

Context,  
international cooperation



Civic Driven Change and International  
Development:  
Exploring a complexity perspective

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- Measurement of development interventions;
- Knowledge management;
- Facilitation and accompaniment of change processes within organisations; and
- Strengthening Dutch societal support for global issues.

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## Preface

In 2006 Context, international cooperation embarked upon a 'bold new programme' and started a Centre for developmental practice and theory with regard to Civic Driven Change (CDC). In this centre we focus on CDC in general and on Civic Driven Child Development (CDCD) in particular.

The rationale for such a programme lies in the observation, succinctly summarised by Alan Fowler, that 'citizens and civic action – that does not presume pre-eminence of states and/or markets – as drivers of change in society can reframe development discourse, redirect efforts and increase aid effectiveness. Expanding the terrain of knowledge, analysis and ideas in this way offers an exciting potential to break out of contested development paradigms that have not proven up to the task of making aid really work and derogate, marginalise and instrumentalise citizenry and civic society'.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to this subject Context, international cooperation will perform different roles itself, varying from expert, advisor, facilitator and facilitating self-organising.

Within such a framework different activities will be carried out. These include:

- Explorative research by staff members of Context, international cooperation, consultants and/or associates about civic driven change in general and civic driven child development in particular;
- Facilitation of knowledge sharing by organisations active in this field;
- Facilitation of knowledge acquisition by organisations;
- Knowledge testing by organisations;
- Knowledge application by organisations and the sector at large; and
- Knowledge distribution and dissemination (publications, portals)

As one of the first steps in the establishment of the Centre, Context, international cooperation decided to initiate a baseline study into the 'state of the art' of civic driven change. Context intends to have a robust, foundational and conceptual overview of what CDC entails and its significance for the development sector. Since CDC finds place in a wider context and relates to many other drivers in development, the study should include the interrelationship between CDC and various other civic drivers.

We are grateful that professor Dr Alan Fowler (Institute of Social Studies, The Hague) was so kind to accept the invitation to formulate such a paper. Alan Fowler is an advisor, analyst and writer who has worked for almost three decades with Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) in Africa, Asia and Europe. He is the author of several books about NGDOs in general and civil society in particular.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Alan Fowler, *Civic Driven Change – The Think Tank Initiative*; a proposal, October 2007.

We also wish to acknowledge the support of International Child Support (ICS, Nunspeet, The Netherlands) which provided financial support for this study.

The area of civic driven change is relatively new: feedback to the present paper is solicited at [info@developmenttraining.org](mailto:info@developmenttraining.org)

*Fons van der Velden*

Utrecht, December 2007

Context, international cooperation

Fons van der Velden

## **Abbreviations**

CDC	Civic Driven Change
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ICS	International Child Support
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MSC	Most Significant Changes
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OD	Organisational Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategies
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Planning
RIM	Reproduction, Identity and Meaning

## **Acknowledgements**

Too seldom are resources, opportunity and encouragement available to tackle a bee in one's bonnet. This publication is a result of such an infrequent and prized combination. For many years I have been preoccupied with the notion that change in society cannot be fully or properly understood primarily as products of how states or markets behave. Consequently, an invitation from Fons van der Velden to follow where a civic-driven view of change in the world might lead is valued for the trust that it implies and for his insight and conviction that this perspective is, indeed, a potentially vital story to be explored. My sincere thanks go to him personally as well as to the team at Context. Needless to say, there are very many others, too numerous to name, that over time have contributed to the ideas set out in this working paper. To them also go my thanks as well as to Finn Heinrich and David Sogge for their critical comments and to anonymous reviewers of a previous draft all of whom indicated that, despite its imperfections and ambitiousness, the effort is worthwhile.

## Overview

This paper presents and employs complexity theory to explore a conceptual approach to understanding and arguing that development in society is simultaneously indeterminant and critically co-dependent on civic association and action.

Adopting an historical view, the analysis proposes, describes and connects major factors involved in civic-driven processes. Of necessity the treatment is broader than aid, which is but one strand of a far bigger story. Nevertheless, the guiding objective is to define an alternative to overbearing aid discourses that, in running their unsatisfactory course in actual performance, have shaped today's thinking and practice to the active exclusion of other, potentially more compelling, possibilities.

The immediate task of this work in progress is therefore to provide a coherent foundation for challenging overly deterministic narratives that are inadequate explanations of lived reality and of change benefiting societies' losers rather than winners, where power is central feature. This intellectual exercise forms the bulk of the text. Much further effort will be needed to apply this perspective to practice. Nevertheless, to help make theory more concrete, in Part II tentative steps are taken the direction of implications. It is written such that, though not recommended, readers with a more practical interest can omit the analysis of Part I.

## Introduction

There are many reasons to revisit the thinking and practice of international development. Foremost is accumulated dissatisfaction with theories, premises and paradigms that oscillate between giving priority to state or market as the primary drivers of socio-economic progress and human well-being. Explanations of why and how these institutional domains accelerate and direct growth towards sustainable poverty reduction, greater equity and inclusion of the powerless – the ostensible goals of international aid – have proven inadequate. More than fifty years of effort and many hundreds of billions of dollars spent as official development assistance (ODA) have not produced their overtly intended results consistently enough to merit a conclusion that the theories are adequate or the methods applied sufficiently effective (Riddell, 2007). Current remedies prescribed to treat this unhealthy condition are: more of the same only even better financed, planned and co-ordinated (Sachs, 2005); greater attention to non-economic factors within aid's allocational policy and architecture (Collier, 2007); or a different approach altogether (Easterly, 2006).

This paper also argues the latter case. It does so by recognising that the topic merits much thinking, critical debate and more than a book length treatment. But all journeys start with a first step. So, by design, the following pages set out a possible way of rethinking development using an evolutionary, complex perspective that has, for example, been powerfully applied to analysis of economics and the creation of wealth (Beinhocker, 2007).

This study does not repeat or summarise reasons for inadequate performance of 'aided' change. It takes as a starting point that aid has reached a level of public doubt and professional disillusionment where rehashing old ideas will not offer satisfactory improvement.<sup>2</sup> The basis of this study is a conviction that an alternative view of the who, why and how of development needs to be investigated and articulated. A prime candidate and source for another perspective is civil society. That is, the self-organised life and agency of people associating and acting as citizens. This phenomenon and force is typically instrumentalised, coercively aligned and increasingly constrained as the messy, residual domain in the traditional aid triad.

There are a number of ways to tackle such a task. Most straight forward would be to take theories of political science and political economy that provide the concepts of civic and citizen and their economic dimensions. They would be applied to civic action over time. This optic would provide direct entry into many of relevant analytic categories and ideas. But it would not necessarily embrace the many dimensions of human development that aid aspires to and of how change occurs. To compensate by introducing a wider mix of contributions from across the social sciences would itself require a defensible organising framework. In addition, even a mainstream multi-disciplinary analysis should learn from and build on the substantial literature on development of societies. Review of such texts suggests that, in considering alternative pathways for exploration, a number of precepts and conditions must be taken into account.

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<sup>2</sup> That aid always has served a Cold War geopolitical agenda – now preoccupied with security – is well proven (Alesina and Dollar, 2000). It is not addressed here in terms of aid achieving implicit objectives and non growth and poverty reduction measures of performance.

One is that history matters. Development is a path-dependent process that must feature in an analytic framework (Adelman and Morris, 1997; Ha-Joon Chang, 2002). Second, that change in society is an inter-dependent process that can best be understood as a multifaceted, interconnected system in which the future is not foreclosed or inevitable or realistically very predictable. For example, evolving, unplanned and unforeseen conditions or events with a low probability – such as the first World War, the Twin Towers attack, a Tsunami, and unanticipated effects of micro-electronics or of particular leaders – can have spontaneous, disastrous or beneficial, self-propagating contagious effects labelled by Taleb (2006) as Black Swans and by Gladwell (2000) as Tipping Points. Third, a compelling narrative must satisfactorily explain people's efforts and relationships under a wide variety of human and physical conditions. Fourth, like history, power matters. While chance and exertion are always in play, society's winners and losers are products of the structures created by people themselves, which orders relationships in favour of some and not others.

An inherently holistic coherent analytic approach satisfying these conditions is provided by complexity theory. In this case, a complexity analysis of civic, driven and change benefiting people who are poor and marginalised needs to draw primarily on a combination of evolutionary psychology, sociology and the array of ideas and factors that make up development studies, particularly politics and political economy.<sup>3</sup> Applying these lenses, with their associated concepts, categories and frameworks to the terrain of civil society as a complex system is daunting and relatively unexplored.<sup>4</sup> But, the effort is worth it. For example, complexity thinking offers creative and thoughtful ways out of the deadening premise of aid that if change is not carefully planned it cannot be pursued in a meaningful way. It shows that results can be found by looking for what actually emerges rather than the usual pathological fixation on what was logically and linearly intended. But, more significantly, complexity offers an as yet unexplored avenue to help redress the erosion of citizens' influence on the world they inhabit.

The approach used in this study therefore asks the reader to travel across a range of disciplines, propositions, interpretations and ambiguities that are interconnected and not always straightforward. It also calls for a 'letting go' of many ingrained ideas about how the world works (Suteanu, 2005). An example, informed by popular science, is that enough purposeful human action will make change controllable and the future more, rather than less, certain. History, as well as contemporary geo-political and climatic events, testifies to the frailty of this proposition.

A major challenge in this type of undertaking is to satisfy Einstein's dictum: make everything as simple as possible, but not too simple. One way of doing so is to avoid too much academic language, but without losing the conceptual essentials. Another is to use diagrams to illuminate the way and illustrate the simultaneity of factors, relations and effects which linear text obscures.

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<sup>3</sup> For the multi-disciplinary range of what this implies see Desai and Potter (eds), 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Groves and Hinton (eds), 2004, take steps in this approach but without specific attention to civil society.

Final judgment about the success of this stage of exploration will depend on whether, at the end, the whole makes sense. Do the description, logic and explanation work both intellectually and intuitively? Does it give the reader confidence for direction and action?

Part I of the paper contains conceptual and theoretical explorations. It begins, in section one, by outlining the general flow, stages and logic of the arguments employed and the time frames of relevance. There is a discussion of the key terminology and concepts involved. The section explains and justifies the inductive method employed. It unpacks language and definitions and sets boundaries.

What drives people to act and to do things together? Section two answers this question from the perspective of innate or axiomatic human predispositions that seek expression and fulfilment. In other words, the argument focuses on the energy expressing and driving human life, society, civic association and civic agency.

Section three introduces complexity as an open, self-adaptive system. It applies complexity analysis to argue that, over time, given different ecological conditions and resource endowments the pressure of human drivers leads to a varied structuring of social relationships as patterns of repetition that create necessary order and human security. The processes involved are accompanied by the emergence of nested or tiered layers of institutions and associated distributions of power that innately optimise society and its relations towards stability at least cost. Civic association and agency is a critical factor in this evolution.

These preceding sections provide the foundation for a detailed discussion about the 'complexification' (Casti, 1994) of civic associations: their configurations, purposes, forms and co-evolution with other major domains of society.

Part II – on implications for international development – commences with section five. After a very brief summary of Part I, the first step compares a complexity view with elements of the dominant development narratives. From here, an approach to Civic Driven Change (CDC) is set out in terms of strategic choices and an indicative guide for interventions and development practice. The concluding section six is forward-looking in terms of work needed to deepen the analysis on the one hand and make it useful for practitioners and policy makers on the other. Areas meriting further study or research are highlighted.

To re-emphasise, this study is the beginning of a work in progress. It is necessarily synoptic rather than extensive or detailed and identifies the major factors, variables and relationships involved at a foundational level. Put another way, it attempts to assemble the principal features and landscape of civic driven change. It is indicative, not prescriptive, in terms of how those wishing to apply CDC in their strategies and work might think about doing so. Its aim is to start, not end, discussion and debate about one way of approaching 'development alternatives'.

## **Part I      Exploration**

This part of the paper concentrates on examining an alternative way of considering change in society. Doing so requires discussing change both within and beyond the confines of international aid for development in societies everywhere. While every attempt is made to be clear about the scope employed, at times they cannot be easily distinguished because the former is often located within and simply reflects and transmits the latter.

### **1    Establishing the terrain**

Governments and markets make no sense without people as populations in need of regulation and as producers and consumers of goods and services. In these roles, people make a difference to how societies work. But, people have always shaped society in their own right. The advent of nation states translated this right into a modern attribute of citizenship. This study is concerned with change in society that people bring about through a civic identity that recognises their rights and obligations.

Exploring civic driven change can be approached through inductive or deductive principles. This study adopts the former. The reasoning is reasonably straight forward. To address this particular terrain, deductive analysis requires access to significant numbers of examples reflecting diverse conditions with thick narratives that allow detailed study. Adequate texts that are readily available tend to cover extreme events – such as a successful slave revolt in what is now Haiti or the overthrow of political regimes in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. These exemplars are informative, but atypical. They also do not necessarily use comparable concepts or consistent language, making interpretation problematic. Third, unlike elites and leaders, the myriad experiences of civic action over historical time are simply either not documented or accessible enough within the resources of this exercise. Finally, empirical analysis (cited later) point to the value of a method that starts from first principles in terms of identifying prime movers that co-determine civic arrangements and behaviour. The resulting explanation of CDC is both more robust and amenable to critical review and debate.

This section sets out the inductive method employed in terms of central concepts, sequence of argument, terms and definitions and contours of the restrictions employed. It includes a brief discussion on the time frames involved.

#### **1.1    Flow and logic**

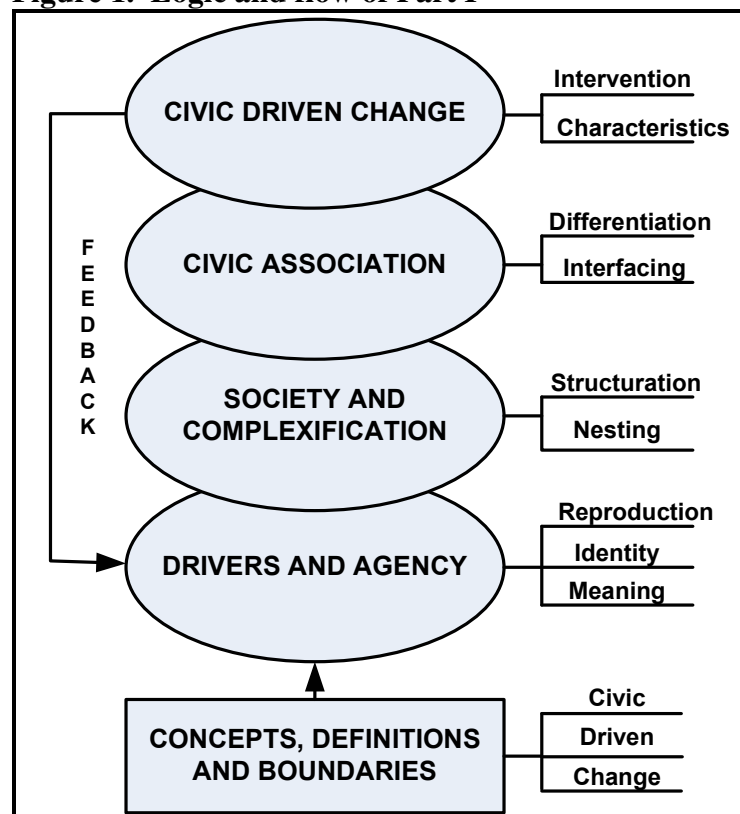
Given the exploratory nature of this study, it is important to set out the basic flow and logic used. Figure 1 does so.

The starting point is clarification of the major concepts used together with boundaries and limitations. This establishes the grounding, starting with the principal sources of civic energy: reproduction, identity and meaning, accompanied by factors of social status and aspiration. These factors are axiomatic forces innate to humans that push people to collaborate in

forming and changing society, i.e., civic actors continually create futures for (their) subsequent generations.

The basic features of complexity thinking are then explained. The primary drivers are introduced into a complexity analysis that describes process of social structuring and the co-evolution of institutional domains each with nesting layers of organisation.<sup>5</sup> The results are employed in a detail look at civic associational life and its interfacing with other institutional domains: political systems, government, the market and families. Together these stages of argument and explanation provide the theoretical and empirical foundations from which characteristics of civic driven change can be defined and implications for interventions can be described.

**Figure 1. Logic and flow of Part I**



The evolutionary time frame used in this paper is highly compressed. It includes pre-history, and then takes a leap to the seventeenth century when nation-statehood and sovereignty became a norm for territorial control. The principle – if not the practice of untrammelled sovereignty – served as the subsequent basis for geopolitical arrangements, rivalries and extremes (Hobsbawm, 1994) including, in the past century: quantum leaps in technological innovation; unprecedented improvements in human well-being; economic depression followed by exponential growth and attendant inequality; the formal end of colonialism; genocides and two World Wars. None of the development was foreseen in 1900. Sovereignty was also the foundation from which the concept of human rights and citizenship started to

<sup>5</sup> This study follows the definition of institution as a stable, valued pattern of social relationships used by Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (1992, 2002).

become universal and a critical part of a person's identity. The past fifty years is, however, the period receiving most attention.

## 1.2 Central concepts

The words – civic driven change – introduce and combine three key concepts, none of which are subject to universal agreement or consistent use. For this study, each needs specification.

### 1.2.1 Civic and civil society

The notion of 'civic' arose some two thousand years ago. Its origins relate to self-selected individuals in city states accorded the standing of citizen. They had a right to engage in and determine city governance and management. The ancient roots of the term are both urban and political.<sup>6</sup> Slaves and other categories within the city and the, then, Greek and Roman Empires were excluded from this status.

Centuries later, a major shift towards a process that would widen 'citizenship' and that is valued as 'civic' in its more recent sense was initiated in 1648 in the Peace of Westphalia. At this event, the borders of geo-political states in much of Europe were (temporarily) defined. Notions of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs were to emerge as later principles of statehood, inter-state relations and international law. Of particular significance for CDC are subsequent processes of state formation and evolution that led to a virtually global recognition and enfranchisement of populations with the rights and obligations of citizens *bound in a legal relationship with a state*. The creation in the mid nineteen nineties of supra-national institutions and their promulgation of universal human rights set out what citizenship should entail. Citizenship as a legal identity, and civic as a social-political domain of rights and obligations, are intertwined (Hyden, et al, 2004).

In addition, the Treaty signed at Westphalia initiated the doctrine of statehood as the exclusive location for, and government the solely legitimate holder of, coercive force in society.<sup>7</sup> This feature of statehood and governance – currently subject to unresolved international debate (Krasner, 1999) – is of major consequence for civic association and CDC elaborated later.

The advent of market capitalism in Europe during the seventeen century introduced and progressively institutionalised a differentiation between: public and private interests, realms, goods and spaces; individual and collective ownership; and emergence of a civic society autonomous from the state, initially occupied by merchants and their financiers and later by the wider citizenry. In this process, 'civil' and civility acquired a mono-theistically informed and class-determined, normative connotation.<sup>8</sup> The ethics, values and norms involved were auto-selected by negative and positive feedback to push a capitalist evolution which

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<sup>6</sup> The urban etymology of the concept is argued to be one reason for its irrelevance to countries with predominantly rural populations and attendant forms of political management (Mamdani, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> This unique attribute of states is attributed to Max Weber and still poses unresolved issues in relation to whether monopoly of force is a legitimate, intrinsic attribute of a state or is conditional on acceptance by citizens within negotiated rules of its use. <http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/~Iridener/DSS/Weber/polvoc.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Akin to the Protestant work ethic identified by Weber.

accelerated economic growth, propelled modernisation and fostered democracy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). The process was not 'managed' by a central, controlling authority. It simply arose from initially primitive rules of material accumulation allied to notions of private ownership, rule of law, with freedom of action and opportunity.

Across the world, this self-driven and state-supported process faced resistance and contestation. These reactions inspired a search for practical alternatives to or resolution of the contradictions within the philosophies, values and principles that underpin capitalist-based differentiations within society. These efforts still lie at the heart of ideological debates, typologies of political regimes and choice of economic policies.

Allied to military superiority, fuelled by economic expansion, extraction and accumulation and informed by a conviction of cultural superiority, 'civilisation' in a Western image was propagated across the world. These justifying features of colonialism continue in many guises. For this reason, the term civic society is less pejorative or ambiguous and hence more appropriate for use in this study.<sup>9</sup>

Since the mid seventeenth century, the concept of a civic or a civil domain has been relied on to explain the politics and the political-economy of the evolution of societies across the world. Unfortunately, this has produced almost as many definitions and explanations of civic society as there are analysts of the subject (e.g., Hodgkinson and Foley, 2003; Hyden, 2006). Consequently, contradictory interpretations of the nature and role of civic society cannot be easily compared or validated because definitions and time frames differ with concepts logically embedded within each theory.

In addition, some schools of theory debate whether or not businesses are part and of civic society or separate from it. For reasons explained later, this study follows the arguments put forward by Cohen and Arato (1992) that support separation based on the distinct institutional logics as complex attractors, detailed later, that drive them. To make this choice clear, the term 'domain' will be applied to each institutional logic, including that of the state. Further, while both civic and business domains may provide public goods and contribute to public debate, they occupy a private realm conceptually separate from the public realm of government institutions, ownership and control. That this distinction is more theoretical than practical and subject of fuzzy borders, pressures and disputes is significant. The issues involved are therefore discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3. But, in doing so, it is important not to forget that, irrespective of the domain in which they apply their productive energies, people remain citizens throughout.

Notwithstanding their differences, disparate theorists are consistent in using civic society to explain how and in whose favour power between citizens and states is acquired, distributed and deployed over time. Such consistency provides an important boundary for this study.

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<sup>9</sup> Civil society analyst, Helmut Anheier (2007), argues that civility has been a sorely neglected feature of theory and research. However, it is not apparent nor logical why this normative measure should be a defining feature of civil society and not a desired attribute of all institution domains in society.

People act together for many reasons. This study limits its understanding of collective action to the lens shaped by – but not too strictly limited – to citizenship.<sup>10</sup>

This lens calls for a distinction between broad and narrow interpretations of civic action. A broad perspective treats all forms of collective civic expression – irrespective of their purpose – as an assertion of a right of association, a crucial feature of citizenship if it is to have a substantive meaning. A narrower interpretation requires civic action to have a dedicated political purpose to ‘change’ society in some way. These lenses are not mutually exclusive. For example, in various settings, any form of collective expression – forming a religious sect, a reading group, a sports or a chess club – may be politically quite significant. In other contexts, such initiatives may be taken for granted, ostensibly devoid of political implication. Both interpretations of civic driven will be employed as appropriate and the importance of contextualisation will be reinforced.

### 1.2.2 Drivers

The notion of driven implies a vector with force and direction. Within the framework of international development this condition is fulfilled by diverse development actors, or stakeholders. They are connected through processes – typically planning and disbursement-based pressures – that provide the resources and goals to bring coherence to their efforts.<sup>11</sup> The result is a concentration on the (project) participation of a relatively narrow set of civic actors to the exclusion of many others of, often, greater significance.

For CDC, development aid is too limited a framework. First, it neglects the perceptions, roles, behaviours and (in)actions of the elite and the better off who are more empowered (Reis and Moore, 2005). Rectifying this omission is critical because evidence (e.g., Karatnycky and Ackerman, 2005) suggests that alignment of middle class interests with those of the poor leading to broad-based mass civic action is a common feature of socio-political transformation (explored in more detail in section 4.2) A fixation of aid on participatory targeting ignores this important link as well as the ineffectiveness of targeting *per se* because of the dynamic churning of people in and out of poverty observed and documented by Anirudh Krishna (2007).

Moreover, an aid-only focus also confuses the proportion of resources within civic endeavours. For example - when set alongside 1) Diaspora remittances, 2) charitable giving, 3) the old and new philanthropy exemplified by the Bill Gates Foundation and social venture capitalists and, 4) for all its ambiguities, corporate social investment provided through legally civic entities – amounts of ODA are modest.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Though small in terms of the world population and the arguments involved, this formulation is required to avoid excluding those denied citizenship by, for example, being refugees or stateless illegal migrants.

<sup>11</sup> Current examples are: Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Paris agreement on harmonization and partnership between stakeholders are today’s version of drivers and driven.

<sup>12</sup> The picture country-by-country is highly variable in terms of government dependency on aid. But as many non-official flows are not captured in national statistics, the argument that aid is not a critical variable in socio-political development can still hold.

Exploring civic driven change must therefore recognise the fullest possible scope of citizen associations, their interests and influences. What this range entails is becoming partially clearer through recent multi-country studies of non-profitism and civic society (Salomon et al, 2000, 2004; Heinrich, 2007). However, such efforts have poorly captured associational life which is not visible because it is not formally registered. Nor do they adequately avoid a self-limiting economic non-profit, or philanthropy, discourse and framing.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, they tell us much more than we knew a decade ago.

In short, civic driven change is a feature of all societies. Therefore, this study will not limit the exploration to processes and actors that constitute and are more or less dependent on the international development system. However, the final steps will concentrate on an aid-oriented perspective.

### *1.2.3 Change*

Not all change is beneficial to society a priori, nor are the consequences of change fully understood or predictable or peaceful. Looked at as an alteration from an existing to a new condition, the merit of specific changes lie in the eye of the beholder. Nevertheless, a long view of history indicates that, while often disruptive, changes which lead to increases in human security – particularly freedom from want and from fear (UNDP, 1994) – are generally welcomed because they strengthen social and economic stability.<sup>14</sup>

Actions that purposefully increase disorder, instability or human in security are usually justified in terms of eventually bringing about greater well-being and ‘freedoms’ in the long term: the American argument for invading Iraq. Typically, transformatory changes – such as political transformations – are destructive, costly and eventually unsustainable unless freely endorsed by the population at large. But, even then, under conditions such as those described by Robert Paxton (2004), mass mobilisation can generate popular mandates for self-repression, disempowerment, armed conflict, pogroms and genocides seen in the irregular rise, but eventual fall, of fascism as a political system. The shadow side of civic action as potential source of disorder is a constant presence.

International development aid is itself premised on purposefully ‘upsetting’ or altering the existing order for the benefits that this will supposedly bring to more people than before. In doing so, it assumes and relies on development as a positive sum outcome for all concerned, the presently rich and the no longer poor. Growth with trickle down means no one loses. As Beinhooker (2007:419-422) argues in complexity economics, such positive-sum outcomes require repeat transactions. Under such conditions, human pre-dispositions towards ‘strong reciprocity’ are in play. Process is as important as benefit in economic transactions and unfairness is punished even at personal cost. Cooperation matters more than utilitarian, self-

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<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this observation.

<sup>14</sup> In current development and aid thinking and financing, gains in human well-being are more likely to occur if governance is improved while, simultaneously, poverty and inequality are reduced (UNDP, 2004; UN, 2005a, 2005b; DFID, 2005; HSC, 2005:152). At the same time, development from a global perspective is focusing on change that counters the destabilising connection between state fragility and international insecurity (François and Sud, 2006).

interested rationality. Put another way, economic behaviour reflects a strongly conditional self-interest rather than unequivocal utilitarianism.

But this equation does not factor in social instabilities arising from accelerating inequalities and an affront to a sense of fairness (UN, 2005; World Bank 2005). Put another way, aid pays inadequate attention to the ‘democratisation of disruption’ caused by economic growth in terms of preventing risk shifting towards those least able to cope. Social safety nets notwithstanding, the structural burdens of economic change are born disproportionately by the poor.

In contrast, instances of ‘democratising disruption’ through non-violent conflict show the importance of popular mobilisation reflecting mass dissatisfaction that cause lasting alteration in socio-political structures (Ackerman and Duvall, 2001). The histories of (Eastern) Europe and North America testify to the fact that robust and enduring change in society that expands equity and justice are just as likely to stem from contention as it is from harmony.

The foregoing sets boundaries mainly in terms of the breadth of terrain to be covered. It has hinted at limitations stemming from the availability of information and collection of evidence within the resources available. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the possibility of taking an original approach to analysis of development.

## **2 Civic driven energy and association**

Whether changing or not, a living society requires energy. Stasis is not cost free. In satisfying and developing beyond minimum essentials for life, evolutionary interpretations of human psychology and behaviour suggest three innate characteristics or dispositions that both characterise and drive the allocation of human energy. They are reproduction, identity and meaning. In theory, society as a product of human endeavour and interaction can be traced back to these primal drivers and significant forces arising from their combinations. The following subsection discusses each one. It is then followed by four subsections that introduce factors critical in shaping the course of associational life.

In brief, over long historical time, primary drivers have interacted and combined in ways that are particularly important for CDC. First, in terms of leading to universal features of social structure: religion, gender and institutional domains. Second, are a set of principles - altruism, cooperation and competition - that have emerged in a particular self-selected combination which co-determine development pathways. They also help to explain the dynamics of associational life and its evolution. Two factors - language and interests - are argued to act as enablers for human transactions and as an attractor for collective agency respectively. Finally, three important features shape the way human transactions are played out in terms of minimising costs and promoting associational viability. These are reputation, trust and affinity.

Together, these variables provide the foundational material required for the complexity analysis that begins in section 3.

## 2.1 Innate drivers of civic agency: reproduction, identity and meaning

It's pretty obvious, people are self-driven to reproduce. It is a fundamental act of living. People consciously choosing not to do so are self-limiting in the long term. Creating conditions to reproduce and increase the probability of inter-generational continuity - in other words to ensure that children outlive parents - generates needs that have to be satisfied (Dawkins, 1976).

Some sixty years ago Abraham Maslow argued that human strivings could be understood as climbing a ladder to satisfy a hierarchy of drivers that start with basic physiological needs, progressing to a need for safety, love and belonging, then esteem and eventually self-actualisation as personal, growth-oriented needs and aspirations. An important sub-text to his analysis was that people are by nature anxiety-averse.<sup>15</sup> Hence, while we may not consciously value the actual level of need satisfaction we already have, we are sensitive and averse to anything that is likely to deprive us of what has already been attained. People are loss-averse (Beinhocker, 2007:358). They do not want change that means having less than already gained. As a consequence there is an inherent human predisposition or bias towards stability and progressive realisation of needs over instability and attrition of existing conditions.

Amartya Sen relocated Maslow's psychological underpinning of satisfying needs into a socio-political discourse of people attaining the positive freedoms required to realise their potentials or innate capabilities (Sen, 1985, 1988). Even if subsequently refined and reformulated, by and large Maslow's observation of what motivates people to act have withstood scrutiny. However, his construction of a sequential hierarchy has not. For example, even people in absolute poverty make choices about where to allocate the little they have. Spending to take part in social events such as weddings and cultural rituals mean that poor people remain hungrier than necessary (Banerjee and Duflo, 2006). In other words, rather than sequential, people's drivers are integral, simultaneous and weighted according to situation.

A similar indivisibility is seen in the interpretation of drivers in terms of human rights as a relatively recent addition to the landscape of human drivers. While suffering from an individualist bias and promulgated at a historical moment of Western post-traumatic dominance, this legalistic way of recognising what peoples' of the world have a right to aspire to is particularly relevant to the concept and practical possibilities of citizenship in two ways. First, because it translates human existence into basic freedoms that underpin civic association. Second, because the array of rights and obligations reflects the millennia long creative scope of human imagination and shared endeavour and the lessons about its necessary limits. Hence, rights and duties are an important factor in CDC. But all rights have costs (Holmes and Sustain, 1999). And whose rights – or drivers - are respected, protected or advanced, or not, becomes a critical issue in relations between citizen and state returned to later.

Over some ten thousand years, economic systems have evolved to better address people's basic and self-development needs and advance their freedoms. An important threshold for doing so was the domestication of livestock and plants which set in train processes of

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<sup>15</sup> Poor people cite anxiety and fear as defining dimensions of their poverty (Narayan, et al, 2000).

specialisation, accumulation and wealth creation. Differences in natural resource endowments co-determined how these processes evolved and the ability of growing populations to expand to new areas or fight for dominance where they were (Diamond, 1999). Economic relations based on simple rules matured to highly complex systems (Anderson, et al, 1988). The resulting territorially expanding, wealth-creating institutional ecology of differentiation, selection and amplification (Beinhocker, 2007:11) is seen in the birth, growth, regeneration, decline, death and renewal within both subsistence livelihoods and in firms.

Maslow's analysis of motivation relied on and anticipated developments in evolutionary psychology focusing on two distinguishing traits of the human mind: self-consciousness and imagination (Ryle, 1949; Chalmers, 1997). These innate capabilities inform civic drivers associated with identity and meaning respectively.

Psychologically, identity translates into an individual's awareness, perception and categorisation of self (Castells, 1997). But this individual self-understanding - **who am I?** - cannot be fully expressed outside the existence of others. There is a permanent interplay between self and other expanded on later. In other words, associational life acts as a co-factor in identity construction. Simply put, the people and purposes an individual chooses to associate with co-define who you are for yourself and for others. The identity-related feature of membership of a civic society organisation (CSO) is commonly under-estimated. But it is a critical attribute of civic action shaping political systems.

An additional distinctive human characteristic is the ability to imagine, to create, to 'see' or envisage that which is not (yet) there (Sallis, 2000). This form of intelligence is closely allied to the notion of belief and to a creative curiosity that drives a human propensity to innovate. The evolution of technology and its harnessing to satisfy human material needs stems from imagining that which can be. Imagining a place of well-being called Utopia has acted as a driver of political and social reform and innovation. Imagining a different world, or personal or family circumstances, or of changing winners and losers in a society, is crucial to social evolution informing the overt ideals of international aid.

A third distinguishing innate trait and driver of human agency is the quest for meaning. That is to answer the question of '**why am I?**' reflected in Maslow's higher order motivations but actually a permanent feature of being a person (Frankl, 1959). That the reply to this question is ultimately individual has not stopped the evolution of long-lived, highly institutionalised, socially conditioning and historically politically powerful belief-based and other answers discussed below.

Singly and in combination, these primary drivers translate into second order behavioural factors of values, normative systems, preferences and aspirations. The issue in CDC, as we shall see, is the susceptibility of these shapers of human energy and civic agency to conscious political manipulation.

Satisfying human predispositions requires the acquisition and holding of both material and immaterial resources. This is a critical force driving society, translated into production, consumption and distribution of types of capital to which people attach value (Bourdieu,

2005).<sup>16</sup> Differences in starting conditions in terms of both natural and human endowments lead to varied values attributed to types of capital which, in turn, spurs conflict over capital acquisition and distribution at different historical moments. Accumulation, allocation and possession of capitals over time impact on and reflect the evolution of social arrangements and the relational power embedded within them.

All the above is obviously a much abbreviated treatment of topics that remain the subject of contrary philosophical and related enquiry. Nevertheless, for our purposes it is sufficient to understand that reproduction, identity and meaning (RIM) are fundamental factors driving human agency. Their effects can be looked for singly but, just as often, operate in combination with one another. This is where we turn to next.

## **2.2 Compound drivers: religion, patriarchy and social identity**

Over time, the interplay of innate drivers has created distinctive forces that show up as important and enduring structural outcomes in every society. These outcomes impact on associational forms and configurations of civic agency. In turn they have shaped the legal principles and acculturated conventions that co-determine the way power is expressed in the rights and obligations of citizenship. Three universal outcome-based forces are of interest for this study. They are religion, gender differentiation and social identity through association and organisation.

Of civic significance is the rise and institutionalisation of *belief* and *faith* as an organising frame for associating. A secular view from evolutionary psychology would argue that emergence of the worship of deities and of organised religions is an anxiety-reducing product of human imagination that serves valued social functions. Whether or not the global presence of religion comes from divine intervention or is a bi-product of evolutionary selection is not of immediate consequence (Wilbur, 2000:133; Dawkins, 2006). This study simply has to recognise that deeply and superficially institutionalised religious beliefs – and reactions to them - are a significant factor influencing civic arrangements, energy and power relations within civic society and towards a state.

Another almost universal feature of power relations - endorsed and justified by many major religions - reflects the fact that the domestication of nature as a springboard for economic development was accompanied by the *domestication and subordination of women* (Boserup, 1970). This facet of social evolution commonly denies women the right to own productive resources and hence a material base for their own agency (e.g., Agarwal, 1988). While this process may or may not be the origin of patriarchy commonly found across the world (Folbre, 1994), the general point is that deeply embedded constraints are faced by women as civic actors when compared to men.

A feature of combined RIM drivers is in establishing social status which involves public recognition of being and belonging. For citizenship, the former starts with birth registration. An official approach to this legal status is seen in affinity categories used in population census or identity cards that include 'group' details such as race, gender, religious affiliation

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<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu, recognises four types of capital: material, cultural, social and symbolic.

and other socialised identities. Both self-perceived identity and recognition by a state are significant elements shaping the power dimensions of civic association and agency detailed later.

Another influential combination of drivers is the function of organisation in combining identity with meaning. For many people, the internal differentiation and purposefulness of organisations provide the site where individual and social identities – I and we - are intermingled to give meaning to life and a subjective world view (Haslam, 2001). Organisational settings with their goal orientation and the role, status and power attributes they provide, contribute to self-categorisation that is simultaneously individual but collective. In the modern, secularised, world giving meaning to human existence is argued to be a pivotal attribute of organisations (Wheatley, 1994).

Of equal importance, but less well investigated or understood, is the role of civic associational life in combining identity and meaning. For example, it could be argued that generating a living is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Meaning is found in self-chosen relationships with a shared interest or purpose that have nothing to do with income per se. Volunteering could be interpreted in such a way. Associational life counters the alienation attributed to modernity. Put another way, there are co-evolutionary aspects of institutional sub-domains and fine-grained affinity systems in the civic domain that are neglected or unexplored.

### **2.3 Relational principles: altruism, cooperation, competition and association**

The previous discussion is more oriented towards motivational drivers of individuals. Of equal importance are the principles that guide human relationships beyond the family or household in the domain of civic association. Three behavioural principles - altruism, cooperation and competition - are the source of major debate and disagreement about the extent to which they explain human relations and development of society.

A basic contention is between explanations of human relations that give primacy to individual self-interest, rational utility and competitiveness over collaboration and collective endeavour premised on altruism, mutuality, reciprocity and cooperation. In order to understand the likely principles on which civic association and driven change may operate a discussion is needed.

Since Adam Smith's invisible hand, mainstream economics attribute some form of self-satisfaction or benefit to all exchanges between human agents. In this view, altruism is itself a psychologically self-satisfying reciprocity. It is a form of risk spreading obligation or investment that will be repaid in future. This does not imply that there is no moral relationship between the parties concerned, simply that an autonomous system of economic relations has evolved which is in itself amoral. Conditional self-interest stimulates competition which translates into an economic system that continues to optimise towards maximising returns by reducing costs or raising productivity.

This explanation is disputed. One source are theories and experiments demonstrating that cooperation is a human predisposition that is sensitive to behaviour experienced as unfair or unjust which acts against competition as a pre-eminent principle (Axelrod, 1984; Cosmides

and Tooby, 1992). When confronted with an unfair transactional offer or condition, people would prefer to decline the opportunity for gain and punish the other party for their behaviour, even at personal cost (Gintis, et al, 2005). This predisposition contradicts a bedrock assumption of self-interested rationality as canonical principle of mainstream economics. In doing so, it also poses interesting questions about the merits of political ideologies that give primacy to individualism or collectivism stemming from opposite interpretations of innate human nature.

Another source stems from historical analysis that demonstrates the primacy of cooperation in the evolution of economic life (Seabright, 2005). Seabright's thesis is that the far-reaching divisions of labour in society and specialisation of skills and functions that are unique to humans can only work productively in cooperative and trusting relationships with other specialisations. The contrary position of continual competition between specialisms generates transaction costs that are simply not consistent with the rate and acceleration of economic growth seen historically.

These arguments counter a dominant, selfish view of human behaviour. However, it does not necessarily resolve the issue of whether we should rely on competition or cooperation to understand people's relational preferences. An alternative approach that confronts the canonical, utilitarian economic premise comes from another angle. It assumes that the pattern of relational principles found today have been self-selected by trial and error over time. What works is reinforced. What does not work is eventually selected down or out of the relational repertoire. With this perspective in mind, a study of 15 small-scale societies across a range of economic and ecological conditions tested the propensity of people to apply selfish (free-riding), reciprocal (balancing contribution and return) or collaborative (inputs exceed return but adequate benefits accrue to collaborators) principles in their exchanges (Heinrich, et al, 2005). Findings do not support the axiomatic assumption of selfishness in all behaviour. Rather, the results, supported by other studies, find 20:65:15 as fairly stable ratio of free-riding reciprocity and collaboration respectively (Kurzban and Houser, 2005). Stable relational strategies such this emerge over time because they prove to work best for enough of the population in enough instances to become institutionalised as social norms (Walker and Ostrom, 2007).

Collective action driven by RIM is initially expressed in the formation of small groups. Following the findings on relational predispositions, groups are likely to operate on a mix of principles. As long as each individual's interests are sufficiently satisfied by the benefits of collective endeavour the group will sustain itself. However, at a certain scale, a limit of personal interaction is reached where informal rules required to maintain social relations can work no longer work effectively. Dunbar (1993) estimates that 150 represent a theoretical maximum number of individuals where each person is known as is how each person relates socially to every other. Groups larger than this either split into new or sub-group with large or small differentiation in identities. Or they acquire more restricted rules and laws with enforced policies and regulations to maintain compliance and stable cohesion. In other words, primary associations evolve into more formalised organisations, such as firms, cooperatives and trades unions.

This observation is consistent with the work of Mancur Olson (1971) and Eleanor Ostrom (2000) on collective action. Their analyses shows that - because there is an alteration in the relative cost-benefit experienced by members for the collective goods produced - differences between small and large groups are not simply one of degree. Put another way, in small groups the value of collective good itself can be sufficient such that coercion or other inducements are not required. The larger the group the farther it will fall short in furthering common interests (Olson, 1971:36). One conclusion is that small groups or networks are likely to be more effective than large groups. Subsidiarity reflects this principle. The quality circles pioneered by Japanese car makers are one illustration of this point, as is British Petroleum's organisational (de)construction to more than a hundred business units and trends towards decentralisation of authority within large corporations and transnational CSOs.

A point of significance from a civic associational point of view is to recognise a threshold when the character of a group changes because different rules of collective action emerge and start to apply. This is important for CDC in that – aside from internal conflict - endogenous forces push for some form of split and differentiation. This organic process starts to diversify the array of civic associations in a natural way. Over time, the ecology of civic association matures which, in turn, and depending on resources, can spawn higher order associations expanded on in section 4.2.

#### **2.4 Enablers and mobilisers: language and interests**

A precondition for civic association is the ability to communicate and to test the extent to which it is worth collaborating. Two factors are critical for enabling this to happen. The first stems for a vital characteristic of human development: *language*. This capability is essential for the thought, cognition, storing and the communication of experience, information and knowledge required for the evolution of societies (Vygotsky, 1986). There are various explanations of how language and speech evolved but little doubt that they play a crucial role in the capability to relate. Moreover, as Orwell's book 1984 illustrated, the all pervading role of language in human life makes its interpretation and application too important to leave to chance. Therefore, the ability and power of language to influence behaviour is of particular importance for CDC (Whiten, 1997).

This topic normally shines a spotlight on the media. However, as O'Shea, argues in relation to the United States, manipulation of scientific data for commercial and political purposes may now be a more invidious factor in shaping people beliefs, world views and opinions.

“We are the most conditioned, programmed beings the world has ever known. Not only are our thoughts and attitudes continually being shaped and molded; our very awareness of the whole design seems like it is being subtly and inexorably erased.

The doors of our perception are carefully and precisely regulated. Who cares, right?

It is an exhausting and endless task to keep explaining to people how most issues of conventional wisdom are scientifically implanted in the public consciousness by a thousand media clips per day.” (O'Shea, 2007)

Second, and directly related, is whether or not particular RIM drivers can be brought into relations between citizens and states. Typically, the energy stemming from RIM appears in the civic domain as the pursuit of individual, group or public *interests*. By this is meant *voice or agency that reflects concerns about the welfare of individuals or of groups that share some form of affinity, or the well-being of society at large*. Having interests recognised in the public domain are a common feature and purpose of CDC which is inevitably a source of conflict discussed later.

## **2.5 Transactional mediators: reputation, trust and affinity**

Alongside and intimately related to transaction principles are crucial attributes of the individuals or groups involved: reputation, trust and affinity. Specific to *reputation* is social standing – the (self-)perceived position in social hierarchies. Allied to reputation is trust, that is the expectation that agency will be enacted as socially prescribed or specifically agreed (Fukuyama, 1995). This is where Dunbar's number of 150 comes into play in terms of the personal limits to adequately knowing and watching others. As long as you can actually observe the behaviour of others in terms of their transactional compliance it makes sense to trust for as long as you are not cheated (Axelrod, 1984). Beyond that sort of number, trust starts to give way to enforceable contracts. Even under conditions of anonymity, building a reputation for *being trustworthy* through a feedback and scoring system is critical to the business model of an internet-based market company like e-Bay.

Trust is also important for the credence given to information as a basis for (in)action. Following the observation of Marshall McLuhan – the source is as significant as the content.

A further feature of trust is the nature and degree of *affinity* from blood lines of close family and kin through ever widening and thinning networks over space and time that operate through intermediaries to eventually become obscured and anonymous to the parties involved (Jones, 1996). In addition, affinities can derive from physical proximity and recognition of shared life experience, or, for example, through similar source of livelihood or interests. Stronger affinities can accelerate the development of trust.

## **2.6 Summary**

This section has introduced a potentially confusing array of concepts. To help clarify, the basic story line about their relationships is as follows. Life needs energy and people acquire and apply energy to satisfy three principle human predispositions or drivers. These are: to reproduce in the full sense of the word – including status, class and so on – to secure a better future for their (extended) offspring; to determine, affirm and alter their self-aware identity; and, to give meaning to their lives and existence. The pursuit of these drivers generates what people value, translated into Bourdieu's four types of capital that are acquired and dearly held because aversion towards anxiety and loss take precedence over future gain. Various needs, capabilities and rights are ways of defining how predispositions translate into social forces, themselves spanning the purely physiological to the limits of human imagination. A link to the status of people as citizens, makes a rights perspective on motivation of particular importance.

Thousands of years of human history show how these predispositions translate into patterns of social arrangements seen virtually everywhere in the world. Three of the most distinct are systems of worship, religious belief and reactions to them; the subordination of women; and the importance of organisations for giving meaning and identity under conditions of modernisation.

It is not possible for individuals to satisfy their drivers alone. Interaction with others is necessary. The question is on what terms and in whose favour. Over time, a relatively stable pattern of principles have emerged to self-regulate human relation, effectively establishing an underlying set of rules societies run on. These principles are applied in practice through language as a critical vehicle of communication about interests around which people can (choose to) associate, collaborate and assert themselves. In turn, the effectiveness of associating is co-determined by mediating factors of reputation, trust and affinity between people both near and far.

The issue now is how these factors translate into civic centred narrative development and change. An answer to this question is pursued using the tools of complexity analysis.

### **3 Complexification and society**

The previous sections establish basic features and first principles, of why and how people individually and collectively apply their energy. This section introduces and employs complexity analysis to explain how these principles lead to the development of society from a civic-centred perspective. It begins with a review of what complexity is all about and then draws on and applies elements of drivers, relational principles and enablers to the process of civic driven change, which introduces a discussion of power.

#### **3.1 A complexity approach**

Complexity analysis is a relatively recent addition to scientific enquiry. For some proponents it is a theoretical framing that can unite all sciences (Waldrop, 1993; Lewin, 1994). The body of concepts that form complexity theory were originally derived from physics and evolutionary biology. In particular was growing evidence and insight that the world's living systems are based on relatively few simple rules which self-evolve in ways that become increasingly complex and unpredictable.

The integral or holistic premise of complexity analysis makes it particularly suited to investigating phenomena, like living societies. Narrow, disciplinary perspectives give primacy to one factor over others, which is itself contestable. While, multi- or interdisciplinary combinations must themselves choose an overarching analytic framework that makes sense in its own right. A well-founded narrative of development itself as well as civic driven change requires an inclusive, trans-disciplinary approach and method that complexity theory provides (Cilliers, 1998:23). It is an approach that moves from the ground up so to speak, drawing on information without a priori disciplinary restraint (Wilson, 1999; Wilber, 2000).

Complex systems rely on limited rules applied through large numbers of transactions, connections, relationships and feedback paths. Thinking of oneself in terms of the number of

daily personal interactions and then scaling this to continuous transactions between the world's six billion inhabitants gives some idea of the scale involved. But this scale is not haphazard, because positive feedback reinforces, while negative feedback attenuates movement from or towards a particular collective condition (Kurzban, and Houser, 2005). People learn and apply that learning next time around, so continuously creating new conditions from which they next act. In this way, complex human systems adaptively self-organise, which limits the extent to which their behaviour is either simply random or fully predictable. Put another, there are selective pressures that give primacy and preference to some movements and directions in society over others. Direction comes from 'attractors', that is feedback-based iterations that move the system towards a 'preferred' state. Human predispositions towards order, stability and anxiety aversion act as constant selective factor towards desired conditions to live in. However, reaching these conditions is itself conditioned by a more powerful set of forces in human systems that seek to minimise the costs of reaching and remaining stable at such a point.

Further, such processes generate surprising, emergent outcomes that cannot be anticipated from or reduced to properties of constituent elements. For example, it is impossible to predict the property of wetness from the hydrogen and oxygen that join to form water and would, on their own, stoke a fire, but when combined as water extinguish it. Emergence creates and nests hierarchies of connections and transactions with self-generated rules (Johnson, 2001). This process is practically seen in the diversity of socio-political arrangements and types of association that occur in the process of evolution of societies.

In addition, there is susceptibility to scales of disruption that are seemingly not proportionate to a small change in, nor are evident from, incremental shifts or differences in initial conditions. Moments of uncertainty and disorder can give impulse to significant rearrangements – Gladwell's Tipping Point – but again seek order and return to a stable state. The implosion of the Soviet Union at the end of the nineteen-eighties is an example of this type of dramatic process. As complex systems, societies are non-linear and open ended. Divergence towards greater variation or convergence towards uniformity and everything in between are all possibilities.

Complex systems are dynamic and never at rest. Forces for instability and loss of balance are perpetually in play pushing processes of self-adaptation to prevent breakdown and chaos. Constituent parts carry the meaning of the whole as well as previous conditions and interactions with external environments. In other words, at any particular moment, complex systems contain their previous histories. While complex systems have these features, they are all distinct in their actual behaviour.

A further critical feature of complex systems is that interactions between agents are typically most intense at short ranges, leading to groupings – such as communities or organisations – and (connected) clustering to perform specific functions. While not isolated and susceptible to wider influence, agent behaviours are subject to proximate determination around a multiplicity of local 'discourses' that, today, draw on increasingly autonomous flows of information (Cilliers, 1998:121, citing Lyotard). The significance of this feature of complex systems for CDC is first, that clustering and connecting is a process underlying institutional

formation. Second that ‘all politics is local’<sup>17</sup> which, rather than being of little consequence for agency, can produce disproportionate effects through networked relationships and transmissions of local discourses. Think, for example, of the impact of a handful of civic organisations in banning land mines and on securing debt relief. Asymmetry can greatly amplify that which is small or local.

For our purposes, the nature of people and relationships described in previous sections can be placed in a complexity framework in the following four parameters.

*The agent:* The principle agent is people acting individually and collectively as citizens with rights and obligations towards each other within the civic domain and towards other domains.

*Agency:* Civic energy and drive stems from agents acting on conditional self-interests involved in acquiring and holding various forms and amounts of ‘capital’, i.e., that which is valued and required to simultaneously satisfy (combinations of) reproduction, identity and meaning.

*Rules:* Within the norms, requirements and constraints of citizenship, rules of transactional behaviour are subject to choices between relational principles of altruism, cooperation or competition with associated sanctions and the costs and benefits of association.

*Attractors:* Social complexification is inherently guided by anxiety-reduction expressed as quest for security and predictability, i.e., iterative processes and feedback self-orient towards to order and stability that requires minimum energy to maintain.

With these parameters set, what does this mean for civic agency when viewed through a complexity lens and analysis?

### **3.2 Complexity analysis**

As citizens, agents pursue their interests through collaboration, struggle, contention, negotiation, alliance-building, networking and exchanges that may or may not be fair and balanced, voluntary or enforced. Through continuous learning, feedback selects between initial rules towards that work best to form stable patterns of transactional principles. These principles optimise under different operating conditions, such as resource availability and environmental dynamics. Conflict between agents for resources driven by RIM and the values, preferences and interests they produce give rise to power differences that have to be governed. These processes also produce economic systems which vie for recognition and influence. The whole co-evolves in uneven, path-dependent interaction that intrinsically orients towards countering social entropy, i.e., organising against the natural flow of energy towards disorder (Rifkin, 1980). In other words, societies seek a condition of greater stability and predictability reflected in the necessary emergence of higher socio-political order and layered rules of the game that become acculturated, codified and enforced.

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<sup>17</sup> Attributed to the father of American politician Tip O’Neil in his book In his 1987 autobiography, *Man of the House*.

### 3.2.1 Structuring and emergence of institutional domains

Giddens's (1984) theory of social structuration is one way of describing this complex process. Structuration is a dynamic arrangement that is continually enacted by learning-based reiteration of transactions by agents. Successful repetition implies and reinforces desired predictability. Society becomes itself as a never ending process. In this respect, social 'structures' are not like a building. They are created and held together by patterns of continuous exchange that people learn to assume will persist and hence that they can rely on.<sup>18</sup> Stabilisation is further consolidated through laws and institutions that regulate and mediate contending interests and address conflicts arising from asymmetries of people's relative attainment of their capabilities. There is self-selection in structuration to manage tensions between winners and losers on different scales. Nation states have emerged as the current geo-political structure of organic choice, of copying or of imposition. The result are configurations of social order that could last decades or centuries, but which show an accelerating rate of change over the past hundred years or so. In a complexity sense, social structure and human agency become one as a process of 'energising' through which society survives. They cannot be juxtaposed. They are fundamentally co-dependent.

However, a resolution of social forces is never finalised or permanently optimal. All societies remain in a constant, interdependent situation of evolution and becoming. Just think of the expanding European Union and China's reforms over the past twenty years. At any moment, collaboration, competition and contention generate internal pressure for reconfiguration. Further, self-generated destabilisation does not occur in isolation. Higher, external or meta level systems and forces penetrate and are reacted to. For example, economic globalisation and inter-penetration through trade and migration and the 'global war on terror' are in the forefront of what confronts societies today.

Looked at over a long trajectory, the parameters of human complexity give rise to structuration with three common features. One is hierarchy (Britan and Cohen, 1980). Reflecting Olson's work, bigger or meta (United Nations) and macro (state) scales of socio-political organisation start to self-generate, adopt and enforce new rules of the game that serve their own interests and impact back onto rules that originated at primary lower levels. A recent example is the unresolved debate in the United Nations about the right for the international community to intervene when a state is abusing its population (UN,2005). Similarly, reservations by the Unites Sates about establishing the International Criminal Court are precisely because of the supra-jurisdiction this would imply over American legal process. Contention over the European Union's powers vested in the disputed Treaty is yet another example, with corresponding struggles about the authority of the African Union over member states.<sup>19</sup>

Layering in hierarchies also includes the growth and scalar nesting of (in)formal civic associations and their interests into higher order compositions discussed below.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This reduces the effort, costs and energy of a person having to make decisions about their every action.

<sup>19</sup> For detail on rule reform for international development institutions see: <<http://www.new-rules.org/>>

<sup>20</sup> In more technical terms, new institutional levels feedback into the constituent parts that created them, establishing conditions for further emergence.

A second, critical, feature of deep structuration identified by Bourdieu is the way in which power evolves in terms of its types and distribution as a sort of glue or binding force field that keeps the whole together (Navarro, 2006). Complexity views power in a similar way.

“The competitive nature of social systems is often regulated by relations of power, assuring an asymmetrical system of relationships. This, it must be emphasised strongly, is not an argument in favour of *domination* or exploitation. ... Non-linearity, asymmetry, power and competition are inevitable components of complex systems. It is what keeps them going, their engine.” (emphasis in original)

“The fact that society is held together by asymmetrical relations of power does not mean that these relations are never exploited. To the contrary, they are continuously exploited by parents, lecturers, by the state and by men, but also by students, by citizens and by women.” (Cilliers, 1998:120)

Asymmetry as a fundamental feature of societies understood as complex, adaptive systems has many critical consequences, but especially for an understanding of economics. The seduction of physics as model and of mathematics to give prediction has rested on an assumption that the economic system is both closed and continuously trying to reach an equilibrium point. But at this point of balance or symmetry energy does not flow in or out: the system is in stasis or simply dead (Beinhocker, 2007:70). The ‘error of equilibrium’ has dominated the past hundred years of economic theory. Put another way, the economy has been systemically misclassified. The socio-political implications will take decades to fully emerge (ibid:19). But, as observed previously, this conclusion does not bode well for the premises on which mainstream aid currently functions.

A third feature of structuration is an emergence of institutional logics with (shifting) differences in relative power. The emerging logics take us to a familiar development discourse.

“The institutional logic of capitalism is accumulation and the commodification of human activity. That of the state is rationalisation and the regulation of human activity by legal and bureaucratic hierarchies. That of democracy is participation and the extension of popular control over human activity. That of the family is community and the motivation of human activity by unconditional loyalty to its members and their reproductive needs...*These institutional logics are symbolically grounded, organisationally structured, politically defended.*” (Friedland and Alford, 1985)

The democracy perspective of this quote is more aspiration than fact. It is also highly Western-centric in its formulation. But it brings into view the centrality of structuration towards the institutional emergence or not of a political dispensation where people, as citizens, exert control over their circumstances. The premise of the aid system is, indeed, that such popular control is a desired condition for everyone on the planet. In this view, it is an evolutionary pathway being denied to people as a civic right. Whether or not this is, a priori, a ‘natural’ evolutionary pathway is a matter of conjecture about which complexity theory offers a particular type of analysis discussed later.

### 3.2.2 *Maximising well-being, minimising costs: power and optimising for stability*

Civic driven change is about enhancing civic influence and control over actions that co-determine life's conditions and well-being. More specifically, it is about the arrangements that establish or prevent a social order that works towards and achieves this end in a just and fair way. Understanding the power in play is therefore critical for CDC.

The West supposedly exhibits an optimised, or least worst, arrangement of civic control. With minor variations, it contains institutional configurations, rules and practices that deliver citizen-determined well-being and freedoms for a substantial majority of people at minimum cost. Notwithstanding dysfunctions, it's claim to pre-eminence is to produce this outcome without relying on cultural or religious discrimination, such as the Indian caste system (Dumont, 1966), or by using the domination, repression, fear and physical coercion found in authoritarian states.

Exclusion, intimidation and repression feed a permanent prospect of popular resistance (Scott, 1990). The potential for reaction against domination and subservience must therefore be actively policed and contained, creating a costly and inherently unstable situation to be found in many countries of the world. The underlying argument is that denying people's rights as citizens in practice as well as in principle both requires resources that could otherwise be used to promote well-being and stifles the creativity and innovation needed for economic growth. Simply put, repression is not, in the long run, a cost-effective way of running a country.

In contrast, gaining stability is more efficient when it arises from citizens' 'voluntarily' complying with norms, conventions and rules that appear to 'normalise' the distribution of power and hence 'fix' who wins and who loses in both absolute and relative attainment of needs, capabilities and interests. Different traditions of political analysis reach contending conclusions about how this mode of social order has or should be attained. But, together, analysts point to a differentiation between four types of power that operate to this end, types that civic driven change needs to be very aware of because of their influence on attaining popular control.

A highly cost-effective method of gaining compliance and retaining control is through the self-subjectification by citizens to a prevailing order because it is the 'normal thing to do'. Or, because a perception has been inculcated that all alternatives are worse. Reaching this point of sophisticated self-restraint emerges from how types of power are distributed over the socio-political hierarchy and rooted in people and institutions.

Contemporary analysis identifies four categories of power with differing degrees of 'visibility'. Most deeply embedded and least visible is the power locked within a person's sense of being. The power involved determines world view and acceptance or otherwise of self and place within the whole (Bourdieu, 1995). It is the human condition in which personal internalities iterate with social externalities. Identities of I and We, are simultaneously held rather than dichotomised.<sup>21</sup> The predispositions of thinking and acting rising from this

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<sup>21</sup> Bourdieu, designated this condition the human *habitus*.

psychological depth embrace both the Cartesian, individualistic philosophy articulated in ‘I think therefore I am’, with the ontological formulation ‘I belong therefore I am’ - a philosophy of identity found in traditional African cultures of *Ubuntu* (Masamba Ma Mpolo, 1985) and the premise of collective identity constructs customary in Asia (e.g., Christopher, 1984).

The ability to influence this psychological grounding is a powerful force influencing self-compliance and the very understanding and appreciation of that which is ‘civic’. Exposing and resisting this type of power requires a conscious process of ‘self-care’. This involves commitment to self re-constitution as a social subject – akin to Frierien principles - attained by a radical critique of the present as a ‘positive power’ (Haugaard, 1997:45). How such power is applied is an important topic for later discussion, but it starts with and relies on the control of language and comprehension.

A sense of being is made articulate to self and others through language by which meaning and power relationships are themselves understood, communicated and manipulated (Foucault, 1987). This type of power provides a crucial explanatory historical connection and hence a source of ‘meaning’ through which power differences are inter-generationally transferred and experienced as being normal and necessary. The mechanisms involved are associated with socialisation and parenting in its narrow sense of immediate family and community as well as in the wider sense of child rights, welfare, protection and public policy provided by government.

Of particular importance of old and everywhere is a reliance on an mainstream education system to inculcate compliant predispositions and values of identity premised on interests of the prevailing hierarchy (Prewitt, 1971; Nader, 1980). This is where, for example, debates about teaching in mother tongue first touch a political nerve. Culture, ethnicity and other forms of identity that can feed conflict and discrimination are inter-related to such a degree that subjugation through dominance of elite language is a common function of schooling.<sup>22</sup> In turn this shapes the very ability to be a citizen in a complete sense. In terms used by Peter Moss (2007), this is where politics enters the nursery, the period of early childhood where Bourdieu’s deep appreciation of being is formed. In play is an ability of education in its broad sense to bring about or counter thinking critically, that is affecting the cultivation of an abiding disposition to correctly assess statements.

“Critical thinking is a process, the goal of which is to make reasonable decisions about what to believe and what to do. ... critical thinking is important to us in personal and vocational, as well as civic, aspects of our lives.” (Olson 2004:6, citing Ellis)

The power function of language is used to define the nature and ownership of knowledge as well as dictate public and private discourse, communications and messages, particularly in favour of existing systems of domination. Irrespective of whether or not this equates with the ideological semantics of Marxian ‘false consciousness’, a power of language is to label in ways that mislead peoples’ predispositions or cause them to misrecognise their ‘objective’

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<sup>22</sup> See IDS Insights #5, September, 2006. <[www.ids.org/insights](http://www.ids.org/insights)>

interests (Lukes, 2005:149). In so doing, the power determining people's existing condition are legitimised - a subtle force for self-compliance (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

The ability to label and the power dimensions of doing so are contentious, particularly so in development work. For example, who determines how 'the poor' are constructed (Walsh, 2007) or what is civic and (legitimate) action in a given context? (Montcrieff and Eyben, 2007). Civic driven change will need to be aware of and sensitive who employs the terms involved, how and why they are interpreted (IDS, 2007).

More apparent, but still requiring conscious observation, is the power to (covertly) influence rules that dictate what is or is not available as an agenda for public decision making; who is included or excluded from the processes chosen; where the places and spaces for necessary dialogue are located and in whose favour? (Gaventa, 2006:22). In the development lexicon, the participation aspect of power permeates discourse about and practical arrangements for civic agency. Its application is a central concern for making civic action effective.

Finally, the most obvious type of power to attain compliance is found in overt coercion and (threatened) application of compulsion and physical force. Following a Weberian interpretation, this power is supposedly singly available to a (recognised) state and its agents. However, not all states are capable of exerting sovereign control over their territories, thus allowing militias and other forces to exert coercive power (e.g., Collier and Hoeffler, 2007).<sup>23</sup> The aid system's current preoccupation with weak and failed states illustrates this point.

To recap, using a more straightforward language, there are powers to shape 'being' as understood by Bourdieu and, hence, to advance or impede through language and other mechanisms the evolution of critical self-awareness called for by Foucault. In addition there are more overt, visible powers *to do*, *to act with* and *to exert influence over* people and processes.

*"Power 'within' often refers to gaining the sense of self-identity, confidence and awareness that is a pre-condition for action. Power 'with' refers to the synergy which can emerge through partnerships and collaboration with others, or through processes of collective action and alliance building. Power 'over' refers to the ability of the powerful to affect the actions and thought of the powerless. The power 'to' is important for the exercise of civic agency and to realise the potential of rights, citizenship or voice."* (Gaventa, 2006:2)

The issue now is to take power analysis into the civic domain in terms of its evolution and its institutional logic of people exercising control over that which determines their lives and well-being.

#### **4 Civic evolution and function**

Whatever the merits or hubris of the western perception of having evolved to an 'optimum' which others should emulate, the problem set out at the beginning can be restated in that a utilitarian economic logic of capitalism and the governance logic of states - the latter understood as managerial and administrative institutions and composite entities - have held

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<sup>23</sup> So called failed and weak states fall into this Western-defined category.

sway in aid and development thinking. This has been at the cost of politics, of which democracy – or other systems mediating civic agency and state authority – is a crucial part (e.g., Harriss, 2002).

But, more significant than the apolitical myopia and sovereign-sensitivities of ODA, are growing concerns across the world that politics is becoming subservient to the demands of capitalism allied to constraints on violent disaffection that are eroding civic freedoms (Sidel, 2004). This momentum is accelerating to such a degree that ecological and social dysfunctions – global warming, poverty and inequality and abuse of people’s rights - indicate that influence and control by citizens over their own lives is under serious threat (Mulgan, 2004; Gaventa, 2006). For analyst David Marquand (2004), in the West the public realm in which citizenship operates is being hollowed out in favour of a private realm and logic which is morally, economically and socially inferior. The processes involved are corroding political accountability with voters being turned into consumers of political sales techniques.

The initial task of a civic driven perspective is, therefore, not limited to redressing a particular way of thinking about aid and under development, but of reclaiming the primacy of citizens in determining their own destiny (Commonwealth Foundation, 1999). Civic driven change, therefore, must address its role in both perpetuating current trends and countering them. Complexity offers one view of this challenge.

Bearing in mind the drivers and principles of association elaborated in previous sections, the following sub-section applies complexity towards the evolution of civic association as a general socio-political phenomenon. The subsequent sub-section begins a narrowing towards the development terrain, specifically in relation to the role of civic society on maintaining and refining, as opposed to significantly changing, power relationships.

#### **4.1 Civic formation and roles**

Section two provided explanations of why and how people associate and notes that transactional rules shift as small groups formalise or grow. History suggests that the evolution of rules and resulting institutional logics are fed by three enduring forces: reaction against injustice (Rawls, 1971); adopting risk avoidance (Knight, 1921); and undertaking problem-solving innovation (e.g., Fagerberg, et al, 2004). The extent and ways in which this occurs are critically dependent on the resource base that civic society can draw on. The following sub-sections analyse these factors in how civic society evolves in form and functions.

##### *4.1.1 Countering injustice*

Again in an abbreviated way, people’s innate reading of what is fair and what is not are a potential source of resistance. Injustices that cross context-specific, indeterminate thresholds can trigger various types and scales of resistance and civic disobedience – Burma is a recent case in point - that can lead to ongoing instability. Consequently social systems make provision for redressing grievances that are usually supposed to entail some form of due process. However, abuse of prescribed processes, denial of rights and arbitrary exercise of power are still common place. This condition undermines public trust and feeds disaffection that invites a negative cycle of repression that again feeds disaffection which increases the

potential for instability.

The civic domain can, but need not, evolve as a stabilising and constraining source of reaction against exclusions and injustice of other institutions. Think of the march in November 2007 of thousands of Indian farmers to highlight legal weaknesses to claiming land rights. Look at civic movements against child labour, or NGOs acting against environmental damage caused by extractive industries. But civic agency can also evolve as a comprador to autocratic state systems – youth and women’s associations for example - that exercise power in the name, but without the will, of the people as in China and Vietnam. In this way, injustice is sublimated through state-orchestrated civic association. The extent to which this happens is strongly related to the material base that civic agency can draw on, i.e., its political economy. How this dimension of civicness has and will evolve is a critical issue.

#### *4.1.2 Distributing risk*

A second enduring source of pressure within social evolution is the continual attempt by agents to shift risk away from themselves to others. This predisposition stimulates collective action – a form of risk sharing. But it also scales up into political choices between individual and collective responsibility that a society operates on. Crudely framed, should risk be carried by everyone for everyone else through the state or left to individuals to sort out as best they can through market mechanisms? The contention between communist and liberal ideologies is readily seen, as is the composite European alternative of a capitalist-based welfare state where the civic domain contains many non-profit providers of public services, reliant on tax-based finance.

In this rule-determining dimension of complexity, according to Habermas, the civic domain is a critical public sphere where discourse about alternatives takes place under conditions of open communication and non-violent exchange (Edwards, 2004:57-59). It is where risk distribution between contending interests is scrutinised within existing and possible power arrangements. This process informs and influences the further development of political systems. In other words, the civic domain is a crucial variable in citizens’ engagement with political ideologies and governance that translate into exerting control over ruling regimes and the management of public affairs.

#### *4.1.3 Site of innovation*

Human imagination, inspiration, conflict over resources and increasing scale of organisations and institutions all push towards problem-solving. Each institutional logic evolves from and contributes to innovation in varied ways across different areas of knowledge and its application.

Market-based exchange drives (technical) innovation which furthers commodification and increases productivity. These processes refine and select rules to enable a better fit with the operating environment which can fluctuate between vertically integrated or the devolved organisational designs currently in vogue (Roberts, 2004; Beinhocker, 2007:216).

For states, enforced taxation allows the formation of different tiers or spaces of governing.

These levels are normally geographically defined and nested within larger territorial boundaries that oversee, regulate and serve the bounded populations. However, the natural tendency is towards centralisation and uniformity through bureaucratisation. Innovation is usually driven by public pressure for better services (at a certain level of taxation) that translates into reform of public policies and refinements in arrangements for (the financing of) delivery. Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and compacts with non-profit organisations are examples.

Despite variations of type within businesses or forms within statehood their logics are essentially homogenising around wealth creation or regulation respectively. Civic associations have neither the innovation stress of accumulation and extraction nor the pressure of making tax-based administration more cost effective. The problem-solving innovation function of civic society is essentially socio-political in finding ways to enhance the satisfaction of rights and fulfilling obligations. Processes are typically fed by tensions between the differential (dis)satisfaction of interests pursued by groups in society. The diversity of civic associations derives, in part, from the fine-grained ways in which innovation plays into the winner-loser dynamic for specific settings and their problems.

#### *4.1.4 The political economy of civic society evolution*

The evolution of civic society is highly dependent on the quality and quantity of resources available over time. Primary, is voluntary effort. Though reliable global figures are not available, there are strong indications that this constitutes the basic, most enduring resource for civic action, both broad and narrow. While the degree of free choice involved can be debated, in many developing countries with weak states and poor public services, people's voluntary time and energy is the mainstay of informal civic associational life. Indeed, where states or markets do not reach or serve those without voice or income – the underclass of marginalised and very poor – self-organisation and voluntary action to satisfy their drivers is common place (e.g., Wilkinson-Maposa, et al, 2006).

An alternative explanation stems from modernisation theory. This posits a growth in civic associations arising from increases in people's free time and disposable incomes. Other by-products of modernisation with effects stimulating civic evolution are increased literacy, improved communication, urbanisation and social mobility. More refined arguments propose a clearer causal link between wealth creation and civic growth. These mechanisms arise because social differentiation involved in modernisation "... facilitates a multiplication of interests and an increased interdependence of social life, in which voluntary organisations emerge as crucial intermediaries between citizens and the various social sub-systems, particularly the political system." (Wessels, cited in Heinrich, 2008)

Contrasting these explanations suggests, perhaps, a non-linear U-form relationship between socio-economic development and civil society related to the quality of statehood. Or, perhaps formalisation of an economy is paralleled with formalisation of civic associational life observed in the number of registered civic associations. But this is not a priori at the expense of informal collaboration – which is formal for those involved - which evolves to address modernisation's socio-political dysfunctions. Volunteer legal aid centres, Neighbourhood Watch arrangements are an example, as are self-supported refuges for women victims of domestic abuse. Whatever the case, available evidence is inconclusive. This limitation exists,

in part, because a complete picture of informal civic associational life has yet to be established.

The point of this discussion is to highlight a general lack of empirically convincing replies to the question: how have resources co-determined the evolution of civic association and agency over time? It is, however, possible to analysis current resourcing pathways used by organisations of civic society. By way of illustration, fourteen options are available to and used by CSOs involved in international development (Fowler, 2000: Part II) and shown diagrammatically in Annex I.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail resource options, their trade-offs and possibilities in different contexts and eras. However, from a CDC perspective a vital trade-off is one of autonomy. Accessing resources from the state and more recently from businesses and (venture) philanthropists may limit or undermine an ability to fulfil a core civic role of claiming rights and asserting popular control. In fact, a compromised position in terms of civic agency as understood this paper is a common feature of CSOs. Nevertheless, against this background, it is possible to describe a general process that leads to distinct configurations of civic society.

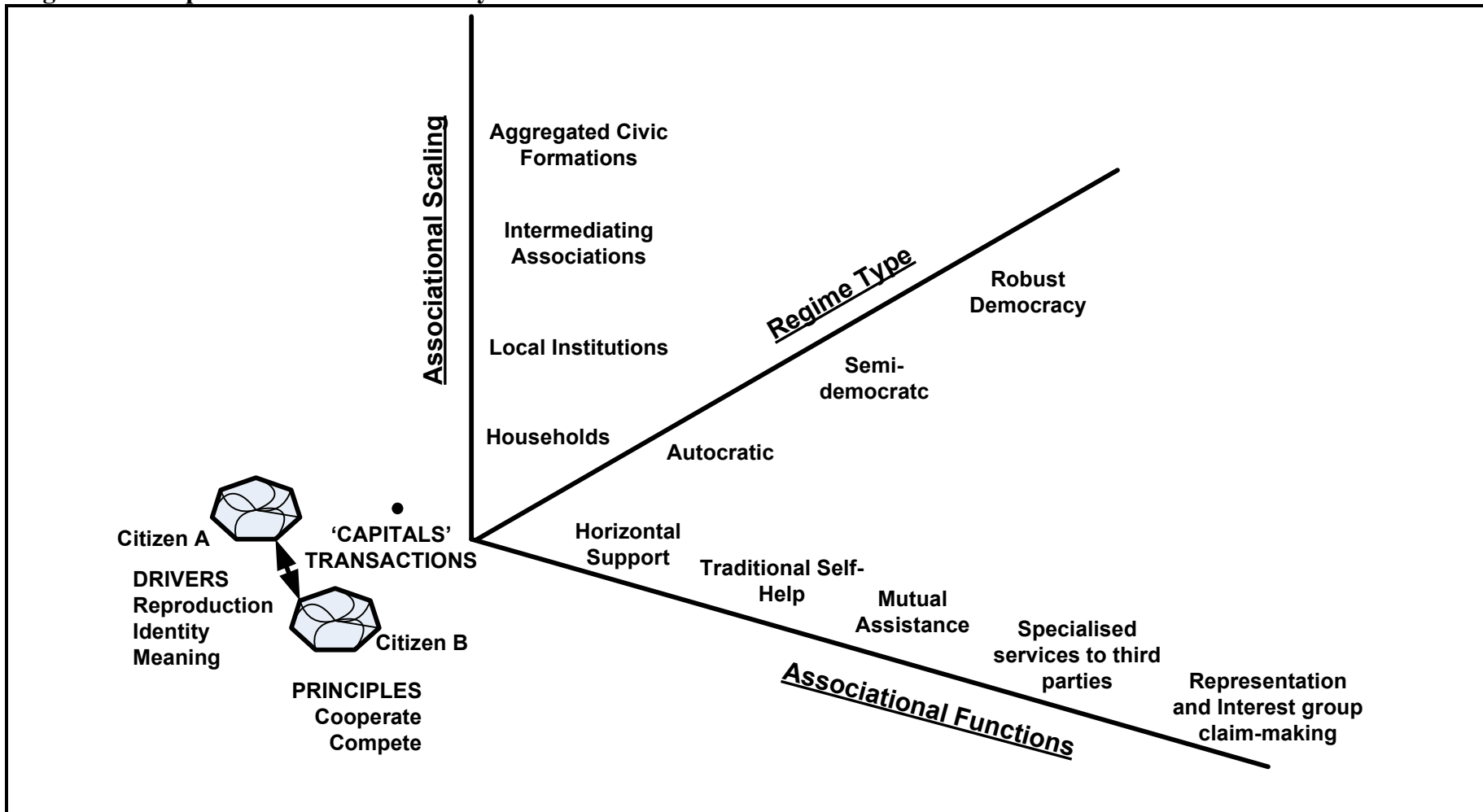
## **4.2 Civic configuration as co-evolution**

Figure 2, illustrates axes on which civic society evolves and complexifies. Depending on how wealth grows and is distributed, the horizontal axis denotes an expanding array of roles civic associations play. The vertical axis denotes a layering and scaling of civic associations within society as an evolving complex adaptive system. The third axis is evolution of regime types and their ideologies towards civic associational life: absolutist authoritarianism (Anderson, 1974), semi-democracy and robust democratic state. This axis is a strong determinant of 'legal' space as well as possibilities for interfacing with political systems and for resource mobilisation.

To be clear, the diagram does not specify a linear progression from one configuration to another. While this may be the case for political evolution – which is also subject to regression seen in security constraints on hard won civic freedoms – the other axes are more likely to be cumulative than transformatory. Rather, the figure it is intended to co-locate determinants of civic diversification in evolutionary processes. As suggested by the previous arguments about CSO political economy, consistent with complexity thinking, there are all sorts of routes from which configurations of civic society emerge, they are not pre-planned.

While the role of external actors in resourcing their preferred types of CSOs, discussed in Part II, further complicates processes and configurations, unless these entities become economically embedded they are but temporary additions to the civic landscape.

**Figure 2. Complexification of civic society**



What the diagram cannot illustrate very well is the interconnectedness of civic associations, typically in a networked way. Nor does it illustrate the feedback loops which co-determine the niches that open and close for civic association that give life to new expressions of civic agency the demise of others.

The range of forms and functions of civic association found across the world are shown in Figure 3. Complexity analysis makes clear that processes shaping the civic adaptive systems do not happen in isolation from other logics and their systems. Therefore, these are also shown and briefly discussed.

As noted in previous sections, institutional domains are analytically useful, but do not sufficiently correspond to reality. For the past century at least, there has always been fuzziness about the borders between them. Moreover, an institutional blending of structuration appears to be gaining ground. While meriting more detailed treatment, at this stage a few examples of major trends of significance for CDC will suffice.

Shifts in power from states to markets are expanding the focus of civic driven change to include businesses. Consequently, the boundary between the two is becoming more confused and innovative as their logics and interests interact with each other. Pressures for corporate social responsibility and investment (CSR and CSI) are extending businesses into the area traditionally occupied by non-profits (Elkington, 1997). At the same time, the super-rich are establishing (venture) philanthropies that operate along corporate lines. The emergence of 'philanthrocapitalism' on an unprecedented scale is altering the rules of the game that much of the civic domain is used to.<sup>24</sup>

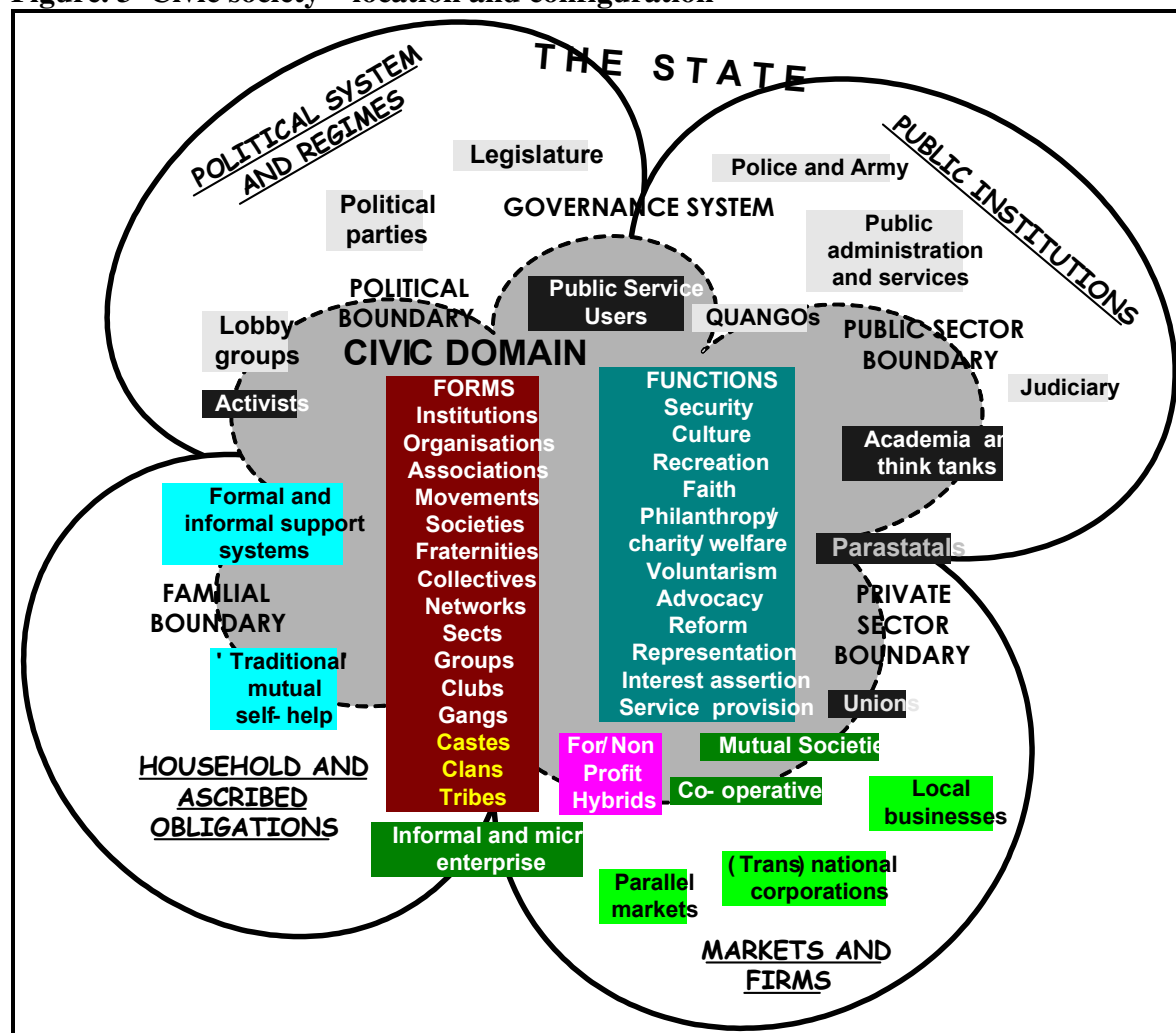
In the other direction, civic organisations are crossing into the business domain in two noticeable ways. One is the promotion of justice, environment and equity-oriented values and accountability into business operations – the so called triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997) and in promoting corporate citizenship (Zadek, 2000). This type of blending is driven by a rationale for corporate civic compliance which argues that legal registration does not provide adequately legitimacy to do business in society. Civic society also has a right of voice in what corporations do or omit to do (Bendell, 2000).

Significant movement is also occurring in the political economy of CSO. Of note is a trend towards competitive availability and market-based conditions attached to accessing public resources. Consequently, often under the label social enterprise, to survive CSOs are crossing into the for-profit domain (Anheier and Ben-Ner, 2003; Borzaga and Defourny, 2001). In other words, there is growth in for-profit/non-profit hybrids, often operating under the label of social entrepreneurship. There is also evolution in the rules of engagement between civic society and governments: compacts rather than contracts as one example.

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<sup>24</sup> For details of the fast shifting field of philanthropy see Alliance magazine <[www.alliance.org](http://www.alliance.org)>

Figure. 3 Civic society – location and configuration



While more detailed analysis is called for, a preliminary bird's eye view on the way in which boundary erosion is taking place confirms the observations of political atrophy and commercialisation introducing this section. The trans-territorial expansion imperative within market logic is progressively undermining the territorial logic of statehood and compromising popular control (Harvey, 2003). An effect is to reshape the political-economy of civic agency. It is doing so in ways that reduce the probability of democratic processes selecting regimes that are not disposed to free market policies. Venezuela and Bolivia are contemporary examples. Civic driven change must be aware of the fundamental forces behind domain blending steering towards this outcome.

### 4.3 Contention within and across civic borders

Inherent to transactions within the civic domain and across its borders is a lack of uniformity, coordination or alignment in what forces are in play. Civic agents pursuing their interests, claiming rights and fulfilling, or avoiding, obligations are inherently quarrelsome. By definition, tension exists between the freedom of civic agents to act on their interest and the right of others to do the same. Rights may be indivisible in legal theory, but in practice all rights – including negative rights - bring costs to society in terms of continuous adjudication,

protection and enforcement (Holmes and Sunstein, 1993). These costs must be met from taxation. Inevitably this involves public choices about the speed of the progressive realisation of all rights for all citizens. The choice about whose rights are recognised and served first is at the heart of contested relations between citizen and state.

Arriving at practical mechanisms to make necessary choices is a vital process of applying power in society. Democracy is meant to fulfil this function. If not performed well, outcomes can lead to deep sentiments of rejection, non-recognition of (group) identity and of interests that lead to violence far beyond public disobedience, sit ins, marches, strikes, boycotts and campaigns. For example, while people's anger at a state's failure to eradicate their poverty may be a co-factor, it is not a significant feature in the profile of terrorism's most potent weapon: suicide bombers. Bombers' attributes point towards experiences of powerlessness, political marginalisation and personal grievance (Reuter, 2004).<sup>25</sup> These characteristics create susceptibilities that can be framed and exploited towards violent, self-destructive dissent by ideological discourses, be they religious, nationalist and others lamented by Sen (2006). As noted in relation to fascism, civic agency is not necessarily benign and the behaviour of states can exacerbate intolerance and foster instability rather than moderate it.

A crucial observation on conflict from a complexity view is that significant civic disruptions often begin in local discourses at society's many margins and peripheries. Micro-structures can emerge as sites of armed 'terrorist' discourse (Cetina, 2005) or unarmed but nonetheless aggressive dissent (Chesters, 2005; Bond 2006). These locations do not necessarily correspond with the poorest or the weakest. For example what was originally seen to be the violent extremism of Greenpeace and the civil disobedience of many social movements – such as gender, or animal rights, or anti-apartheid - was not an affair of the poor per se. Greenpeace was a product of micro-defiance of committed environmentalists that led to a wider, less aggressive following.<sup>26</sup> Incremental successes provided positive feedback to more ambitious initiatives. These could have led towards transformative rather than incremental or 'reformist reforms' (Gorz, 1964) that do not address the underlying logic of the power relations in play. In this case, a 'nonreformist reform' agenda of challenging and undermining prevailing power relations was not realised. In sum, while perhaps counter-intuitive, history shows that social innovation and socio-political transformation are more likely to start in contagious movements at the 'edges' of society not just economically but also in terms of ideas (Ekins, 1992; Tilley, 2004).

Applying a complexity perspective of change originating from a society's *many* peripheries to the field of development assistance corresponds in part with arguments made by Easterly (2006) and Ellerman (2006) and by Rondinelli (1983) long before them. They contend that social experimentation, problem solving and learning are the most appropriate way of both understanding and practicing development. According to Ellerman, decentralised learning networks are the way to do so, corresponding to complexity principles from-the-ground-up. In other words, sensitivity and attention is needed to the self-organised innovation and justice-seeking civic agency of those on the margins of ideas, identity, recognition and voice. These

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<sup>25</sup> Basque separatists and Irish nationalists employ violence against civilians. In fighting for a separate state, the Tamil Tigers used a suicide bomber to assassinate India's Prime Minister, Rajeev Gandhi.

<sup>26</sup> The Japanese government label Greenpeace 'environmental terrorists' or their actions against whaling.

experiments are driven by human energy that – singly and comparatively – can tell a lot about viable development because, in the first instance, it is not aid-determined.

The same principle applies to learning in institutions and organisations. Decentralised, parallel learning can be stimulated and co-ordinated but it cannot be centrally directed. Diffusion is horizontal through peer-to-peer exchange and self-initiated connectivity, rather than the transfer and hub and spoke of common aided, state-driven models.

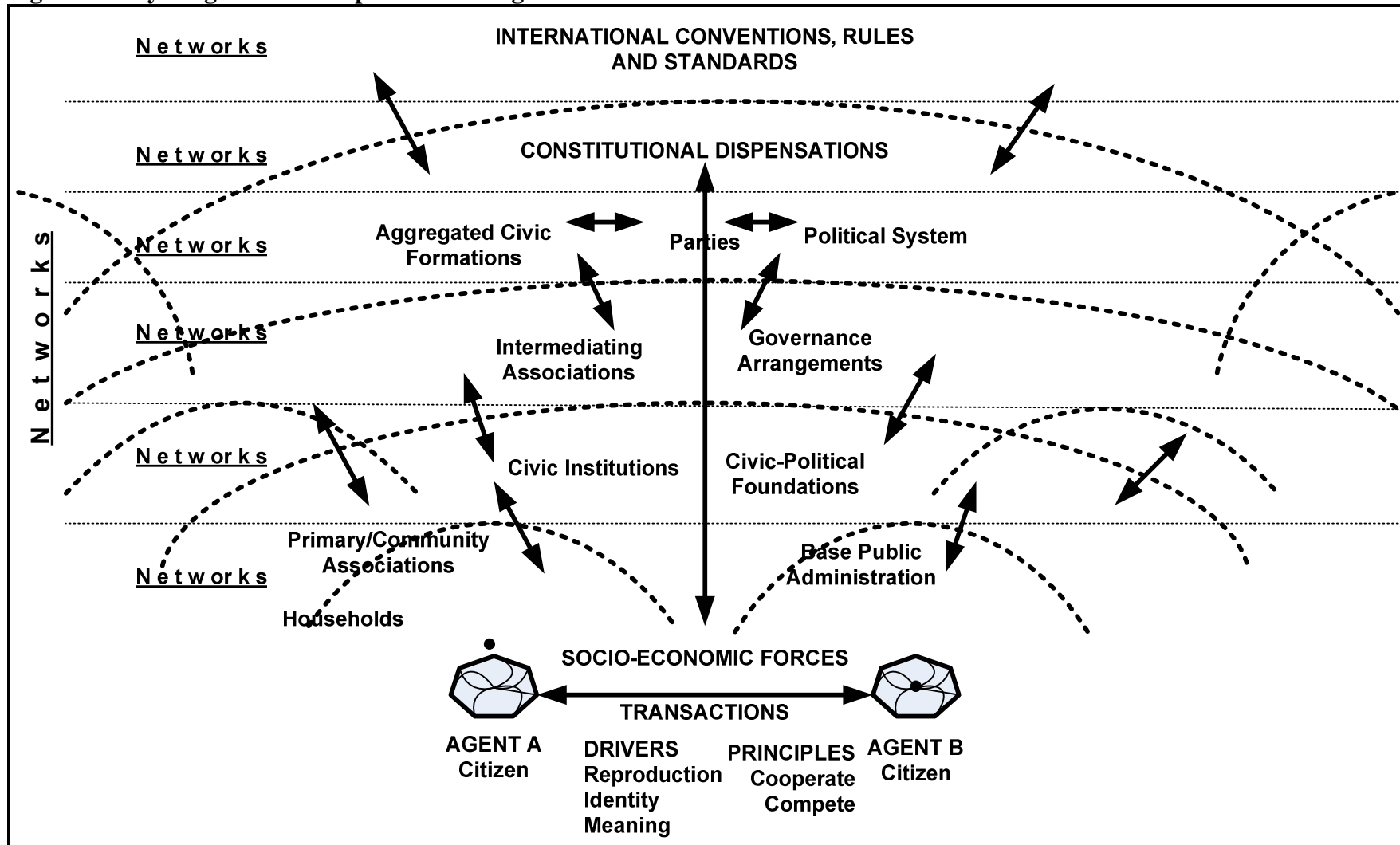
An outflow of conflicting interests within civil society and towards states is a question about civic agency as a force for change or stability. Framed in terms of the previous discussion, where does the civic domain fit in terms of maintaining or incrementally, or radically, altering power relations and in whose favour? Specifically, what (roles) are played in altering the patterns of self-compliance described in section 3.2.2 in favour of people who are disempowered? This is a question around which theories advance very different answers that require some attention. For our purposes it is sufficient to limit the analysis to non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs).

The following figure illustrates processes of civic evolution and political exchange. Civic agents collaborate to form local institutions. They may be more or less formal and seek recognition by the state or not as the (risks of the) case may be. Agents also form networks of relations and affiliations to others. These relations can help fulfil obligations, generate risk-spreading social capital as well as provide indirect pathways to express interests and claim rights.

That which is felt as ‘local’ in the sense of a personal concern shared by others is the foundation for establishing a representative or deliberative interface between civic and political society (Biekart, 1999). It is the site to mobilise, assert rights and pursue interests. It is where citizenship co-determines the quality of statehood (Eyben and Ladbury, 2006). Governance arrangements emerge to create relations with political representatives – for example, councillors and the public administration. Both contain iterative connections up to and down from higher levels. Party operatives are typically constrained by their institutional policies, rules and hierarchies. Such limitations create space and reason for civic agency that is often seen in intermediating associations. They may operate around micro-geographic concerns, be issue-based, or act out other inspirations or agendas. Civic agency is not necessarily party-bound or affiliated but is intrinsically connected to this system because, *inter alia*, of citizens claims as voters (ID21, 2007).

Civic layering and aggregation take place within a constitution or conventions that determine – on paper anyway – how arrangements should work, enshrining the rights, obligations, locations of power and processes involved. To greater or lesser degrees, constitutions and the laws enacting them conform to international norms, standards and conventions a state has signed up to. Compliance is monitored through Councils and United Nations forums where civic agency is an important source of additional information allowing complementary oversight that invites government backlash (Bond, 2000).

Figure. 4 Layering of civic and political arrangements



All political systems – autocracies and democracies included - optimise around an array of public policies that are always sub-optimal for a particular group or set of interests. The possibility, civic right and space to argue the case for a more appropriate policy or government behaviour depends on the form of political system and regime type.

Autocratic regimes do not easily tolerate civic voice or, for international show, create their own ‘civic’ organisations. Nominally democratic systems have the formal trappings and laws of representative politics but with substantive uncertainty about the probity of the electoral process. Incumbent regimes foreclose choice through a single-party, or manipulate the outcome. Vietnam and China are examples of the former. Nigeria is a recent case of the latter. These conditions offer pre-selected space for civic influence but on the margins of what is important. In Contrast, robust democratic systems provide *substantive certainty* of an untainted electoral process but with *substantive uncertainty* of the outcome in terms of an existing regime retaining or losing popular mandate and power.<sup>27</sup>

Previously illustrated in disagreement about recent reforms to institutions of global governance, the emergence of socio-political layers reflecting new rules and relations is a useful insight of complexity analysis. It also points towards a different way of understanding ‘local’ and ‘aggregation’. Exhibited in civic transnational advocacy, horizontal networking - connecting and combining across socio-political levels not bounded by territory, sovereignty or statehood -is becoming an increasingly significant and politically powerful pathway for CDC (Batliwala and Brown, 2006).

Located in corporations, the internet, the media and other transnational sites, global power is becoming more mobile and extra-territorial. This shift needs to be matched by civic flexibility and mobilisation at a range of scales that connect both vertically and horizontally as the issue and type of power demands.

Everything and everyone is local in one sense. Everyone can experience what is impinging on the ‘local’ from other locations and levels. Aided by technology of net and cell, aggregation is no longer a product of hierarchy and scaling-up, but one of scaling-out in terms of the numbers and the issues that self-generates a concerned network. Distributed knowledge, experience and information create the Wisdom of Crowds (Surowiecki, 2004) that are argued to be of importance in international development (Stone and Maxwell, 2005). Citizen networks are a pre-eminent mode for civic agency within a state (Ronfeldt and Thorup, 1993) as well as transnationally and globally (Urry, 2005).

These factors all impact on shifting articulations between political systems and civic domains, with uncertain outcomes that can, at best, be forecast but cannot be predicted. Be that as it may, the resolution of contentions in any society will need to be at the political level. Critical in this will be the role of civic agency in co-determining the way power is employed to gain adequate popular compliance with the existing order.

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<sup>27</sup> South Africa is an interesting case of substantive certainty in electoral process, but with – for historical reasons – the substantive certainty of an electoral majority for the African National Congress. A weak form of full

#### 4.4 Civic society: power and compliance

As a recognised actor in the international development system, civil society is still often confused with NGOs. This conflation helps funders avoid openly taking on board the essentially political nature of CDC. Significant literature describes what, developmentally, civil society is expected to effectively do – rather than be - and why (e.g., Bernard, Helmich and Lehning, 1998; Van Rooy, 1998; Ottaway, and Carothers, 2000; Edwards and Gaventa, 2001; Howell and Pearce, 2001; Clark, 2003a, 2003b; Fowler, 2003; Scholte, 2003; Edwards, 2004). However, assumptions about the framework of power in which this analysis is located are implied but seldom clearly expressed. The efficacy and realism of civic society as an agent of change would therefore be served by a deeper probing of where recipient states are coming from when civil society acts with external support.

Two arguments are advanced here. First, civic agency anticipated by official aid, and by many western NGOs, are premised on an interpretation of how different types of power should be configured that is not necessarily shared by recipient countries. Second, that the differences involved play out across the threshold of state sovereignty. This occurs in ways that current geopolitics of ‘development for security’ exacerbate, creating greater risks and shrinking space for civic action (Fowler, 2007). The notions of ‘political society’ and autonomy are used to help examine what is in play (Biekart, 1999:42; Hyden, et al, 2004:19).

The development-related civic domain has a two-fold task. One is to redistribute non-coercive powers towards the relatively powerless.<sup>28</sup> The other, as noted earlier, is to redistribute (externally driven) risks of change in society away from the poorest. The previous sections argue that a critical interface in this process is with political society, a category with a variety of understandings. For Gramsci political society was composed of the state apparatus of police, courts, coercive and educative power operating in service of an (unholy) alliance between capitalist, civic society that wields material and normative power. In other words, political society contained the realms of private controls over the public good and collective interests. Consequently, civic agents cannot be trusted to truly articulate the concerns and interests of subordinated groups. In this understanding, CSOs being ‘autonomous’ of power holders is a contradiction in terms. This attribute belongs to the subordinated mass underclass.

In this light, foreign civic actors and counterparts supported by them are seen to be furthering external agendas rather than the real interests of the disempowered. The plight of the poor and marginalised is a cover for external penetration. In today’s geopolitics, aid can more than ever be reasonably interpreted as an instrument of (security) infiltration with civic actors its benign face propagating Western ‘values’ power. Their own premise of ‘autonomy’ is patently false in that increasingly, foreign-aided CSOs rely on government or market funding and carry its hidden propositions about compliance. Vietnam, China, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Venezuela and Sudan’s suspicion about and reproach of a foreign ‘aided’ civil domain reflect this interpretation.

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<sup>28</sup> Which does not exclude civil disobedience or, in disputed cases, coercive armed struggle against tyranny or for self-determination with South Africa and Sri Lanka as exemplars?

In Western liberal thinking political society is equated with parties and the apparatus of public decision making through representative politics of competitive choice allocating parliamentary mandates. Parties fulfil an 'acquisition of interests' and intermediation role towards the exercise of state power. While such systems may be more or less plural in terms of party arrangements, the premise is that they are rooted within and emanate from the citizenry as members and voters. They can hold and express powers of 'within', 'to', 'with', 'for' and, if mandated, 'over' the state and polity.

For developing countries and newly independent states espousing plural politics, the interface with organisations in the civil domain is problematic. CSOs comprise associations of citizens with the same power potentials as political parties, bar one – the objective of gaining elected, coercive power 'over'. For example, CSOs have the power 'to do' things for their members and supporters, such as agitating, lobbying and intermediation. They can exhibit power 'with' others by convening and creating places and spaces for public discourse on agendas that power holders are trying to suppress. They can expose and contest the legitimacy of those with power domestically and internationally (van Rooy, 2004; Edwards and Gaventa, 2004).

Consequently - for existing and aspiring power holders - CSOs, such as trade unions and social movements, are potentially (threatening) sites of political entrepreneurship and launching pads for and bottom-up mobilisers of political alternatives. CSO intentions are therefore suspect. Foreign support is interpreted beyond its face value of wanting to help the poor and is seen as a challenging the distribution of non-coercive power, so disrupting established systems of compliance. This sensitivity typically motivates new rules furthering state containment of CSOs. Often this occurs under cover of concerns, used in India and Russia, about security, money laundering and the like. Another restrictive remedy is legislating CSO eligibility to receive foreign finance applied in Bangladesh.

Reflecting a Gramscian interpretation, recent analysis argues that aid-funded CSOs, particularly northern NGDOs, are abetting a common feature of a compliance strategy: co-optation as service providers. Only selective rights are recognised. Harmonising aid modalities is also inculcating a managerialism that does not permit analysis of power or embrace NGDO diversity (Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman, 2006).<sup>29</sup> In conforming with and transmitting aid-chain effects, northern NGDOs are disempowering southern counterparts (Edwards, 2005).

In addition, by 'domesticating' themselves within developing countries, northern NGOs are displacing indigenous CSOs. The "capture" of a domestic, emerging civic domain by large multinational international NGOs is moving menacingly ahead in setting the agenda for advocacy and capacity building is.<sup>30</sup> In this cooptation, civic power 'to' is channelled into expressions that fulfil mediating or buffering functions, but not 'nonreformist reforms'. In other words, roles that intimate sensitivity to citizen participation for the public good but without changing the social order. Agenda and rules of engagement are still defined by existing power relations. For example, processes of Poverty Strategy Reduction Planning

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<sup>29</sup> Competitive donor financing is also doing its share in fulfilling the civic-market linkage that Gramsci posits.

<sup>30</sup> Rajesh Tandon, personal communication.

(PRSP) indicate that areas such as economic policy and performance parameters are out of bounds for civic influence (Shah and Youssef, 2002).

In many respects what has been described is not new. It is a progressively observable feature of aid-related CSOs, first, because sovereignty lurks as an appreciated but unarticulated parameter of risk. Second, institutional imperatives of international NGOs find it hard to conceive of eventual redundancy or deep power sharing.

Generally speaking, to avoid allegations of interfering in a country's internal affairs aid directed at improving statehood has involved managerial, technical processes. The civic vehicle was mainly urban based, middle-class NGOs as central non-state actors in democratic promotion. This approach was generally disappointing (Ottaway and Carothers, 2000:295).

All in all, the role of aided-CSOs is to assist in steering the power of compliance towards the constructions relied on by donor countries, but without the strife required to get there. This cloaked, apolitical, sovereignty-constrained anomaly is well understood by aided governments that consequently mistrust and are wary of involving and strengthening CSOs as players, paying lip service to the inclusive processes asked of them.

Findings of this and others studies therefore point at the necessity to "... pop the bubble of the idea that civic society development is somehow a safely apolitical domain."<sup>31</sup> This conclusion resonates with long-term trend data on democratisation involving sixty-seven countries (Karatnycky and Ackerman, 2005). Successful transitions from undemocratic to stable democratic conditions in thirty-three countries provide useful insights about the role of civic society in such processes. Three conclusions are of particular interest.

"The central conclusion of this study is that *how* a transition from authoritarianism occurs and the types of forces that are engaged in pressing the transition have significant impact on success or failure of democratic reform." Emphasis added.

"... in a preponderance of successful transitions, the most dramatic improvements in freedom tend to come quickly – in the first years of transition, rather than slowly and incrementally over a long period of time, underscoring the importance of the nature of the civic and political forces that emerge as important actors in the pre-transition period."

"... far more often than is generally understood, *the change agent is broad-based, nonviolent civic resistance* – which employs tactics such as boycotts, mass protests, blockades, strikes, and civil disobedience to de-legitimate authoritarian rulers and erode their sources of support, including the loyalty of their armed defenders." Emphasis added (ibid:2)

These results may not correspond to conditions in weak countries that are relatively free of authoritarian rule, albeit not robust democracies. They also need to be assessed against

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<sup>31</sup> Ottaway and Carothers, 2000:viii.

diversity in civil configurations. Nevertheless, the number of cases involved point to the importance of political evolutions that arise and broaden from the 'below' of local discourses, rather than are instigated, forced and guided from above. The processes required call for methods that engender non-violent contention and its resolution rather than an over-reliance on 'partnership' or a 'harmony' model of state building.

Put another way, if a world of strong states based on democratic rule is crucial for stability and security, the aid system must contend with the fact – reflected in the history of donor countries (Dunn, 2005) - that attaining a robust democracy is a process of struggle as well as of collaboration. Civic agency plays a vital role of protagonist in redressing deeper powers ensuring conformity. This path to healthy stability gets beyond the superficiality of reforming inherited or imposed forms of government and political systems in aid-recipient countries which are fragile because these institutions do not resonate with indigenous political cultures or historical preconditions.

So far, complexity analysis has been used as an alternative way of seeing and thinking about society and change. In doing so the perspective has often been broader than the confines of development aid and co-operation. The concluding task is to move the analysis towards ideas about application within the framework of international development and aid.

## **Part II      Implications**

As a work in progress, much of Part I requires more detailed discussion and analysis. Addressing implications on terms of development practice is, therefore, somewhat speculative. However, it is still useful and possible to assess the implications a complexity perspective on civic driven change as an overall approach from comparative, strategic and principled points of view. The following section does so, with a forward-looking closure towards next steps. Though not recommended as a substitute for the full text, a brief summary of the central ideas is provided below.

A primary purpose of civic driven change (CDC) is to redress development of society that gives pre-eminence to the roles of government and markets at the cost of citizen action to control their well-being now and for future generations. A complex perspective shows why that the results of the CDC tasks needed to reach this goal are not predictable. Social change emerges from the combined actions of many actors in ways that are and are not intended by any one of them. It is, however, possible and valuable to look for the basic drivers and rules that generate and direct people's energy as citizens with rights and obligations. History shows that by and large these two factors lead societies to configure around major institutions or systems of government, capitalist markets and civic society that have arisen naturally, been imposed through colonial force or are being copied. The core processes involved require collective action and collaboration that counters assumptions about the primacy of competition. Key processes also shape how power evolves and is distributed to attain social order at minimum cost for maximum well-being. Complexity analysis opens up an alternative understanding of the role of civic society in gaining the necessary compliance of citizens in this way. In doing so, it provides a coherent set of categories for debate as well as innovative

ideas about how civic society can (re)assert itself towards popular control on socio-political change.

## **5 Civic driven change as a development approach**

Complexity analysis emphasises processes of co-evolution of institutions in society that are held together by distributions of power that create relative and absolute winners and losers or, in Robert Chamber's (2006) terms, 'uppers' and 'downers'. A long history of human drivers has led to a socio-political world constructed around nation-states inhabited by citizens and their associations, where the whole increasingly relies on an economic system based on capitalism and market exchange.

In this co-evolution, it is argued that the state will always be first amongst equals because its sovereign monopoly of coercive force creates the conditions within which contention and compliance are managed to prevent disorder (Huetter, 2003). Markets need the regulatory enforcement of contracts and protection of ownership. Civic society needs public and other spaces and locations to express divergent interests with the mediation and prevention of conflict and social instability that only a state can provide. If this is the case, a two-fold fundamental question underpins the challenge for CDC in development work. First, how can citizens exercise effective control over the state rather than the other way round? Framed in previous terms, how is state compliance achieved? Second, how can popular control be attained such that fairness and justice for all citizens is assured?

Drawing on previous analyses, this section works towards answering these questions in three steps. Step one sets out the shift in mind-set that a complexity view of aided change calls for. The second step pulls together and summarises the characteristics of change that can be said to make it more or less civic driven. In step three a tentative strategy towards pursuing CDC is described, to serve as a basis for discussion and debate, not a 'how to' guide.

### **5.1 Shifting mindset: is non-deterministic development a contradiction in terms?**

A major challenge of complexity theory is to be comfortable with uncertainty and reflexivity as a basis for development. To convince tax-payers that their money is well spent politicians and aid institutions promise to produce an agreed type and amount of change. The historical results of this imperative are patently poor, which leads to public cynicism, bringing the system into discredit. But William Easterly's alternative – a call for searchers rather than planners - misrepresents the idea that purposeful development investments are simply a waste of resources and effort. Complexity helps see that the alternative to planned change is not random change but a recognition of the highly contingent nature of development and ways of deeply analysing what is involved.

Table 1 below, illustrates this point by comparing 'traditional' perspectives on development employed by the aid system with a civic complexity perspective. In order to sharpen the argument, some descriptions are stereotypical, but signal the underlying characteristics involved.

**Table 1. Comparison of traditional and complex development**

Traditional perspectives on aided development	Civic complexity perspectives on aided development
<u>Prediction.</u> Assumption that the future is knowable and reachable by human action.	<u>Estimation.</u> Informed guess about how things work and interact and what change might result from human effort.
<u>Certainty.</u> Enough planning and effort create specific types and amounts of social change.	<u>Uncertainty.</u> No effort in social change guarantees desired outcomes.
<u>Centralised.</u> Hierarchy-based transaction and rule framework.	<u>Devolved.</u> Margin-driven rules and connectivity.
<u>Mainstream development capital.</u> That which is valued economically and socially.	<u>Complex development capital.</u> That which is valued economically, culturally, socially and symbolically.
<u>Reliance on exogenous capital.</u> External investments - finance, technology, know how.	<u>Reliance on endogenous capital.</u> Self-mobilisation of all types valued capital.
<u>Utilitarian development economics.</u> Economic behaviour based on rational self-interest and equilibrium as attractor.	<u>Conditional development economics.</u> Economic capital co-dependent on process and fairness of rules in play, with asymmetry as critical force.
<u>Cause-effect relationships.</u> Logical, non-contingent relationships that can be relied on to achieve desired change.	<u>Transactional rules.</u> Interaction patterns that show actual relationships and their effects in contingent interaction.
<u>Protocols.</u> Formal institutional relations and interactions.	<u>Networks.</u> Self-instigated, multi-directional connections.
<u>Plan.</u> Reliance on different scales of resources and scheduled actions with pre-determined goals and outcomes which justify allocations.	<u>Forecast.</u> Investments set against a range of possible scenarios with associated degrees of attainment probability.
<u>Planning.</u> Gathering information and 'buying in' support from those who are required to implement and deliver pre-determined results.	<u>Testing.</u> Gauging support and establishing prevailing conditions within which to try out an investment and learn from it.
<u>Sectoralised.</u> Development as technical, specialist areas connected by integrated programmes and 'joined-up' government.	<u>Holistic.</u> Context specific expression of human drivers as source of diversification for interventions.
<u>Public policies.</u> Top-down transmission of rule preferences based on existing power arrangements.	<u>Local discourses.</u> Periphery-originated transmission and amplification of marginalised power assertion over recognised interests and rule selection.
<u>Deficits.</u> Capital limitations, reflecting what aid has to offer.	<u>Assets.</u> All capitals people have and are (not yet) using.
<u>Needs.</u> Dependency view of well-being.	<u>Rights.</u> Citizen/rights holder view of well-being.
<u>Time.</u> Political cycles.	<u>Time.</u> Socio-political stages of change.
<u>Capacity.</u> Set of organisational capabilities.	<u>Capacity.</u> The emergent power of (civic) agency.
<u>Scale.</u> 'Vertical' growth in size and budget.	<u>Scale.</u> 'Horizontal' growth in number and through citizen leverage.
<u>Impact.</u> Pre-determined, expected changes resulting from development efforts.	<u>Emergence.</u> Range of changes due to development initiatives, both anticipated and unexpected.
<u>Civic organisation.</u> A stakeholder included in some development initiatives.	<u>Civic association.</u> Expression and site of collective energy and prevailing drivers.
<u>Apolitical governance.</u> Obscuring or ignoring	<u>Political governance.</u> Direct concern with

political issues, respecting sovereignty boundaries.	citizenship and the civic-political interface in governance.
<u>Institutional analysis</u> . Assessment of roles and competencies of stakeholders.	<u>Power analysis</u> . Identification of types and locations of power across all stakeholders.
<u>Civic participation</u> . Inviting citizens to get involved in processes defined, designed and ruled by others.	<u>Civic energy</u> . Recognising where people are locating their efforts and preferences irrespective of external assistance.
<u>Feed forward</u> . Primary attention to future activities towards planned steps and milestones.	<u>Feed back</u> . Iterative reflections on what connections are in operation in relation to previous conditions that will amplify or attenuate social change.

It is important to note that innovations in development practice already reflect elements of complexity analysis. One example is asset rather than deficit based starting points for intervention. Another is the need to use appropriate time scales. Yet another is valuing networked relations, i.e., attention to intangible social capital. And aid evolutions beyond ‘participation’ towards civic driven change and social accountability are also steps towards a more civic-centric development approach (Malena, et al, 2004). What these disparate initiatives and improvements lack is a theoretically robust organising framework that complexity can provide. Many also lack a conscious attempt at nonreformist reforms of structural change in the power distributions and political-economy they reflect.

The aid system relies on a linear cause-effect model of bringing change to society. Complexity thinking asks that assumptions involved with the traditional model of planned change be replaced by the idea of insightful estimation: purposeful change is contingent with various levels of probability. Complexity does not make intentionality a waste of time or human agency inevitably random in terms of effects. Rather, because societies are operating at the edge of chaos, they must continually adjust to counter forces of disorder, but with no guarantee that the accumulation of planned actions or historical analysis will produce unequivocal results. By comparison, the physics of putting a man on the moon is complicated but predicable. Politics and economics are complex: no one can predict conditions in Iraq or the cost of oil ten years from now.

A second critical feature relates to emergence. Much discussed, but seldom treated seriously, is the ability to see what has emerged rather than focus on what was intended. The principles of the Most Significant Changes (MSC) approach to monitoring and evaluation is generally compatible with this requirement (Davis and Dart, 2005).

Third, the longer the time frame and the greater the scale of change the greater the degree of unpredictability. Hence, rather than overly draw on questionable assumptions that today’s self-interest will reliably determine relationships into the future, attention must be paid to the basic rules in play and the connections and quality of reactions and feed back between actors actually observed.

Finally, many dimensions and categories in the comparison require critical observation through an engendered lens. Structuration of women’s subordination is so endemic and deep rooted that any form of CDC worth its name will have this aspect fully in view.

The table is intended to be indicative rather than exhaustive. However, it points to how further efforts in understanding implications for mainstream aid might bear fruit. In addition, it gives ideas about where complexity-informed development innovations may be called for. One example is in categories and approaches to power analysis.

## 5.2 Characteristics of civic driven change

Civic driven change will probably escape a satisfactory definition. At this stage of our understanding a practical approach is to reach definition through description. This can be tackled through principles in play, strategies called for and interventions to be followed.

The principle of co-evolution suggests that enduring change in society that is solely and exclusively civic driven is a fallacy. There will always be power relations that shape civic energy and transmit civic force to other institutions generating feedback in some way or the other. At this stage, it is therefore probably more useful to look at civic driven change as an issue of the degree to which civic driven principles are actually in play. This can be done by a series of questions to obtain a 'CDC reading'.

1. What is the degree of self-determination in the intended change?
2. To what extent is civic energy broadly exhibited rather than induced by prospect of external resources? (A proxy indicator is the presence of self-mobilised citizen initiatives, i.e., the occurrence and frequency of problem-solving activity and agitation on the peripheries. Another proxy is antecedents of civic energy, looked for through, for example, appreciative enquiry.)
3. Does the intended change represent a positive, zero, or negative sum game in the perception of stakeholders?
4. What forms of power are in play in the intended change; where are they located in what agents with what capabilities?
5. What is the degree of (rights-oriented) rule-setting by civic agents themselves?
6. What is the type and strength of collectiveness/affinity within the civic agents?
7. What is the degree of trust and 'solidarities' between civic agents and other institutional stakeholders?
8. What is the degree of language control exerted by civic agents?
9. What (horizontal and vertical) connections, transmission mechanisms and networks are/should be in play?
10. What positive feedback should be amplified and negative feedback attenuated?

One objective of a CDC analysis is to compare the directionality of change exhibited by lower and higher level systems. This appreciation is critical for determining the best strategy and tactics to be applied (Bond, 2006). In other words, assessing the relationship between agents, power types and their levels/locations of interplay is an important step in deciding how best to support CDC (Gaventa, 2006). Practical methods of making CDC-related readings are in early stages of exploration: a potentially important area of action-research and future investment.

### 5.3 Approaching civic driven change

Complexity calls for a different interpretation of ‘local’ understood as a socio-political location of discourse and civic agency, not simply micro in (physical) location. One lens on local is civic mobilisation around a problem, interest or issue located anywhere within society. It could be the expanding middle class in India politically mobilising to counter affirmative action in job allocations and protections for scheduled castes and similar categories of (religiously) marginalised identity groups. It could be landless people invading private property. It could be corrupted politicians working out how to counter the effects of anti-corruption legislation.

Identifying transmission paths and mechanisms that bring local discourse into processes of structuration becomes a critical challenge where context and time scales become very relevant. Learning from past applications of a ‘drivers of change’ perspective is also valuable (e.g., Dahl-Østergaard, Unsworth, Robinson, and Jensen, 2005). Again, by way of illustration, drawing on aspects of the exploration, the following sections consider what this means in terms of possible strategy and practical efforts.

#### 5.3.1 Strategy

A comprehensive CDC strategy needs to incorporate two defining features detailed earlier (2.2.1). One is the distinction between broad and narrow understandings of civic. The former is more significant in the context of autocratic regimes. The latter is more in play where fundamentals of freedom of association and expression have adequate respect and hence civic space to act. Each interpretation of civic has time scales that require different strategic views of intervention. Table 2, summarises what these look like through a CDC lens.

**Table 2. CDC strategies**

<b>Civiness and civic agency</b>	<b>Short term (Political)</b>	<b>Medium term (Institutional)</b>	<b>Long term (Generational)</b>
<b>Broad</b>	Legal protection and administrative reforms respecting citizen’s rights	Changing rules of engagement between civic and other domains	Producing inclusive identities and tolerance
<b>Narrow</b>	RIM-based local discourses and mobilisation with civic/rights awareness	Connecting civic ‘solidarities’ with nonreformist reforms	Critical education in early childhood

Short term orientations are around the duration of a political regime, nominally corresponding with an electoral cycle. In many countries, this condition may itself be meaningless and other temporal markers would be needed. Medium term involves the time scales required to bring about change in institutions that are naturally and necessarily slow because of their roles in power structuration and social stabilisation. Strategically critical are choice between types of reform that rely on harmony or contention models of change. Much longer term are inter-generational processes that bring about alteration in people’s deeper sense of being and world view.

Not to be misunderstood, these time frames do not mean waiting to act. Rather, they signal the duration against which different interventions must be considered in terms of their eventual effects.

Taking a broad civic perspective, short term effort is required to create a minimally enabling context for civic agency to exist. Typically this involves pressing for legal provisions around basic human rights and due process in their interpretation and application. Medium term CDC efforts would probably tackle the rules of the game applied to civic engagement with state and market to make them more citizen defined, mandated and civic-centric. In development speak – altering the rules for participation towards definition by citizens themselves. Long term efforts would work on tolerance of difference by expanding identities to reflect the increasing integration of cultures and cosmopolitanism emerging through media penetration, manipulation and labour migration.

The narrow view, where civic agency is reasonably possible, permits pursuit of strategies that can deal more directly with the application of human rights and obligations to development (Pettit and Wheeler, 2005). From a CDC point of view, there are many links to rights-based approaches that will benefit from a more systematic review that cannot be included here. However, one aspect that stands out is the application of a rights lens to power analysis (Miller, VeneKlasen, Clark, 2005), with particular attention to invisible powers that mislead in order to gain compliance or misdirect political mobilisation towards violent instability and abuse of rights.

Today, strategies that draw on a narrow view of civicness applied to change in the short term are concentrating on interests leading to citizen mobilisations that are (too) loosely labelled as social movements (Tarrow, 1994, 2004; Tilley, 1994; Dalton, and Kuechler, 1990; Ghimire, 2004). Annex II, provides an overview of the terrains that have and are generating civic energy on a scale beyond the piecemeal and fragmented. The label covers an array of interpretations and theories. Nevertheless, they all presuppose the existence of local discourses which translate into drivers significant enough to resonate with feelings that are widely shared at any socio-political level, which then emerge as time-bound pathways of civic assertion.<sup>32</sup> By their nature, social movements are not permanent.

Evidence of systematic structural change towards greater respect for civic rights and freedoms suggests that medium term, narrow strategies could usefully concentrate on establishing the solidarities needed between groups, interests, classes and other divisions in society. In other words, a move away from a fixation on the poor and policy makers that has sidelined more powerful civic actors, such as the middle class, in processes of structural change.

Most fundamental to a narrow strategy for CDC in terms of change with a long time frame for effects is infusing an orientation towards and capacity for critical thinking. There is compelling evidence to suggest that the most cost-effective period of human development to do so are in the early years of a child's life. The effects are emergent in terms of changing a society's development through a mass of unseen alterations in people's awareness that self-aggregate towards less tolerance for unaccountable power or acceptance of unfairness that can

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<sup>32</sup> <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_movement)>

reach a tipping point prompting a new political dispensation: processes seen in Eastern Europe.

Strategies require translation into interventions. The range of possibilities across diverse contexts, types of civic agent and purpose illustrated in Figure 3. are innumerable. However, given the across-the-board-significance of capacity building in international aid (Fukuda-Parr, et al, 2002), it is worth initiating a discussion around applying CDC to this type of investment.

### *5.3.2 CDC intervention: organisational development and capacity building*

The complexity approach to understanding and strategising towards CDC offers interesting and potentially powerful ways of re-looking at institutional domains, organisations and an agenda of enhancing their capabilities. This subsection is therefore serves as an illustrative introduction to a potentially innovative path.

Morgan (2006) argues that effective organisations have five types of capability.<sup>33</sup> Each is an outcome of collective action that draws on the competencies of individuals from which capacity arises, defined by Allan Kaplan as an “emergent power to perform.” In this sense, complexity thinking is already informing the concept of capacity (Stacey, 1996). However, it is at a nascent stages in terms of application to organisational development generally (Seel, 2004) and for CSOs (e.g., CDRA, 2007).

Further enhancement of current thinking about capacity building stems from the new categories and analysis of organisational processes that complexity and CDC have to offer. In theory and application, complexity approaches will probably play out differently between membership and non-membership based organisations, businesses and governments. A few examples may illustrate potentials to be explored.

Applying CDC to OD stresses attention towards the many intangibles that contribute to emergence. Two standing out are individual motivations stemming from different driver (combinations) in RIM and in the way that compliance is gained, that is the way power is configured within a hierarchy. Much OD work in aid skirts around making this latter dimension too overt. CDC provides opportunities for progress in opening up this direction of capacity building, which also has a potential for refining rights based approaches to development programming.

CSOs self-evolve and adapt to give a better fit between internal capabilities and context, but in doing so need to maintain their identity, their being. This dimension is being overwhelmed by results-driven pressures demonstrate ‘doing’. Complexity approaches to OD can help reassert and foster continuity in ‘being’ required if the value of civic agency is not to be eroded by the very funders who argue its distinctive merits.

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<sup>33</sup> The five capabilities are: to act; to get development results; to relate; to adapt and self-renew; and to achieve coherence.

In the realm of change of member-based organisations hierarchy is less easily applied. For example, there is preliminary evidence from natural resource management that the attention complexity thinking gives towards rules and motivations operating under specific conditions can make interest-negotiation a more viable approach to OD (Warner, 2001).

These are simply indicative of what complexity analysis may have to offer. Needless to say, there is much creative work to be done in applying the marriage of CDC and complexity analysis into the world of development co-operation. Organisational development is a high potential candidate for further systematic thinking and investment. This leads to a concluding conversation about where next.

## **6 Moving forward**

A strength of the complexity approach is that it is closer to everyday experience. It makes more sense. Planning is useful but insufficiently reliable to base an effective development system. Complexity offers an alternative explanation to the empirically problematic story of ODA as well as a way of thinking about and doing development differently. In an exploratory way this study complements the application of complexity to ongoing reappraisals of the function of economics, markets (Anderson, et al, 1988; Beinhocker, 2007) as well as political systems and infrastructures (Jervis, 1997; Geyer and Rehani, 2000). Employing complexity analysis to both understand and 'define' CDC as a new development concept is at a conceptually credible forefront that is evolving in many social fields (Byrne, 1998).

In considering next steps, two issues merit attention. One is the resistance and counter-arguments likely to be encountered. The other is an identification of where further effort would be of value in taking complex development beyond exploration.

### **6.1 Resistances**

Resistance to adopting a CDC approach is more than likely. Professional developers are not immune to valuing stability. They also rely on the repetitions that generate the resources needed for their work and for the forces creating necessary security. Complexity development will rock too many boats to be readily embraced.

A probably large obstacle stems from the inability or unwillingness of aid agencies to contemplate a development paradigm openly recognising that social change cannot be planned with any convincing level of accuracy or certainty. Showing that indeterminism does not mean that change is random will therefore require substantial effort in communication. It may also require significant investment in establishing practical alternatives - 'what must we do differently', 'can we have a Manual' - that simply may not be compelling enough to convince clients of the merits of effort in this direction. Mature politics are required to honestly argue 'maybe' rather than certainty in translating development investment into social change (Westley, et al, 2006).

Further, measures of achievement and attribution become on the one hand more difficult, but on the other less necessary. A complexity approach is much more agent-centred in philosophy

and understanding such that critical self-assessment can counter a lot of problems in monitoring and evaluation.

An additional probable constraint is that CDC is more overtly ‘political’ inviting inter-state problems. A possible response is to layer practice from less through to more assertive forms of civic agency.

Beyond the politics, even for those predisposed to do so, significant effort lies in the intellectual demands of letting go of deeply ingrained ways of thinking. The competencies required are not very amenable to ‘training’. It asks for greater personal reflexivity and iterative organisational progress.

## **6.2 Future investments**

Explorations in Part I suggest a wide area of topic and ideas that require more and detailed analysis. Of these, a few stand out meriting attention and investment.

Probably the most urgent and interesting effort required is to create methods that permit a cost-effective assessment of power distribution by type in relation to the compliance role played by diverse actors across all domains. Specifically, what actors in each domain abet or contest compliance with the existing order and impede popular control? Ways of answering this question would create a composite picture locating both civic agency and its impediments. This profile would help deploy civic power for social change (Eyben, Harris, and Pettit, 2006) as well as indicating entry points for capacity enhancement.

A second area of work is to draw together what is known about the resource base – both quantity and rule-related quality - on which civic association and agency work across the world. Resources are likely to be a limiting factor in the ability of empowering local (nonreformist) discourses to both emerge and propagate.<sup>34</sup> Results could provide aid financiers with information to re-look at the quality of resources they provide and practices going with them

Third, is using complexity analysis, category and tools to advance the very idea of capacity building itself. Relevant theory has moved far from a mechanical view of organisations to embrace systemic and complex interpretations but these are predominantly applied to the for-profit domain (e.g., Seel, 2004). This work can be usefully expanded.

Finally, efforts are needed to stimulate a community of practice around the conceptual deepening, research, experiment, innovation, application and growth of interest in complexity development. Hopefully, this publication will prompt initiatives in this direction.

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<sup>34</sup> As one observer cogently observes, the revolution will not be funded (Del Moral, 2005)

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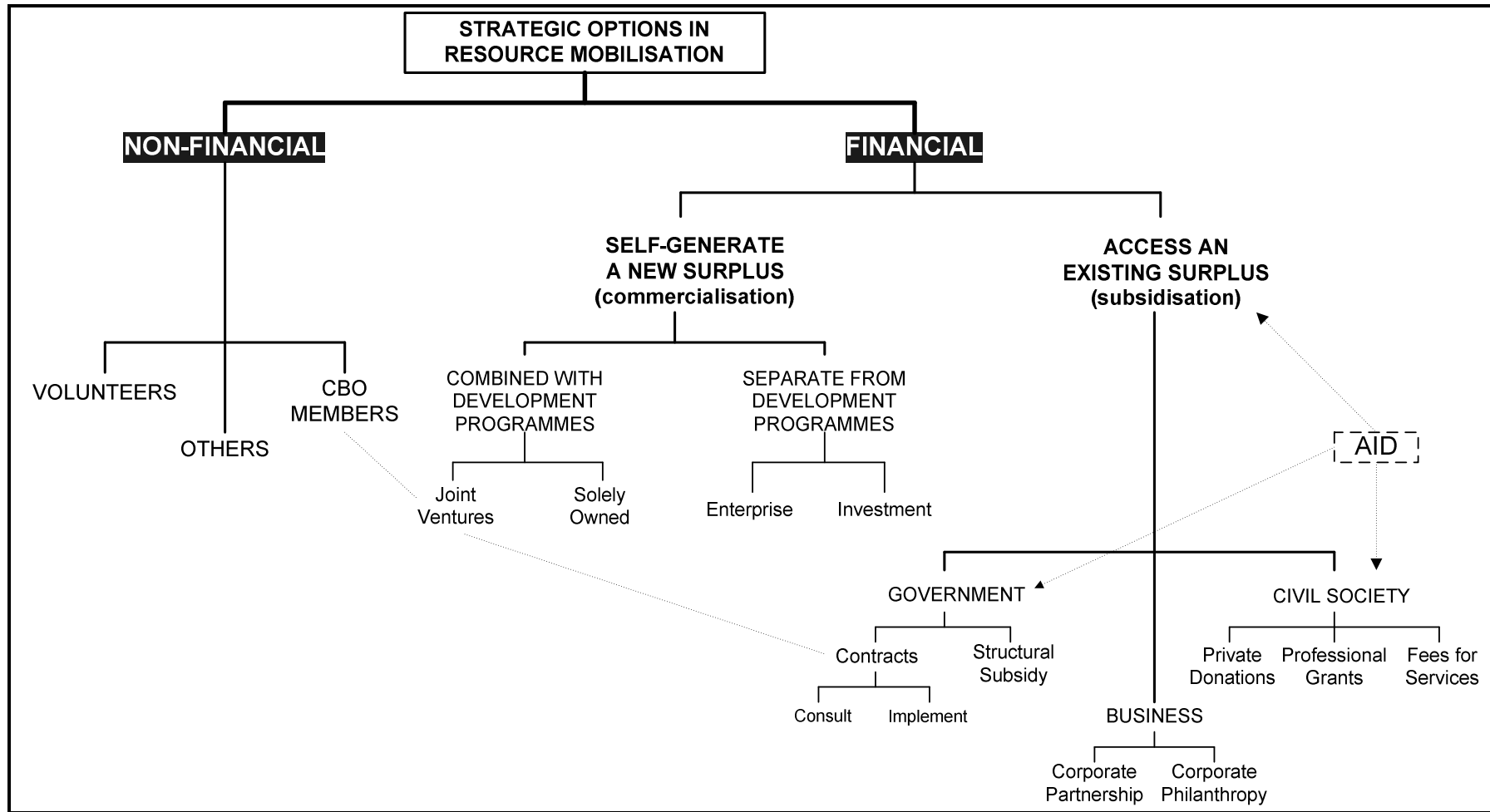
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**Annex I**



Source: Fowler, 2000:63.

## Annex II

### Terrains of civic self-mobilisation

<b>Political movements for social change</b>	<b>Traditional and cross-sectoral civil society movements</b>	<b>Issue-based civil society movements</b>
Political movements / parties representing values / ideas of social democracy, nationalism, socialism, autonomism, anarchism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Labour mvts (including unemployed movements, migration and workplace health/safety)</li> <li>2. Women’s mvts (including a variety of gender issues)</li> <li>3. Youth mvts (including children)</li> <li>4. Anti-war mvts (including arms sales, nuclear weapons, landmines)</li> <li>5. Anti-racism mvts (dating to abolition)</li> <li>6. Minority rights and ethnic mvts</li> <li>7. Civil rights mvts</li> <li>8. Democracy mvts (including transparency/corruption)</li> <li>9. Consumer mvts</li> <li>10. Indigenous rights mvts</li> <li>11. Human rights mvts</li> <li>12. Sexual identity mvts</li> <li>13. Disability rights mvts</li> <li>14. Cultural mvts (art/music/literature/crafts/vid)</li> <li>15. Religious mvts</li> <li>16. Solidarity mvts</li> <li>17. Elder rights mvts</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finance/debt/aid/investment</li> <li>2. Trade</li> <li>3. Economic subsectors (including recuperated factories)</li> <li>4. Corporate disempowerment and anti-consumerism</li> <li>5. Land/agriculture/forestry/fisheries</li> <li>6. Housing/urban access rights</li> <li>7. Water (including irrigation, groundwater, dams and rivers, household access, sanitation)</li> <li>8. Energy (including global warming, pollution, household access)</li> <li>9. Health (including treatment)</li> <li>10. Food/nutrition</li> <li>11. Social security</li> <li>12. Education</li> <li>13. Other environmental (including toxics, nuclear, mining, marine)</li> <li>14. Media</li> <li>15. Policing/prisons</li> <li>16. Information/ICT</li> </ol>

Source: Patrick Bond, 2007, ‘Global Governance’ or the World Social Forum: Divergent analysis, strategy and tactics”, Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal

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