Civil (Dis) Obedience and Social Development in the New Policy Agenda

Research Priorities for Analysing the Role of Civil Society Organizations in Social Policy Reform, with Particular Attention to Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America

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CIVIL (DIS) OBEDIENCE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW POLICY AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

The coupling of social policy and civil society has become common in international discussions of development priorities in the Third World. From appraisals of the implementation of structural adjustment programs (e.g. Angell and Graham 1995) to proposals for democratizing the development process itself (e.g. Reilly 1995a), social policy is taking on greater importance in relation to economic policy and, within this growing valuation, civil society is frequently indicated as an integral element to its success.

Social policy is recognized in these discussions as a means to improve economic productivity as well as overall human well-being. It typically covers the delivery of health care, education, housing, employment, social security, and other social services to citizens, or a specified group of citizens, of a country. Although governments and development organizations may differ in their goals for social policy (e.g. World Bank 1995b, UNDP 1996), a common understanding today is that there needs to be a greater emphasis on shared responsibility between the state and civil society actors in designing and implementing these social interventions.

This shared understanding is part of what has been termed the “New Policy Agenda” in aid transfers and development thinking (Robinson 1995a). Until recently, the dominant assumption in development since its consolidation as a global practice and discourse in the aftermath of World War Two was that aid would be channeled through the state which, in turn, would be responsible for formulating and implementing policy (Escobar 1995). In the last fifteen years, more and more practitioners, agencies, and academics involved in development have began to promote other means and actors, notably private markets and non-governmental organizations, as the mechanisms to achieve economic growth and delivery of services. These mechanisms, often taken to represent “civil society,” are said to be more economically efficient and efficacious in impact than the state as well as acting as a harbinger of democratization to the state itself.
Under this New Policy Agenda, the dominant role for the state is to provide a supporting environment for private provision and reduce and rationalize public expenditures on social services (Edwards and Hulme 1996a. Moher 1996). Under the aegis of "social policy reform," development agencies and Third World governments are increasingly promoting new forms of program delivery which rely heavily on non-government providers (including decentralization, privatization, and community-based services) as well as greater participation of civil society organizations in policy-formulation.

In this paper, I critically examine this greater role given to civil society in social policy with the aim of developing a set of research questions and methodologies to address issues pertaining to the presumed viability and equity of this New Policy Agenda. My examination hinges on looking at the "institutional arrangements" presumed, superseded, and neglected by this new trend in social policy. By institutional arrangements, I am referring to the social relationships, interests, power relations, and values found in social policy processes (i.e., formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of social policies). This concept bears a family resemblance to what some call "policy communities," the "constellations of actors who share clusters of interests in a broad policy domain" (Lindquist 1992:133). In other words, institutional arrangements denotes the changing relationships between state and civil society actors in social policy processes. But it also includes the range of actions taken outside formal social policy channels, the arrangements undertaken by groups and individuals to meet their social needs on the margins of state-civil society interactions.

By focusing on institutional arrangements, it is possible to examine exactly how the New Policy Agenda is affecting social policy processes: who is involved, who is neglected, what is being accomplished and how is it being done. It goes beyond static, reified notions of the "state" and "civil society" which tend to dominate the literature on the New Policy Agenda. In so doing, empirical research on the changing institutional arrangements under social policy reform should be able to analyse whether the new constellation of actors can provide social services viably and equitably.
Such research would be beneficial to at least three audiences. It would enable policy-makers and policy-takers (within both the state and civil society) to understand how social policy reform has affected the constellation of actors and interests involved in specific social policy processes. Such knowledge could be used to help them better learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the arrangement itself, identifying, for instance, what groups should be included and what institutional capacity is needed. Development agencies promoting social policy reform would also find this research beneficial as it would offer insight into how their programs are playing out in the actual activities involved in social policy processes. Such knowledge could help them better tailor their programs or, perhaps, re-evaluate their programs themselves. The third audience would be the observers of social policy reform, the “attentive public” in the country itself as well as in the international community. Although not immediately involved in the design or implementation of social policy reform, these observers could use the knowledge on the viability and equity of this program in different countries to make informed suggestions and arguments which, in turn, may influence decisions made by the policy actors.

To clear the path for such a research agenda, I critically review the dominant theoretical assumptions, political prescriptions, and regional interpretations of social policy reform under the New Policy Agenda. These varying evaluations shape not only the type of analysis of this changing policy environment but also the policy environment itself: the ability of some social groups and organizations to participate in social policy processes and the inability of others.

In the next section, I sketch out the historical emergence of social policy reform under the New Policy Agenda. I then provide a brief theoretical examination of civil society and the state in terms of social policy processes more broadly. In this section, I also focus on the role played by, and given to, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in these processes. NGOs have been singled out as the most important representative of “civil society” in the New Policy Agenda (e.g. Edwards and Hulme 1996a). It is thus worthwhile to pay close attention to NGOs in this context. In the next to final section, I discuss how social policy reform differs by the region under discussion. I focus on
Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America as social policy reform takes on very different hues in these two regions. It is instructive to touch on this contrast as it shows how the assumptions and practices involved with social policy reform are coloured by the social geography of the region in which they are promoted. In the last section, I propose a set of research questions and methodologies for use in the study of the role of civil society organizations in social policy reforms. Based on the understanding developed in the previous sections of this new policy environment and the institutional arrangements it presumes, involves, and marginalizes, I set out a research agenda to address the viability and equity of social policy reform.

I. THE EMERGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SOCIAL POLICY PROCESSES

_It has become more important for residual state functions to become more efficient through the discipline of greater public accountability and for civil society (including the private sector, NGOs, and local government) to assume certain functions for which the state was previously responsible._

Bhuvan Bhatnagar and Aubrey C. Williams. *Participatory Development and the World Bank*

Groups and organizations that are said to comprise civil society as well as the term itself have been at the forefront of major policy changes in health, education, housing, employment, and social security in the last fifteen years. Although this is a global phenomenon, occurring in the states of the North as well as the South for somewhat interconnected reasons, it has taken on great salience in the Third World. A combination of pressure by social movements, disruptions from prolonged economic crisis, and strong promotion by development organizations and actors have provided new roles and opportunities for civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of social policy in countries of Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Asia. There are three clusters of factors that have led to this heightened interest in civil society organizations in social policy processes in the Third World.
During the 1980s, an economic-driven remodeling of "the state" contributed to a re-evaluation of social policies. In the early 1980s, many governments, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, suddenly faced a severe fiscal crisis as high public spending coupled with a rapid drop in primary commodity prices and a tight squeeze on global lending led to a rapid escalation of their foreign debt loads. To meet this fiscal crisis, most governments instituted some form of a structural adjustment policy during this decade. This route was chosen due to a combination of their own initiative, pressure from donors and conditionality packages from international lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This policy has promoted economic liberalization and reduced government expenditures and activities.

A common result of this policy in many countries has been increased poverty, unemployment, and social displacement as well as reduced government spending and government presence in health, education, housing, employment, and social security (Morales-Gómez 1993, Grindle 1996). Structural adjustment has typically weakened the administrative capacity of governments for delivering these policies as public sector wage restraint has undermined the staffing and expertise levels of the civil service. As poverty increased and government-run social programs shrunk or disappeared, governments, donors and development agencies began to turn to civil society organizations, expecting them to compensate for the reduced role of the state in social services.

Another important source of change has been more overtly political. The 1980s witnessed a resurgence of protests and resistance by an array of social forces against autocratic regimes across the globe. "Democratization" was the aim of many of these social protests. Although their successes have varied from country to country, protest to protest, their demands for greater accountability of governments to citizens have augmented and spurred on increasing interest in political reforms of the state amongst development donors and practitioners. By the end of the decade, development was being increasingly seen to be contingent on the establishment of (some form of) democracy. Whereas the World Bank began promoting "good governance" on the grounds that economic growth depends on financially and administratively efficient states, other development agencies and
foundations began promoting human rights, multi-party elections, decentralization and other attributes of "democracy" as a means to elicit wider participation of citizens in the decisions that affect their lives. These two have merged by the mid-1990s in "New Policy Agenda."

In terms of social policy, this new focus for international development promotes a (greater) involvement of civil society organizations in policy formulation and implementation on the assumption that this will make social services more efficient, effective, and equitable (Edwards and Hulme 1996a). For instance, Bhatnagar and Williams (1992), the authors of the opening quotation and World Bank employees, argue that participation of people and their organizations in policy formulation, implementation, management and monitoring help ensure programs are better adapted to local conditions, government services are broadly utilized, and local resources are mobilized to augment government resources. Here civil society organizations are assumed to be the bearers of democratization, the midwives of effective development projects, and the promoters of efficiency.

The final cluster of factors contributing to a greater role of civil society organizations in social policy processes have been a significant drop in level of aid flows to the Third World in general and to governments in particular. In 1994, official development assistance (ODA) from the governments of the world’s rich countries has been at its lowest point for twenty years in terms of percentage of their combined GNPs. This is due to changing priorities in the North with the end of the Cold War and a diversion of funds to former Soviet bloc countries. Furthermore, a significant proportion of ODA (ten to twenty per cent) goes toward debt relief and rescheduling, meaning that this money never reaches the Third World countries themselves (UNICEF 1996:48-49). Of the ODA that does arrive, an increasing proportion of it goes through NGOs rather than governments. NGOs delivered over $6 billion in aid in 1993, or about ten percent of total aid that year. A third of that aid came from official aid agencies (Riddell and Robinson 1995). The growing financial and institutional importance of NGOs in development accompanied by the interlinked reduction of aid directed to Third World governments has also led to greater roles and possibilities for NGOs, as the designated representatives of civil society, in social policy processes.
These three broad clusters of factors have greatly contributed to social policy reform with its emphasis on shared responsibility between the state and civil society, particularly NGOs, in social policy processes. Let's now turn to examine how such terms have been defined and what type of institutional arrangements they entail.

II. ENGAGING THE TERMS

"If discourse can be midwife, then civil society is well and truly born. Before we issue the birth certificate, however, a number of uncertainties concerning its identity require reflection."

Crawford Young. “In Search of Civil Society”

1. Overview of civil society and the state in social policy processes

In development circles these days, civil society is everywhere. It appears as a dominant assumption and principal aim in development projects. It is a vogue topic of discussion in both donor publications and academic writings. There are also a growing number of backlashes, words of caution, and critical reflections about it. There is so much being written on civil society and it acts as the lynchpin of more and more development projects that it is necessary to explain what civil society means in these practices.

Civil society is typically defined in relation to the state (Hadenius and Ugglia 1996). Both terms operate in spheres of power and competing negotiations of interests. This not only means the groups, individuals, and institutions to which they refer but also the discursive assertions of the terms themselves are subject to, and are engaged in, regulatory relations and political contestations. The definition of the terms, the division of responsibilities, and the prescription of interests all entail inclusion of certain institutional arrangements and the exclusion of others.

This is most obvious with civil society. Civil society is rooted in Western traditions. Although its origin can be traced to days of the Roman Empire, its current usage refers more to the
theories, practices, and struggles of Western Europe and United States from the seventeenth century onward (Kumar 1993, North South Institute 1996). The meaning of civil society has differed substantially through these centuries. However, it has always been an explicitly political and moral term, intimately connected to questions of political power, citizenship and nation-building.

There are three dominant theories of civil society today: neo-conservative, liberal pluralism and neo-marxist (see Macdonald 1994). The neo-conservatives argue that civil society is independent and morally superior to the state. It is the locus of freedom, efficiency and flexibility. For them, the term includes non-state organizations such as employers’ groups, NGOs, and cooperatives as well as private, for-profit businesses, including micro-enterprises. For the neo-conservatives, the goal is to strengthen civil society in order to weaken the state’s grip on the economy and society and thus enabling democracy and development to flourish. The liberal pluralists tend to follow Alexis de Tocqueville, the nineteenth century French observer of the United States, and view civil society as the location of associations formed for other than primordial ties. Liberal pluralists assume that civil society can work in tandem with the state, acting as both a defensive counter-balance to and a critically constructive partner of the state. They thus advocate strengthening non-state organizations -- such as NGOs, employers’ organizations, trade unions, local government, etc -- which contribute to the formation of liberal pluralistic regimes in the Third World (e.g. Whaites 1996). Neo-marxists draw on the works of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Communist theorist and activist of the early part of the twentieth century, and take civil society as the terrain where classes, the state, intellectuals, and non-state organizations struggle (e.g. Bobbio 1988). For neo-marxists, civil society is viewed as a site of both oppression and possibility: a location which needs to be democratized while it, in turn, is used as a base to democratize the state (Cohen and Arato 1992).

When these theories are incorporated into development practice and discussion, their assumptions help determine the type of organizations which are included in civil society and which get supported. For example, a number of scholars, from all theoretical persuasions, assert that civil
Civil society only emerges within societies fully integrated with capitalist markets and which have a legal order and public sphere resting on Western concepts of individual and property rights (e.g. Blaney and Pasha 1993, Hutchful 1995). Consequently, they raise doubts about the applicability of the term to all states in the Third World, given uneven capitalist penetration and legal orders in many of these countries. Some donors, such as U.S. AID (see North-South Institute 1996), take a similar starting point and make it their mission to replicate the conditions which are said to have encouraged the rise of civil society, development, and democracy in the West (e.g. the expansion of capitalist markets, creation and enforcement of property rights, multiparty elections, and so forth).

Civil society is thus defined tendentiously, according to the goals, assumptions, and politics of the donors and commentators. An Oxfam (UK) staff member captures this plasticity of the term for development practitioners, "For a funding agency strengthening certain elements of civil society is a means to a broader end, however a funder might define that end" (Renshaw 1994:47). Rather than claiming these donors are falsely looking for civil society when there is none, it is of more use to look at what arrangements are emerging out of this activity, what they are replacing, and what they are neglecting. The very interest of donors and development agencies in civil society is helping to make the term relevant for many Third World countries, despite uneven capitalist markets or limited legal orders.\footnote{There is also a tendency to ignore the long history of civil society organizations in many Third World nations such as trade unions, nationalist associations, missionary groups, farmers associations, and so forth which have actively participated in the interface between the state and society.}

Instead of providing a tidy definition, I offer a minimum set of attributes of civil society. To put it simply, civil society refers to groups and individuals who are at the interface between the state and the rest of the social order (see Guyer 1994). Civil society is thus differentiated from society at large and from the state, but its meaning draws from interacting with both. However, the distinctions between civil society, society, and the state depends on the situation studied and frequently shifts.
I do not burden my definition of civil society with any preordained political or ethical tendencies (e.g. "for democracy." "anti-state"). necessary social composition (e.g. middle class), or preconditions (e.g. fully developed capitalist markets). Nor do I automatically include the private sector as a component of civil society since businesses do not necessarily operate at the interface of the state and the rest of the social order. Only in policies such as privatization of social services do certain members of the "private sector" act in that role. I make my definition as content-free as possible because many commentators and development practitioners make civil society carry particular interests and political agendas: it obeys a preordained political and development trajectory. Such practice is of interest as it defines what groups are included in civil society and, consequently, which are included in social policy processes. That is, it should be studied in research, not be the starting assumption of research. For when commentators prescribe the political content of "civil society" and its necessary preconditions, they neglect other forces, social dynamics, and interactions going on between the "state" and "civil society" as well as neglecting how their own assumption powerfully shapes the development and research agenda; in short, they overlook the existing institutional arrangements and any changes to them.

Unlike civil society, the state is more commonly treated as unproblematic in discussions of civil society and development. It is typically approached as an actor separate from civil society based on recognizably distinct institutions, powers, and motives. For instance, Michael Bratton, a political scientist who has become an authority on the topic of state-society interactions in Sub-Saharan Africa, defines the state as an organization within society that coexists and interacts with other organizations as well as trying to seek predominance over them (1989, 1990). This definition, which presumes a theoretically and empirically distinct set of characteristics between the state and (civil) society, resonates with that held by others in the field (e.g. Fowler 1994, Grindle 1996).

However, as Timothy Mitchell argues, the separation between the state and (civil) society cannot simply be determined theoretically. Rather one needs to analyze how certain activities and groups are said to be part of the state or (civil) society, investigating the institutional arrangements
and discursive understandings which (re)produce and regulate this boundary: “the state-society divide is not a simple border between two free-standing objects or domains, but a complex distinction *internal* to these realms of practice” (Mitchell 1991:90). In other words, the distinction between state and society is not asserted but investigated.²

This line of inquiry does not imply the distinction between state and civil society is false or illusory. Rather it proposes to understand the interrelationships, histories, practices, and power relations involved in maintaining this boundary as well as the effects of this boundary on allocation of and entitlement to resources and decisions involving them.

The state will be simply defined as a set of ongoing institutions and social practices which are (inter)nationally recognized as having authoritative decision-making and implementation powers over a territory and in international fora. But the ways in which these powers are defined, their goals, and their linkages to other forms of non-state forms of powers and spheres of influence historically and situationally shifts. They are not set in stone. Rather than beginning from the boundary between state and civil society, the arrangements that, amongst other things, help produce this boundary will be the starting point (see Box 1).

Approaching the topic of the role of civil society organizations in social policies this way, one is able to analyze the interrelationships and the specific agendas of the organizations, individuals, and institutions involved in the social policy processes without being constrained by an *a priori* package of assumptions associated with the terms civil society and the state. By

² Mitchell uses the example of banking: “The relations between major corporate banking groups, semipublic central banks or reserve systems, government treasuries, deposit insurance agencies and export-import banks, and multinational bodies such as the World Bank, represent interlocking networks of financial power and regulation. No simple line could divide this network into a private realm and a public one, or into state and society. At the same time, banks are set up as private institutions clearly separate from the state. The appearance that state and society are separate things is part of the way a given financial and economic order is maintained” (1991:90).
Box 1 State/Civil Society Blur in Nigeria

In the late 1980s, the federal military government of Nigeria began to form Village Community Development Associations in its approximately five hundred local government areas and provide state funds for their development activities. The explicit intention was to inculcate citizenship through involvement in voluntary associations and to strengthen local level civil society structures to act as a bulwark against capricious governments. As a government manual on the initiative stated, “Popular organizations cut across narrow interests and are run on the basis of democratic principles.... Democracy and social justice can only be achieved when people participate in decisions affecting their lives through democratically elected bodies at all levels of society” (quoted in Guyer 1994:223). The military government claimed it was “thickening the web of associational life” in the rural areas and small towns as a necessary precondition for returning the country to civilian rule (Barkan, McNulty and Ayeni 1991:477). Although this process does look like an attempt by the military regime to strengthen its hold over the population and its organizations and to delay its withdrawal from power, Jane Guyer (1994) also speculates that many of these community associations will quickly be sought out by Northern donors and NGOs who are seeking “civil society” partners at the grassroots level.

Are these Village Community Development Associations part of the state or civil society? Research would be necessary to understand who is involved in these organizations, what role these groups play in terms of the political plans and social development policies of the federal military government and other lower levels of government, how they serve the differentiated needs of community members, and how they deal with possibilities for foreign investment and building international linkages. Such research would not start from assuming certain predispositions of these groups because they are seen to be either creatures of the state or representatives of civil society. Rather it would begin by looking at how this division gets constituted in the different arrangements between these associations, government bodies, and international donors and NGOs and what are the resulting consequences in terms of resource access for different social groups.

detaching these terms in this way, one can more easily assess the degree to which this (greater) involvement of civil society organizations in social policy processes facilitate viable and equitable social policy and service provision as opposed to assuming certain results will arise simply due to
the inclusion or not of civil society. In other words, the resulting institutional arrangements -- the roles, responsibilities, and power relations of various state institutions, government bodies, civil society organizations, and other social groups (e.g. private sector, households) — involved in welfare provision may be more realistically assessed.

This approach rejects any prescriptive and evolutionary analyses of the state-civil society nexus (contra Landell-Mills 1992; Blaney and Pasha 1993, Bratton 1994, Harbeson 1994, Fatton 1995, Fowler 1994, Whaites 1996) and draws on the emerging tendency in the literature that looks at the heterogeneous nodes of interaction, the points of contestation, divergence of interests, within civil society and the state themselves as well as between them and between them and the "rest of" society (e.g. Keane 1988, Cohen and Arato 1992, Reilly 1995a). It also presumes that the dynamics between civil society and the territorial state do not exhaust the scope of social policy. There are two further areas of focus for understanding the institutional arrangements resulting from the New Policy Agenda: the international dimension and the social margins within a country.

The increasing interest in the role that civil society organizations can play in social policy processes is a global phenomena. Both states and civil society organizations in the Third World have linkages and resources available to them and, at the same time, are subject to various forms of compulsion, from governments and civil society organizations of other nations, inter-government organizations, and international civil society groups. How these varying interests and sources of influence shape the agenda and funding of social policy practices is an important question to be answered when looking at the viability and equity of social policy reform.

The other area comprises the array of groups, social arrangements, networks, and practices that (attempt to) meet social needs but lie outside of the interactions of civil society and the state (as conventionally defined). Social policies introduced by the state and/or civil society organizations (like missions and NGOs) have not had universal coverage in many Third World countries, leaving large portions of areas like housing, health, and education to be met by social groups not publicly
recognized (such as informal squatter groups, healers, and non-dominant religious organizations). What role these groups can play in more formal social policy processes, if at all, is another question for research.

To summarize, there are three overlapping aspects to understanding the institutional arrangements resulting from this increased role of civil society organizations in social policy processes: the complex and shifting arrangements between civil society organizations and the state; the powerful international dimension; and the dynamic social field that lies on the margins of state-civil society interactions. Before examining how these aspects are shaped by the histories and current conditions of Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, I now briefly discuss them in light of NGOs, the organizations which are becoming the archetypical "civil society" group in the New Policy Agenda.

2. Non-governmental organizations in the New Policy Agenda

While civil society is often discussed as an inclusive term in the New Policy Agenda -- including, for instance, churches, trade unions, farmers' organizations, employers' associations, cooperatives, community organizations, and so forth -- it frequently means NGOs. Development NGOs are taken to be the major carrier of "civil society" interests by the three dominant theories of the concept (Macdonald 1994). Moreover, major development organizations have increasingly viewed NGOs as intermediary organizations (Carroll 1992), civil society groups that can broker between governments, donors, and grassroots communities by playing a greater role in social policy processes.

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3 When a researcher questioned donors what they meant by the importance of a "strong" civil society for democratizing Third World countries, they replied "that in practice this meant funding larger number of NGOs and increasing funding to the NGO sector as a whole" (Stewart 1997:22).
NGOs have taken on such importance within official development assistance that many multilateral agencies have created divisions whose only task is to liaise with NGOs. For example, the World Bank has a NGO Unit, which grew out of a NGO-World Bank committee that started in 1982. Since this period, the Bank has increasingly assessed NGOs as innovative, efficient, able to channel resources to the poor, operate in areas where government services are absent, and are effective representatives of grassroots communities as well as able facilitators of their involvement in development projects. The World Bank now strongly promotes the involvement of NGOs in the formulation and implementation of projects, policies and services. Over fifty percent of the projects funded by the World Bank in 1994 had provisions for NGO involvement, compared to just 6 per cent of the projects supported in the period 1973-1988 (World Bank 1995a,c. Goetz and O’Brien 1995).

This process has been pushed along by NGOs themselves who have coalesced into numerous national and international networks and alliances, demanding a greater say in national policy arena and international fora (e.g. Van Rooy 1997). Their advocates trumpet the capacity of NGOs to improve social services through their innovations and linkages to the grassroots as well as facilitating the greater involvement of the poor in government policies (e.g. Clark 1992. Reilly 1993. Garrison 1993. Brown 1994. Miller 1994).

But what exactly is an NGO in this context? What roles do they play in social policy reform? What type of interactions do they have with the state and at what level of government? What type of relationships do they have with the “grassroots”? Are they really able to make social policy more viable and equitable? Which groups are benefiting and which are being excluded? In short, what are the institutional arrangements emerging with this New Policy Agenda in terms of NGOs?

To critically answer this question is somewhat difficult since, as two well-known scholars and NGO practitioners recently observed, “independent and rigorous comparative research on and about NGOs and GROs [grassroots organizations] is still rather rare” (Edwards and Hulme 1996b:963; see also Stewart 1997). Instead, most research is carried out by NGO personnel or by
donors who already have preconceived notions about the role of NGOs. To approach the issue of the institutional arrangements involved with this elevation of NGOs, I draw on the three aspects to understanding the role of civil society organizations in social policy processes identified above.

(a) NGOs in terms of the complex and shifting arrangements between civil society and the state

Until the 1980s, the typical roles for NGOs in development were carrying out relief and welfare and implementing small scale projects. With the emergence and consolidation of the New Policy Agenda, NGOs have expanded their activities considerably in other segments of social policy processes (Korten 1987). Greatly due to this new-found interest, NGOs have been increasing in number and size at a rapid rate in the Third World, multiplying hundredfold since the early 1980s, and serving more than a hundred times more people, with some NGOs like BRAC in Bangladesh serving millions of people (Edwards and Hulme 1995, Charlton and May 1995). Some estimate that there are 3,000 Northern NGOs and 30,000 to 50,000 Southern NGOs operating in the Third World (Riddell and Robinson 1995, Charlton and May 1995).

The increased and elevated role played by NGOs may be seen by the range of organizations that can be included under the term. Some definitions of NGOs are all-encompassing, virtually including any organization serving some social need. Others reserve the term for intermediary organizations -- those organizations which create linkages between central government, donors, and the grassroots (and their groups). Others include community organizations (e.g. Kiondo 1993), social movements (e.g. Reilly 1995a), local government and private firms (World Bank 1995b). As Jenny Pearce wryly writes, NGOs have become "something which everybody can love, but which mean very different things to everyone" (1993:223).

4 For example, Michael Bratton labels ethnic welfare groups, separatist churches, and professional associations of the early part of the twentieth century as the "first modern NGOs in Africa" (1990:572).
NGOs usually refer to non-profit organizations established independently from the state that seek to promote a social goal (see Winchester 1996:3). Given the elasticity of the term, however, some scholars have tried to delineate different type of NGOs and to differentiate them from other groups. As a result, there has been a whole list of acronyms emerging in the literature such as NNGOs or INGOs (Northern NGOs or International NGOs, referring to NGOs based in Northern countries but which operate in other parts of the world), SNGOs (Southern NGOs, referring to NGOs based in Southern countries), GONGOs (government-organized NGOs), CBOs or G(R)Os (community-based organizations or grassroots organizations, referring to organizations based in the area of the targeted beneficiaries), MOs (membership organizations, groups that have formal mechanisms of accountability to constituents such as trade unions or cooperatives), and GSOs (grassroots support organizations, a term used to describe NGOs that serve as intermediaries between government and the community).

The range of acronyms hints at the complexity and heterogeneity of NGOs and community-based organizations with which they work. Some use these acronyms, or create a typology of NGOs, as a way to understand the different activities engaged by NGOs (e.g. Green and Matthias 1996). Such endeavors, however, simplify matters when it comes to institutional arrangements. For the roles and responsibilities of NGOs, let alone their ability to deliver social services viably and equitably, cannot be reduced to organizational features. This also depends on the sociopolitical context and relations between NGOs and other actors and groups. For instance, despite their typical ascription as civil society organizations, some NGOs, as the example of GONGOs shows, have been created by governments as a way to capture donor funds. Others have been used by individual politicians or civil servants to shore up their support in certain areas or may serve local elite interests. In both cases, the outlook and activities of these NGOs are more typical and supportive of the interests of the state and powerful local groups rather than that of disenfranchised communities (e.g. Streeten 1987, Kanyinga 1993, Kiondo 1993, 1994, Postma 1994, Vivian 1994b, Bebington and
Consequently, NGOs should not be seen as some paragons of democratic virtues or transparent carriers of the interests of disenfranchised communities, a fact increasingly recognized by practitioners (e.g. Fowler 1991, Dawson 1993, Edwards and Huime 1995). Rather, the various roles and responsibilities played by NGOs in the shifting arrangements between civil society and the state need to be carefully analyzed as opposed to simply presumed to be clear-cut (see Box 2).

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5 Bebbington and Thiele contend that a number of new NGOs in Latin America have been created by middle class individuals who have lost their jobs due to structural adjustment policies and are taking advantage of the resources available with the New Policy Agenda: “As donor agencies’ interest in working with NGOs is on the rise, so it has become easier to gain access to this foreign currency.... Ultimately, many such NGOs are more concerned about their income than about social change” (1993:56-57).

6 William Postma (1994) describes how national NGOs emerged in Niger in the late 1980s due to a combination of donor pressure and a more liberal attitude of the government. However, by the early 1990s most of the 25 accredited NGOs were staffed by government officers. Postma comments that it was not surprising then that most of these NGOs were not democratic in their organizational behaviour but rather they fashioned themselves after the political culture they knew the best -- the autocratic state.
A good example of the overlapping and shifting relations between the state and civil society organizations like NGOs comes from Cachoeiras de Macacu in Brazil. Health care professionals in this municipality worked with neighborhood committees demanding better health services to create the Papucaia project in the mid-1980s. This project trained community health workers and liaised with the municipality to redesign health care in the city. In 1987, Brazil’s first Health District was created in the town and some members of the project began to work for the municipality, with the coordinator becoming the Municipal Secretary for Health Care. However, once the Coordinator/Municipal Secretary for Health Care unsuccessfully ran for office of the Mayor in 1988, people trained by the Papucaia project were dismissed from their jobs with the municipality. The project members then re-evaluated their mission. They decided to change course from being implementers of government health care to return to their autonomous roots. With the help of Northern donors, they invigorated a community health network, opened up (along with other community and church groups) a health centre for women and children, and advocated for health policies and training more attuned to the social needs of the community (Gonçalves and Manahes de Oliveira 1994). In short, the roles and responsibilities of this NGO in health care delivery and policy shifted significantly vis-à-vis the state and society in a short time period, with various costs and benefits resulting with each change.

How has this New Policy Agenda affected the institutional arrangements of social policy processes? Observers differ in their opinions.

Some fear that the greater role played by NGOs in the New Policy Agenda will undermine the characteristics which make NGOs such appealing representatives of civil society (Pearce 1993, Fowler 1991, 1993, Archer 1994, Arellano-López and Petras 1994). As Alan Fowler (1994) colorfully contends, the New Policy Agenda is transforming NGOs into “ladles for the global soup kitchen,” substituting for, or complementing, Third World governments in providing welfare services to the ever-increasing number of poor and disenfranchised people. Such actions, Fowler argues,
palliate the growing needs of the majority of the people in the world and help to minimize social unrest which disrupt global capital flows and investment opportunities. For him, NGOs will be encouraged to develop linkages to governments, become more dependent on donor funds, and lose the chance of actually improving the well-being and empowering the poor. Proponents of this view argue that unless support is given to NGOs which enable them to develop links with, and become accountable to, popular organizations, the institutional arrangements being promoted under social policy reform are not to the advantage of the poor majority.

Others express opposite fears: the increased emphasis on supporting NGOs over the state in social policy in the name of efficiency, equity, and effectiveness, will make “state inefficiency a self-perpetuating reality” (Edwards and Hulme 1995:850; see also Collier 1996). NGOs lack the size, representativeness, and coordination to provide social services effectively and equally in a country. Moreover, NGOs themselves require a strong state to provide services, support, and legal protection (e.g. Uvin and Miller 1996). Consequently, commentators and practitioners holding this view encourage greater linkages between the state and civil society organizations like NGOs as well as strengthening both entities. Emphasis is thus placed on the different policy environments in which linkages between NGOs and the state can take place, particularly the “micro” and “meso” environments at the sub-national levels of local community, municipality, and regional government.

Some observers promote institutional arrangements which allow NGOs to have a larger say in social policy formulation. For them, NGOs can bring the experiences and insights gained from their grassroots projects to bear positively on government social policies. International NGOs direct their attention to working with line ministries in promoting particular policies and in building an acceptance of input from indigenous NGOs. The latter can also engage in direct political processes, allying themselves with others in policy coalitions to try to bring make an impact on social policy formulation (e.g. Edwards and Hulme 1992, Reilly 1993, Covey 1994, Edwards 1994, Uvin and Miller 1996).
Others argue that development practitioners should not worry about increasing NGO involvement in policy formulation since the key component of policy processes for the majority of the people in the Third World is implementation. Charlton and May (1995), for instance, suggest that over the last twenty years NGOs have made a substantial difference at this point already, undercutting local patronage networks and ensuring effective and equitable distribution of services while policy formulation processes are still dominated by state and donor elites. The argument here is that the involvement of NGOs in implementing social policies can lead to institutional arrangements which foster cooperation and mutual influence among unequal parties (e.g. government, grassroots communities) that lead to successful programs (Brown and Ashman 1996).

In summary, the New Policy Agenda is opening up new opportunities for NGOs in social policy processes in the name of civil society. However, the boundary between civil society and the state is not as clear-cut as it is presented. It follows then, neither are the distribution of benefits and resources or the roles and responsibilities of different organizations in social policy processes.

(b) **NGOs in terms of the international dimension**

As it should be apparent from the preceding, NGOs are intimately connected to international pressures and practices. The New Policy Agenda has created a receptive environment for NGOs, providing new funding opportunities and putting pressure on governments to give them new roles in social policy processes. It has also fostered the emergence of transnational NGO alliances.

Northern NGOs have been active in creating new organizations in the Third World, both NGOs and grassroots organizations. For example, Davis, Hulme and Woodhouse (1994) claim that even though more than half of NGOs operating in The Gambia are national ones, most of them were actually created by international NGOs to meet their demands of having Southern partners. There are multiplying institutional webs between international NGOs, national NGOs, grassroots organizations, and the communities themselves, and between them and Northern governments.
Southern governments, subnational levels of government, and other multilateral donors. Some have praised this “thickening web of civil society” (Reilly 1995a,b). Others have warned that it has thrown up more levels of bureaucracy between communities and policy-makers (Derman 1996). Many have pointed out the problem of having Southern organizations dependent on funding and support from Northern NGOs and other donors in terms of management structures, prioritization of activities, and plain and simple power imbalances (e.g. Drabek 1987, Nyoni 1987, Van Der Heijden 1987, Fowler 1994, Postma 1994). But little attention has been directed towards the consequences of this web of institutional arrangements on social policies -- on the viability of social policies which depend on funding from a variety of national, subnational, and international sources and on organizational inputs and capacities of an array of potentially unstable groups (see Box 3).

**Box 3 Some consequences of the thickening web of intermediary organizations on “grassroots managers”**

Steven Arnold and Kelly Rae Reineke (1996) examine the undiscussed dilemmas faced by “grassroots managers” in light of the thickening web of intermediary organizations in Latin America since the mid-1980s. These organizations are playing greater roles in the delivery of social services, picking up where the state has left off. But they vary tremendously in size and in the range of territory and populations covered (e.g. nationally or locally). Many are managed by former community leaders who are untrained for their new responsibilities, including disbursing large funds, negotiating with donors, bargaining with other intermediary organizations and governmental bodies, and maintaining strong ties to their constituents. There tends to be high staff turnover due either to burn-out or to the attractiveness of more lucrative jobs in other intermediary organizations. As a consequence, the institutional memory of these organizations is quite shallow. How this affects service delivery is an important question that needs to be answered.

Another attribute of the international dimension of NGOs has been the emergence of effective NGO networks that have bearing on social policy decisions of governments. From AIDS policy to literacy promotion for girls, these international NGO networks have played significant roles in setting policies (e.g. Ghiils 1992, Spiro 1994, Darcy de Oliveira and Tandon 1995). At the 1995
World Summit for Social Development, for instance, there was a separate NGO forum that met alongside the official meetings held by representatives of world governments with 2,274 representatives from 1,299 accredited NGOs (NGO Summit Newsletter, No. 6. May 1995). Although the international influence of NGOs has not been as great as hoped for by NGO advocates, some NGOs have had success in shaping international discussions of social policy (Van Rooy 1997).

In terms of sub-national arrangements, the New Policy Agenda have created new opportunities for NGOs to play a larger role in social policy processes. An important example has been the concern of the World Bank in shoring up social safety nets to deal with the "short-term" disruptions of structural adjustment policies. NGOs have played a large role in many of these programs, including innovative ones such as social investment funds that target the "chronically poor." Social investment funds require the establishment of autonomous agencies in countries to disburse small grants to projects providing social services and infrastructure to the poor. First set up in Bolivia in the mid-1980s, the Bank has tried to replicate these "demand-driven" social service projects in other countries, increasingly emphasizing that NGOs play a large role in carrying out the projects on the grounds that they are more able to reach the chronically poor and are more efficient than the state (World Bank 1995b). In fact, this program is being used to base social policy reform in many countries (Vivian 1994a). However, doubts have been voiced over whether the "chronically poor" have benefitted from these funds and questions have been raised over whether participating NGOs are just being passive tools in the evisceration of any public social welfare policy and acting as to assuage social antagonism that could result from the imposition of structural adjustment policies (Solis 1992). Rather than contributing to a viable and equitable model of social policy, empirical evidence suggests that social adjustment funds and the envisioned social safety nets have fostered institutional arrangements that have continued to support influential individuals, are dependent on donor support, and have (re)introduced selective and residualist programs (Arellano-López and Petras 1994. Vivian 1994a, Mhone 1995).
The international dimension to social policy processes is a significant aspect to the role of NGOs in the New Policy Agenda. From pressure on Third World governments to support and encouragement towards Southern NGOs, international actors have greatly assisted the elevated role played by NGOs in social policy processes. However, what this actually entails in terms of sub-national and inter-national institutional arrangements is still quite sketchy.

(c) NGOs and the "rest of" the social order

An important but generally undisussed issue concerning the ascendency of NGOs in the New Policy Agenda is the neglect of institutional arrangements lying in the penumbra of NGO activities that are important for meeting the social needs of many. Such arrangements often play important roles in servicing the majority of the educational, health, housing, and social security needs of a large portion of the population, particularly that of the disenfranchised. Although mosque schools, "traditional" healers, leaders of landless communities, and burial societies complement or take the place of social services provided by the government or NGOs, many development practitioners and commentators do not consider them to be part of, or possibly to become part of, the social policy process.

By neglecting these institutional arrangements on the margins of civil society-state interactions, development practitioners and researchers forego the opportunity to understand the strategies taken by many people in the Third World to sustain, or even improve, their social conditions. As Rubem César Fernandes notes in terms of thousands of polytheistic religious centres organized in Rio de Janeiro, "en plus de la célébration religieuse, chacun de ces centres offre une ensemble de services sociaux qui constitue une partie intégrante des ressources mobilisées par les individus pour faire face aux misères de la vie" (1995:376). Moreover, these informal social services are often carried out by, and meet the needs of, women -- such as midwives, healers, non-Western religious groups, parents' groups, and welfare associations (Tripp 1992, 1994). The neglect of these informal institutional arrangements in favor of the more organized NGOs and other civil society organizations helps to reinforce women's marginalization from formal social policies.
But what are the interactions between these institutional arrangements lying on the margins of state-civil society dynamics and the more formal social policy processes? Should they be included in them? Should they retain their autonomy but receive further resources? Is there a reason for their marginality? Some have noted success resulting from the “formalization” of some of these social arrangements, like the inclusion of midwives and “traditional” healers in the Tanzanian health delivery system and the Ugandan mental health program (Tripp 1994, Cannon 1996). Others speculate that both disenfranchised populations and civil society organizations would benefit from greater interaction and collaboration in social services. For example, Leilah Landim explains how NGOs that are grassroots support organizations (GSOs) should learn more about the “vast universe” of social philanthropy of religious, charitable and social assistance groups in Brazil: “if GSOs are able to share their expertise with social service agencies that have direct access to otherwise unorganized populations, such partnerships can help ensure that existing resources for the poor are used more wisely and help create new models of inclusion that strengthen Brazil’s fragile democracy by making it work for all of its citizens” (1993:37). But others observe that some institutional arrangements are on the margins of official social policy processes because of antagonism and conflict (see Box 4).

**Box 4 Islamic sources of social assistance**

Amani Kandil (1995) has richly described the strong Islamic and nationalist roots of social services in the Middle East. Islamic practices such as waqf, or religious endowments, and zakat, or tithe payments, still provide significant resources to schools, hospitals, and social security practices. More than 30 per cent of the NGOs surveyed in the region are Islamic associations. Much of these Islamic practices are integrated in complicated ways with state institutions and private businesses. However, some of these practices are carried out by organizations that are subject to state repression such as the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt. The latter provide much of the funding for the 3,000 or so health centres run out of mosques (which serviced an estimated 10 million people in 1989). However, as the Egyptian state periodically persecutes the Brotherhood, seeing it as a challenge to its authority and legitimacy, it is uncertain how much cooperation, if any, exist between mosque-run health clinics which receive funding from the movement and the national health care system, let alone possibilities for better integration of services and resources.
In conclusion, the interactions of these social service arrangements with the recognized civil society-state social policy processes need to be carefully assessed to understand the points of convergence, alliance, and divergence. The costs of over-privileging NGOs as the representative civil society organization also need to be assessed in terms of issues of accountability, breadth and depth of ties between them and groups and communities in the "rest of" society.

It is also important to recognize that the institutional arrangements involved in this elevated role of civil society organizations in social policy processes in the New Policy Agenda differ from locality to locality, country to country, region to region. Given the general scope of this paper, I concentrate on regional differences, in this case some of the distinctions between Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

III. REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE NEW POLICY AGENDA

1. Importance of Regional Differences

A series of books were published by Routledge in 1993 on the interactions of NGOs and the state in agricultural development of different regions of the world. In their summary of findings of the volume on Sub-Saharan Africa, Kate Wellard and James Copestake (1993c) observe that there were very few examples of positive NGO-state interaction in this field in Africa. This is due, they suggest, to factors such as limited representation of small farmers in public sector policies, a small number of grassroots and membership organizations to lobby government relative to the number of international NGOs and their local partners, and, perhaps most importantly, government ambivalence towards civil society. They conclude optimistically that the convergence of dwindling public sector budgets, professionalization of NGOs, growing poverty, and increasing donor interest, should lead to more substantial collaboration in the future. In contrast, Anthony Bebbington and Graham Thiele summarize the book on Latin America by commenting on how the 1980s ushered in the start of increasing NGO-state collaboration in agricultural development in the region due to a combination of factors, including: the spread of democratization; public sector reforms induced by structural
adjustment policies; donor emphasis on funding NGOs; a proliferation of indigenous NGOs; and the emergence of less radical and more pragmatic attitude of NGO leaders. They conclude that "research suggests that formalization of coordination and other linkage mechanisms is likely to be more flexible, transparent and adapted at a local level. The current trend towards the decentralization of public administration can only favour this" (1993:211).

The differences in the summaries of these two regions hint at significant contrasts between Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America in terms of social policy processes under the New Policy Agenda: while NGOs and state bodies in Sub-Saharan Africa have limited ties to the grassroots and relations of indifference or hostility between each other, in Latin America civil society organizations and the state work together tackling public policy issues, though not without conflict or distrust.

In exploring these generalizations, I will not only show how it is important to situate the research problematique for analyzing social policy reform within a specific regional context but also how the dominant paradigms for understanding each region shape social policy reform itself. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, the dominant paradigm views civil society organizations as not only facilitators of social policy reform in a situation of an administratively weak state and growing poverty but also as modernizers of the African state and society. In contrast, the dominant paradigm used to understand the role of civil society in social policy reform for Latin America assumes that it is not only a source of innovation and efficiency but also at the forefront of democratizing the state and society. Such a difference in assumptions, I argue, affects the institutional arrangements.

2. **Sub-Saharan Africa**

*The exercise of power within most African societies takes place through a multiplicity of channels. Thus, the formal and informal are always interwoven as people and associations seek new ways to exert influence and accumulate material resources.*

Abdou Maliqalim Simone and Edgar Pieterse, "Civil Societies in an Internationalized Africa"
The historical roots and current practices of social policy in Sub-Saharan Africa are diverse and somewhat opaque. There are well known examples of institutions and practices in pre-colonial polities concerned with issues of education (for example, mosque schools and Islamic universities in West Africa and the Indian Ocean coastal zone). health (a range of practices concerning healing, midwifery, preventive medicine) and social security (for example, granaries set aside by leaders to feed select populations during drought years. reciprocal exchange between pastoralists and farmers. entitlements to resources based on age and gender divisions). But social policy as conventionally thought of -- state actions explicitly concerned about improving and/or maintaining the conditions and life possibilities of specific human populations -- principally began during the colonial period, albeit in an extremely uneven manner.

In colonies that had a significant proportion of white settlers. state social services were predominantly directed towards them. For the majority of the population, the colonized Africans. the colonial state gave missionaries and approved charitable and welfare organizations the responsibility to look after their health. education. and social security needs. In the case of African workers at mines and plantations, the colonial state largely left "social services" up to the white employers. The only social services the state provided to Africans in these settler colonies were primarily oriented towards maintaining racial segregation and ensuring a healthy labour-force (e.g. Packard 1989. Kaseke. Dhemba. Gumbo and Kasere 1996). In colonies without a core population of white settlers. social services were almost exclusively the concern of European missionaries and charitable organizations. In both types of colonies. the coverage of social services was very uneven, dependent on the location of the few missionaries and the interests of colonial officials. The treatment of the various pre-colonial practices involved in health. education. and social security during the colonial period (whether they were ignored. repressed. eradicated. or worked with) differed by country and by historical period. Those practices that continued, however. often did so in a hybrid fashion as they were influenced by the changes introduced with colonialism.

At Independence, social services began to take on new importance for the state. During the time of decolonization. the state was being promoted as the major actor in the lives of Africans
through diverse but overlapping ideas of state socialism, Keynesian economics, and development economics (Young 1994, Escobar 1995). The new post-colonial governments inherited a highly interventionist, regulatory state machinery and began to extend it to more edifying issues such as health and education (albeit, the coercive side of colonial state apparatus was also kept, if not extended). For many governments, social services were seen as vehicles for extending their legitimacy, forging nationalism amongst culturally and regionally diverse populations, and promoting modernity as well as more particularistic national images (Bratton 1989b, Lemarchand 1992, Gibbon 1993, Kaseke 1993, Young 1994, Cooksey, Court, and Makau 1994). Consequently, the rather haphazardous, neglected, and/or segregated social services of the colonial period were centralized by post-colonial governments under some form of social policy. Social policy here always concerned education and health, occasionally housing and social security, and, more rarely, issues surrounding employment.

Bilateral and multilateral donors actively promoted and greatly assisted this initial process of centralization. Recently, donors have had even greater say in social policies given the dire financial situation of most African governments, the conditionality of aid packages, and the debilitation of social service ministries with structural adjustment policies (Cooksey, Court, and Makau 1994, Grindle 1996). But now decentralization, the charging of user fees, and a recognized role by the private sector and NGOs to “fill in the gaps” comprise the current orthodoxy in many areas of social policy (Ridker 1994, World Bank 1994, Therkildsen and Semboja 1995).

However, research has raised serious doubts about the capacity of government ministries to carry out these new reforms and the coherence of the underlying assumptions. As Henry Manyire and Narathius Asingwiire put it, in discussing the often ill-conceived and hastily planned social policies of Uganda, “[t]he whole process of social policy in the country seems to be characterized by ad hocism” (1996:45). There are also strong indications that the “centralized” social services introduced after Independence were never as coherent, widespread, or completely dominated by the state as they were represented in policy papers and development reports. As Christy Cannon comments.
the view that NGOs are increasingly compensating for inadequate government provision in such sectors as social welfare, education, or health, traditionally seen as the responsibility of governments ... appear[s] to neglect the involvement of NGOs in the African health sector, particularly missions, for over a century: non-government support to such services is not a new phenomenon. The paradigm also implies a functioning public sector with minor gaps which can be filled by NGOs, a situation far removed from reality in most African countries (1996:262).

Although non-governmental support to social services has a rich history in the continent, their role today in social policy processes is significantly different from the past. Between 1975-85, there was a 1,400 per cent increase in the number of African NGOs, a growth largely fueled by international donors (Fowler 1991). This process increased even more in the following decade, as examples of increasing numbers of NGOs in individual countries during this period show (e.g., Postma 1994, Kiondo 1993, 1994, Kanyinga 1993, Wellard and Copestake 1993a). Moreover, donors are pressuring governments to give NGOs a greater say in policy formulation (Robinson 1995b). Although other organizations such as missions continued to be involved in social services, NGOs have benefitted the most from this New Policy Agenda. What has been the consequences of this new situation on the institutional arrangements involved in social policy processes in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Most commentators have noted that there appears to be greater strain between governments and NGOs since the advent of the New Policy Agenda (Bratton 1989a, Wellard and Copestake 1993b, Ngunyi and Gathiaka 1993, Kiondo 1993). There are few indications of governments granting greater roles to NGOs in policy formulation, despite the pressure by donors (Vivian 1994b, Cooksey, Court, and Makau 1994, Kaseke, Dhemba, Gumbo and Kasere 1996, Manyire and Asingwiire 1996, Mchomvu et al 1996). Rather, African governments predominantly view NGOs as passive deliverers of government services and followers of state policies and regulations. For example, for the Ghanaian government, "the role of NGOs is largely seen as social welfare provision and taking over responsibility of community development as government reduces the public sector. NGOs are expected to develop their initiatives in accordance with the priorities of regional and district administration" (Amanor, Denkabe, and Wellard 1993:188).
But in practice, NGOs seem to have great leeway in carrying out their activities, formulating their own policies and priorities through consultation with the beneficiaries (or their organizations) and with their own donors, while coordination with the state, let alone with other NGOs, is a rare occurrence (e.g. Fowler 1988, Kiondo 1993, 1994, Kanyinga 1993, Vivian 1994b). Speaking of pressures and policies for government decentralization of (social) policies in The Gambia, Davis, Hulme and Woodhouse comment that the "real decentralization of the 1980s has been the rapid growth of NGOs: a decentralization by default that may well have weakened government agencies" (1994:265). In other words, despite claims of more efficient, effective and equitable services, social policy under the New Policy Agenda still seems to be largely a fragmented process in many countries of the continent (see Box 5).

Donors promote NGOs, and NGOs promote themselves, as significant actors in social policy processes not only because they "fill in the gaps" of state services, but also because they are said to facilitate local participation, community empowerment, and the expansion of civil society itself. The fact that many SNGOs and GROs operating in Africa have been created by, and/or financially dependent on, NNGOs has lead to a lot of commentary on the problems of North-South partnerships, on capacity-building of SNGOs, and on the limited ties of local NGOs to the majority of the population (e.g. Jamela 1990, Musengimana 1990, Mulyungi 1990, Postma 1994, Vivian 1994b).  

Yet this inorganic nature of NGOs in Africa is also viewed as an indication of the stunted growth of civil society on the continent. This retarded development is most often blamed on the backwardness of most Africans who, according to this discourse, lack the preconditions of modernity to break-free of the "primordial" ties of ethnicity (or, for some, "tribalism").

For instance, it is frequently noted in discussions of civil society in the Third World, that Africa has at least two "publics" -- the "civic public" realm that concerns the matters of the state and

7 "Many local NGOs are the products of urban-based educational elites with no substantive roots in underprivileged groups or are just consulting firms by another name" (Fowler 1991:73).
Civil (Dis)Obedience and Social Development in the New Policy Agenda

Box 5 Social Policy Processes in Uganda

Social policy in Uganda has largely been an uncoordinated process of disparate, conflictive and overlapping activities. During the colonial period, churches and mission groups bore primary responsibility for providing education and health services (Cannon 1996). After Independence in 1962, the churches received increased support from NNGOs but had their activities confined to welfare, charitable work and provision of health facilities as the state took over education and presumed it would take over the other areas once resources permitted. But internal conflict and warfare after 1971, led to a breakdown of state provisioning, the usurpation of state facilities by community groups (Nabuguzi 1995), and the withdrawal of NNGOs until stability returned to the country in the 1980s. Today, the government devises social policies such as the introduction of user fees in health and cost-sharing practices in health-care, but at an infrequent rate (Manyire and Asingwiire 1996), and encourages a greater role to be played by local administrative units (Resistance Councils and Resistance Committees). However, these councils and committees are often serving the interests of local elites and require significant contributions by users for what services they do provide (Tideman 1994). In turn, staff of these local administrative units complain about the lack of transparency and coordination on the part of NGOs (Cannon 1996). Since both the local and national government lack the capacity to implement social policies, they increasingly leave it up to NGOs and churches to formulate and implement them: in short, there is a “projectisation of public policies” (Tideman 1994). This is not necessarily a significant change in the state’s role since many citizens view the state solely as the guarantor of security, not a major player in social services (Tideman 1994, Cannon 1996). Amongst NGOs themselves, there is tension between foreign and local NGOs as the latter view the former as monopolizing contacts with donors and having strict reporting criteria for disbursing funds (Riddell and Robinson 1995). Due both to their historical role and their political connections, churches still play a large role, especially in health care delivery, and have links to international donors at the diocese level. They are moving away from project activities to more comprehensive program activities, but do not necessarily coordinate with NGOs or the government (Riddell and Robinson 1995). Moreover, the coverage of NGOs, local administrative units, and churches differs drastically by region and services are being increasingly differentiated in quality based on the economic class of users (Nabuguzi 1995, Passi 1995). In short, the institutional arrangements involved in social policy processes in Uganda are very complicated and need to be understood to be able to assess social policy reform there.

the more stronger, “primordial public” realm that is rooted in the primary concerns of kin-based
solidarities and ignores the state (Ekeh 1975; see Blaney and Pasha 1993, Hutchful 1995). One of the roles charged to NGOs in the New Policy Agenda -- building up civil society -- takes on even greater importance in Sub-Saharan Africa where it is seen to be lacking. NGOs are said to be able to facilitate (more) Africans to move beyond primordial ties and associate "on a non-ethnic and more interest-, class-, or issue-basis" (Blaney and Pasha 1993:13). This, in turn, is said to strengthen the state. As a senior staff member of World Vision (UK) recently argued. NGOs need to stay clear of African groups that are based 'on primordial ties and instead to "seek out those groups that promote the idea of association in a way which cuts across any continuing divisions, such as local geography, gender, and even political loyalty" as well as work with the state since such projects "enable a degree of contact between State and citizen which may enhance the prospects for civil society" (Whaites 1996:243; see also Landell-Mills 1992, Edwards 1994, Monga 1995).

There are several problems with such a justification of NGOs. Aside from the simplistic, reductive, and patronizing labeling of ethnicity as primordial or traditional, there are also indications that NGOs are strongly shaped by the patron-client practices that have defined development in Africa over the decades (Kiondo 1993, 1994, Kanyinga 1993, Vivian 1994b). Moreover, many NGOs in Africa seem to be less interested in promoting citizenship, or greater community participation in policies, or even lobbying governments on behalf of constituents, compared to implementing projects and searching for more funding (Gibbon 1993, 1994b, Riddell and Robinson 1995). Finally, and ironically, the assumption that greater involvement of (modern) civil society organizations in social policy processes will help promote (modern) citizenship and good governance continues to make NGOs and donors stronger proponents of the African state than many African citizens. In fact, this edifying mission of NGOs is similar to that assumed by many post-colonial governments whose

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8 "'Ethnicity' is, of course, itself only a crude shorthand for a complex of linguistic and cultural, geographical, and above all status differentiations, themselves initially heavily influenced by processes of colonial state administration and organised labour migration" (Gibbon 1994:18; see also Lemarchand 1992, Young 1994, Mamdani 1995). For a discussion on how "ethnicity" has played a changing role in the politics of harambee, the state-supported self-help groups that have played a crucial role in providing social infrastructure in rural Kenya, see Barkan 1992, Kanyinga 1994.
goal, be it socialist, capitalist, or a "third way." typically has hinged on the state "to remake society, to expunge 'traditionality,' to serve as pedagogue of 'modernity"' (Young 1994:41). In contrast, for many citizens in many countries of the continent, the African state has been reduced to the "essentials": "stationary with seals; a discourse of flags, borders, border posts, territories; administrative shells, and currencies. It is barely able to rationalize social and economic transactions within a particular physical and cultural space. The call for the democratization of states occurs at a time when state integrity is most relevant as a structure to be violated [by its erstwhile citizens]" (Simone and Pieterse 1993:47; see also Lemarchand 1992).

This does not mean "the state" is irrelevant in social policy processes in many African countries. Although state expenditures in social sectors have generally declined throughout the 1980s and 1990s for most African countries, the state is still the main channel of resources for the social sector (Jespersen 1992). Moreover, many social services provided by NGOs, missions, and for-profit organizations still depend on state subsidies (e.g. Zvobgo 1986, Therkildsen and Semboja 1995). These, in turn, are often dependent on donor assistance. For instance, more than 50 per cent of expenditures on health and education by the Tanzanian government for several decades have come from donors (Therkildsen and Semboja 1995:17). Moreover, donor-driven social reform policy in Africa, despite advocating a greater role for civil society, direct most of their programs through state structures (Taube 1993).

Yet, these institutional arrangements between the state, civil society, donors, and those groups on the margins of these categories are often neglected by many commentators and practitioners. But it is these arrangements, many which confound common assumptions about social policy processes, that are crucial in the provisioning of social services to most Africans. I will give examples from three countries to illustrate.

People living in Touba, Senegal’s "second city," have access to the same urban social services as those available to people living in Dakar, often with central government funding. Yet, unlike those in Dakar, they also enjoy free land and live in a municipality lacking shanty-towns. The
reason for the difference is that Touba is both autonomous from and falls under the Senegalese state. Its uniqueness is due to the fact that it is a holy city of the Mouride tariqa, an Islamic religious order, and the leaders exert control over who can live in Touba while, at the same time, tap into central government funds. The Mouride leaders have monopoly control over the economically important groundnut trade in Senegal and play a politically important role in Senegal and thus have been able to ensure control over social services such as housing, health, and education for their members (Simone and Pieterse 1993, Ross 1995, Keita 1996).

In Nigeria, decentralization and privatization of government social services has had some contradictory consequences. On the one hand, this has exacerbated social inequalities in services as the rich are able to contribute significant funds for education and health services while the poor are able to only contribute their labour. As a result, the services for rich and poor are drastically different in quality (Uduku 1994). On the other hand, it has legitimated a long history of collaboration of rich and poor people in the form of "hometown associations" or "development unions." Primarily found in western and southeastern Nigeria, these self-help associations mainly emerged in the 1930s. They were frequently rooted in the social practice of age grades and were fueled by rising nationalist consciousness and the reluctance of the colonial state to provide social services to Africans. These organizations consist of professionals, civil servants, and politicians living throughout Nigeria (and the world) who provide resources and connections to the state and development donors for residents of their hometowns. Many have written constitutions and charge annual fees in money or in kind. Largely through their own efforts, but also through their linkages to the state and development agencies, they have provided primary and secondary schools, medical services through the construction and staffing of clinics and even hospitals (Barkan, McNulty and Ayeni 1991, Guyer 1994, Uduku 1994).

In Tanzania, the decentralization of social policy during the 1980s has led to the creation of District Development Trusts, some of which in certain districts like Hai openly straddle "hometown associations" and local governments while, at the same time, receiving substantial donor support. These Funds provide anything from educational services to health clinics. They receive support
from important people from Hai who live in Dar es Salaam and are managed by members of the local elite (local government officials, leading parents, religious leaders, business figures, and so forth). But they also “work as a form of privatised local government" (Kiondo 1994:69) by levying mandatory taxes on people living in the District through the offices of the local government and the ruling party. At the same time, they tap into international aid. In short, these Development Trust Funds combine practices that typically fall under the separate categories of state, civil society, and society (Ishumi 1995).

To summarize, social policy processes are quite complicated and diffuse in Africa, hinging on amalgams of state, (civil) society, and international donor influence and participation. Their effectiveness in terms of maintaining or improving the social needs of the majority of Africans is generally quite poor, made worse over the last decade (Gibbon 1996, Grindle 1996). While under the New Policy Agenda there is greater attention is given to the role of NGOs as representing and/or fomenting civil society and, simultaneously, on strengthening state capacity in social policies, there is scant attention on the role of other civil society organizations in playing a (bigger) role in social services (e.g. trade unions, neighborhood associations, religious organizations). More importantly, there is little detailed attention on the practices and strategies that underwrite the daily provision of social services for most people -- on the institutional arrangements between state institutions, patrons, community leaders, social groups, NGOs, other organizations, and donors in terms of decision-making, the lines of accountability, the provision of funds and labour for building, maintenance, salaries, and so forth. These are often highly localized strategies and practices and do not easily fall into the terms underlying the New Policy Agenda. But without understanding these arrangements, “many well-funded and conceptualized development efforts fail, for they assume that in dealing with politically and economically marginalized populations, they deal with people without resourcefulness or proficiency” (Simone and Pieterse 1993:64-65). The predominant presumptions of the New Policy Agenda concerning social policy reform in Africa rarely refer to the social heterogeneity, the institutional overlap, and the various innovative strategies that comprise “social policy processes” as they currently exist in the daily lives of the majority of people on the continent.
3. Latin America

Merging frontiers between public and private sectors may contribute to strengthening participatory local governments [in Latin America] and lead to more inclusive, diversified social policy.... These mechanisms of the informal polity help keep government permeable to civil society. NGOs, grassroots groups, and social movements are indeed heterogeneous, sometimes ephemeral, often opportunistic.... But collectively, they constitute the basis and foundation of civil society and, as such, have become key vehicles for purposive social policy.

Charles A. Reilly, “Topocrats. Technocrats, and NGOs”

As in Sub-Saharan Africa, social policies in Latin America are historically rooted in the activities of religious institutions and private charitable organizations (Filgueira and Lombardi 1994:148). But unlike Africa, the histories and current practices of social policies in Latin America are more visible.

States assumed responsibility for social programs increasingly throughout the first six decades of the twentieth century in many Latin American countries. In countries like Chile, the state became responsible for regulating working conditions and satisfying educational, health, nutritional, housing and social security needs of (a proportion of) its population by the 1930s, in great part due to pressure brought on the government by labour and social movements (Schkolnik 1993).

By the 1980s, most nations of the region had a framework of social policies in place, with differing capacities, breadth, and coverage by sector, by subnational region, and by country (e.g. Sherraden 1995). The social policy processes were typically centralized, statist in orientation, and monopolized by the public sector. But a combination of the massive debt crisis, which led to the adoption of structural adjustment policies throughout the region, the limits of existing social policies (such as decreasing funds, corruption, and inability to have universal coverage), the growing social problems exacerbated by the neo-liberal policies,9 and pressure from multilateral organizations.

9 Whereas the number of people living in poverty in the region dropped during the 1980s, it grew during the 1980s. Latin America also has the widest income inequalities in the world (Morales-Gómez 1994).
resulted in the emergence of social policy reforms in most countries. At the heart of these reform programs is "targeted assistance": channeling minimal state welfare provisions to those most in need, replacing general subsidies and state social welfare programs with needs-based direct payments to users or service providers (Londoño 1993, Angell and Graham 1995, Stahl 1996, Vilas 1996, Oxhorn n.d.). Carlos Filgueira and Mario Lombardi nicely capture the five main elements of this reform:

(a) to foster community participation; (b) to incorporate organizations from the poor sectors, instead of carrying out actions geared exclusively to the individual or family unit; (c) to replace assistance policies with goals geared to production and investment in human capital; (d) to achieve a balance among the programs addressed to poor- and middle-level segments; and (e) to provide a package of measures to deal with the newly emerging problems (1994:139).

As Filgueira and Lombardi point out, with social policy reform there is a reversal of the underlying assumptions of the pre-1980s social policy processes: from centralization to decentralization, statism to community participation, public sector monopoly to privatization. Social policy reform has also been viewed by governments and international donors in an explicitly political light. Whereas some view it as a way to legitimize neo-liberal economic reforms, others see social policy reform as a way to enable popular forces to democratize the policy-making arena (Reilly 1995a, Oxhorn n.d.). In short, social policy reform is not only appraised for its effects on poverty-alleviation but also in the possibility that it "may also be necessary for the consolidation of democracy [in Latin America]" (Angell and Graham 1995:189). To assess social policy reform in Latin America then, special attention must be placed on the institutional arrangements concerning the role of community participation, the epitome of "democratization" in these discussions.

Civil society organizations (such as trade unions, church groups, employer associations, neighborhood associations, cooperatives) have a long history in the region. But their involvement in social policy processes have been traditionally marked by corporative or clientelistic relationships. They have lacked space for autonomous and effective input (e.g. Landim 1987, Filgueira and

10 "Democratic social sector reforms and efficient poverty alleviation measures will also contribute to sustaining the major economic reform measures by securing popular acceptance for them" (Angell and Graham 1995:194; see also Inter-American Development Bank 1996).
Lombardi 1994:147. Reilly 1995a. Martinez Nogueira 1995). Their roles substantially changed during the struggle for democratization in many countries over the last decades. At the forefront of these struggles in many countries were Catholic Church organizations, social movements, and NGOs (Landim 1987. Garrison 1993, 1996. Reilly 1995a, Cesar Fernandes and Piquet Carneiro 1995). In particular, it was during this period that NGOs began to establish themselves as important representatives of civil society. Involved in grassroots projects and promoting the popular movement against state oppression. Latin American NGOs took on what are taken to be their distinctive characteristics today: professionalism, a focus on research, training, and dissemination of knowledge, and having strong, though informal, relationships with other progressive organizations within and without their countries (Landim 1987, Bombarolo and Perez Coscio 1994. Cesar Fernandes and Piquet Carneiro 1995).  

With greater democratization of many of the regimes in the 1980s, NGOs, social movements, and other civil society actors began to re-evaluate their previous antagonistic relationship with the state. Coinciding with the introduction of the social policy reforms, many of these civil society organizations in Latin America increasingly began to work in policy processes in a variety of ways (Landim 1987. Bebbington and Thiele 1993, Garrison 1993, Bombarolo and Perez Coscio 1994).

There are three inter-connected ways civil society institutions have fit into social policy reform in Latin America: as innovators for state policies; as active participants in the formulation, financing, and implementing stages; and as vehicles for greater citizen participation. All three of these ways flow into one another.

To meet the growing demands for social services from citizens with fewer and fewer resources, governments at different levels have called upon civil society organizations, particularly

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11 "Between highly committed volunteer service and professionalization; between the Church, universities, and political parties; between Christianity and Marxism; between a conspiratorial brotherhood and institutional relations: it is amidst these contradictions that the agents of these sui generis entities make their way" (Landim 1987:33).
NGOs, to provide innovative examples and policy suggestions. They are seen to be closer to the grassroots, more innovative than the traditional government bureaucracies in charge of social policies, and are able to carry out research as well as universities. As one proponent argued, NGOs “are social laboratories for inventing and testing new policy ideas for solving previously intractable problems. The test NGOs face is not their ability to replicate projects exponentially, but their ability to help transfer and refine project models into public programs” (Reilly 1993:30). Although NGOs may lack clear-cut ties to the policy process, they have a series of informal mechanisms of collaboration with government officials, research centres, political parties, and to other civil society organizations which have allowed ideas proposed by NGOs to become government policy in, for example, municipal services (Caccia Bava and Mullahy 1995) and public health policy (Salinas and Solimano 1995).

These informal channels have arisen as decentralization has burdened unprepared and underfinanced local governments with the responsibility to meet the demands of an ever-growing population, particularly in the urban areas of the continent. Coinciding with greater demands by neighbourhood associations, women’s groups, NGOs, and other groups for not only improved services but also a greater say in them have led to innovative arrangements to husband resources, negotiate policies, and provide services. Although these arrangements may be adversarial, conflictual, competitive, surrogate, collaborative, or consensual, they all share a greater emphasis on negotiation between different parties in state and civil society: “A new spirit of pragmatism is at work in Latin America today, giving rise to patterns of interaction that may feature explicit pacts or implicit bargains” (Reilly 1995b:256; see also Bebbington and Thiele 1993). These arrangements are quite sophisticated in Brazil, where there are a growing number of examples of “participatory administration” at the municipality level which brings together local governments, neighborhood associations, local businesses, NGOs, research centres, and community members in the fashioning of community-oriented services and the fostering of support and financing to sustain them (e.g. Ferguson 1992, Cruz 1994, Gonçalves and Manahes de Oliveira 1994, Valla 1994, Caccia Bava and Mullahy 1995. Cohn 1995, Abers 1996, Cabral and Sobreira de Moura 1996). However, it is a process that has also occurred in other parts of the region (see Box 6).
Box 6 Urban Services for Illegal Settlements in Guatemala City

More than a third of the population of Guatemala City live in illegal squatter settlements, where living and health conditions are quite poor. A UNICEF program which provided basic health services to a squatter settlement that started in 1984 led to the creation in 1987 of a committee (COINAP) to assist people living in illegal settlements composed of members from UNICEF, government ministries, technical experts, NGOs, and community organizations. Starting with a plan to train community volunteers to provide primary health care and promote basic health, the program has had a range of spin-offs, including: the start-up of income-generating projects for the volunteers such as establishing pharmacies supplying low-cost medicines and community-run stores; the building of a community laboratory to carry out simple tests; the taking over of government-run dispensaries and transforming them into family health centres; the creation of an innovative water-supply project; the teaching of literacy classes; the establishment of day-care; and the provision of loans to build houses. In short, there seems to have been a number of positive consequences from this collaboration between a multilateral development agency, the state, civil society, and the community (Espinosa and López Rivera 1994).

By this greater involvement of civil society organizations in social policy processes, promotion of citizenship has also come to the forefront. On the one hand, government programs and state officials have become more responsive to listening to, if not (partially) meeting, community demands and needs (Garrison 1993, 1996. Espinosa and López Rivera 1994, Cesar Fernandes and Piquet Carneiro 1995. Reilly 1995a). On the other hand, people living in marginalized communities have learned how to make greater demands on government services through the activities of neighborhood associations, NGOs, and the like. After discussing the role of NGOs in successfully working with the municipal government and community organizations in various programs in Rosario, Argentina, Roberto Martinez Nogueira suggests.

[NGOs] will continue to support the rise and consolidation of new social actors to accompany them down the road that leads from raising demands to articulating interest, from protest to social movement, from sporadic events to sustained action, from resource transfers to skill generation, from isolation to collective action, and from discourse to action—all in a context in which structural constraints are daunting and strategic options are few. These sometimes tenuous linkages—variously binding the organizations of civil society to one another and, increasingly, to municipal
governments--hold the key to democratization and sustainable development (1995:68).

Given these greater collaborative ventures, there is thus great interest of development commentators and practitioners in the "meso" level, the arrangements between civil society groups and the different levels of the state in formulating and implementing social policies. Much of the literature has focused on the successful collaborations, albeit there are occasional comments that not all civil society organizations are progressive, able to effectively collaborate with both state and community groups, or free from clientelistic practices (Reilly 1995a, Cohn 1995, passim).

Such comments hint at a series of questions and issues concerning the institutional arrangements under social policy reform which only a few observers have touched on so far. These include: how the complexity of local politics and power relations have limited policy influence of NGOs and other civil society groups (Dawson 1993); how many community organizations are themselves composed of unequal relations along, for instance, lines of gender (Rodriguez 1994); how the visions and knowledge held by the professional staff of NGOs do not necessarily represent or are equivalent with the (contested) knowledge and priorities of the communities they serve (Valla 1994); or, given that social policies are said to have been ineffectual and limited in range in the region for some time, what were the institutional arrangements at the community level before the growing role of NGO and other (recognized) civil society organizations in social policy reform and how have they interacted with each other (Landim 1993). Given these issues and the emphasis on the political dimension of social policy reform by both proponents and critics, it is appropriate to take a closer look at appraisals of the institutional arrangements developed under targeted social policies in a few countries.

Social-investment funds (SIFs) is the model program for targeted social policies. Administered by agencies autonomous of the state bureaucracy but under the office of the presidency, SIFs act as social development banks, financing projects submitted by civil society groups and state agencies which aim to mitigate the impoverishing effects of structural adjustment
through creating jobs and providing social assistance. Praised for combining resources from the public sector, private sector, civil society organizations, and donors, and for being more flexible and efficient than line ministries (Graham 1992). SIFs have moved from being a short-term model for dealing with the transition of structural adjustment to being an alternative to traditional public social policy measures (Wurgaft 1992).

Although ostensibly targeted to the impoverished, critics have argued that those who benefit the most are often intermediary groups who implement the programs, such as NGOs (Stahl 1996). There is also a question of how broad the popular "participation" actually is in these funds (Wurgaft 1992).

For example, Sonia Arellano-López and James Petras (1994) argue that the privileging of NGOs by the SIF in Bolivia has restricted the political space for grassroots movements in the country. As state-led social policies have retracted, grassroots organizations such as peasant movements, trade unions, and indigenous groups have lost their former channel of influence to policy-makers. NGOs, which were predominantly allied with such movements in the 60s and 70s turned their attention in the 1980s towards receiving funding from the SIF, which does not fund projects which challenge the status quo. As NGOs multiplied to take advantage of the funding opportunities, the grassroots populations were further removed from actual influence in project design or social policy processes, leading the authors to conclude ironically "NGOs, which generally see themselves and are often seen by others as agents of democracy, have been instrumental in undermining the institutional bases of political participation" (Arellano-López and Petras 1994:567). Others reach similar conclusions about the consequences of the institutional arrangements implemented under targeted social policies in other Latin American countries, including Mexico.

Before 1980, there were approximately 100 NGO operating in Bolivia. Between 1980 and 1992, there were 530. In the first three years of operation of the first SIF implemented in Bolivia (which ran from November 1986 to mid-1990), 81 per cent of the 551 institutions carrying out projects were NGOs (19 per cent were state agencies). NGOs received 32 per cent of the resources invested by the SIF, over 50 per cent of the social assistance projects and 99 per cent of the projects to support productive activities (Arellano-López and Petras 1994).
(Laurell and Wences 1994) and Honduras (Stahl 1996). As Carlos Vilas observes, one needs to critically assess the emphasis on civil society participation in social policy reform in the region:

While it is true that grassroots participation in social-policy implementation is greater in local structures than in the centralized entities that were usually far away and bureaucratic, not all sectors of society get involved. Participation is the result of an array of factors that are normally absent, or exist to a lesser degree, in the neediest social groups: organizing capacity, a sense of efficacy, and basic education (1996:24).

To summarize, decentralization, privatization, and demand-based social services have changed institutional arrangements in social policy processes in Latin America. But which civil society groups are benefiting, which ones are being neglected, and how is this being done, are questions for research rather than presumed by a notion that social sector reform is facilitating the "consolidation of democracy" in the region.

4. Regional Dimensions

In summary, there are important distinctions between Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America in terms of the effects of the New Policy Agenda on the role of civil society organizations in social policy processes. Although both regions have been experiencing fundamental changes in social policy processes under the New Policy Agenda and, largely as a consequence, a rapid growth of NGOs, there ostensibly seems to be a better "fit" of the reforms in Latin America than in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Latin America, the institutional capacity and (seemingly) genuine interest of state institutions and civil society organizations to collaborate in social policy reform is more widespread and the resulting innovations in social policy processes are more recognized and lauded. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the capacity of the both institutions and organizations seem, in general, to be lacking and there also appears to be less interest on the part of governments and many civil society organizations in working together in social policy processes. Although there is generally little attention on the practices, perspectives, and arrangements of the people who are said to benefit (or not) from the New Policy Agenda in both regions, for Sub-Saharan Africa this absence is more glaring given the stereotypes and analytically weak concepts used to ostensibly represent these practices, perspectives, and arrangements; generalizations and terms which, in turn, have helped to justify the supposedly edifying activities of different actors in this New Policy Agenda.
But research needs to go beyond this apparent distinction as well as investigate concretely how the generalizations supporting such a contrast are affecting the institutional arrangements within social policy processes. If Africa is "lacking" the necessary pre-conditions for successful social policy reform, perhaps the assumptions underlying the reform must be re-evaluated in light of existing arrangements involved in social policy processes within and across state, civil society, and society boundaries. Moreover, the consequences of this presumption of a "lack" and the demand to "modernize" African states and societies must also be examined. If Latin America really is a model of social policy reform, perhaps attention should be directed towards the effects of these changes on existing institutional arrangements in terms of their viability and equity as opposed to simply presuming a process of democratization is occurring in both civil society and the state. In other words, the task now is to draw out from the above discussion the relevant research priorities for analyzing the role of civil society organizations in social policy reform under the New Policy Agenda.

IV. RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND CONCLUSIONS

*If civil society so often begs the question in explaining democratic change, it is because the concept ... lacks grounding and empirical elaboration in the politics of social forces. Instead of romanticizing about civil society in the abstract, there is a real need to know what these groups and their sociopolitical perspectives might be, rather than to equate them with democracy in the absence of concrete evidence.*

Eboe Hutchful, "The civil society debate in Africa"

In the above sections, I have discussed how the New Policy Agenda has called for dramatic changes in social policy processes in the Third World, fostering a supportive environment for the creation of new institutional arrangements in the financing, designing, implementing, delivering, monitoring, and modifying social policies built around a greater role for civil society organizations, particularly NGOs. In this discussion, I have also tried to shake up some of the underlying assumptions and political prescriptions regarding these institutional arrangements both at a general level and in terms of regional trends in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Accordingly, I
suggest here that research priorities in analyzing the role of civil society organizations in social policy reform be as free from these assumptions and agendas. The advantage of adopting such an analytical framework is that it enables research to go beyond common presumptions about the state and civil society in social policy reform while simultaneously examining how such normative discourses shape the institutional arrangements in specific social policy processes in different locales.

Below are my recommendations regarding key research questions and methodologies for analyzing institutional arrangements in social policy reform. I conclude the section with a brief discussion of the relevance of this research.

1. **Analytical Framework**

I have grouped the issues discussed above into three clusters of research questions. For each cluster, I outline general research questions, explicitly or implicitly drawing on the discussion in the above sections, and then provide some suggestions on how to carry out the research. The methodologies which are discussed the most are those used for relatively in-depth qualitative studies such as participant observation, interviewing (structured, semi-structured and unstructured), and focus group discussions. They come from disciplines such as anthropology, geography, political science, and sociology. Such methodologies are able to capture the complex and changing nature of institutional arrangements under social policy reform. They are also more adept at probing below the usual assumptions and agendas guiding the discourse on the topic. Moreover, they are being lauded and put to use by more and more researchers looking at civil society-state dynamics in development (e.g. Bratton 1989b:426, Kanyinga 1993, Guyer 1994, Gibbon 1994, Reilly 1995a. Riddell and Robinson 1995:56). Quantitative methodologies are also indicated as important tools for providing a more representative picture of the institutional arrangements and any changes to them discussed by the qualitative studies.
(a) **Civil society organizations in social policy processes**

- how has social policy reform affected the particular institutional arrangements (the roles and responsibilities of different individuals and organizations in the state and civil society) for carrying out each segment of social policy processes (e.g. financing, designing, monitoring) in a particular sector both at the national level and in specific subnational areas?
- what are the lines of accountability, social composition, and power relations in the particular institutional arrangements? (e.g. what civil society groups are being given a greater role in social policy processes and for what reasons? what ties do they have to the state, local communities, different donors, other civil society organizations?).
- how have these arrangements affected the coverage (expanded? shrunk? targeting different communities/populations?), the usage (the role they play in different communities' or social groups' activities), and efficiency (the distribution and use of resources) of the social service in question?

To answer these questions, the first step is to understand the policy changes themselves: according to interviews with policy-makers and donors and analyses of relevant policy documents, what groups and individuals should be doing what at the national and subnational levels in each segment of the social policy in question. The next step is checking with the identified groups and individuals themselves to hear their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Then one checks these discourses against how decisions are made, resources distributed, and activities followed in particular (or all) segments within various locales. To carry out this step, researchers would have to analyze the relationships between the relevant stakeholders in each segment and how they condition the relevant practices.

To pick up on the example discussed in Box 1, how does the fact that Nigerian Village Community Development Associations were set up by the military government provide them with a say in formulating or implementing social policies? How does this shape their legitimacy and scope of actions in different parts of the country? How has this shaped donor actions towards them? To acquire such information, researchers would have to be present at critical points in the social
policy process (e.g. formal and informal meetings, instances of delivery of the social service in question). Although there will be a number of blind-spots due to the inaccessibility of some of these meetings, interviews with as many people involved in these process as possible along with focus group discussions should flesh out the dynamics of these practices.

To relate the information gathered in these first steps to how it has affected the coverage and usage of the social service, the dynamics of change must be understood. Research would start with any official records which exist that show the trends and rates of usage and coverage of the social service in question. These would be compared with any recent data that may exist or which may have to be solicited in the research itself through sample surveys and interviews. Time-line surveys on a population of users and on different stakeholders within the policy process for one or more years would provide quantitative data on how on-going changes in institutional arrangements affect usage and coverage. This research would show whether usage and coverage has changed substantially for certain groups and for what reasons. It also would indicate whether this changes on a seasonal basis due, for instance, to agricultural work cycles, availability of employment (and wages), and so forth. Oral histories and focus group discussions would provide further details on how social policy reform has changed coverage and usage. These methodologies could focus on specific populations such as women, youth, ethnic groups, classes, or regional communities. Participant observation amongst a certain community of users over at least a six month period would provide greater insight into how the changing institutional arrangements affect pre-existing conditions and power relations shaping access to as well as entitlement and usage of the social service in question. This research concerning coverage and usage would put to test claims made about the improved effectiveness and equity of social policy processes with a greater role played by civil society organizations.

It is more difficult to answer the question concerning efficiency of the social policy reform. It would be necessary to acquire quantitative data on the expenditures of the various institutions and groups involved in the social policy process over time. This would entail the changing budgetary allocations to the government department in question, any financial or human input put in by other
government departments or levels of government and the expenditures of donors, NGOs and other civil society groups. The latter, especially, may be difficult to acquire as other researchers have discovered (e.g. Desai 1995). These costs would then be related to the breadth of coverage of the social service in question over time. To solicit this data, it would be necessary to have the support of the government and the key donors, if any, which are supporting civil society organizations in this social policy reform. Although data from the past may be missing, any data generated from current research on the current levels of efficiency of social policy reform could be used as a baseline for comparable research a few years later.

(b) **NGOs in social policy processes**

- what exact roles do NGOs play in certain instances of social policy reform? what type of relationships, lines of accountability and influence, do they have with state institutions, other civil society organizations, and the different users of the social service in question? what are the social composition of the involved NGOs?
- what are the consequences of increased involvement of civil society organizations like NGOs in social policy processes in terms of the state’s role in social provision -- is it making the state more responsive? are these NGOs providing innovative suggestions to state policymakers? or decreasing the role of the state in social service provision?
- what are the consequences of increased NGO involvement for the users of the service in question -- strengthening their sense of "ownership" of the service and of government itself? a greater responsive of the service? or a reduced sense that the state plays a role in their lives? a more unreliable service?

To answer these questions, the NGOs which are playing a role in social policy reform, such as the Papucaia project organization involved in health reform at the municipal level in Brazil discussed in Box 2, would be the object of research. Participant observation over a significant period would provide data on exactly what type of role they play within the social service in question and what impact they have on changing its viability and equity. Interviews with key stakeholders such as state officials, civil servants, and users themselves would also shed light on this impact of the NGOs over
time. For the Papucaia project, politicians and health policy-makers would be interviewed as well as different users and non-users of the community health network and of the municipal health services in general to find out the changes in health-care in the city, what role these different stakeholders thought the NGO played in them, and the (competing) visions of who has responsibility for different aspects of the social policy process.

Research of this type would provide information on the breadth of legitimacy of the changes in the social service in question and of the different actors in the social policy process (e.g. the NGO, the national state, the local government, other civil society organizations). It also would show which groups do not get covered or which become marginalized and for what reasons. Sample surveys concerning the usage of the social service by identified populations would provide more representative data concerning coverage. Finally, this research also would act as a barometer of differing capacities and responsibilities of different levels of the state and civil society and how these play out amongst the citizens who use and do not use the service in question.

(c) The margins of state-civil society interactions in terms of social policy

- what are the practices, arrangements, and types of coverage amongst disenfranchised groups concerning the meeting of different social needs? how much of these fall under the conventional civil society-state interactions and how many are on the margins of these?
- why do certain groups pursue particular strategies that are on the margins of state-civil society social policy processes (e.g. lack of services, greater legitimacy of certain practices, patron-client relations, discrimination from social service due to ethnicity, gender, clan, class, locale, etc.)? can the marginalized practices meeting social needs be included in the more formalized social policy processes and, if so, at what cost and for what benefit?
- what are the consequences of the donor promotion of civil society in social policies for groups like mission societies which have traditionally played a large but unrecognized role in this area (e.g. greater acceptance in social policy process and greater funding or marginalization and increased competition with NGOs)?
This type of research should be based amongst a certain community or within a defined locale. It would initially be carried out by participant observation, which would describe the various ways in which different groups in a community meet their social needs during the year and for what reasons. One example could be the ways and practices women from poor households meet their health needs. This research would include their appraisals of the different services and explanations about why they use them (cost, efficacy, religious reasons, lack of choice, etc.). Once the range of different practices are understood, a survey of the wider population could be carried out to understand how many others use these various practices and for what reasons. The key individuals involved in the marginalized practices (such as healers) and relevant officials from the state and NGOs working in the area would be interviewed to understand points of divergence, (possible) areas of collaboration, and points of complementary.

This research would also fit into the first two clusters of research by showing how the New Policy Agenda relates with (e.g. intersects, supports, occludes, represses) the practices and arrangements used by specific groups to meet their social needs. It would examine the relevance of the selected civil society organizations in social policy reform to the community/social group/locale under study by, for example, examining whether these organization play any role in terms of the ways the group under study meet their social needs. This research would also identify whether the new institutional arrangements have changed the practices and arrangements the group under study have used to meet their social needs (due, for example, to changes in resource allocation, (de)legitimation of certain organizations by the government, donors, or community leaders, or overt conflict from particular groups). Participant observation, interviews with key stakeholders, and sample surveys of the group under study would provide data on these issues.

2. Relevance of research

The recommended research would provide useful insight into how social policy reform is affecting the provisioning of social services and the decision-making over their direction. Rather than simply accepting the guiding assumptions of the New Policy Agenda regarding the consequences resulting from a greater role played by civil society organizations in social policy, the
recommended research would investigate exactly how these changes are shaping and being shaped by the arrangements on the ground in different regions, countries, and subnational areas. Such research is sorely lacking. Instead, much research takes the perspective of the state and/or the civil society organization in question (usually NGOs) and examine how the policy arena is changing their responsibilities and their ensuing needs in terms of organizational capacity. It is my contention that there is not enough empirical research on the ground which looks at how these guiding assumptions shape the institutional arrangements, explaining the roles, responsibilities and coverage of the social service in question, as well as analyzing other practices and arrangements used by people to meet their social needs. By following some of the recommendations above to gain greater insight into the relevant institutional arrangements, various stakeholders and research networks would be able to better assess the direction, the priorities, and the problems with social policy reform. By opening up the research to the various ways and understandings which comprise actual social policy processes which transverse the boundaries between the state, civil society and society, the resulting knowledge could help shake-up the usual terms and points of view which comprise the dominant discourse of social policy reform under the New Policy Agenda and possibly feed into decisions being made at different points in the social policy process.
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