GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY?

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A New Cosmology

All human orders, hunting and gathering societies included, have lived off shared images of the cosmos, world-views that served to plant the feet of their members firmly in space and time. Yet very few have fantasised the linking of the five oceans, six continents, and peoples of our little blue planet wrapped in white vapour. Each of these world-views in the strict sense emerged only after the military defeats suffered by Islam, in modern Europe. They included the forceful global acquisition of territory, resources, and subjects in the name of empire; the efforts of Christendom to piggyback on imperial ventures for the purpose of bringing spiritual salvation to the whole world; and the will to unify the world through the totalitarian violence of fascism and Marxism-Leninism. Each of these globalising projects left indelible marks on the lives of the world's peoples, their institutions and ecosystems, but each also failed to accomplish its mission. In our times, against the backdrop of those failures, the image of ourselves as involved in another great human adventure, one carried out on a global scale, is again on the rise. A new world-view, radically different from any that has existed before, has been born and is currently enjoying a growth spurt: it is called 'global civil society'.

These unfamiliar words 'global civil society'—a neologism of the last decade— are fast becoming fashionable. They were born at the confluence of three overlapping streams of concern among publicly minded intellectuals at the end of the 1980s: the revival of the old language of civil society, especially in central-eastern Europe, after the military crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968; the new awareness, stimulated by the peace and ecological movements, of ourselves as members of a fragile and potentially self-destructive world system; and the widespread perception that the implosion of Soviet-type communist systems implied a new global order.[1] Since that time, talk of global civil society has become popular among citizens' campaigners, bankers, diplomats, non-governmental organisations, and politicians—the term even peppered the speeches of former US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright (2000)—to the point where the words themselves are as fickle as they are fashionable. The phrase 'global civil society' must certainly be used with caution. Like all other vocabularies with a political edge, its meaning is neither self-evident nor unprejudiced. When used carefully as an ideal type, which can in turn be wielded for purposes of descriptive interpretation, or political calculation, or normative judgement,[2] global civil society refers to the contemporary thickening and stretching of networks of socio-economic institutions across borders to all four corners of the earth, such that the peaceful or 'civil' effects of these non- governmental networks are felt everywhere, here and there, far and wide, to and from local areas, through wider regions to the planetary level itself.

Global civil society is a vast, interconnected, and multi-layered social space that comprises many hundreds of thousands of self-directing or non-governmental institutions and ways of life. It can be likened—to draw for a moment upon ecological similes—to a dynamic biosphere. This complex biosphere looks and feels expansive and polyarchic, full of horizontal push and pull, vertical conflict, and compromise, precisely because it comprises a bewildering variety of interacting habitats and species: organisations, civic and business initiatives, coalitions, social movements, linguistic communities, and cultural identities. All of them have at least one thing in common: across vast geographic distances and despite barriers of time, they deliberately

[1] *Among the earliest expressions of these concerns is the theory of a 'world civic culture' in Boulding (1988); the idea of 'global civilization' in the working paper by Richard Falk (1990); the theory of the 'internationalisation' of civil society and the terms 'cosmopolitan civil society' and 'global' or 'transnational' civil society in Keane (1989; 1991: 135) and Ougaard (1990). Among the first efforts to draw together this early work is Lipschutz (1992: 389–420).*

[2] *The importance of distinguishing among these different usages is analysed in more detail in my introduction to Keane (1988[1998]; 1998).*

organise themselves and conduct their cross-border social activities, business, and politics outside the boundaries of governmental structures, with a minimum of violence and a maximum of respect for the principle of civilised power-sharing among different ways of life.

To liken global civil society to a vast biosphere that stretches to every corner of the earth is to underscore both its great complexity and, as we shall see, its vulnerability to internal and external interference. Just as nearly every part of the earth, from the highest mountains to the deepest seas, supports life, so too global civil society is now found on virtually every part of the earth's surface. To be sure, everywhere it is tissue-thin, just like the natural biosphere, which resembles a paper wrapping that covers a sphere the size of a football; and its fringes, where ice and permafrost predominate, are virtually uninhabited. In the interior of the Antarctic, only restricted populations of bacteria and insects are to be found; and even on its coasts there are very few living inhabitants. Global civil society is similarly subject to geographic limits: whole zones of the earth—parts of contemporary Afghanistan, Burma, Chechnya, and Sierra Leone, for instance—are no-go

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areas for civil society, which can survive only by going underground. But in those areas of the earth where it does exist, global civil society comprises many biomes: whole areas, like North America and the European Union, characterised by specific animals and plants and climatic conditions. Each biome in turn comprises large numbers of living ecosystems made up of clusters of organisms living within a non-living physical environment of rocks, soil, and climate. These ecosystems of global civil society—cities, business corridors, and regions, for instance—are interconnected. And they are more or less intricately balanced through continuous flows and recycling of efforts among, as it were, populations of individuals of the same species, which thrive within communities,

such as smaller cities, that are themselves embedded within non-living geographic contexts.

Biospheric similes are helpful in picturing the contours of global civil society, but they should not be overextended, if only because global civil society is not simply a naturally occurring phenomenon. Although it is naturally embedded within a terrestrial biosphere, global civil society is an ensemble of more or less tightly interlinked biomes that are in fact *social* processes. The populations, communities, and ecosystems of global civil society comprise flesh and blood, symbol-using individuals, households, profit-seeking businesses, not-for-profit non-governmental organisations, coalitions, social movements, and cultural-religious groups. Its biomes feed upon the work of charities, lobby groups, citizens' protests, small and large corporate firms, independent media, trade unions, and sporting organisations: bodies like Amnesty International, Sony, the Catholic Relief Services, the Federation of International Football Associations, Transparency International, the International Red Cross, the Ford Foundation, News Corporation International, and the Indigenous Peoples Bio-Diversity Network. Such bodies lobby states, bargain with international organisations, pressure and bounce off other non-state bodies, invest in new forms of production, champion different ways of life, and engage in direct action in distant local communities: for instance, through 'capacity-building' programmes that supply jobs, clean running water, sporting facilities, hospitals, and schools. In these various ways, the members of global civil society help to conserve or to alter the power relations embedded in the chains of interaction linking the local, regional, and planetary orders. Their cross-border networks help to define and redefine who gets what, when, and how in the world. Of great importance is the fact that these networks have the power to shape new identities, even to stimulate awareness among the world's inhabitants that mutual understanding of different ways of life is a practical necessity, that we are being drawn into the first genuinely transnational order, a global civil society.

Defined in this way, the ideal-type concept of global civil society invites us to improve our understanding of the emerging planetary order, to think more deeply about it, in the hope that we can strengthen our collective powers of guiding and transforming it. This clearly requires sharpening up our courage to confront the unknown and to imagine

different futures.[3] And it most definitely obliges us to abandon some old certainties and prejudices grounded in the past. The words 'global civil society' may be said to resemble signs that fix our thoughts on winding pathways that stretch not only in front of us but also behind us. To utter the words 'global civil society', for instance, is to sup with the dead, with an early modern world in which, among the educated classes of Europe, 'world civil society' meant something quite different than what it means, or ought to mean, today. Just how different our times are can be seen by dwelling for a moment on this older, exhausted meaning of 'world civil society'.

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Consider the works of two influential authors of the eighteenth century: Emmerich de Vattel's Le *droit des gens* (1758) and Immanuel Kant's *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784) and *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795).[4] These books stand at the end phase of a long cycle of European thinking which understands civil society (*societas civilis*) as the condition of living within an armed legal order that guarantees its subjects stable peace and good government. 'A State is more or less perfect according as it is more or less adapted to attain the end of civil society', wrote de Vattel, for whom the distinction between state and civil society was literally unthinkable. A civil society is a special form of government. It 'consists in procuring for its citizens the necessities, the comforts, and the pleasures of life, and in general their happiness; and in securing to each the peaceful enjoyment of his property and a sure means of obtaining justice, and finally in defending the whole body against all external violence' (de Vattel 1758: Ch. 1, section 6). Kant joined him in making it clear that civil society in this normative sense was not necessarily synonymous with the modern territorial state and its legal codes (*ius civile*). Their classically-minded theory of civil society emphasised that war- mongering among states and what Kant called the 'unsocial sociability' of subjects could be cured by subordinating them within a cosmopolitan alliance of states that is overridden and protected by its own legal codes. De Vattel insisted that states are obliged to respect and to protect what he called the universal society of the human race. 'When . . . men unite in civil society and form a separate State or Nation . . . their duties towards the rest of the human race remain unchanged' (1758: Ch. 1, section 11). Kant went further. He envisaged a 'law of world citizenship' (*ius cosmopoliticum*) which binds citizens and states into a higher republican commonwealth of states. This commonwealth, which resembles not a peace treaty (*pactum pacis*) but a league of peace (*foedus pacificum*), would put an end to violence for ever by treating its subjects as citizens of a new law-governed political union. This union he called 'universal civil society' (*einer allgemein das Recht verwaltenden bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*) (1784: fifth thesis).

The subsequent birth of modern colonial empires, the rise of nationalism from the time of the French Revolution, and the near-triumph of a global system of sovereign territorial states arguably confounded this eighteenth-century vision of global government or a world civil society. Two centuries later, the concept of 'international society', familiar in the work of scholars like Hedley Bull and Martin Wight, tried both to register this historical change and to preserve something of the old-fashioned meaning of *societas civilis*. The global system of interlocking territorial states was said not to resemble Hobbes' classic description of a lawless state of nature racked by deathly strivings after power over others. Territorial states were rather seen by Bull and others as socialised by the behaviour of other states. They were linked into 'the most comprehensive form of society on earth', an increasingly global framework of mutually recognised, informal customs, and formal rules: diplomatic protocol, embassy functions, multilateral treaties, and laws governing matters as diverse as trade and commerce, war crimes, and the right of non-interference (Bull and Holbraad 1978: 106). These state-enforced customs and rules that limit sovereignty by respecting it came to be called 'international society', a state-centred term that Hedley Bull considered to be a basic precondition of contemporary world order. International society, he

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[3] *A stimulating example of such rethinking that is guided by the idea of a global civil society is Edwards (2000).*
[4] *The emergence of the distinction between civil society and governmental/state institutions is examined in Keane (1988 [1999]).*

wrote, 'exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions' (Bull 1995: 13; see also Bull 1990).

Contours

The terms 'world civil society' and 'international society' still have their champions,[5] but from the standpoint of the new concept of global civil society their 'governmentality' or state-centredness are today deeply problematic. Neither the classical term *societas civilis* nor the state-centric concept of 'international society' is capable of grasping the latter-day emergence of a non-governmental sphere that is called 'global civil society'. These words, 'global civil society', may well sound old-fashioned, but today they have an entirely new meaning and political significance. This is why the quest to map and measure the contours of global civil society is essential for clarifying both its possible conceptual meanings, its empirical scope and complexity, and its political potential.

The principle is clear—theories without observations are bland, observations without theories are blind—but the task is difficult. Some sketchy data are available thanks to the path-breaking contributions of bodies like the Union of International Associations, the Index on Civil Society project supported by CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation), the Ford Foundation-funded comparative study of civil society in 22 countries, and this Global Civil Society Yearbook. These efforts confirm the widespread impression that, during the past century, the world has witnessed a tectonic—two hundred-fold—increase in the number and variety of civil society organisations operating at the planetary level.[6] Today, in addition to many hundreds of thousands of small, medium, and large firms doing business across borders, there are some 40,000 non-governmental, not-for-profit organisations operating at the global level; these international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) currently disburse more money than the United Nations (excluding the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund); while more than two-thirds of the European Union's relief aid is currently channelled through them.

The actual contours of global civil society nevertheless remain elusive, for understandable reasons. Histories of the globalisation of civil society—studies of the rise of cross-border business, religion, and sport, for instance—are in short supply.[7] Most data are nation-based and systems of national accounting provide few detailed statistics on the economic contribution of corporations with a global reach (see Chapter 1). Researchers also disagree about which criteria—book translations, diasporas, links among global cities, the spread of the English language, telephone traffic, geographic locations of Web-sites, the mobility patterns of corporate nomads—are the most pertinent for picturing the networked character of the emerging global society. In-depth, qualitative accounts of global summits, forums, and other eye-catching events like the global campaign against landmines and public protests against the G7 powers are also rare. And studies of the intimate details of everyday life, especially research that concentrates on the civilising and socialising effects at the global level of matters like food consumption and television news-watching, are virtually non-existent.

These empirical and technical barriers to mapping and measuring global civil society are compounded by a basic epistemological difficulty. Simply put, its actors are not mute, empirical bits and bytes of data. Linked to territories but not restricted to territory, caught up in a vast variety of overlapping and interlocking institutions, these actors talk, think, interpret, question, negotiate, comply, innovate, resist. Dynamism is a chronic feature of global civil society:

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[5] *Examples include Ralf Dahrendorf's stimulating neo-Kantian defence of a universal civil society in Dahrendorf (1988: 189): 'The next step towards a World Civil Society is the recognition of universal rights of all men and women by the creation of a body of international law.' Compare the argument that a 'mature anarchy' among states is a precondition of a strong 'international society' in Buzan (1991: 174–81).*

[6] *See the data covering the period 1909–97 presented in the Union of International Associations (1997-98: Vol. 4, 559); compare Risse-Kappen (1995), Matthews (1997: 50–66); and the misleadingly titled, country-by-country study by Lester M. Salamon et al. (1999).*

[7] *But on these topics see Hobsbawm (1989), Beeching (1979), and Maguire (1999).*

not the dynamism of the restless sea—a naturalistic simile suggested by Victor Pérez-Diaz (1993)[8]—but a form of self-reflexive dynamism marked by innovation, conflict, compromise, consensus, as well as rising awareness of the contingencies and dilemmas of global civil society itself. This civil society enables its participants—athletes, campaigners, musicians, religious believers, managers, aid-workers, medics, scientists, journalists, academics—to see through global civil society by calling it both *our* world and (more impersonally) *this* world. For this reason alone, those who speak of global civil society should not lose sight of its elusive, *idealtypisch* quality. The concept of global civil society has what Wittgenstein called 'blurred edges'. It is an ill-fitting term clumsily in search of an intelligent object that is always a subject on the run, striding unevenly in many different directions.

Sustained and deeper reflection on the subject, and a willingness to puncture old thinking habits, are definitely warranted. An example is the need to question the current tendency to speak of civil societies as 'national' phenomena and, thus, to suppose that global civil society and domestic civil societies are binary opposites. In fact, so-called domestic civil societies and the emerging global civil society are normally linked together in complex, cross-border patterns of looped and re-looped circuitry; or, to switch to similes drawn from the field of physics, the domestic and the global are marked by strong interactions of the kind that hold together the protons and neutrons inside an atomic nucleus. The use of ecological similes earlier in this essay may be questionable, but it serves the basic purpose of identifying the urgent need to develop theoretical imagery for better imagining global civil society, as it is and as it might become.

The rule of thumb, both in the past and in the present, is that the liveliest local civil societies are those enjoying the strongest links with the global civil society. So, in practice, the development of modern civil societies within the framework of European states and empires contained from the outset the seeds of their own transnationalisation. The roots of local civil societies are partly traceable to the revival of towns in Europe during the eleventh century, a revival that marked the beginning of the continent's rise to world eminence—and its laying of the foundations of a global civil society.[9] Although the distribution of these European towns—unusual

clumps of people engaged in many different tasks, living in houses close together, often joined wall to wall—was highly uneven, with the weakest patterns of urbanisation in Russia and the strongest in Holland, they were typically linked to each other in networks or archipelagos stretching across vast distances. Wherever these urban archipelagos thrived, they functioned like magnets that attracted strangers fascinated by their well-lit complexity, their real or imagined freedom, or their higher wages. Towns like Bruges, Genoa, Nuremberg, and London resembled electric transformers. They constantly recharged life by adding not only motion but also tension to its elements. Town-dwellers seemed to be perpetually on the move. The constant rumble of wheeled carriages, the weekly or daily markets, and the numerous trades—floor polishers, pedlars, sawyers, chair-carriers—added to the sense of motion across distance. All these occupations rubbed shoulders with members of the better sort: merchants, some of them

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very rich, masters, mercenaries, engineers, ships' captains, doctors, professors, painters, architects, all of whom knew what it meant to travel through time and space.

The winding, twisting layout of towns added to their appearance of geographic and social dynamism. Medieval Europe was one of only two civilisations—the other was Islam—that fashioned large towns with an irregular maze of streets. What was different about the medieval and early modern European towns was their unparalleled freedom from the political authorities of the emerging territorial states. Local merchants, traders, craft guilds, manufacturers, and bankers formed the backbone of a long-distance money economy endowed with the power to dictate the terms and conditions on which governments ruled. Seen in this way, urban markets were the cuckoo's egg laid in the little nests of the medieval

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8 *Compare my remarks on the self-reflexivity of actually existing civil societies in Keane (1998: 49ff.).*

9 *The section that follows draws upon Braudel (1981: Ch. 8). The urban origins of civil society are explored more fully in my work in preparation,* Global Civil Society?

towns. These nests were woven from various non-governmental institutions, which together with the markets helped to nurture something brand new: unbounded social space within which the absolutist state could be checked, criticised, and generally held at arm's length from citizens.

The birth of civil societies in this sense heralded the dawn of universal history marked by the constant reciprocal interaction between local and far-distant events (Aron 1978: 212–23). So it can be said that the eighteenth-century vision of cosmopolitanism defended by Vattel, Kant, and others was a child of local civil societies; and that cosmopolitanism was the privilege of those whose lives were already anchored in local civil societies. The other-regarding, outward-looking openness of these societies—their glimpse of themselves as part of a wider, complex world—constantly tempted them to engage that enlarged world. True, this worldliness, helped along by the superior naval power, deep-rooted pugnacity, and comparative immunity to disease that had earlier facilitated the rise of the West from around 1500 onwards often triumphed in violent, uncivilised form. Among its landmarks, which now appear barbaric by today's standards of civility, are the ruthless aggression of Almeida and Albuquerque in the Indian Ocean, the destruction of the Amerindian civilisations of Peru and Mexico, and the generalised hostility towards peoples as diverse as Muslim traders in the Mediterranean basin and aboriginal hunters and gatherers in such countries as Australia and Canada (McNeill 1963: Ch. 11). And yet—the birth and maturation of global civil society has been riddled with ironies—the worldliness of early modern civil societies undoubtedly laid the foundations for their later globalisation. An example is the colonising process triggered by the British Empire, which at its height governed nearly one-third of the world's population. Unlike the Spanish colonies, which were the product of absolute monarchy, the British Empire was driven not only by maritime-backed colonial power but also non-state initiatives, either for profit (as in the Virginia Company and the East India Company) or for religious ends, evident in extensive Christian missionary activity and the emigration of

dissenters: Puritans to New England, Quakers to Pennsylvania, Methodists to Australia, and Presbyterians to Canada.

Overdeterminations

The neologism 'global civil society' belatedly names this old tendency of local and regional civil societies to link up and to penetrate regions of the earth that had previously not known the ethics and structures of civil society in the modern European sense. But the neologism points as well to current developments that speed up the growth, and greatly 'thicken', the networks of transnational, non-governmental activities. What drives this globalisation of civil society? Its activist champions and their intellectual supporters sometimes pinpoint the power of autonomous moral choice. Treading in Gramsci's footsteps, usually without knowing it, they define global civil society as the space of social interaction 'located *between* the family, the state and the market and operating *beyond* the confines of national societies, polities, and economies' (Chapter 1, p.17). That leads them to speak, rather romantically, of global civil society as a realm of actual or potential freedom, as a 'third sector' opposed to the impersonal power of government and the greedy profiteering of the market (households typically disappear from the analysis at this point). 'Civil society participates alongside—not replaces—state and market institutions', write Naidoo and Tandon. Global civil society 'is the network of autonomous associations that rights-bearing and responsibility-laden citizens voluntarily create to address common problems, advance shared interests and promote collective aspirations' (1999: 6–7).[10] Such purist images reduce actually existing global civil society to campaign strategies harnessed to the normative ideal of citizens' autonomy at the global level. That in turn creates the unfortunate impression that global civil

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[10] *The more recent campaign writings of Kumi Naidoo develop less romantic and more sophisticated images of global civil society, which, however, continues to be understood as the space wedged between global market forces and various forms of government (see for example Naidoo 2000: 34–6).*

society is a (potentially) unified subject, a 'third force',[11] something like a world proletariat in civvies, the universal object-subject that can snap its chains and translate the idea of a 'World Alliance for Citizen Participation' (Tandon 1999: 5) into reality, therewith righting the world's wrongs.

Although many things can be said for and against these conceptions, it is worth noting here that their Gramscian bias, which draws a thick line between (bad) business backed by government and (good) voluntary associations, leads them to understate the over-determined character of global civil society. 'Solidarity and compassion for the fate and well-being of others, including unknown, distant others, a sense of personal responsibility and reliance on one's own initiative to do the right thing; the impulse toward altruistic giving and sharing; the refusal of inequality, violence, and oppression' (de Oliveira and Tandon 1994: 2–3)[12] are undoubtedly significant, even indispensable motives in the globalisation of civil society. But one-sided emphasis on the free civic choices of men and women has the effect of obscuring other planetary forces that currently constrain and enable their actions.

Turbo-capitalism

Turbo-capitalism is undoubtedly among the principal energisers of global civil society.[13] To understand why this is so, and what the term 'turbo-capitalism' means, a brief comparison needs to be made with the system of Keynesian welfare state capitalism that predominated in the West after World War II. For some three decades, market capitalist economies like the United States, Sweden, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Britain moved in the direction of government-controlled capitalism. In terms of the production of goods and services, firms, plants, and whole industries were very much national phenomena; facilitated by international trade of raw materials and foodstuffs, production was primarily organised within territorially-bound national economies or parts of them. Markets were embedded in webs of government (Hobsbawm 1979: 313). In the era of turbo-capitalism, by contrast, markets tend to become disembedded. Turbo-capitalism is a species of private enterprise driven by the desire for emancipation from taxation restrictions, trade union intransigence, government interference, and all other external restrictions upon the free movement of capital in search of profit. Turbo-capitalism has strongly deregulatory effects, and on a global scale. The transnational operations of some 300 pace-setting firms in industries such as banking, accountancy, automobiles, airlines, communications, and armaments—their combined assets make up roughly a quarter of the world's productive assets—no longer function as production and delivery operations for national headquarters (Barnet and Cavanagh 1995: 15). Bursting the bounds of time and space, language and custom, they instead function as complex global flows or integrated networks of staff, money, information, raw materials, components, and products.[14]

Admittedly, the degree to which turbo-capitalist firms operate globally, like border-busting juggernauts, should not be exaggerated. Turbo-capitalism has a marked geographic bias. Its home base frequently lies within the OECD countries, and the capital, technology, and trade flows that it effects tend to be concentrated, for the time being, within rather than among the European, Asian-Pacific, and NAFTA/Latin American regions.[15] Only one of the top 100 transnational corporations has its headquarters outside the OECD, and nearly 60 per cent of world trade is between high income countries (see Tables R3 and R2 in part IV of this Yearbook) Yet, wherever the turbo-capitalist economy gains the upper hand, it has definite globalising effects. It leads to sharp increases in profit-driven joint ventures and co-production, licensing and sub-contracting agreements among local, regional, and global firms. For the first time ever, modern capitalist firms have unlimited grazing rights. Helped along by trade and investment liberalisation and radical improvements in transportation and communication

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[11] *The temptation to see global civil society in this way is evident in the introduction to Florini (2000: 1–15).*

[12] *Similar views are defended in Korten (1990) and in Habermas (1996: Ch. 8). The chief theoretical limitations of the (neo-) Gramscian approach are analysed in my forthcoming* Global Civil Society? *and in Keane (1998: 15–19).*

[13] *The term 'turbo-capitalism' is drawn from Luttwak (1999). It will be seen that my substantive account of the impact of the process differs considerably from that of Luttwak.*

[14] *By 1997 there were some 53,000 transnational corporations with 450,000 foreign subsidiaries operating worldwide. They spanned the world's principal economic regions in virtually every sector, from finance, raw materials, and agriculture to manufacturing and services. Selling goods and services to the value of some US$9.5 trillion in 1997, these transnational enterprises accounted for 70 per cent of world trade and around 20 per cent of the world's overall production. Some relevant data are usefully summarised in Held and McGrew (2000: 25). (See Table R3 in part IV of this Yearbook)*

[15] *Compare Hirst and Thompson (1999) and Mittelman (2000: 20–1).*

technologies, they can do business anywhere in the world. The exceptions—North Korea, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone—prove the rule, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the beginning of the Chinese experiment with state-engineered market reforms. Some economists describe this trend in terms of the historic development of global commodity chains: geographically dispersed yet transactionally linked sequences of functions in which each phase adds market value to the overall worldwide process of production of goods or services (Gereffi 1996: 427–39; Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994: Ch. 5).

When Adam Smith famously analysed the 'division of labour' within the emerging civil societies of the Atlantic region, his references to the specialisation of workers within different parts of the production process had no specific geographic connotations. He could suppose that industries and services of all kinds enjoyed a 'natural protection' from foreign competition thanks to the vagaries of geographical distance. That supposition continued to be plausible even during the vigorous growth spurt of international economic integration before World War I and until two decades ago, when shallow integration (Dicken 2000: 5)—arm's length trade in goods and services among independent firms and through international movements of capital—was the norm. The system of turbo-capitalism, by contrast, draws everybody and everything within its wake into processes of deep integration, which extend from visible and invisible trading to the production of goods and services by means of globally connected commodity chains organised by transnational corporations.

These processes of deep integration are highly complex and uneven. Turbo-capitalism has unleashed globalising forces but this has not yet resulted in a fully globalised world economy. Turbo-capitalism does not lead to a 'global marketplace', let alone a 'global village'. Its effects are variable, ranging from very weak or non- existent forms of integration to very strong or full integration. At one end of the continuum stand whole peoples and regions who are routinely ignored by the dynamics of turbo-capitalism. Some parts of sub-Saharan Africa fall into this category; such areas, victims of 'capitalist apartheid'—a term used by the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto[16]—suffer the consequences of organised neglect by turbo-capitalist investors. Elsewhere, further along the continuum, straightforward exchange across vast distances between wealthy core and poorer peripheral areas—for instance, the exporting of granite mined in Zimbabwe to the kitchens and bathrooms of western Europe—is the norm. Then, at the opposite end of the continuum, there are sectors of economic life, like the highly unstable, twenty-four-hour financial speculation conducted in cities like New York, London, and Tokyo, in which the whole earth is a playground for turbo-capital.

Within the industrial and service sectors of global civil society, turbo-capitalism also slices through territorial and time barriers by bringing about highly complex forms of market integration involving the fragmentation of production processes and their geographical relocation and functional reintegration on a global scale. In accordance with what can be called the Low Cost and Safety Principle, turbo-capitalist firms globalise production by transferring sophisticated state-of-the-art production methods to countries where wages are extremely low. A number of poorer countries, Mexico and China among them, are consequently now equipped with the infrastructural means of housing any service or industrial operation, whether airline ticket and holiday telephone sales or capital-intensive, high-tech production of commodities like computers and automobiles. Such trade and investment within firms also leads to the formation of a global labour pool.[17] When businesses develop globally interconnected chains of investment, resources and finished products and services workers based in richer countries like Germany and France are effectively forced to compete with workers living in places—China, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea—where wages are

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[16] *De Soto (2000) argues that some five-sixths of humanity has been denied the economic fruits of globalisation.*

[17] *Estimates are that about a third of world trade is now taken up by trade between one part of a global firm and its other affiliates, and the proportion is growing. Such 'self-trading', oiled by so-called transfer pricing, is strongly evident in the operations of firms like General Electric, which like many other firms operating across the Mexican-US border ships machinery components to its own subsidiary in Nuevo Laredo.*

low and social entitlements of workers are either poorly protected or non-existent.[18]

Market Contradictions

The striking social discrepancies produced by market processes within global civil society have led some observers—Sakamoto Yoshikazu, for instance (2000: 98–116)—to question whether market forces with such destructive consequences properly belong within the category of global civil society. Yoshikazu's query is important, if only because it exemplifies the strong tendency within the existing academic literature on global civil society to draw upon the deeply problematic, originally Gramscian distinction between civil society—the realm of non-profit, non-governmental organisations—and the market— the sphere of profit-making and profit-taking commodity production and exchange. Yoshikazu, treading Gramsci's path, mistakenly conflates the different possible usages— empirical interpretation, strategic calculation, normative judgement—of the concept of global civil society. On that basis, his understandably strong dislike of the socially negative (disruptive or outright destructive) effects of market forces within actually existing civil societies moves him to banish the market altogether from the concept of global civil society. The reasoning secretly draws upon the distinction between 'is' and 'ought' in order to defend the latter against the former. The term global civil society is thereby turned into a normative utopia. Ethically speaking, it becomes a 'pure' concept: an unadulterated 'good', like a sparkling coveted diamond that all would want to prize, especially if offered it on a soft velvet cushion of fine words. Yoshikazu's normative reasoning is tempting—who but curmudgeons, ideologists, and crooks could be ethically opposed to civil society in his sense?—but it should be rejected, for three reasons. Normatively speaking, it implies that global civil society could in future survive without money or monetary exchanges, rather as nineteenth- century and early-twentieth-century communists disastrously imagined that future communist society would be bound together by such attributes as love, hard work, and mutuality. In matters of strategy, the purist concept of global civil society fares no better. If the aim is to create and/or to strengthen global civil society by displacing market forces, then anything related to the market—money, jobs, workers, trade unions— cannot by definition be of much use in struggles to achieve that civilising goal. Otherwise, the means—the commodification of social relations—would corrupt and potentially overpower the envisaged end: the humanisation of social relations. It seems, unrealistically, that global civil society will be possible only if people behave as good people. Work, trade unions, corporate philanthropy, small businesses, advanced technologies supplied by transnational firms: none of this (it is supposed) could or should play a part in the struggle to expand and thicken the cross-border social networks that comprise global civil society.

Finally, there is a strong empirical objection to the attempt to separate markets from global civil society. The dualism between market and global civil society wielded by Yoshikazu and others is a phantom, a bad abstraction, for in reality markets are always a particular form of socially and politically mediated interaction structured by money, production, exchange, and consumption. Global civil society as we know and experience it today could not survive for a day without the market forces unleashed by turbo-capitalism. The converse rule also applies: the market forces of turbo-capitalism could not last a day without other global civil society institutions, like households, community associations, regions, and linguistically shared social norms like friendship, trust, and non-violent cooperation.

To emphasise that market activity is always socially embedded runs counter to the view of those who warn that 'global capital' is a profits-hungry

> **. . . this one-sided emphasis on the free civic choices of men and women has the effect of obscuring other planetary forces that currently constrain and enable their actions.**

[18] *The figures are telling of this new development: in 1975, the top dozen exporters of goods were almost all rich capitalist countries with relatively small wage differentials. The highest average hourly wage was in Sweden (US$7.18); the lowest was in Japan (US$3), a differential of just under two-and-a-half times. By 1996, driven by the forces of Turbo-capitalism, a global labour pool had developed, with a corresponding dramatic widening of wage differences. The highest average hourly wages were found in Germany (US$31.87) and the lowest in China (US$0.31): a pay differential of more than a hundred times. The striking differences are of course compounded by much longer hours of work (sometimes up to 80 hours a week) and poorly protected working conditions in the low-wage sectors of the global economy. See Anderson and Cavanagh (2000: 30).*

juggernaut ruthlessly breaking down political borders and smashing through walls of social restraint embodied in local communities and other institutions. 'Cold-blooded, truly arm's-length and therefore purely contractual relations exemplify the entire spirit of turbo-capitalism', writes Luttwak (1999: 43). Such descriptions of the spread of global business correctly capture something of its swashbuckling, buccaneer, time-and-distance-conquering tendencies. They also point to its amoral profiteering as a consequence of companies' geographic separation of investment decisions and their social consequences. These descriptions pose a normative problem: the need to deal politically with the chronic tendency of

> **Global civil society as we know and experience it could not survive for a day without the market forces unleashed by turbo-capitalism**

commodity production and exchange to pick the locks of global civil society and to roam freely through its rooms, like a thief in the night. 'As long as capitalism remains triumphant', comments Soros, 'the pursuit of money overrides all other social considerations . . . The development of a global economy has not been matched by the development of a global society' (1999: 102).

While these claims are sobering, they arguably exaggerate the degree to which turbo-capitalism has become unhinged or disembedded from the emerging global civil society. No business, global business included, can properly function as business unless it draws upon and nurtures the non-market environment of civil society in which it is more or less embedded. The artificial distinction between 'the market' and 'global civil society' obscures this fundamental point and in so doing obscures a basic dynamic of our times: the tendency of turbo-capitalism to nurture and simultaneously disorder the structures of global civil society within which it operates.

It is important to grasp these positive and negative dynamics. On the positive, society-enhancing side, some sectors of global business greatly 'thicken' the communications networks that enable all organisations and networks to operate at the global

level. Under modern conditions, states rather than global businesses have often been the inventors of new technologies of transport and communication. While this rule holds true, say, for the World Wide Web and geostationary satellites, subsequent new investments in these and other communications technologies are typically market-driven: they go where the returns are high. The commercial introduction of these technologies, as well as wide-bodied jet aircraft, fibre optics, super-freighters, and containerisation, have several cumulative—revolutionary—effects. Through leased networks, organisations large and small can now operate over vast geographical distances, thanks to the growth of country-to-country links, regional hub-and-spoke networks, and global telecommunications services (Langdale 1989). There is a sharp reduction of both the operating costs and the time it takes both information and things and people to move from one part of the world to another. The friction of distance is greatly reduced.[19]

Business firms also have socialising effects by virtue of their tendency to cluster geographically in the ecosystems of global civil society, in towns and cities that form part of a wider region. They create regionally-based 'untraded interdependencies' (see Storper 1997; also Amin and Thrift 1994). Examples of such thriving regions include Seoul-Inchon, southern California, the M4 corridor, and the conurbations of Stuttgart, Tokyo, Paris-Sud, and Milan. The recently created Special Economic Zones, open coastal cities, and priority development areas in China also count as striking examples. Like bees to a hive, firms swarm to such places not simply because it is profitable (thanks to reduced transaction costs) but because their own profitability requires the cultivation of densely textured socio-cultural ties ('untraded interdependencies') that come with agglomeration. The regional civil society becomes the hive and propolis of business activity. Firms find that face-to-face interaction with clients, customers,

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[19] *The growth of market-driven communications within global civil society 'shrinks' the world, even though this time-space contraction is extremely uneven. Shaped like a slim octopus with the globe half in its clutches, influential cities, together with powerful national economies and globe-straddling firms, are drawn together as if they are part of the same body; but while certain places and people become the head and eyes and tentacles of global civil society, whole geographic areas and whole peoples, many millions of them, are left out and left behind in the spaces between the slim tentacles of communication.*

and competitors is easier. They find as well that their chosen patch contains social spaces for gathering business information, monitoring and maintaining patterns of trust, establishing common rules of business behaviour, and socialising with others: in places like clubs, bars, cinemas, theatres, sports venues, and restaurants. And the regional civil society acts as 'technopole' (Castells and Hall 1994) or 'technology district' (Storper 1992). It enables firms to enhance their capacity for technical innovation: they can better develop, test, mimic, and track innovations, find new gaps in the market, and react more quickly to changing patterns of demand.

Turbo-capitalist firms, aided by the local and regional networks of smaller firms with which they do business, also have definite civilising effects on the global civil society in which they are embedded. For a start, the hundreds of thousands of firms that inhabit the markets of global civil society are generally antipathetic to violence. Some of them, in certain contexts, have shameful records of colluding with the violence of political authorities hell-bent on destroying their opponents—as happened in South Africa before the revolution against apartheid, or as now happens in the global small arms industry. There are even global businesses, like the diamond and cocaine trades, that operate through murderous networks of armed guerillas. Yet—the qualification is important— most global businesses share a commonly perceived, long-term interest in the eradication of violence. Their chief executive officers, for instance, do not like working within the deathly shadows of knee-capping, abduction, or murder. In general, the conduct of business, which requires the freedom to calculate risk over time, prudently and without interruption, is made difficult or impossible when violence threatens, which is why investment is chronically low, or non-existent, in zones of uncivil war, like Sierra Leone, southern Sudan, Chechnya, and parts of the former Yugoslavia.

Turbo-capitalist firms also generate—for some people—income, goods and services, and jobs (50 per cent of the world's manufacturing jobs are now located outside the OECD region, a twelve-fold increase in four decades). These firms produce some measure of 'social capital' by training local employees in such skills as self-organisation, punctuality, and forward-looking initiative. Particularly in the field of consumer retailing, through commercial radio and

television, firms also engage local cultures for the purpose of constructing convincing worlds of more or less shared symbols, ideas, and values. Consumer retailing by transnational conglomerates demonstrates the obsolescence of the neo-Gramscian distinction between struggles for meaningful authenticity (for instance, in the idioms of food, dress, language, music, and dance) in the realm of 'civil society' as narrowly conceived by Yoshikazu and others, and money-centred conflicts over wealth and income in 'the economy'. To the extent that global civil society becomes media-saturated, with intense pressure to consume, conflicts about the generation of wealth and income within 'the economy' are

> **Most global businesses share a commonly perceived, long-term interest in the eradication of violence. Investment is chronically low, or non-existent in zones of uncivil war.**

simultaneously disputes about symbolic meanings (see Ong 1999). The development of up-market services—hotels in Dubai boasting seven-star status and featuring exotic menus of breaded Dover sole and char-grilled bison fillets—and the down-market retailing of products like McDonald's, Pepsi, and American television programmes to the villages of south Asia and central America and to cities like Shanghai, Sydney, Johannesburg, and Cairo, if anything, have the effect of accentuating local cultural diversity within global civil society. This is partly because profit-seeking, turbo- capitalist retailers themselves see the need to tailor their products to local conditions and tastes; and also because (as Marshall Sahlins has wittily pointed out[20]) local consumers display vigorous powers of reinterpreting and 'overstanding' these commodities, thus giving them new and different meanings.

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[20] Sahlins (1999: 34): 'Why are well-meaning Westerners so concerned that the opening of a Colonel Sanders in Beijing means the end of Chinese culture? A fatal Americanization. But we have had Chinese restaurants in America for over a century, and it hasn't made us Chinese. On the contrary, we obliged the Chinese to invent chop suey. What could be more American than that? French fries?'

Market Failures

Caution should certainly be exercised on this last point, for the truth is that global corporations today enter our living rooms aglow in public-image or 'pro-social' advertising. Many firms, backed up by high-flying, well-paid 'ethics officers', present the world with their 'we too are citizens of the world' corporate credo and do their best to distract their (potential) critics from saying that these firms employ eight-year-olds in sweatshops or brazenly trample upon the environment. Corporate advertising is a potential menace when it comes to understanding clearly the dynamics of global civil society. Although turbo-capitalism feeds and fuels the delicate social ecosystems of the emerging global civil society, sadly this is only half the story, essentially because turbo-capitalism also operates as a contradictory force within global civil society. Like a predator, it misuses and depletes its resources, endangers some of its species, even ruining whole habitats, the effects of which ricochet throughout the ecosystems of global civil society. Not surprisingly, the predatory effects of turbo-capitalism meet resistance: global resistance that ranges from micro-experiments with credit unions, maximum wages, and time banks, through petitions (like the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which has collected 25 million signatures worldwide in favour of debt cancellation—see Chapter 3) to militant street protests by individuals and groups, gas masks and megaphones in hand, who are convinced that the cutting edge of anti-capitalist politics is extra-parliamentary.

The sources of this protest against turbo-capitalism are not hard to find. To begin with, the business units of turbo-capitalism chronically exercise what C. B. Macpherson (1973: 42–50; 71–75) once called 'extractive power' over their workers and other dependents, for instance through day-by-day hiring and firing practices and their ability to pay ruinously low, take-it-or-leave-it wages. These businesses also have at their disposal the power to ruin others' lives by deciding to invest here and not there, or instead by moving their investments from here to there. Global civil society is also under great

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pressure to adopt more or less unaffordable turbo-capitalist living standards, many of them originally American, like automobility, Windows 2000, microscooters, Mastercards, shopping malls, and endless chatter about 'choice'. If during the eighteenth century a cosmopolitan was typically someone who thought *à la française*, who in other words identified Paris with cosmopolis, then three centuries later, thanks to turbo-capitalism, a cosmopolitan might turn out to be someone whose tastes are fixated on New York and Washington, Los Angeles, and Seattle.

Pressured by turbo-capitalism, global civil society, which otherwise displays a strong tendency towards polyarchy, naturally cradles new property relations, with staggering discrepancies in wealth and income distribution. The economies of giant firms like Ford and Philip Morris exceed the gross domestic products of countries like Norway and New Zealand. Meanwhile, a small elite of winners, the 'transnational managerial class' (Cox 1986), less politely the bourgeois cosmocracy—corporate executives, peripatetic lawyers, rock-stars, jet-age nomads living in penthouse apartments in choice locations, like the Upper East Side of Manhattan—monopolises more than its share of wealth and income. The combined wealth of the world's richest 200 billionaires reached an astonishing US$1.1 trillion in 1999, the year in which the combined incomes of 582 million people living in the least developed countries was US$146 billion, or less than a dollar a day. The three richest people in the world own assets that exceed the combined GDP of the world's 48 poorest countries (Hirsh 2000: 79; Mittelman 2000: 246). For the time being, this bourgeois cosmocracy exercises power globally over a mass of survivors or losers of varying affluence or poverty. They do so despite the opposition of market-shy governments and the growth of new forms of transnational protest, like the recent battles for the streets of Seattle, Prague, and Québec City led by groups like Earth First! and the Ruckus Society, and backed up by contingents of farmers, environmentalists, students, aboriginal rights activists, and trade unionists.

Not surprisingly—a final item on the balance sheet—turbo-capitalism strengthens the hand of market domination over the non-profit institutions of civil

society, which are twisted and torn into bodies that obey the rules of accumulation and profit-maximisation. Some non-governmental organisations formerly dependent on government funding, like the Seattle-based service agency Pioneer Human Services, opt for self-financing through their own for-profit business enterprises. Market forces produce great inequalities among INGOs: Greenpeace, with a $100 million annual budget, and the World Wildlife Fund, with $170 million, are wealthier than the UN Environment Programme and most other state-level governments they deal with (Shaw 2000: 14). In some sectors, it is as if the emerging global civil society is merely the appendage of the turbo-capitalist economy. Some non-governmental organisations—so-called business NGOs or BINGOs—even explicitly model themselves on business enterprises by developing commercial departments, head-hunters, media sections, and private fund-raising and investment strategies. The neat division between the corporate and NGO worlds consequently becomes blurred.

The New Medievalism

Although turbo-capitalism is arguably the force that most strongly energises the non-governmental sector from within, global civil society is not simply its child. To repeat: global civil society is overdetermined by various forces. It is a 'syndrome' (Mittelman 2000) of processes and activities which have multiple origins and multiple dynamics, some of them—like the recent collapse and discrediting of communism—more conjunctural than deep-seated. Together, these forces ensure that global civil society is not a single, unified domain and that it is not turned into something that is coming to resemble a combined factory, warehouse, and shopping mall retailing consumer products on a global scale—let's say, a version of Disney's 'Its a Small World After All'. Global civil society is not simply reducible to the logic of commodity production and exchange, which helps to explain why the ideal of a global civil society currently appeals to an astonishing variety of conflicting social interests, ranging from groups clustered around the World Bank to broad-minded Muslims defending their faith and radical ecological groups pressing for sustainable development.

If the institutions of global civil society are not merely the products of civic initiative and market forces, then is there a third force at work in nurturing and shaping it? It can be argued that global civil society is also the by-product of state or inter-state action, or inaction. Examples are easy to find. Most obvious is the set of political institutions and agreements that play a vital role in fostering the growth of turbo-capitalism, for instance the 'Final Act' of the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations, a 1994 agreement that had the backing of 145 states and that led to the establishment of the World Trade Organisation and to the extension of the principle of freer trade into such areas as copyrights, patents, and services. Meanwhile, in fields like telecommunications and air, land and sea traffic, political bodies such as the International Postal Union, most of them resting formally on agreements to which states are signatories, exercise formidable regulatory powers that enable many parts of global civil society to keep moving at a quickening pace (see Tables R6 and R10 in part IV of this Yearbook).

Government agencies, much more than corporate philanthropy, also currently play a major, positive-sum role in protecting, funding, and nurturing non-profit organisations in every part of the earth where there is a lively civil society (Salamon 1999, see also Pinter, Chapter 8).[21] Included in this category are civil organisations that operate on the margins of the governmental institutions that license them in the first place. Examples include the International Committee of the Red Cross which, although non-governmental, is mandated under the Geneva Convention and is linked to states through the organisation of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; similarly, the International Association of Religious Freedom, a forum for inter-religious dialogue, has accredited NGO status at the UN and UNESCO levels. State-funded systems of mass higher education linked together by shared languages, common teaching and research methods, staff and student exchanges, and compatible hardware also fall into this category of state-enabled civil organisations. Governmental institutions also sometimes operate as important catalysts of activity within global society, for instance by hosting global conferences like the much-publicised 1992 Global Forum and Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, and the follow-up women's and population conferences in Beijing and Cairo (see Pianta, Chapter 7).

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[21] *The comparative findings are cited in Evans (1997); and on the funding of Japanese INGOs by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, see Menju and Aoki (1995).*

This logic of catalysis is also evident in the proliferation of human rights groups like Charter 77 after the 1975 signing of the Helsinki Accords, one of whose 'baskets' required signatories to guarantee the civil and political rights of their citizens; similar catalytic effects have resulted from the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights, where 171 states reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of the 'universal nature of the rights and freedoms' specified in the International Bill of Human Rights.

These well-known examples illustrate the less familiar rule that global civil society should not be thought of as the natural enemy of political institutions. The vast mosaic of groups, organisations, and initiatives that comprise global civil society are variously related to governmental structures at the local, national, regional, and supranational levels. Some sectors of social activity, the so-called anti-government organisations (AGOs), are openly hostile to the funding and regulatory powers of state institutions. Other sectors, for instance those in which the acronym NGO rather means 'next government official', are openly collaborative, either serving as willing contractors for governments or aiming at dissolving themselves into governmental structures (Tendler 1982). Still others (GONGOs or GRINGOs, like the International Air Transport Association and the World Conservation Union) are the dependent creations of state authorities. In between these two extremes stand those social actors (for example, Médecins sans Frontières, Oxfam, Greenpeace) who slalom between self-reliance and legal and political dependency. They form ad hoc partnerships with governments; lobby donor intergovernmental bodies like the World Bank to change their policies; and work with other non-governmental organisations in rich and poor countries, zones of peace and war alike.

More reflection is definitely needed on the complex, unstable relationship between global civil society and the hotchpotch of political-legal institutions in which it is embedded (see Young 1994; Rosenau and Czempiel 1992). One important generalisation can safely be made, which is that unlike the early modern civil societies, which typically

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hatched within the well-established containers of empires and territorial states, global civil society has emerged and today flourishes in the absence of a global state or world empire. Practising the art of *divide et impera* from below, well-organised actors within global civil society, turbo-capitalist firms for instance, often manage to transform territorial governments into their submissive courtesans or to evade the regulatory hand of such governments, whose own attempts to guard jealously their own remaining sovereign powers ties the hands of transnational governing bodies like the United Nations.

Those who conclude from these trends that the term 'global civil society' is therefore meaningless—as if the term could only ever be the Siamese twin of the term 'global state' (Brown, 1999)—overlook the novelty of our situation. It is true that there is currently no global state and that it is most improbable that in future one could be developed, assuming that it would be desirable to do so. The current growth spurt of global civil society under 'lawless' conditions outpaces governments of all descriptions, and it contains within it a pressing constitutional agenda: the need to find the appropriate form of global governance so that something like publicly accountable, multi-level government can develop on a global scale.

There is currently no consensus about what form this agenda might take, partly because of the inordinate strength of those forces that champion unregulated, free market turbo-capitalism *über alles* and partly because some of their opponents slam 'globalisation' in the name of stronger and more nationalist territorial states or through vague notions of 'deglobalisation' and the 'deconcentration and decentralisation of institutional power' through 'the re-empowerment of the local and the national' (Bello 2000). It should be obvious that global civil society requires political and legal protection through legal and political bodies that guarantee basic freedoms of association, protect those whose voices are ignored, enforce contracts, preserve property, and rule against violent crimes (Christenson 1997; Falk 1992). Less obvious is which courts, governments, or governing regimes are reliably capable of granting such protection. Some political theorists defend the

neo-Kantian principle of a transnational democratic legal order, a community of all democratic communities, something resembling a global *Rechtsstaat* of the kind implied in Art. 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration can be fully realised.' Others anticipate a second-best scenario that owes everything to Emmerich de Vattel: a complex international system of nominally sovereign, democratic states that are the voting members in a variety of international forums. Still others foresee a new compromise between these two options: a cosmopolitan process of democratisation through which citizens gain a voice within their own states and in sites of power among their states (Archibugi and Held 1994).

There are evidently no guarantees that any of these competing views can or will prevail, not least because the form of political-legal institutions that currently frames global civil society has much more in common with the world addressed in Johannes Althusius's *Politica* (1614), a many-sided world of overlapping and potentially conflicting political structures, primordial groups, and differently sized political associations, and federalist strivings for both particularism and universalism, community, and ecumene (see Althusius 1614; von Gierke 1966 [1880]). From a normative point of view, it may be that this Althusian world of political structures will facilitate a new, multi-layered global political settlement defined by a core of institutions designed to rein in the most destructive behaviours and a periphery of governing institutions based on more voluntary and non-coercive regulations (Edwards 2000). This is the undecided future. For now, it is clear that global civil society is today flourishing within a thoroughly modern, strangely 'neo-medieval' mélange of overlapping legal structures and political bodies that come in all shapes and sizes. The emerging patterns of regulation of the Internet are a pertinent example. The healthy mix of self-regulation and no regulation that once characterised the medium is now withering away. So too is the presumption that the Internet abolishes both geographical boundaries

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and territorially based laws. In fact, a regulatory net is being cast over the Internet by three intersecting types of political institutions. Territorial states like South Korea have outlawed gambling Websites; in Britain, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act has granted the police broad powers of access to e-mail and other online communications; and a French court has banned the Internet portal firm Yahoo! from providing French users with images of Nazi memorabilia otherwise posted on its American sites. Meanwhile, supranational institutions are also experimenting with their regulatory powers. A new European Union law drawn from the Brussels Convention entitles consumers to sue EU-based Internet sites in their own countries so long as it can be proved that the site was targeted at their countries; the Hague Convention aims to enforce foreign judgements in matters such as contractual disputes, libel and intellectual property claims; and the Council of Europe has drafted the world's first global treaty on cyber-crime, which aims to harmonise laws against hacking, child pornography, and Internet fraud (see Naughton, Chapter 6). Finally, the 'neo-medieval' pattern of multiple jurisdictions is reinforced by moves by e-commerce firms to claw back regulatory powers through so-called mechanisms of alternative dispute resolution: in effect, they are pushing for a new market-based system of private laws which would enable companies to operate outside of the courts within a minimum framework of 'safe harbour' rules guaranteeing privacy and consumer protection.[22]

This mélange of political and legal structures in the field of the Internet is present in many other policy areas, so much so that the so-called system of 'global governance' hardly deserves the name 'system'. It comprises a clutter of nation states and regional and local governments; intergovernmental agencies and programmes, like United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as well as intergovernmental structures with sectoral responsibilities like the World Trade Organisation and the OECD; and the International Court of Justice and other global institutions seeking

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[22] *Economist, 13 January 2001: 25–7.*

to enforce the rule of law. The hotchpotch system of global governance also includes global accords, treaties, and conventions such as the Montreal Protocol covering ozone levels; policy summits and meetings like the Davos World Economic Forum; and new forms of public deliberation and conflict resolution like truth commissions that have a global impact. Summarising the dynamics of these interacting and overlapping neo-medieval structures is not easy, but they are undoubtedly having the effect of slowly eroding both the immunity of sovereign states from suit and the presumption that statutes do not extend to the territory of other states. There are many tendencies in this direction. INGOs are licensed by bodies like the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Non-governmental groups participate in election monitoring and as *amici curiae* in the proceedings of such bodies as the European Court of Justice and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. War crimes cases are given global publicity thanks to new bodies like the Hague Tribunal; the project of establishing an international criminal court is nearly completed; and local courts show ever greater willingness to prosecute symbolically 'foreign' acts of wrongdoing.[23]

An Earthly Paradise?

Such 'legalisation' of global civil society, the effort to remedy its permanent crisis of representation by giving it legal and political voices and injecting the principle of public accountability into governing institutions, has deeper roots in the post-eighteenth-century opening of state constitutions to international law (Stein 1994). It arguably helps stabilise and perhaps strengthen this society, even though it does not turn it instantly into paradise on earth. Global civil society is certainly rich in freedoms beyond borders, for example, to invest and to accumulate money and wealth; to travel and to reunite with others; to build infrastructures by recovering memories, protecting the vulnerable, and generating new wealth and income; to denounce

and to reduce violence and uncivil war; and, generally, to press the principle that social and political power beyond borders should be subject to greater public accountability. Such freedoms are currently unfolding in a hell-for-leather, Wild West fashion, and are also very unevenly distributed. The freedoms of global civil society are exclusionary and fail to produce equalities; in other words, global civil society is not really global. It is not a *universal society*.

Vast areas of the world, and certainly the large majority of the world's population who live there, are excluded. They are made to feel like victims of a predatory mode of foreign intervention: they are shut out from global civil society, or uprooted by its dynamism, imprisoned within its discriminatory structures and policies, like unpayable debt-service payments, or victimised by scores of uncivil wars (Dallmayr 1999; Falk 1999: Chs 3, 5, 8). Still others—many Muslims say—are made to feel that the enormous potential of global civil society to expand dialogue among civilisations, to 'affirm differences through communication', is being choked to death by the combined forces of global markets and military might, manifested for instance in the violent repression of the Palestinians by the dangerous alliance between the United States and Israel.[24]

Then there are the cruel facts of communication poverty. Three-quarters of the world's population (which now totals 6 billion) are too poor to buy a book; a majority has never made a phone call; and only 1 per cent currently have access to the Internet (Keane 1999). All these points serve to fuel the conclusion that global civil society is currently a string of oases of freedom in a vast desert of localised injustice. Not only that, but the privileges within this oasis cannot be taken for granted, for the plural freedoms of global civil society are threatened constantly by the fact that it is a breeding ground for manipulators who take advantage of its available freedoms. The growth of borderless exchanges encourages winners, global corporations for instance, to cultivate ideologies that slake their thirst for power over others. Free market, IMF ideologies linked with turbo-capitalism—talk of deregulation, structural

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[23] *From the* Los Angeles Times *(11 August 2000: A11) comes a random example: the order, applied during early August 2000 by a US District Court in Manhattan, requiring Radovan Karadzic to pay $745 million to a group of twelve women who filed a civil suit, accusing him of responsibility for killings, rapes, kidnappings, torture, and other atrocities.*

[24] *Interview with Professor Abou Yaareb al-Marzouki, Hammamet, Tunisia, 18 April 2001.*

adjustment, opportunity, risk-taking, consumer choice—have a strong affinity with these corporate winners.

Borderless exchanges also produce strong political reactions in favour of the local and national, for instance among losers who react to their dis-empowerment resentfully by taking revenge upon others, sometimes cruelly, guided by ideological, uncivil presumptions like xenophobic nationalism. In other words, global civil society is constantly threatened with takeovers in the name of some or other organised ideology. Ideologies like the free market and nationalism take advantage of the growth of global civil society by roaming hungrily through its free social spaces, treating others as competitors or as enemies to be defeated or injured or left to starve to death. Inequalities of power, bullying, and fanatical, violent attempts to de-globalise are chronic features of global civil society. Understood normatively as a transnational system of social networks of non-violent polyarchy, global civil society is a wish that has not yet been granted to the world.

On Violence

Violence is undoubtedly among the greatest enemies of global civil society, whose tendency to non-violence stems partly from the fact that its participants more or less share a cosmopolitan outlook, for instance by displaying a strong dislike of war, a facility for languages, or a commitment to ordinary courtesy and respect for others. Given this tendency towards non-violence, it should come as no surprise that the contemporary revival of interest in civil society and the corresponding invention of the new term 'global civil society' have much to do with such twentieth-century experiences as total war, aerial bombardment, concentration camps, and the threat of nuclear annihilation. World War II was undoubtedly a turning point in the contemporary history of global civil society. That global war certainly encouraged post-colonial and 'liberation' struggles and hence the spread of the modern territorial state system throughout the rest of the world (Badie 1992). But it also triggered exactly the opposite trend: the long-term delegitimisation of state sovereignty because of the total mobilisation and sacrifice of untold millions by both victorious and vanquished states, who stood accused for the first time (in the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals) of committing not just war crimes but the 'crime of war' (Habermas

1997: 126; see also the important study by Bass 2000). There followed a nuclear age, in which the chilling fact of nuclear-tipped sovereignty has brought the world together by subjecting it to the permanent threat of mutually assured destruction many times over.

Today, global civil society lives in the shadow of an unresolved problem: the role to be played by nuclear-tipped states in the post-cold war world system. This system is dominated by the United States, the world's single superpower, which can and does act as a 'swing power' backed by nuclear force. As such, it is engaged in several regions without being tied permanently to any of them, but its manoeuvres are complicated by the fact that it is presently forced to coexist and interact peacefully with four great powers, three of whom are nuclear powers: Europe, China, Russia, and Japan (Buzan 2000). The geometry of this arrangement clearly differs from the extended freeze imposed by the cold war, when, according to Raymond Aron's famous formula, most parts of the world lived in accordance with the rule, 'peace impossible, war unlikely'. With the collapse of bipolar confrontation, this rule has changed. There is no evidence of the dawn of a post-nuclear age and the freedom from the fear of nuclear accident or attack that that would bring. Nowadays, as Pierre Hassner (1995) has put it so well, peace has become a little less impossible and war is a little less unlikely, principally because a form of unpredictable anarchy has settled on the whole world.[25] The probability of a nuclear apocalypse, in which the earth and its peoples are blown sky-high, may have been reduced, but major wars remain a possibility, including even the use of nuclear-tipped weapons in conflicts that originate in local wars.

Future historians may well look back on the past half-century and see it as the prelude to a barbarous form of Hobbesian 'mediaevalism' (first envisaged by Guglielmo Ferrero), a global order riddled with violence, suspicion of enemies, and restless struggles that produced universal fear. Perhaps indeed our fate has been so decided. And yet, among the most promising signs within global civil society is the renewal of a civilising politics, that is, networked public campaigns against the archipelagos of incivility

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[25] *See the concluding interview in Hassner (1995), especially p. 332: 'In the past, the doctrine of deterrence matched the civil character of our societies: an invisible hand, or abstract mechanism, took charge of our security, and we did not have to bother our heads with it. But today the nuclear issue can no longer be considered in isolation; it is inextricably mixed up with everything else.'*

existing within and beyond its frontiers. These campaigns have a long history (see White 1968; Pei-heng 1981: Ch. 2; Seary 1996). They extend back in time, for instance to movements against slavery and trafficking in women and children; the birth of the International Committee of the Red Cross (first named the International Committee for Relief of Wounded Soldiers) after the 1859 Battle of Solferino; the founding of The Save the Children Fund after World War I; and Médecins Sans Frontières after the Biafran War. Oxfam, established to provide civilian relief to Greece when it was still under Nazi occupation, against the wishes of the British government, counts as another example.

Such civil initiatives against incivility, the attempts to build 'bridgeheads' for expanding the reach of global civil society, are today a feature of all zones of violence. Some efforts, like that of Saferworld, are aimed at publicising and restricting global arms flows. Other organisations like Human Rights Watch actively 'witness' others' suffering in violent areas like Burma, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and southern Sudan. Or they push for the elimination of landmines or biological weapons, or (like Amnesty International, which has more than one million members in 162 countries) campaign against political repression, especially maltreatment of the body and unfair imprisonment. Still others attempt to negotiate ceasefires or to provide comfort for lives ruined when civilians are turned into refugees. And some groups find themselves targets of global criticism for prolonging or complicating uncivil wars, for instance by sheltering hostages, feeding aggressors, or serving as cover for warring armies.

Social campaigns to civilise global civil society—to democratise or publicly control the means of violence (see Keane 1995a)—are among its vital preconditions. Yet they are hampered by countervailing trends, which are perhaps better described as a single dilemma that the defenders of global civil society need to recognise, to worry about, and practically to address. Put simply, the dilemma confronting global civil society is that while it is vulnerable to violence, whether from within or without, and needs armed protection, its members (by

definition) do not have the available means of violence (police and standing armies) to eradicate that violence unless of course they resort to picking up the gun to wield violence—against themselves (see Kaldor, Chapter 5).

This weakness of global civil society is partly traceable to its own plural freedoms: to the extent that global civil society enjoys such freedoms it can easily be taken for a ride by mercenaries, gangs, wired-up hooligans, mafia, arms traffickers, terrorists, private security agents, and psycho-killers, all of whom cavort with the devil of violence by using, misusing, and abusing the peaceful freedoms of that society (see Findlay 1999). Global civil society is further threatened by the fact that the organised violence (potentially) needed to protect its citizens has a nasty habit of getting out of hand: arms breed arrogance, thereby threatening everything that global civil society stands for. As the merchants of the early civil societies of the Italian city-states first recognised,[26] standing armies are as dangerous as they are necessary. The citizens of global civil society thus require limited armed protection.

If that is so, then defenders of global civil society must bite the bullet, quite literally. For among the most difficult political problems yet to be solved is if, how, and when armed intervention can legitimately be used to keep alive, even to extend, the project of global civil society. Many activist supporters of global civil society understandably shy away from talk of violence: like the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, they have a principled commitment to active non-violence or they have simply seen enough of violence and therefore pragmatically prefer pacific means of protecting and nurturing the lives of defenceless citizens. Conventional 'realists', by contrast, doubt that civil society can become the good-natured cavalry of freedom. They point out that might often triumphs over right. They defend the formula that sovereigns are those who actually decide to use force to protect citizens, which begs hard normative questions about who can and who should shield our

> **The freedoms of global civil society are exclusionary and fail to produce equalities; in other words, global civil society is not really global. It is not a universal society.**

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[26] *See the remarks on the relationship between markets and organised violence by Lasswell (1935: 23).*

emerging global civil society from violence, and under what circumstances. The answer provided by the post-Shoah advocates of 'just' or humanitarian war—that the violent enemies of global civil society should be fought wherever they make a move—arguably legitimises eternal war, particularly in a world bristling with incivility.

Or does it? The geo-military scope of non-nuclear humanitarian intervention is arguably constrained by the fact that the United States, despite its ability to act as a 'swing power', is presently forced to coexist and interact peacefully with the four great powers of Europe, Japan, China, and Russia. Not only that, but especially under 'post-Vietnam', conditions, when log-rolling politicians' fear of casualties leads them to rely on the use of computerised, 'risk-free', aerial bombardment as their preferred means of 'humanitarian inter-vention', war can be waged only by the superpower, it seems, in a very limited number of uncivil contexts: like those of Kosovo, where the marauding forces to be bombed are geographically strategic but without powerful friends, and weak enough to be defeated easily but sufficiently strong to make the sensible calculation to refrain from using further violence (see Luttwak 2000; other limitations of 'post-heroic' aerial bombardment are examined in Ignatieff 2000*a*, *b*). These preconditions of successful military intervention are exacting. They imply that most patches of the earth where global civil society has made little or no headway—Russia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia—are for the moment safe in their outright opposition to its principles and practice.

Hubris

Hubris is also an enemy of global civil society. Its critics, including those who question the very concept because there is 'no common global pool of memories; no common global way of thinking; and no "universal history", in and through which people can unite' (Held 1995: 125; the same point is made in Bozeman 1984), overlook or understate the advantages of the heterogeneity of global civil society. It resembles a bazaar, a covered kaleidoscope of differently sized rooms, twisting alleys, steps leading to obscure places, people and goods in motion. It is marked by increasing differentiation, thickening networks of ever more structures and organisations with different but interdependent *modi operandi*, multiplying encounters among languages and cultures, expanding mobility, growing unpredictability, even (despite growing numbers of full-time moderators and mediators) a certain depersonalisation and abstractness of its social relations. Such complexity is sometimes said to be a threat to democracy (Matthews 1997: 64). That is false, as John Dewey (1978) long ago emphasised, for the struggle against simplified definitions of 'the social good' is a hallmark of a mature civil society. It is nevertheless true that complexity alone does not release global civil society from the laws of hubris. It is not only that the plural freedoms of global civil society are severely threatened by a political underworld of secretive, unelected, publicly unaccountable institutions, symbolised by bodies like the IMF and the WTO. The problem of hubris is internal to global civil society as well: just like the domestic civil societies that form its habitats, global civil society produces concentrations of arrogant power that threaten its own openness and pluralism.

Stronger legal sanctions and armed protection can ameliorate these inequalities, but are there additional ways of ensuring that its social freedoms can be nurtured and redistributed more equally at the world level? The growth since the mid- nineteenth century of a globe-girdling, time-space conquering system of communications, beginning with inventions like overland and underwater telegraphy and the early development of international news agencies like Reuters and culminating in the more recent development of geo-stationary satellites, digitalised media, and the growth of giant media firms like Thorn-EMI, News Corporation International, Sony, and Bertelsmann is arguably of basic importance in this respect (Hugill 1999). It goes without saying that this global communications system is an integral—

> The contemporary revival of interest in civil society has much to do with such twentieth–century experiences as total war, aerial bombardment, concentration camps, and the threat of nuclear annihilation.

supremely aggressive and oligopolistic—sector of today's turbo-capitalism. Ten or so vertically integrated media conglomerates, most of them based in the United States, dominate the world market (Herman and McChesney 1997). They prioritise advertising-driven commercial ventures: music, videos, sports, news, shopping, children's and adults' filmed entertainment. Programme-making codes, in the field of satellite television news for instance, are consequently biased in various ways. They are subject to specific rules of mise-en-scène. And material fed to editors by journalists reporting from or around trouble spots (called 'clusterfucks' in the vernacular) is selected, shortened, simplified, repackaged, and then transmitted in commercial form.

Yet for all these turbo-capitalist biases, global communications media do not simply produce turbo-capitalist audiences who are politically inactive. 'The dictatorship of the single word and the single image, much more devastating than that of the single party', laments Eduardo Galeano, 'imposes a life whose exemplary citizen is a docile consumer and passive spectator built on the assembly line following the North American model of commercial television'.[27] Such laments are overdrawn, partly for reasons (cited above) to do with the marketing process itself: the retailing of products like American movies has had the effect of enhancing local cultural diversity within global civil society, partly because profit-seeking, turbo-capitalist retailers themselves see the need to tailor their products to local conditions and tastes. Local consumers of commercial television reciprocate: they display vigorous powers of investing these commodities with new and different meanings.

The globalisation of media has also had a rich, if wholly ironic, political effect, especially from the time of the protest of youth against the Vietnam War: it has contributed to the growth of a plurality of differently sized public spheres, some of them global, in which many millions of people witness mediated controversies about who gets what, when, and how (see Keane 1995b).[28] Not all global media events—sporting fixtures, blockbuster movies, media awards, for instance—sustain global public spheres. But within the besuited world of diplomacy, global

business, inter-governmental meetings, and NGOs, thanks to wide-bodied jet aircraft, computerised communications, and satellite broadcasting with large footprints, the public practice of non-violently monitoring the exercise of power across borders has taken root. These global public spheres—the term is used here as an ideal type—are sites within global civil society where power struggles are visibly waged and witnessed by means other than violence and war: they are the narrated, imagined non-violent spaces within global civil society in which millions of people witness the powers of governmental and non-governmental organisations being publicly named, monitored, praised, and condemned, despite barriers of time and space.

Although still rather issue-specific and not yet strongly institutionalised, global public spheres, helped along by initiatives like Transparency International and nurtured by channels like CNN and the BBC World Service (which attracts 150 million viewers and listeners each week), have several interesting effects, some of which are 'pre-political'. Global public spheres, for instance, interpolate citizens of the new global order, in effect telling them that, unless they find some means of showing that global civil society is not theirs, then it is. In this way, global public spheres function as temporary resting places beyond familiar horizons; they give an entirely new meaning to the old watchword of Greek colonisation, 'Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*'. Within global public spheres, people rooted in local physical settings increasingly travel to distant places, without ever leaving home, to 'second homes' within which their senses are stretched.

Hailed by media narratives that probe the wider world in tones of (ironic) intimacy, the members of global civil society become a bit less parochial, a bit

> The dilemma confronting global civil society is that while it is vulnerable to violence, its members do not have the available means of violence to eradicate that violence

[27] Eduardo Galeano, cited in the epigraph in Herman and McChesney (1997: vi). More prudent assessments are presented in Ong (1999); Packer (1995); and Schudson (1997).

[28] Adam Michnik has suggested that the recent growth of global public opinion can be seen as the rebirth in different form of an earlier parallel trend, evident within nineteenth-century socialist internationalism, that came to an end with World War I (interview, Washington DC, 21 April 2001).

more cosmopolitan. Global publics are taught lessons in the art of flexible citizenship: they learn that the boundaries between native and foreigner are blurred and that they have become a touch more footloose. They learn to distance themselves from themselves; they discover that there are different temporal rhythms, other places, other problems, other ways to live. They are invited to question their own dogmas, even to extend ordinary standards of civility—courtesy, politeness, respect—to others whom they will never meet (Toulmin 2000). Global public spheres centred on ground-breaking media events like Live-Aid can even be spaces of fun in which millions taste something of the joy of acting publicly with and against others for some defined common purpose. Global publics, like the recent UN-sponsored multimedia event 'A World Freed of Violence Against Women', can also highlight cruelty; and global publics can also be sites of disaster, spaces in which millions taste unjust outcomes, bitter defeat, and the tragedy of ruined lives.

The public spheres housed within global civil society also have more directly political effects. Especially during dramatic media events—like the nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl, the Tiananmen massacre, the 1989 revolutions in central-eastern Europe, the overthrow and arrest of Slobodan Milosevic—public spheres intensify audiences' shared sense of living their lives contingently, on a knife edge, in the subjunctive tense. The witnesses of such events are encouraged to feel that the power relations of global civil society, far from being given, are better understood as 'an arena of struggle, a fragmented and contested area' (Keck and Sikkink 1998), the result of moves and counter-moves, controversy and consent, compromise and resistance, peace and war. Public spheres not only tend to denaturalise the power relations of global civil society. They most definitely increase its self-reflexivity, for instance by publicising conflicting images of civility, civilisation, and civil society. Publicity is given as well to the biased codes of global media coverage and to hostile coverage of global civil society itself, for instance by airing claims that it is a soft term without specific gravity, a Western dogma, a mere smokescreen for turbo-capitalism, that is, a mere vehicle for 'the useful idiots of globalization' (Rieff 1999).

In these various ways, global public spheres heighten the topsy-turvy feel of global civil society. Doubt is heaped upon loose talk that anthropo-morphises global civil society as if it were a universal object/subject, the latest and most promising

> **The problem of hubris is also internal to global civil society: it produces concentrations of arrogant power that threaten its own openness and pluralism**

substitute for the proletariat or for the wretched of the earth. Global public spheres make it clearer that 'global civil society', like its more local counterparts, has no 'collective voice', that it alone does nothing, that only its constituent individuals, group initiatives, organisations, and networks act and interact. Global publics consequently heighten the sense that global civil society is an unfinished, permanently threatened project. They shake up its dogmas and inject it with energy. They enable citizens of the world to shake off bad habits of parochialism, to see that talk of global civil society is not simply Western bourgeois ideology, even to appreciate that the task of painting a much clearer picture of the rules of conduct and dowries of global civil society, a picture that is absent from most of the current literature on globalisation, is today an urgent ethical imperative.

Democracy

The contemporary growth of global publics certainly points to the need to bring greater democracy to global civil society.[29] By throwing light on power exercised by moonlight or in the dark of night, global publics keep alive words like 'freedom' and 'justice' by publicising manipulation, skulduggery, and brutality on or beyond the margins of global civil society. Global publics, of the kind that in recent years have monitored the fate of Aung San Suu Kyi, muck with the messy business of exclusion, racketeering, ostentation, cruelty, and war. They chart cases of intrigue and double-crossing. They help audiences to spot the various figures of top-down power on the world scene: slick and suave managers and professionals who are well-practised at the art of deceiving others through images; kingfishers who first dazzle others then stumble when more is required of them; quislings who willingly change sides

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[29] *The exclusion of the theme of public spheres from virtually all of the current literature on globalisation is criticised by Slaatta (1998). A similar point is made implicitly by Appadurai (2000).*

under pressure; thugs who love violence; and vulgar rulers, with their taste for usurping crowns, assembling and flattering crowds, or beating and tear-gassing them into submission.

Global public spheres can also probe the powers of key organisations of global civil society itself. Reminders are served to those who read, listen, and watch that its empty spaces have been filled by powerful but unaccountable organisations (like the WTO and the International Olympic Committee) or by profit-seeking corporate bodies that permanently aggravate global civil society by causing environmental damage or swallowing up others by producing just for profit rather than for sustainable social use. Global public spheres can as well help question some of the more dubious practices of some non-profit INGOs: for instance, their bureaucratic inflexibility and context- blindness, their spreading attachment to market values or to clichés of project-speak, or their mistaken belief in the supply-side, trickle-down model of social development. Public spheres can point to the post-colonial presumptuous-ness of some INGOs, their bad habit of acting as their brothers' keepers, like missionaries, in so-called 'partnerships' that are publicly unaccountable. And public spheres can criticise their smartly-dressed, self-circulating, middle-class elites, sometimes dubbed the 'Five Star Brigade', whose privileges and privileged behaviour contradict the principles for which global civil society should otherwise be rightly cherished its diversity of equal organisations, its open toleration of differences, the speed and flexibility with which it forms complex, shifting alliances around a plurality of shared values and interests.[30]

Exactly because of their propensity to monitor the exercise of power from a variety of sites within and outside civil society, global public spheres—when they function properly—can help to ensure that nobody monopolises power at the local and world levels. By exposing corrupt or risky dealings and naming them as such; by wrong- footing decision-makers and forcing their hands; by requiring them to rethink or reverse their decisions, global public spheres help remedy the problem—strongly evident in the volatile field of global financial markets, which turn over US$1.3 trillion a day, 100 times the volume of world trade—that nobody seems to be in charge. And in uneven contests between decision-makers and decision-takers—as the developing controversies within bodies like the International Olympic Committee show—global public spheres can help prevent the powerful from 'owning' power privately. Global publics imply greater parity. They suggest that there are alternatives. They inch our little blue and white planet towards greater openness and humility, potentially to the point where power, whenever and wherever it is exercised across borders, is made to feel more 'biodegradable', a bit more responsive to those whose lives it shapes and reshapes, secures or wrecks.

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[30] *Some of these undemocratic tendencies within non-governmental organisations—satirised in the South African joke that those lucky to have an NGO job can 'EN-J-OY' life—are discussed in Ndegwa (1996: esp. Ch. 6); Smith (1990); and Sampson (1996).*

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