is the reason why Montesquieu (1995, p. 36) equates citizenship with political virtue that he defines as patriotism or “a continuous preference of the public interest to one’s own”. Thus understood citizenship is always patriotic, because it requires the renunciation of the self, the deliberate attempt to order one’s preferences within and not outside the political family of the fatherland (in the republican state) or the kingdom (in the monarchical state).

To recapitulate, the ideal typical (and therefore deliberately exaggerated and de-historicized) elements of the social organization of civil society are contractual social bonds, common sense, the social or civil values of autonomy and emancipation and the authority model of the sovereign nation-state. According to classical sociology, these are the defining conceptual elements in the empirical study of civil society. By showing *how* the defining conceptual elements of civil society are actually perceived in contemporary scholarship, and by uncovering the different moral commitments that go hand-in-hand with these perspectives, are the *different* proposed aims of civil society exposed.

### **The Perspective of Civil Society as a Mediating Structure**

The perspective of civil society as a complex of mediating structures is committed to the civil project of self-realization through social participation in civil society, and individual responsibility through associational membership. Its key concept is the mediating structure or intermediary institution that mediates between the interests and values of the private domain and those of the public domain. In this perspective, the main goal of

civil society is to improve public policy in such a way that social subjects are better enabled to actualize their selfhood. The analysis of mediating structures is focused upon the dynamic relationship between public policy and civil society, understood as the entire complex of intermediary institutions. The insight that this perspective generates is meant to improve public policy—public policy designed for the autonomy from hierarchy and emancipation from communities into the civil society of associates.

Charles Taylor (1995) suggests that Montesquieu is the originator of the perspective of intermediary institutions. However, on closer inspection this appears to be mistaken. Taylor believes that Montesquieu envisions a social organization in which powers are distributed among several *independent* intermediary bodies—the so-called *corps intermédiaires*—which would constitute Montesquieu's perspective of civil society. There are some flaws in Taylor's analysis. For Montesquieu, intermediary powers *are not independent*, but *dependent* upon the monarchical state, while they do not even have a place in the republican state (a point that Rousseau later preached). In fact, for Montesquieu, intermediary powers are intermediate *ranks* in the kingdom, which include the nobility, the clergy, the guild system and the bourgeoisie. These ranks do not mediate between public and private interests, but moderate the paternal powers of the monarch. Nobility, merchants, guild and clergy do not act outside the state in civil society and the market but function, through legal bodies, corporations, craftsmanship and ecclesiastical bodies, as a check on absolutism within the political community. In contrast to what Taylor suggests, Montesquieu offers no civil society perspective at all; his concern is the development and protection of citizenship through the intermediate ranks of the monarchical state.

Berger & Neuhaus (1977, 1996) designed the intermediary institutions perspective of civil society, as a result of their commitment to the realization of the social self. For Berger & Neuhaus, intermediary institutions exist not within, but outside the state, in civil society. Intermediary institutions, as they understand them, have very little in common with Montesquieu's intermediate ranks but, on the contrary, include communities and associations such as the family, school, church, voluntary work and neighbourhood. These are the institutions—located in between the nation-state and the individual—that, in the perspective of mediating structures, constitute civil society. Through intermediary institutions, social subjects such as children, elderly people and inhabitants are socialized to feel more 'at home' in civil society. As a result, families, schools, neighbourhoods and even nation-states are no longer experienced collectively as abstract entities, but are recognized as the means through which the self is realized. Intermediary institutions are mediating structures because they function as a broker between the public interest of the state and the private interests of "the people".

For Berger & Neuhaus, civil society is a concern of public policy. They observe that intermediary institutions arouse public affection for private interests and private affection for public interests. Through mediating structures, the *real* interests, *real* needs and *real* values of "the people" are expressed, rather than the imaginary and abstract visions of policy makers. Berger & Neuhaus argue that it is the responsibility of public policy to *empower* families, churches, schools, neighbourhood watches and voluntary associations so that the government comes to know social reality, not through questionnaires, statistics and monitoring systems but through empowerment of active membership. In order to empower people through empowering intermediary institutions, public policy is called to increase the *autonomy* of mediating structures *vis-à-vis* the state and the market. Through civil society's mediation between public and private interests, the social order

of individualized society is sustained through a dialectical process of social participation and individual responsibility. For Berger & Neuhaus, by empowering people social cohesion is strengthened: intermediary institutions are the cement of the *Gesellschaft*.

In Montesquieu's perspective of the intermediary powers of the monarchical state, the state needs its citizens to maintain its sovereignty. The citizens need their state in order to preserve their (political) freedom—to govern themselves as citizens through the intermediary powers of their intermediate ranks, in the political community of the kingdom, for the glory of their monarch. For Berger & Neuhaus civil society is the expression of the social realities of the people. Montesquieu is civically committed to political liberty from oppression. Berger & Neuhaus are civilly committed to autonomy from hierarchy (in particular the hierarchy of the administrative state) for the responsible realization of the self, through interaction with the other, through social participation in civil society.

### The Civic Perspective of Civil Society

A second perspective of civil society is Tocquevillianism, which analyses and evaluates civil society from a civic point of view. In this perspective it is argued that there can be no democratic social structure, penetrating into all institutions of society, without civil society that is able to include citizens in townships and moral and intellectual associations (Gannett, 2003). From a civic viewpoint, civil associations that are organized for socio-economic purposes or for entertainment demand less from their associates than they are capable of achieving as citizens (Lasch, 1991, pp. 174–175). If civil society is to be the domain of citizens rather than associates, then Putnam's (2000) bowling clubs are to be transformed into arenas, battlefields and forums in which citizens are able to exercise their civic virtues. This is Tocqueville's project (Ossewaarde, 2004). In his civic perspective, civil society does not consist of bowling clubs, labour unions, grass-roots associations, non-profit organizations, voluntary work and partisan institutes for purposes of selfhood. His civil society consists of townships, boroughs, assemblies, municipalities, provinces, cities, juries, forums, town halls, public meetings and counties, as well as intellectual and moral associations. Civil society exists not so much for purposes of social solidarity, autonomy and emancipation as for the development of self-governing, patriotic citizenship—for liberty and liberation from oppression.

Tocqueville has an alternative, civic definition of civil society (Antoine, 2003). He does not plead for a return to antiquity: individualization is a fact of modern society and the modern challenge is to create democratic citizens in this society. For him, the Puritan township is a model of a civic civil society. The same can be said of the French commune or the German town. In the civic perspective, civil society is understood as *civic society*, as the entire complex of townships through which modern citizens exercise their civic virtues and settle their own affairs by themselves, in accordance with the public interest. The township is not thought to be a civil institution, a social construction or a product of public policy but, like citizenship, is understood as a *phenomenon of nature*. As Tocqueville (2000, p. 57) states:

the township is the sole association that is so much in nature that everywhere men are gathered, a township forms by itself. Township society therefore exists among all peoples, whatever their usages and their laws may be; it is man who makes

monarchies and creates republics; the township appears to issue directly from the hands of God.

The ancient polis enabled the aristocratic citizens of antiquity to govern themselves directly in their small-scale and exclusive republics. Township society enables the democratic citizens of modernity to realize their political nature, their political animality, in democratic citizenship, by taking an active part in local affairs. In the civic perspective it may be civil to be governed, but it is *unnatural* not to govern oneself in the public domain.

Through the small-scale and exclusive township associations (Tocqueville observes that their size is limited to approximately 3000 citizens) and the intellectual and moral associations that shape a civic vision, citizens are able to govern themselves in accordance with civic virtues, debate face to face about the public interest and settle their political and moral controversies by themselves (Chandhoke, 1995; Rosenblum, 1998, pp. 43–44; Seligman, 1995). Citizenship in civic society means that township associates are involved directly in enacting their own laws, vote their own taxes jointly, appoint their own officials and have the right to trial by jury. Townships are like little platoons within, not outside, the wider political community of the nation-state (the great platoon). In the little platoons of the townships, which resemble the ancient fatherlands and the intermediate powers of aristocratic society, associates are, as self-governing citizens, able to elect their own national representatives whom they want to govern the great platoons.

Tocqueville understands townships not as a possession of citizens (entitlement, capital or status) but as the habitual pursuit of civic virtues out of political passion for self-government which, in America, he identifies with Puritanism. To be a citizen, it is not enough to possess a certain predisposition, good will and altruism to do something for others. The development or cultivation of civic virtues depends upon their political *use* in the public domain, upon the actual performance of great deeds for the city. Thus, when Tocqueville argues that, “in order that men remain civilized or become so, the art of associating must be developed and perfected among them in the same ratio as equality of conditions increases” (Tocqueville, 2000, p. 492), he refers to intellectual and moral associations organized specifically for civic purposes, rather than for welfarist and emancipatory purposes. The birth of the citizen in civil society takes place through the “natural” association of the township, in which political nature is realized, and through intellectual and moral associations, in which the civic mind is cultivated and the passions are ordered civically.

Tocqueville seeks to extend the possibility of democratic citizenship to individualized society. By relating the modern democratic nation-state to township society, he attempts to preserve self-governing citizenship in modern conditions of equality (Ossewaarde, 2004). In the civic perspective the challenge of modernity is not to further shape an individualized society of autonomous and emancipated individuals but, on the contrary, to resist individualism and develop a democratic *Gemeinschaft* of civic fellowships. Only in township communities, supported by moral and intellectual associations, is a democratic citizenry able to rule over its common destiny. Only in townships are they able to combat collectively against bureaucratic oppression, control and domination that Tocqueville identifies so strongly with centralization of executive powers and that Weber calls “rationalization”. Only through joint self-government are democratic citizens able to resist the welfarist and administrative pressures that, although often benevolently, attempt to define, regulate,

monitor, categorize and satisfy citizens as social subjects, as stakeholders, tax payers, units, administrative numbers or individuals.

### Concluding Remarks

If civil society is understood conceptually in the classical sociological sense, as a social organization of individualized society, then it becomes clear why it is difficult to reconcile civil society with citizenship. The civil project of the autonomous self is the direct cause of governmental monopolization that seeks to institutionalize individualism through welfare programs: the civil project is the antithesis of citizenship. In recent discussions, two types of ‘worries’ have arisen with respect to the concept civil society. It has been pointed out repeatedly that, in the social organization of civil society, the decisive role of the urban bourgeoisie, its power, its passions (for comfort, well-being and social mobility) and its commitment to autonomy from hierarchy and emancipation from community should receive critical examination. Protagonists of civil society hold that “talk of . . . civil society is not simply Western bourgeois ideology” (Keane, 2003, p. 172) while critics believe that civil society legitimizes the exercise of power, so that it fails to deliver the promise of democracy, let alone the promise of freedom (Goodhart, 2005; Hearn, 2001; Lipschutz, 2005; Morison, 2000). A second, related worry concerns the ‘fetishization of civil society’ that is manifested in Third Way thinking. As Craig Calhoun stresses, the language of “civil society” is all too quickly deployed as “a mongoose to kill all manner of theoretical snakes” and is all too often “articulated in ways that exaggerate the meaningful distinctions among state, market, and the ‘rest’ of society” (Calhoun, 2005, p. 361).

The first worry concerns the antithetical relationship between the civil and the civic, the associate and the citizen, which the idea of civil society, in itself, cannot solve. It cannot solve this problem because, as classical sociology shows, civil society is a category of individualized society, a distinctive type of modern society that is organized for civil purposes of autonomy and emancipation of the self. Citizenship can be reconciled with the idea of civil society when civil society is organized as civic society or township society, supported by the intellectual and moral associations that implement the doctrine of “self-interest well understood” that Tocqueville has in mind. Civil society can be understood and studied as “a realm of citizenship” (Somers, 1995, p. 230) only when the relations and communications in civil society do not have a civil, but a civic character. For the empirical study of civil society and citizenship it is therefore crucial not to dismiss the antithesis between the character of the bourgeois and that of the citizen. These two types of people belong to two antagonistic concepts of social organization—one organized for the development of the self, the other for the public interest. In the *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* the citizen disappears in bowling clubs and companies; in township society the bourgeois is lost in the public domain.

The fact that the idea of civil society receives the attention of institutions such as the World Economic Forum and the World Bank does not mean that talk of civil society is ‘simply western bourgeois ideology’ that serves to legitimate a welfarist order. What is at stake is that individualized societies are a reality, making citizenship, at least theoretically, impossible. Citizenship cannot be sustained by autonomy and emancipation, common sense and self-realization, but requires hierarchy, political bonds, intellect and self-government. To be more than ‘simply western bourgeois ideology’, civil society

protagonists would have to show that civil society is organized for no other purposes than self-governing citizenship. In other words, to go beyond the paradoxical conception of civil society without citizenship, the social organization of civil society should be transformed into a civic society of forums and battlefields. This is how Tocqueville, and recently Neera Chandhoke (1995), approach civil as civic society, but this civic vision of the public interest is not supported by the policy makers of international organizations, civil and political associations and non-profit organizations (Ebrahim, 2003, pp. 38–41).

To go beyond the antithetical relationship between the civil and the civic, and thereby to reconcile the *bourgeois* and the *citoyen*, a qualified critique of civil society as bourgeois society is much needed if the democratic citizen is not to disappear. According to Bryan Turner (2006, p. 137), classical sociology does provide this critique. Classical sociological concepts and ideal types can be used to revive what can be called “strong democracy” (Barber, 1984), the “good life” (Bellah *et al.*, 1992), “the rousseauist intuition” (Antoine, 2003, p. 83) or Tocquevillian “new liberalism” (Ossewaarde, 2004). Tocqueville’s doctrine of self-interest well understood is a classical attempt to transform the civil into the civic, not by coercing the civil or destroying the bourgeois but by keeping civil individualism in check, through civil society membership of a moral and intellectual kind. That is, it is an attempt to shape civil society membership with a civic mind, which takes shape in civic or political practices such forums and civic resistance to the welfarism of policy makers or administrative powers. The ultimate test for “good governance”, as well as for social science (see Burawoy, 2005) is, therefore, not to take civil individualism for granted, but to criticize it. The aim of public policy, in the Tocquevillian perspective, always is to cultivate self-governing citizenship.

The second worry, related to the first, is the fact that the idea of civil society is all too readily borrowed for other purposes than citizenship, in particular for the ‘higher’ purpose of the common welfare of national populations. Classical sociology, however, insists that common welfare is neither an objective of association nor of citizenship, neither of *Gesellschaft* nor of *Gemeinschaft*, but is the objective of *industrialized societies* that organize the relationship between capital and labour. As a category of individualized society, civil society is *as such* not organized for redistribution of income and public service delivery, but for autonomy and emancipation. It is *not industry and welfare* but civil and political opportunities for self-realization (for instance, through mediating structures and bowling clubs) which belong to the core of civil society. Thus understood, civil society can be approached conceptually as a complex governance network that pluralizes powers and problematizes violence for no purpose other than civil individualism; that is, autonomy and emancipation, supported by civil virtues such as civility, mutual recognition and social solidarity (Keane, 2003, p. 8). Industrialist concepts such as labour and capital, production and consumption, have no place in the language of civil society.

The ‘fetishization of civil society’ becomes worrisome when civil society comes to be seen as a policy instrument that is applied for improving government effectiveness. The ‘fetishization of civil society’ makes government and civil society membership a common executive task, demanding not so much the mediation between private interests and the public interest, bowling together or the exercise of civic virtues, as the active cooperation from all to realize policy objectives, designed by social planners or engineers for the common welfare of the population. Public policy *instrumentalizes* or *rationalizes* civil society as the third sector, as a policy partner in government—transforming civil associates into civil servants, to fill gaps that governments themselves cannot or will

not address (Gilbert, 2002; Lewis, 2004; Rau, 2006). The instrumentalization of the concept of 'civil society' has been attractive to the third sector because it has helped them in the process of legitimizing themselves. However, their concern with public service deliveries and aid operations are so shaped by economic conditions of competition and commercialism that there can be hardly any room for civil and political association (Turner, 2001, p. 203). The third sector, however, neither promotes autonomy and emancipation nor citizenship. It is not the domain of associationalism or citizenship in individualized society, but of management and production of goods in industrial society.

John Keane (2005) has argued recently that the welfarist threat to civil society not only comes from states but also from markets. Policy ends of industrial society (welfare, living standards) and sociological concepts of industrial society (labour and capital) not only penetrate into civil society through welfare state systems (including education systems) but also, and perhaps even more so, through markets and governmental policies of marketization. Keane points out that NGOs such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace or Human Rights Watch, which could be identified as moral and intellectual (rather than socio-economic), cannot be seen as representatives of the civic vision. These associations, therefore, although they may define themselves as the friends of social justice in the face of marketization, appear bourgeois rather than civic in their mind-set. Although their operations may be most effective in realizing organizational objectives, they are nevertheless worrisome to friends of the civic vision.

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