Civil Society and Governance – Pluralizing the State

by Dorothée de Nève
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The perception of civil society in Europe has fundamentally changed in society and social sciences since the beginning of the 1990s. In this article, the development process as well as the relevance of civil society will be illustrated. First, I want to demonstrate which roles have been – and which roles are now – ascribed to civil society in the European polity in general and in Germany in particular. Moreover, the notion of civil society will be defined and the functions of the arenas of civil society will be discussed. With the help of selected examples, concrete forms of interaction of civil society organisations will be identified. The question will then be addressed of how civil society organisations seek to influence policy making processes and to shape their own role in community building in Europe.

1. Political Perspectives on the Role of Civil Society

The concept of governance describes certain forms of interaction between the state and society. This mode of politics is considered modern in which the plurality of actors is acknowledged. Societal problems are not solved by state institutions only; rather, the state interacts with other actors, for example, with private companies or civil society organisations. This interaction is necessary because – among other reasons – the quality of these problems exceeds the capacity of the state. This holds true for social problems, for example, in the context of poverty reduction or demographic change, as well as for environmental problems, climate change and so forth.

Therefore the governance perspective has not only changed the perception of civil society organisations, but has also contributed to a revaluation of this sphere. Political science research on civil society has also observed this development, but at the same time has identified contradictory, inconsistent and problematic tendencies.

While civil society was considered a dangerous and even suspicious actor in Western Europe until the 1980s, it is now seen as an important and relevant partner of the state and the economy. This change is for instance noticeable in speeches delivered by many German politicians.

At a time when the student movement and accordingly the 1968 movement was very active in Germany, Bruno Brandes (1969), a well-known politician of the Christian Democratic Union, commented on the character of parliamentary democracy, “In parliamentary democracy there is, by its very nature, no extra parliamentary opposition intended“ (FAZ 1969). So from his point of view, there is no need for the existence of a civil society in a parliamentary system. However, the Social Democratic German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Willy Brandt (1966 to 1969), held a different view on parliamentary opposition. His criticism only targeted anti-parliamentarian and anti-democratic opposition pursuing their objectives by illegal means. He did not doubt the opposition’s right to exist in general (SPD Pressemitteilungen und Informationen Nr. 198/68, Apr 1968).

In a contribution for Frankfurter Hefte, Gerhard Schröder, a Social Democrat and German Federal Chancellor from 1998 to 2005, describes the role of the state in relation to civil society, “The state and civil society are in a relationship of mutual tension, but they are not irreconcilably opposed. Civil society needs a better, a more active and activating...
state” (Schröder 2000). Therefore, from his point of view, the state bears an important responsibility in enabling civil society to develop. At the same time he describes a new quality in the relations between civil society and the state, bridging the gap of earlier times. The incumbent Chancellor Angela Merkel even goes one step further in her argumentation regarding the role of the state in dealing with civil society, namely, “The state must assist and must not constrain. In this sense, it must be the gardener, not the fence. We should put trust when people are willing to get involved and take responsibility” (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2006).

Whereas Schröder and Merkel placed emphasis on the relations and the interdependency between the state and civil society, the Social Democratic party Chairman Sigmar Gabriel, points out that a distance or even an alienation of the two spheres still exists. “Ever fewer people in Germany have the impression to be accounted for in the established interpretations of the political agents – not even as objects, let alone as subjects. (…) That is why the loss of trust is not put down to a single party, but to ‘the politicians’ in general. In opposition to them, many people get involved in cultural and environmental initiatives, neighbourly help, community foundations, agenda-based groups or in the development of municipal concepts. This civic engagement serves public interest, though it is often perceives itself as ‘private’. It also distances itself deliberately from the traditional organisational forms of institutionalised democracy” (Gabriel 2000, p. 26). Gabriel’s remarks make clear that roles might have changed by now. Whereas in earlier times, the state sought to distance itself from civil society, which was perceived as chaotic, and sometimes even as threatening and illegal, today; civil society agents tend to separate their activities systematically from state-run and other political institutions. Civil society intends to resist the danger of appropriation and instrumentalisation by official politics in times of the post-democratic crisis (Crouch 2008).

On another note, in the German Democratic Republic, there existed a different understanding regarding the role of the social organisations belonging to ‘civil society’ until 1989, for example, relating to the Free German Trade Union Federation or the Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB); the Free German Youth or the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ); or the Democratic Women’s League of Germany or the Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands (DFD). These mass organisations were expected to accept a subordinate role to the leadership of the prevailing Marxist-Leninist party, namely, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany or the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED). Their members were to be organised for the “willful and active assistance in fulfilling social and state tasks” and should help “to form the socialist consciousness of the workers” (Böhme and Schütz 1978, p. 294f.). Therefore, in this logic of the state socialist system, social organisations also played an important role. However, this role was defined as supporters in a hierarchical system to which they had to subordinate themselves.

The differing statements of popular German politicians quoted above illustrate the significant change in the perception of civil society by (the political) society. Nowadays, the importance of civil society organisations has increased by shifting the perspective of analysis from traditional governmental studies to the perspective of governance or good governance. In fact, civil society organisations now play an important role in the national and international political arena. The relations between the state and civil society have changed.
The European Commission points out in its white paper on European governance that civil society plays an important role in the elaboration of community policies. It therefore wants to bring forward the participation of non-governmental organisations, social partners and civil society. However, at the same time, the Commission demands from these organisations constituting civil society to act in compliance with the principles of good governance themselves, in particular through ensuring accountability and openness (Europäisches Regieren – Ein Weißbuch 2001). The European Union pursues the strategy to include not only national administrations and governments, but also business enterprises, associations and civil society organisations in political decision processes.

This new partnership with civil society is reflected, for example, in the new ‘compacts’ between the state and civil society which have been agreed on in numerous European Union member countries since the turn of the millennium. With the help of these written agreements, better, more structured, and more systematised relations between the state and civil society are possible as both parties must approve of the document and sign it. This issue is about fundamental principles of co-operation and the promise of support for civil society.

However, recent research on civil society also points to the problem of idealisation and exaggerated expectations. Civil society is idealised as a spontaneous, free, proactive and autonomous sphere where citizens participate in all fields of political processes and decision-making. The peaceful revolutions in East and Southeast Europe have contributed significantly to the fact that civil society has been (and still is) idealised in politics and social sciences. The expectations concerning the productivity of civil society organisations and their positive impacts on the political systems grow constantly. Hitherto, we may have developed rather unrealistic expectations considering the benefits that our political systems and societies are deriving from civil society. This is particularly true for young democracies and for post-democratic crises in established democracies, where civil society is expected to perform compensatory services, to mobilise apathetic citizens, and to raise their trust in the political system. At the same time, another dilemma becomes obvious. A strong civil society is the product of successful state building, the consolidation of the political system, and the support of other stakeholders in the political system. Yet, on the other hand, actions of civil society are an important precondition for this. Therefore, in the relationship of civil society and the state, there is a clear dilemma of interdependency. Civil society functions as democratic grass root organisations with a high level of democratic culture, equality, inclusiveness, and equal rights and opportunities. In this context, autonomy and independence play an important role. On the other hand, a rapid increase in professionalism can be observed. This includes the adoption of organisational structures and decision-taking processes which show similarities to those of the state administration, political parties and businesses. This development sometimes seems to promote the establishment of hierarchical structures, profit orientation and competitive behaviour. Something like a new civil society market has developed.

2. Characteristics of Civil Society

In political science literature, there are a great number of different explanations of the notion of civil society, reflecting the controversies in civil society research and the different political and cultural contexts. Therefore there is no generally accepted definition of this term.

Civil society organisations are differentiated, among other criteria, by their content orientation (i.e. charitable, service-based, participatory, and empowering organisations are distinguished from each other). In reports on the civil society sector in a certain region, often only key contents of the commitment are listed, for example, culture, ecology, health, social issues, occupational unions, religion and so forth. Furthermore, civil society organisations are categorised with respect to their scope of influence, differentiating organisations acting within a community, those acting within the whole of a city, and
others which are active on the national or international level. Moreover, numerous abbreviations circulate, which partly describe the aforementioned criteria regarding orientation and spatial scope, but sometimes also refer to the relation between civil society and other actors.

Table 1: Abbreviations for Civil Society Organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BINGO</td>
<td>Business-friendly International NGO/ Big International NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DONGO</td>
<td>Donor-organised NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENGO</td>
<td>Environmental NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>GONGO</td>
<td>Government-operated NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSO</td>
<td>Grassroots Support Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>MANGO</td>
<td>Market Advocacy NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGDO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Development Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPO</td>
<td>Non-profit Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUAGO</td>
<td>Quasi-governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUANGO</td>
<td>Quasi-non-governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCO</td>
<td>Social Change Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>TANGO</td>
<td>Technical Assistance NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNGO</td>
<td>Transnational NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGDO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Development Organisation</td>
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First of all, the abbreviation NGO for Non-governmental Organisation is widespread and also used in various word compositions, for example, INGO, BINGO or MANGO. All these classifications and notions are quite suitable for describing developments and civil society organisations. However, they are not necessarily useful for scientific analyses since these categories are not defined precisely enough and since they are not separated accurately.

Political science also has difficulties with giving clear definitions. Even though the multiplicity of existing attempts to define civil society may be confusing at first sight, there can be identified shared basic assumptions which are quite consensual (cf. Kaelble 2003 and Simsa 2001):

1. Civil society includes all public associations, movements, informal groups, and conventions which are open to every actor and in which citizens become involved on a voluntary basis. Civil society is always connected to the public. For the influence of civil society on politics and society, this connection to the public is essential (Kaelble 2003, p. 269).

2. The different definitions also emphasise the importance of a non-profit orientation in civil society activities.

3. At the same time, the definitions attach great importance to the autonomy of civil society institutions. That is, it is assumed that civil society enjoys the highest possible independence from other power centres, for example, from business companies or from the bureaucratic state apparatus.

4. Civil society is legally organised. Institutionalised human rights, such as the freedom of assembly and the freedom of opinion and thought, are materialised in these structures.

5. Civil society follows normative standards such as non-violence, solidarity and tolerance. The compliance with these (self-imposed) standards is ensured by institutions and mechanisms of self-control.
6. Civil society is said to have a high capacity for innovation, sometimes even a utopian potential or subversive function (Borstel 2008, p. 23).

7. Civil society itself is pluralistic, in that it consists of many organisations, movements, projects, networks and individuals. At the same time, highly different political positions and preferences are articulated in civil society. This plurality nourishes the social discourse.

8. Numerous definitions also mention the ideal of a pluralistic regulation of society which is made possible by the interaction with civil society.

9. Moreover, in most cases it is assumed that civil society has a positive effect on the level of democracy in a society (Meyer 2009, 139f.). Civil society is therefore also called a ‘school of democracy’.

However, beyond these aforementioned aspects, which are relatively undisputed in political science discourse, there are also facets in the discussion of this concept which are seen very differently:

1. Among others, there are controversies about the political contents of civil society. Here, of course, the underlying question is how to define the notion of politics itself (Meyer 2010, p. 37ff.). Are further considerations based on a narrow understanding of politics as fixated on institutions, or is politics understood – as Patzelt argues – as that kind of human action “aiming at the establishing and enforcing of generally-binding regulations and decisions […] within and between groups of people” (Patzelt 2003, p. 23). From this differentiation, it can then be inferred, whether civil society should be localised as a part of the polity or rather outside the political sphere in a space antecedent to politics and to the state.

2. There are highly different conceptions regarding the question which organisational properties characterise civil society. This question is also closely connected to the legal status and financial resources of civil society organisations.

3. Another aspect of the debate on the notion of civil society is associated with this question, exhibiting considerable differences and seeming especially relevant in the context of the research on governance. The multifaceted definition attempts reveal significant differences concerning the localisation of civil society within the political system. Depending on where civil society is localised in the political system, different functions are ascribed to it.

This last aspect, the localisation of civil society and the functions ascribed to it, plays a central role in the research on governance. Civil society is located within the institutional setting of political systems in different ways.

3. Arena of Civil Society

One approach, for example, is to understand civil society as citizens’ movements standing in opposition to state institutions and commercial enterprises. These movements are spontaneously organised in the beginning, their identities being primarily constructed by the confrontation with and the dissociation of other institutions. The workers’ movement, the women’s movement, the peace movement and the anti-nuclear movement are examples of such citizens’ movements which played an important role in the 20th century. In the course of time, a hard core group of activists manifested themselves, surrounded by a circle of sympathisers. From these movements finally emanated numerous new organisations, associations or parties, for example, the German Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen). A new international citizens’ movement arose in 2011, the so-called Occupy Movement, which opposes social inequality and plutocracy – in other words, rule by the wealthy (http://occupywallst.org/). Such citizens’ movements, according to the logic of political systems, particularly fulfill the functions of agenda-setting, supervision of other actors and mobilisation of citizens.
In political science research, another model of localisation is much more common. Civil society organisations are described as intermediary organisations mediating between the citizens and the state. Civil society organisations are expected to have good and strong relations with the citizens and the state at the same time. They fulfill important functions in mediation and community building. The intermediate sphere between the state and citizens is not only territory to civil society. It is rather a shared space between different actors. Therefore it seems very interesting to observe the relations between civil society organisations and other intermediate actors, such as parties or the mass media.

These two models of localisation separate civil society from the state and ascribe specific functions to the former in its interaction with the state. It also becomes obvious, though, that this is a hierarchical relation, with the state playing a dominant role. This dichotomy in the relation between civil society and the state is disintegrated in another model of localisation which seems to be important – especially with regard to governance, in other words, the interaction between the state and society and the interdependence of different actors. Here, the emphasis lies on the ideal of a pluralistic regulation of society.

Linz and Stepan define the notion of civil society as follows “By civil society we refer to that arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities, and advance their interests. Civil society can include manifold social movements (...) and civic associations from all social strata (...).” (Linz and Stepan 1996, p. 8). In this understanding, there is a high organisational diversity. Not only formally registered associations, but also loose groups and individuals are assigned to civil society if they fulfill specific functions.
The model is based on the assumption that there are five arenas in a political system. These arenas are separated from each other, each one following its own logic of action. The interesting thing about this model is that it overrides the above-mentioned dichotomy between the state and society. Rather, there are interdependent relations between the different arenas of the political system. Civil society is just one arena with equal rights and duties within the whole system. Civil society is dependent on the functioning of other arenas of the political system: the transfer of resources from the economic arena, the development of a legal framework by the political arena, and the implementation of these formal rules by the rule of law and the state apparatus. At the same time, civil society is expected to fulfill important functions in the arenas of the political system. Civil society is expected to:

- Develop interests and preferences;
- Establish and nurture values and norms;
- Legitimise other actors and arenas of the political system;
- Develop new ideas and problem solving strategies; and
- Control other actors and arenas of the political system.

This model of localising civil society by Linz and Stepan has several advantages:

First, with this model, it is possible to systematically analyse diverse civil society organisations. This is important, since it is definitely not true to say that all civil society organisations are identical and fulfill the same functions. Certainly there are relevant differences in the roles played by organisations like the football club FC Bayern, the Catholic Church, Reporters Without Borders, Attac, and a bee-keeping association. This model allows the comparing of different organisations in one system. And we can also analyse the effects of malfunctions and defects, for example the effects on the functional logic of the democratic system if a civil society organisation is corrupt.

Second, we can draw comparisons with the help of this model, for example, what role did civil society organisations like trade unions play in the German Democratic Republic and in the Federal Republic of Germany; in Egypt and in Russia; and in North and South Korea? Thus, the model allows us to describe the functions of civil society more precisely. Civil society actors who are involved in co-operation relations fulfill different functions than those who pursue a policy of confrontation or damage limitation. The model makes it possible to describe these functions more exactly.

Third, the citizen/civil society-state dichotomy, which is widely established in scientific research, disintegrates in this model. Civil society interacts with all arenas, each one featuring its own noticeable logic of action. What is interesting about this is that citizens...
are located between these arenas and adapt themselves to their logics of action. For example, one person can be an employer and at the same time can be involved in voluntary work for a civil society organisation. With this model, we can describe if and how people act differently in different contexts.

And fourth, we can also point out interdependencies. For example, one can show the connections between economic development, the rule of law and the development of civil society.

3. Interactions of Civil Society
Regarding the interaction of civil society with other arenas of the political system, different types can be distinguished. In the following, four basic types of interaction are differentiated and illustrated with the help of selected examples (cf. Simsa 2001).

1. In co-operation relationships, specific problem areas are identified. In this process, the intention of the civil society arena and the other arenas do not necessarily have to be the same, but should at least be partially similar in order to make co-operation possible. In other words, they should pursue similar or compatible objectives. Therefore the initial point is a certain problem situation or criticism. Co-operation comes about because both sides strive for changes.

An interesting example of an established and institutionalised co-operation relationship in the European Union is the so-called Economic and Social Committee. This committee is an advisory organ. The committee’s function is to bridge the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament on the one hand; and civil society on the other hand. Concretely, the committee prepares, for example, opinions on legislative projects and pursues other topics which are considered pertinent. The members of the committee represent a broad range of economic, social and cultural interests. They belong to one of three groups: ‘employers’, ‘employees’ and ‘various interests’. This example illustrates co-operation between many actors as 344 members from 27 European countries belong to the committee. Why are the two partners – the civil society and the European Union – willing to be involved in this co-operation relationship? The European Union expects to be able to harness the expertise of civil society from this co-operation. A further aim is to increase social inclusion and, in the course of this, legitimacy. In turn, civil society actors expect greater possibilities to influence political processes. In the end, both partners therefore anticipate better output and outcomes respectively.
However, there are also co-operation relationships in which only two partners participate. A well-known but disputed example is the campaign for rainforest conservation in which the World Wide Fund for Nature and the brewery, Krombacher, were involved. Krombacher made Günther Jauch, a popular German TV host, the spokesperson for the campaign for rainforest conservation in Central Africa. This was a new form of environmental campaigning in which Krombacher committed itself to donate a certain amount of money for each sold crate of beer and environmental activists pledged to conserve one square meter of rain forest for each beer crate. The co-operation partners were said to have conserved 96.7 million square metres of rain forest within six years. This information was doubted in a TV-report later on, and the partnership was discussed controversially in public (see ARD Pakt mit dem Panda). Nevertheless, in June 2011, a new period of partnership began. This time, it dealt with climate protection. On the Indonesian island, Borneo, efforts were made to preserve peat swamp forests in order to avoid extensive green house gas emissions.

There are numerous examples of partnerships between civil society organisations and other stakeholders, for example, those between political parties and foundations (registered associations), trade unions and federations, or between business companies and sports clubs. Sometimes these relations also operate through third parties. Similar forms of co-operation exist between the police and civil society. In many European countries, for example, there is often close relations between the police and human right organisations in the struggle against human trafficking or in the enforcement of sentences.

Partnerships can also be designed for a short or for a long time. In part, such relationships only exist for a short time and are related to a special purpose. However, others are relationship structures that have evolved over a long period of time, which are even agreed on by contract. In this case, both partners commit themselves to long-term co-operation. In such co-operation between stakeholders, a transfer of resources takes place (of tangible goods and immaterial items), bringing about advantages for both sides.

Co-operations are not riskless, especially for civil society organisations. The organisation’s autonomy can be constricted, e.g. when donors make their donations subject to certain conditions or when they want to take influence on the organisation’s agenda. The civil society organisation’s credibility can possibly be diminished, because critics may see the organisation as henchman to corporations and state institutions. On the other hand, it is also possible, that corporations and state institutions are badly affected, for example, when the agreed attainment of the co-operation does not meet the quality expectations.

2. The second type of interaction relations refers to ‘confrontations’ between civil society and other stakeholders. The starting point is the criticism or rather the rejection of the existent state of things. The aim is to establish a critical public opinion. A confrontation with values, objections and content takes place. Besides the mere publication of information and sometimes its classification as scandalous, the forms in which this confrontation is articulated include different forms of protest such as campaigns, strikes or boycotts. Civil society organisations seek such a confrontation in the political and economic arenas, and with the state apparatus, when for instance fundamental civil and human rights or children’s rights are concerned.

A current example of such a confrontation unfolded after the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima. The European Commission raised the tolerable radiation level for food products from Japan on short notice. This decision was criticised by a consumer watchdog, the Munich Environmental Institute (Umweltinstitut München e.V.), and also by Greenpeace (see Foodwatch Strahlen Grenzwerte). The criticism targeted the European Commission, but also the German Consumer Protection Minister, Ilse Aigner (CSU), who was accused of not informing the public sufficiently. In this example, we see that both co-operation – here between different civil society organisations – and
confrontation, are relevant. The confrontation is aimed at actors on the national and supranational level. In this dynamic, media coverage plays a decisive role.

The example illustrates that confrontational relations do not necessarily result in mass protests. Occasionally, though, civil society organisations appeal for demonstrations and mass protests. For example, trade unions called for demonstrations against European Union services directives. Often, however, confrontation is simply about information and the force of the better argument. The objective of the confrontation is often to push for change of behaviour from another stakeholder. Such confrontational relations also exist among civil society organisations themselves. This was the case, for example, when Transparency International (TI) passed criticism on the financial conduct of other civil society organisations. TI has again and again criticised the use of donations and problems with corruption in the context of development work. It has warned that civil society is threatened by a loss of trust comparable to the one in politics and the economy, if there is no rigorous action against corrupt organisations (see ‘Transparent civil society’). The state, too, sometimes interacts with civil society in a confrontational way. For example, state institutions act in a confrontational way regarding religious organisations. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Germany, for instance, monitors and controls the Scientology Church. The Office justifies this with the Church of Scientology’s efforts against the free democratic order. This is why it is deemed necessary to have the organisation observed by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (see Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution; see also de Nève 2011, 177).

3. The third form of interaction is ‘competition’. In relations of competition, a divergence between civil society and other arenas as well as a rivalry with respect to values, objectives, contents and strategies exists. The interaction or coexistence of stakeholders is governed by competing and complementary offers, forms of action, and operating modes. Self-perception, situation analysis, and the development of strategies, objectives and contents take place in front of the mirror, the reflection, and observation of the other. In this context, for example, competitive relations in the area of education are of interest, that is to say between state-run educational and childcare institutions on the one hand and competing institutions which are privately organised on the other hand. Ideally, this competition brings about the chance that best practices win recognition and that good ideas take over. For example, the modern and ecologically friendly approaches of business companies and public authorities in many countries in the European Union has been stimulated significantly through the initiative civil society. For instance, encouraged by environmental organisations, waste separation, which was the domain by civil society before, was finally enacted nationwide in Germany. Such incentives for social, political, as well as technical changes and reforms in the past have often originated from the arena of civil society.

4. The last type of interaction is ‘damage limitation’. In this type, there are high divergences between civil society and other stakeholders in that their logics of action and tendencies of interpretation differ. Deficits in the functioning of the other is identified by civil society and external ‘assistance’ is offered.

The central focus of strategies of damage limitation is to mitigate negative effects (Simsa 2001, p. 364). Unlike confrontational interaction, damage limitation does not only aim at announcing subjectively sensed grievances, but also at an intervention in the other’s sphere of influence with the aim of eliminating the problem. The character of these offerings varies: The organisation, Weißer Ring, for example, supports victims of crime and assists them in interacting with public authorities. So, in this case, a deficit concerning the state apparatus’s approach towards dealing with victims is assumed by the organisation. In this context, civil society organisations adopt a policy of damage limitation by supporting the affected persons in demanding their rights. In other cases,
though, damage limitation manifests itself in different forms of vigilantism. This is the case for example, when the animal rights group, Vier Pfoten, liberated animals from a fattening farm which does not allow them species-appropriate living conditions.

Other interesting examples are projects from regional funds that exist in many European countries such as Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Hungary. These projects offer a type of parallel currency, which is used by civil society organisations, providers and consumers. The development and stabilisation of the local economy are the aims of these regional money systems. By interacting only within a small territory in which the alternative currency is used, the purchasing power stays in the region. The system is expected to contest negative impacts of globalisation. This type of interaction leads to a hybridisation of the civil society and the economic arenas.

4. Conclusion

The localisation of civil society and the functions ascribed to it, play a central role in the research on governance. Civil society is located within the institutional setting of political systems either in opposition to the state and/or business companies or as intermediate actors between the citizens and the state. From a perspective of governance especially the model of civil society as an equitable arena is of interest. On the basis of this model the various interactions of civil society with other players can systematically be examined. Especially important are co-operations between state institutions, business companies and civil society organisations, which after all help to overcome a conflictual confrontation.

Finally we have to ask the question: what hinges on the successful interaction between the state and civil society? Civil society organisations use manifold instruments in order to influence political processes and decisions. The professionalisation of civil society together with the recognition of civil society as a relevant actor has broadened its influence. Today, civil society acts as an agenda-setter and generator of ideas, participates in decision-making and fulfills a function of control at the same time. The repertoire of political forms of participation has been widened in the course of the involvement of citizens in civil society organisations. These organisations, however, can only prosper in the garden of the political system if they keep their autonomy. That is to say, the subtle border between mutual interdependency and unidirectional dependency has to be preserved.

Governmental institutions have manifold instruments to regulate, protect and support civil society. For instance, it is only them who define the regulatory framework within which civil society actions are constituted. Following the path from this strict hierarchical relation to a productive partnership is not necessarily simple – but it is worth it.
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