

South Africa's evolving civil society landscape:
Donors and selected civil society organisations.
Case Studies

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is original work by the author and has not been submitted in any other form or to any other university. Where use has been made of the work of other authors and sources it has been accordingly acknowledged and referenced in the body of the dissertation.

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Abstract

One of the central pillars of the new developmental agenda of the 1990s is a vibrant and plural civil society. It has been argued that civil society is not only crucial to safeguarding democracy but to extending democratic space. The absence of democratic accountability has often been cited in explaining poor levels of development in Africa. Given the resource weakness within civil society organisations in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa many multilateral and bilateral donors have intervened to support and manufacture civil society. While these interventions have been going on little work has gone into theorising the forms of civil society that would broaden democratic space. Donors have largely intervened to implement civil society building programmes that are to their liking.

This research paper reviews recent literature. It evaluates the claims and the practice of donor agencies. The paper also identifies key areas of donor interest, the deployment of funding in pursuance of those interests and how these interests are shaping civil society engagement. The paper argues that the structure of funding is acting to exclude certain organisations that may hold the key to ensuring democratic accountability. It also reviews the emerging literature on the ideological changes that have attended the new developmental agenda of the late 1990s and their links with the civil society building process.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the rationale for this dissertation; it formulates the problem statement, discusses its potential value, lays out the underlying theoretical paradigms and provides an overview of the following chapters. It also presents the necessary insight into the reasons and predispositions behind the way in which the study was followed.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

One of the dominant developments of the 1990s was the mainstreaming of civil society as crucial to democracy (Putnam 1993, Hagenius and Uggala 1996). For some time there appeared to be broad consensus on the importance of civil society. Beckman (1993) contends that the "liberation of civil society from the suffocating grip of the state has become the hegemonic ideological project of our time" (20). According to Habib and Kotze (2002), the power and importance of civil society was "lauded by everybody from the World Bank to small grassroots groupings and movements in the South" (4). On the left *"this versatile idea has become an all-purpose catchword... embracing a wide range of emancipatory aspirations, as well as – it must be said – as a whole set of excuses for political retreat"* (Wood 1990: 60). In *Advancing Philanthropy*, William White of the Mott Foundation argued that in eastern, central Europe and the former USSR, United States Foundations had "an open window of opportunity ... to help nurture the establishment of democracy" and that "the development of a civil society" was critical "if democracy [was] to flourish there" (cited in Katz, 1994: 34). For Africa especially, this situation appeared at the same time as certain Cold War geopolitical considerations had fallen away and the failure of the state came to the fore. Essentially, scepticism about the ability of the African state to deliver on development had heightened while Cold War machinations on containing communism had vanished. For those intent on re-shaping Africa this presented an unprecedented opportunity. "In Africa, more than in any other region, the international community has scope to nurture and influence the fate of democracy" (Diamond 1997:35).

With the new global order as epitomised by Francis Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama: <http://home.freeuk.com/ethos/endhist>) leaving the academia and taking practical shape, the narrow path to the creation of a 'proper' state was seen to be through the promotion of a 'proper' civil society (Beckman 1993). According to Stacey and Aksartova (2001) many American Foundations got in on the civil society bandwagon. Katz (2000) argues that these institutions "frequently identified 'civil society' as a concept helpful in developing strategies of assistance [for democracy].... 'Civil society,' it is argued provides a paradigm for conceptualising strategies to create the preconditions for democracy in transitional nations" (Katz, 2000:16). Quigley's research on foundations concluded that key strategies in aiding democracy in eastern and central Europe after 1989 involved supporting "civil society as the best means available to [them to assist] democracy" (Quigley, 1997:104). According to Renz (1998) US Foundations in the 1990s showed "a renewed interest in the role of civil society vis-à-vis the state," and while at the same time noting that geopolitical developments in the last decade had "thrust non governmental, voluntary, and citizen action groups into the spotlight" (507-508).

Stacey and Aksartova (2001) note that an important lesson stemming directly from recent transitions to democracy in Latin America and Poland was the crucial role-played by civil society. Some critics while acknowledging the importance of civil society to political transition in these regions caution against the uncritical and wholesale embrace of the benefits of civil society. Earlier critics such as Rousseau (cited in Noumoff 2000) observed that civil society was "a swindle of the rich designed to remove the threat to private property by making laws favouring the rich" (3). Current critics charge that the 'liberation of civil society' plays a vital role in the struggle to legitimate the shift in balance of forces, both internally and globally, and to de-legitimise resistance and contending options (Beckman 1993). Underlining all this is the rout of communism by capitalism. As part of a broader project, civil society is seen as no more than a cog in the neo-liberal machine deployed to make the world compliant to capital. For instance Noumoff (2000) points out that this has been a longstanding United States "drive for hegemony" (10). He quotes Gramsci from 1934:

Americanisation requires a particular environment, a particular social structure (or at least a determined intention to create it) and a certain type of state. This state is the liberal state, not in the state of free-trade liberalism, or of effective political liberty, but in the more fundamental sense of free initiative and of economic individualism,

which with its own means, on the level of civil society, through historical development, itself arrives at a regime of industrial concentration and monopoly (Gramsci cited in Noumoff 2000: 10).

Beckman's (1993) essential argument appears to be that the notion of civil society is part of a more specific attack on the Third World state in addition to the general pressure of economic globalisation. Beckman (1993) asserts that "the state vs. civil society' discourse offers an arena for de-legitimation" of the Third World state. He further charges that civil society is therefore substituted for the 'nation' as the principal locus of legitimation. From this perspective the civil society vis-à-vis state is an attempt to weaken or demobilise the nation state to facilitate economic globalisation and elite nation interests. According to Noumoff (2000) the conceptual boundaries of current civil society have been established within a liberal paradigm and that "an assertion of neutrality, notwithstanding, mask[ing]s a drive for total ideological hegemony" (2).

One of the consequences of scepticism about the Third World state's ability to deliver was the emergence of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as key conduits for developed countries to effect development. Oftentimes this was undertaken without going through states that not only lacked capacity to do development but also were often perceived as predatory or not interested in development. But a key lesson from the early work of donors is that they themselves did not escape some measure of blame for the ineffectiveness of the African state and the role of aid in general. For instance multiple conditionalities foisted by donors have also been regarded as key aspects in the ineffectiveness of aid. Stiglitz (2002) makes a distinction between conditions and conditionalities. The former refers to a set of basic conditions that increase the likelihood that the loan will be repaid. The latter "refers to more forceful conditions, ones that often turn the loan into a policy tool" (Stiglitz 2002:44). The loan is then disbursed in instalments tied to measurable or verifiable compliance with a particular policy direction.

This study will look at some aspects of civil society in South Africa. Why South Africa? South Africa is an important site for a number of reasons. It is seen playing a leading role especially given President Mbeki's promptings of an African renaissance and more recently the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) initiative. In addition South Africa is regarded as strategic for other considerations, for instance in 1995 South Africa was the second largest African recipient of US aid after Egypt (Hearn 1999). American philanthropic organisations have similar conclusions. For instance South Africa

was a major focus of Carnegie's civil society and democracy promotion efforts. Carnegie argued that "the demand for democratic governance and participatory societies" in the rest of Africa was "spurred on by South Africa," and that South Africa's experiences stimulated it to try "to clarify the requisite conditions for sustaining Africa's emerging democracies and to encourage democratic reformers (Carnegie Corporation 1996:29).

1.2 Problem Statement

Many pressures impact on civil society organisations in their endeavour to influence public policy. It is not the purpose of this study to attempt a comprehensive account of South African civil society. It is concerned with but one factor, namely the impact that donor funding has on the independence and effectiveness of CSOs in post-apartheid South Africa. The purpose is to probe for an impressionistic understanding of what is happening in order to contribute to the demystification of the concept and indeed relevance. This paper will therefore focus on a select group of civil society players. With regard to donors it will look at United States Agency for International Development (*USAID*) and the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, a German political foundation. The paper will explore how these organisations conceive of civil of society with regard to their work in South Africa. *USAID* argues that it supports civil society initiatives "because a healthy and robust civil society is a critical element of the consolidation of South Africa's emerging democracy, a strategic objective supported by *USAID* in South Africa" (*USAID* 2000: 1). Critical to this study *USAID*'s New Partnership Initiative declares that it "will focus significant resources on strengthening civil society and helping to restructure the relationship between states and civil societies" (cited in Kakarala 2001: 3).

This dissertation impressionistically explores the extent to which donors and the direction of donor funding has been instrumental in the form that civil society is taking and coalitions emanating there from. It will pay special attention to priority area setting by donors and how this apparent agenda setting filters to the work done by civil society organisations (CSOs). For instance *USAID* acknowledges that it works with a select group of CSOs in an attempt to impact public policy. A central focus will be to unravel how priorities are set particularly with regard to funding of civil society. This research will employ a case study approach to look at NGOs involved in activities that aim to influence public policy. The research looks at *Chapter 2 Network*, which is an

organisation that provides support for civil society organisations involved in advocacy in South Africa. This organisation is an arm of *Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA)*, which began as a forum and mediating body for discussions and negotiations between blacks and whites within South Africa. *Chapter 2 Network* is a recipient of *USAID* support. Following *USAID* funding the research will also investigate the *Centre for Public Participation (CCP)* and the *Centre for Civil Society (CCS)* at the University of Natal, Durban. The research will also look, as it attempts a comparative study of democratisation models, at the direction of the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation*, which has an ostensibly different model on civil society. It will look at one of the Foundation's partners namely the *Democracy Development Programme (DDP)* that aims to build capacity in civil society organisations. (www.racism.gov.za/pr/workshop). The research also takes a look at the *Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)*, an organisation that receives support from both the *USAID* and the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation*. The research looks at *South African Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition (SANGOCO)*.

1.3 Potential value of the study

Assessments of how selected institutions understand civil society and how they link civil society to democracy is important because it elucidates and confronts the pressures that are shaping civil society and democracy in South Africa. Democracy is after all a contested term. It will pay close attention to who gets funding, why and the kind of work they are involved in, in all the cases. It will be of value in interrogating the claims that civil society can act as a bulwark against state oppression or indeed the potential for state oppression, that civil society can act as democratising agent through assuming a watchdog role. While it does not make a direct attempt to conceptualise such a civil society, it does assess the trajectory of South Africa against these broad claims. For instance Hearn (1999) found while looking at civil society in South Africa, Uganda and Ghana that civil society organisations committed to promoting liberal democracy and economic liberalism were the most popular with donors. A tentative attempt will be made to assess the extent to which donor funded institutions influence state policy vis-à-vis other civil society institutions.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As civil society is a contested concept, definitions vary depending on which characteristics are stressed. According to Anheier and Carlson (2002), "some definitions primarily focus on aspects of state power, politics and individual freedom, others more on economic functions and notions of social capital and cohesion" (2). They argue that civil society has in the 20th century come to be associated with notions of civility, popular participation and civic mindedness (Verba et al. 1995), the public sphere (Habermas 1992), social capital (Putman 1993 and 2000; Coleman 1988 and 1990), culture (Gramsci 1971) and community (Etzioni 1971, 1993).

The complexity of civil society and the many relations and intersections it has with the economy, the state and institutions like the family, the media or culture, makes it not only possible but almost necessary to examine the concepts from different perspectives and orientations. Some analysts adopt an abstract, systemic view and see civil society as a macro-sociological attribute of societies, particular in the way state and society relate to each other. Others take on a more individualistic orientation and emphasise the notions of individual agency, citizenship, values and participation, using econometric and social network approaches in analysing civil society. There is also an institutional approach to study civil society by looking at the size, scope and structure of organisations and associations, and the functions they perform (Anheier and Carlson 2002:2).

According to Gramsci (1971) civil society plays a crucial role in the formation of values, norms and identifications. Civil society does not merely implant or reproduce practices but it is an arena of social contestation. It is therefore a site of alliances, an arena where collective identities form and in the case of transitional states such as South Africa where progress towards nation building is gauged. Cohen (1998) asserts that twentieth century analysts make a distinction between informal networks and social movements on one hand and formal voluntary associations, institutions and organisations such as parties and unions on the other. "Social movements articulate new social concerns and projects; they generate new values and collective identities. In struggles over democratisation, they seek to reform not only the polity, but also the institutions of civil society" (www.puaf.umd.edu/IPPP/summer98/american_civil_society).

Following Anheier and Carlson (2002), this dissertation takes the view that the different perspectives are not necessarily contradictory, "nor are the various approaches to

understand it necessarily rival; to the contrary, they are often complementary and differ in emphasis, explanatory focus and policy implication rather than in principle" (2)

Key Theoretical Concepts

Hegemony

Hegemony is a Greek term that originally referred to the power of a single state over others. Litowitz (2000) contends that this understanding of the term prevailed throughout the centuries, for instance, to describe the power of Prussia over various German states or the power of France over its colonies. Marx and Engels used the term in the same sense. The concept has over time been broadened to describe the ideological power of a particular class or classes over other classes in a given society and/or across nation states. Apposite to this study, it also describes the dominance of northern donors over the CSOs, which are recipients of funding from these donors.

Piven and Cloward (1977) argue that historical experience and commonsense point to clear sources of power in a given society. They argue that those who "control the means of physical coercion, and those who control the means of producing wealth, have power over those who do not" (1). They continue:

Since coercive force can be used to gain control of the means of producing wealth, and since control of wealth can be used to gain coercive force, these two sources of power tend over time to be drawn together within one ruling class (Piven and Cloward: 1977)

Gramsci (1971) argued that social control requires power at two levels namely coercion and consent. In his view, coercion refers to the ability of a state to ensure compliance due to monopoly control of the police, the army and other coercive instruments at its disposal. Consent describes the ability of dominant classes to persuade subordinate classes to "accept, adopt and interiorise the values and norms which dominant groups themselves have adopted and believe to be right and proper" (Miliband 1990: 346). Miliband (1990) sees this as the strong meaning of "hegemony-as-consent". The core argument is that the power of a social group is maintained not only by forced compliance but by also taking control of civil society – "the vast network of contacts, associations, families, churches, and informal gatherings in which people move from day to day without direct involvement from the state" (Litowitz 2000:523).

[T]he 'spontaneous consent' given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant group; this consent is "historically caused" by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production (Gramsci 1971:12).

Under such a situation domination does not merely reside in the state but is manifested in popular imagination, the education system, the work of intellectuals, religion and the arts. For Gramsci (1971) the "the foundation of a directive class [*class dirigente*] (i.e of a State) is equivalent to the creation of a *Weltanschauung*," (381) a dominant worldview. According to Piven and Cloward (1977), as this superstructure of beliefs and rituals develops within a patently unequal context, "it is inevitable that beliefs and rituals reinforce inequality, by rendering the powerful divine and the challengers evil" (1). Critical for this study, Litowitz (2000) asserts that it "stands to reason that the decline in physical force is related to the increasing use of persuasion and conformity as mechanism of social order"" (524). Put another way: When domination is internalised and naturalised, the need for external coercion falls away.

The establishment of a dominant worldview requires instruments of universalisation, naturalisation and rationalisation. With universalisation, the dominant group is successful in portraying sectarian interests as the common or national interests of all people (Gramsci cited in Litowitz 2000). By naturalism, a certain way to life becomes 'reified' to a point where 'culture' is equated with 'nature'. According to Litowitz (2000), this induces a "quietism because there is no point in fighting against nature" (526). According to Miliband (1990), consent can also be seen in the capacity of dominant classes to persuade subordinate classes that:

whatever they might think of the prevailing social order, and however alienated they might be from it, any alternative would be catastrophically worse, and that in any case there was nothing much that they could do to bring about any such alternative (Miliband 1990: 346).

Coupled together, these processes consolidate a particular social order. In the strategy of rationalisation, Gramsci (1971) argues that every ruling group gives rise to an intellectual class that perpetuates the existing way of life. Even before this longer-term process takes effect, hegemony is constantly being reinforced for it can never be irreversibly guaranteed. According to Miliband (1990), "it is something that needs to be

constantly nurtured, defended and reformulated". This paper argues that the notion of civil society must be understood in this light: namely, as a continuation of these processes in order to ensure acquiescence of South African society. In other words, the dissertation argues that northern donors use their control over financial resources to disproportionately influence the agenda of CSOs in South Africa. In that process the militancy or progressive components of the initial programs proposed by some CSOs are lost in attempts to secure funding, to become electable to donors. In this way, these donors are able to fashion CSOs in their own image, and wittingly or unwittingly these end up implementing programs/projects strongly influenced by these donors. Hence the charge: most CSOs have become implementing agencies for neo-liberal projects. This is not to say that civil society organisations cannot extend democratic space or to say that civil society cannot articulate certain forms of state oppression. They can perform all these functions, in a piecemeal fashion, as individual organisations. But taken as a totality, this by no means, the overarching intention of civil society particularly when viewed against the background of profound resource weakness. For instance, as Piven and Cloward (1977) point out that only under exceptional conditions "are the lower classes afforded the socially determined opportunity to press for their own interests" (7). They contend further that theorists of various persuasions agree that extraordinary disturbances in the larger society are required to move poor or marginalized people to action. "And with that said, the implication for an understanding of the potential for political influence among the poor becomes virtually self-evident: *since periods of profound social dislocations are infrequent, so too are the opportunities for protest among the lower classes*" (Piven and Cloward 1977: 14). For South Africa, this has far-reaching consequences. At the root of this inequality lies an apartheid social structure that consisted of "a process of state-driven underdevelopment that encompassed dispossession and exclusion for the majority of South Africans" (May et al 1999). Bornstein (2000) contends that this resulted in "an institutional framework that worked to the advantage of whites, men, people in urban areas, and established industrial interests" (174). In summary, May et al (1999) argue that the legislation and institutions through which this ideology was implemented operated to produce persistent and extreme inequality. Even though constitutional apartheid has ended, its structures continue to frame the perpetuation of inequality. It is against this background that the impact of civil society must be analysed.

Legitimacy

The online *Dictionary* (<http://dictionary.com>) lists seven possible meanings for the word 'legitimate', three of which are relevant to this study. These are being exactly as purposed, that is authentic and genuine neither sham nor false. Secondly conforming to recognised principles or accepted rules and standards and thirdly being in accord with the law or with established legal forms. Therefore, an organisation can be said to enjoy legitimacy when it exhibits the following: that it is exactly what it claims to be, that it conforms to some accepted standard and that it is legal. According to Habermas (1975) legitimization refers to the general sense on the part of the citizens that the institutions that govern them are just, good and deserving of support and adherence.

Habermas (1975) contends that legitimacy is essential otherwise institutions or indeed society falls into crisis. For instance, when an economy fails to create opportunities for citizens to compete, to have jobs, to educate their children, and so on, Habermas (1975) believes that there is a crisis. As a consequence, the legitimization of social institutions is questionable. For Habermas (1975), the source of this legitimacy crisis arises when communicative action has been colonised by a particular discourse, or particular interests. While Habermas (1975) believes that societies need integration, he also recognises that they are in crisis, because - as advanced capitalism has taken hold - the integrative function of communication has increasingly faltered. Habermas (1975) identifies two types of media in the communication process that are crucial to this study. He recognises a quantitative part made up of money and power (specified in votes) that has become dominant. "Rather than communicative action – people talking about their differences and coming to a common understanding – one (person, party, or interest) dominates the other by having money or votes" (www.ucalgary.ca/~frank/habermas). Specific to this study, it can be argued that the influence of donors constitutes a crisis of legitimacy for civil society. Also crucial to this study, Habermas (1975) argues that the quantitative part requires legitimacy, which can only be attained through the qualitative media consisting of communications between individuals and groups. This study will argue that by determining the agenda within civil society through a large pool of resources, donors are also impacting on the qualitative end through shaping the deployment of those resources.

Accountability

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) inclusive of civil society organisations (CSOs) are often said to have multiple accountabilities. According to Edwards and Hulme (1995), functional accountability refers to financial resources employed during a project cycle and is therefore easily quantifiable. Due to this quality, donors tend to rely heavily on this type of accountability. Strategic accountability, which is considerably more difficult to measure, relies on subjectively defined factors (Edwards and Hulme, 1995).

Partnerships

Partnerships are seen as a way to improve the effectiveness of aid and assuring a more equal relationship (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 1998). Historically, money has been equated with power and a belief on the part of Western governments and non-governmental organisations that their mission is to develop those who suffer the effects of underdevelopment. There has been a significant shift in thinking at least at the level of rhetoric. The World Bank (1999) believes that partnerships should be entered into with the specific objective of assuring or improving local 'ownership'. According to Fowler (1996), while donors acknowledge the importance of partnership, the current debate has not delivered on substance.

Participation

Participation refers to the involvement of stakeholders in a process. These activities can take place at various stages, for instance project conception, formulation and implementation. Because donors control financial resources they can often delineate CSO participation through making available money for certain activities, programmes or projects. While NGOs can take part at different stages, substantive participation takes place when involvement occurs at all stages. Reliance on one donor can seriously compromise organisational independence. Multiple accountabilities to more than one donor and other stakeholders can mitigate the impact of control by one dominant partner (Edwards and Hulme 1996).

1.5 Research Questions

The specific objectives of this research are:

- a) To examine the extent to which the availability of donor funds, programme focus and donor coordination act to channel and corral civil society in particular directions. This is intended to answer questions such as: How did these institutions understand civil society, what form did they think was important for democracy and how did they see South Africa's evolving society? Further, how was this operationalised?
- b) To examine donor perceptions with regard to CSO participation in the formulation of local projects they fund. In other words, how significant are CSOs beyond acting as implementing agencies for donors?
- c) Did these institutions favour professionalised CSOs over grassroots and decentralised organisations, and if so, was this the right approach?

1.6 Chapter Outline

The dissertation is organised into six chapters. This chapter spells out the research problem, key theoretical concepts, research questions and the method used in the field research. Chapter Two looks at research methodology and the justification for choice of research method. Chapter Three reviews the literature, examines in considerable depth the history, ideological underpinning of various approaches to civil society and attempts an evaluation of these perspectives. It will also explore the arrival of civil society as the 'hegemonic project' (Beckman 1993) of our time. Chapter Four presents the individual case studies, *Chapter 2 Network, Democracy Development Programme (DDP)*, *Centre for Public Participation (CCP)*, *Centre for Civil Society (CCS)*, *Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)*, *South African Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition*

(*SANGOCO*), *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* and *USAID*. In each case, a brief history of the organisation is given in order to situate it in South African civil society. Chapter Five provides analysis of the experiences of the various organisations. It will also present and interpret the findings of the analysis, including whether this research revealed a relationship between factors such as areas of donor focus and the issues pursued by civil society organisations. Also discussed is whether the research suggests different approaches to assisting civil society organisations.

Finally, the conclusion will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the findings and will include an assessment of both the internal and external validity of this study. It will also explain to what extent my research questions were answered. An attempt will be made to compare the findings to those of earlier studies. A supposition is made that donors are exerting significant influence on civil society organisations seeking to impact public policy in South Africa. This is happening through setting the agenda in terms of what civil society activities are funded. The research will also argue that civil society organisations are *more* accountable to donors than to other stakeholders. The study will conclude with the policy implications of my findings and make suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the relevant methodological considerations. It details the chosen data collection and analytical tools, brings to the fore the ethical issues and discusses the study's limitations.

2.1 Research Methodology

The study employs qualitative methods, which according to Maier et al (1994) can be understood as open procedures, "trying to determine 'what exists' and 'why it exists' rather 'how much of is there'" (3). In addition qualitative approaches describe "undefined and open situation[s], where knowledge about the problem has to be explored first" while quantitative methods on the other hand require a defined problem. It is apparent that civil society in South Africa falls more into the undefined and open situation. Maier et al (1994) see three types of qualitative techniques namely interviews, observation and interactive/projective techniques. This study applies the interview method. The principal methodology comprised of key informant interviews with four organisations, 2 donor agencies and 2 civil society organisations. Documents were collected from all these sources and reviewed.

2.2 Choice of Method: Justification

The research employs the interview as an information gathering technique but selection of organisations follows the case study approach. Robson (1993) defines a case study as "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (147). The case study approach is appropriate for this study for a number of reasons. The first, is that case studies can be pre-structured or 'emergent'. Secondly as the study is an exploratory one, i.e seeking to "get some feeling as to what is going on in novel situation (civil society) where there is little to guide what one should be looking for" (Robson 1993:149) a tight pre-structure may straitjack the study and result in unreliable findings.

But this is not without problems, for instance Robson (1993) notes a dilemma between *looseness* and *selectivity*. For instance he argues that the looser the original design, the less selective you can afford to be in data selection. "On the other hand, the danger is that if you start with a strong conceptual framework, this will blind you to important features of the case, or cause you to misinterpret evidence" (Robson 1993:149). While noting the existence of this dilemma this study has sought to employ the pre-structured approach due to considerations of time and findings from earlier studies.

2.3 Sampling strategy

In general qualitative research uses a purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling involves selection of informants based on an important characteristic under study, such as where they live (rural or urban), position in society (for instance community leaders or ordinary citizens), or specific cultural knowledge (traditional leaders, farmers). According to Robson (1993) the principle of selection in this method of sampling is the researcher's judgment as to 'typicality or interest'. "A sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her specific needs in a project" (Robson 1993:141). Robson (1993) also notes that this is an approach commonly used within case studies.

Participants were selected from civil society organisations working in Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg and Durban. It was the intention of the study that the participants come from diverse backgrounds representing a broad spectrum of ideological positions. In addition the participants were chosen due to their positions within their organisations and because they can provide information and knowledge that cannot be found elsewhere. Kumar et al (1993) assert that key informants are able and willing to communicate their knowledge. According to Borg and Gall (1989), using the key-informant approach has many advantages. Key-informants can "provide insights that no amount of observation would reveal. They can also provide insights into processes, sensitize the researcher to value dilemmas, and help the researcher see the implications of specific findings" (p. 399). While a concerted effort was made to obtain a diverse sample of civil society leaders, the sampling obtained is however not statistically random. It is important to point out this was never the intention of the study.

2.4 Selection of Data Collection Techniques

According to Robson (1993), the conceptual framework adopted, the research questions and sampling chosen determine the approach to data collection. The study employed the interview as the best technique for data collection. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) regard an interview as a conversation with a purpose. Mishler (1986) however makes a distinction between a standard interview and a qualitative research interview:

At its heart is the proposition that an interview is a form of discourse. Its particular features reflect the distinctive structure and aims of interviewing, namely, that it is discourse shaped and organised by asking and answering questions. An interview is a joint product of what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each other. The record of an interview that we researchers make and then use in our work of analysis and interpretation is a representation of that talk (Mishler 1986)

According to Robson (1993), face-to-face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of enquiry, in a way that other techniques such as questionnaires cannot. This is an important point for this study which is essentially an exploration of the evolving civil society terrain in South Africa. But it is not without significant problems. For instance Robson (1993) points out that "interactions between interviewer and interviewee can also be influential; differences or similarities in class, ethnic origin, gender, age and status can affect rapport and the extent to which the interviewee seeks to please, or reacts against, the interviewer" (237). Selection bias was introduced by the targeting of *particular* key informants. Consequently these findings are not statistically generalizable for the entirety of South African civil society. While in general the absence of standardisation inevitably raises concerns about reliability, biases, considerable skill and experience on the part of the interviewer can allay some of these fears argues Robson (1993). But it is also important to underline the advantages of the approach such as the in-depth nature of the assessment using qualitative methodology. Most of the demerits of the approach were mitigated by the fact that the interviewer is a seasoned journalist who is well versed with interviewing skills.

Unstructured	Semi-Structured	Structured
Unfamiliar		Familiar
Emotions and attitudes		Numbers and Facts

Values and morals	Hard Facts
Complex	Simple

(Adapted from Maier et al (1994).

The study used a combination of opened-ended interviews, focused interview and structured interview. Here follows a description of the main features of these techniques:

- *Open-ended interview*: No pre-specified set or order of questions; little or no direction from interviewer; goal typically to gain insight into a person's perceptions in a situation (Robson 1993). According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), the researcher "tactfully asks and actively listens in order to understand what is important about the setting and the experiences of people in that setting" (81). The researcher asks questions pertinent to the study as opportunities arise, listens closely to the informants responses for clues as to what questions to ask next, or whether it is important to probe for additional information. Bogdan and Biklen (cited in Maykut and Morehouse 1994) contend that interviews are particularly important when one is interested in gaining participant perspectives, the language and meanings constructed by individuals. Using work done by Perry titled *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in College Years* as an illustration, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) argue that using a single open-ended question and then relying on good interviewing skills to elaborate and extend the contents of each interview can illuminate thinking and purpose.
- *Focused interview*: Use of interview guide specifying key topics; order of questions not fixed. According to Merton et al (cited in Robson 1993) a focused interview is an approach which allows people's views and feelings to emerge, but which gives the interviewer some control. Patton (1990) sees an interview guide, an important tool using this technique, consisting of a series of topics or broad interview questions which the researcher is free to explore and probe with the interviewee. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) contend that an interview format consisting of a detailed set of questions and probes is called an interview schedule. Having noted these differences Maykut and Morehouse 1994) point out that in the actual interview situation, the skilled researcher will discover that what is important to the interviewees, within the broad boundaries of the

interview topics and questions, and pursue these new discoveries in the interview.

- *Structured interview*: Standardized set of questions (Robson 1993). Robson (1993) argues that the structured interview is not dissimilar to a questionnaire, “the procedural difference is of course that while the respondent fills in the questionnaire, the interviewer completes the interview schedule” (236). This enables a direct comparison and makes easier quantification of the findings. But a significant weakness of this approach is that it is insufficiently flexible and has potential of producing irrelevant results.

The unstructured approach is highly suited for adaptation depending on the personalities of the key informants. A key informant interview unravels in much the same way as a dialogue. Open-ended questions are asked and the interviewer makes a concerted effort to build rapport. While the unstructured interview has the potential to leave out certain issues that may not arise during the course of interview, an interview guide can overcome this. An interview guide is essentially an outline of the topics to be discussed. It is important to stress that it is not necessary to follow the guide as long as the issues contained are discussed in the interview. It is usual for the interviewer to explore relevant issues as they come up.

Four in-depth interviews were carried out with 4 key informants. Civil society leaders were chosen using advocacy profile as a main selection criterion. This is because the study has taken a civil society organisation as one that seeks to affect the conduct of public policy. Informants were also chosen from referrals (a form of snowball sampling procedure) made during the interviews.

Survey questions were designed in such a way that they elicit information regarding the advocacy work and the ideological underpinnings of that work. Another reason why this technique was chosen, is that it allows for a flexible and iterative approach. Flexibility was built in in order to investigate each participant’s statements and to probe issues related to the study but which were absent from the interview guide. Permission was also sought from the participants to record interviews. In addition extensive notes were taken during each interview. Interviews were planned to last between one to two hours.

The interview data was then transcribed verbatim. The data were then content-analyzed. Content analysis is a research technique for systematically examining the

content of communications (Denscombe 1998). At the same time "quite independently of what the writer had consciously intended, the text carries some clues about a deeper rooted and possibly unintentional message that is actually being communicated" (Descombe 1998: 168). According to Robson (1996) content analysis has three main advantages. He notes that it is an unobtrusive measure, that the data is in a 'permanent form' and hence can be subject to re-analysis and thirdly it provides a low cost form of longitudinal analysis "when a 'run' or series of documents of a particular type is available" (280). Robson lists the limitation or partiality of available documents (for instance, in this case the chosen interviewees), that documents have been written for another purpose (which is not relevant as the material was collected specifically for this study) and as with "other non-experimental approaches, it is very difficult to assess causal relationships" (280).

Data were read and put together and filed according to the topic or issue addressed. Responses were analyzed thematically with emergent themes ranked by how frequent they were mentioned and subsequently categorized. The content analysis of the interview data was completed manually.

2.5 Ethical considerations

The following ethical issues have been considered in this study:

- Acknowledgement of sources of information: All sources of information have been duly acknowledged.
- Dissemination of information: the dissertation will be made available in the library of the University of Natal. I may publish relevant aspects of the research in scientific and/or professional journals. All participants of the study will be informed, and on request, a copy of the article will be made available

2.6 Limitation of the study

This dissertation lacks generalisability. For instance, while mindful of common considerations, the participants are not representative. If a decision had been made to interview other civil society organisations other than the ones interviewed the issues may have taken a different trajectory. Again, no attempt has been made to interview a cross section of civil society organisations that have a financial relationship with donors; the choice of organisations has been selective. Having said this, with qualitative research of this nature, the inability to generalise does not constitute an overwhelming limitation. The researcher does not make a claim to widespread generalisation of this study's findings.

Concerning reliability, the researcher has ensured accuracy and objectivity by recording and verbatim transcription of interviews. Where possible the statements of participants are presented unchanged in the discussion of findings. However as the interpretations are those of the researcher, they cannot be neutral.

The main limitation of the study relates to the role of the researcher. The dissertation relied on the researcher as the tool for data collection. As noted elsewhere the author brings particular experiences and influences that frame a particular 'reality'. It is reasonable to speculate that a different author may have created a different reality, a

different study. Put another way this study makes no claim to be objective. It is inherently subjective.

This following chapter lays out the historical background to notions of civil society. It focuses on the evolution of civil society as a concept.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE EMERGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY, CONTENDING POSITIONS AND STATE CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the emergence of civil society as an organising principle. It deals with the broad question of what makes up civil society's constituting elements, its purpose, its role and the changing way it has been understood over the centuries. It will also look at how all these aspects altered with changing contexts. In conclusion following the example of Hearn (1999), it argues that while civil society means different things to different people, the organisations that are central, and therefore crucial to this dissertation, are those that seek to influence public policy. The research therefore takes the view that civil society organisations are those organisations aiming to influence public policy.

3.1 Civil Society: Historical background

According to Wood (1990), there is a long standing intellectual tradition in the West extending back to classical antiquity, "which has in various ways delineated a terrain of human association, some notion of 'society', distinct from the body politic and with moral claims independent of, and sometimes opposed to, the state's authority" (61). Glasius (2001) echoes this when she notes that the notion has direct equivalents in Latin and Greek. The *Centre for Civil Society (CCS)* at the *London School of Economics* argues that the most comprehensive account of the notion is by the Scotsman Adam Ferguson, in *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1995) who wrote in the 18th century. According to Glasius (2001), the book attempts to resurrect the Roman ideal of civic duty. "In order to have a civil society, men (not women, of course, that age) needed to take an active interest in the government of their polity, instead of simply accumulating wealth and diverting themselves" (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1). This notion clearly resonates with the present use of the term. Under the highly influential classical work *Leviathan* (1990) by

Thomas Hobbes, "it was generally thought that in primitive societies, men were constantly competing and trying to kill each other over food, possessions or women. It was thought that 'savages' had no forms of social organisation". (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1). It can be argued that attempts to introduce and nurture civil society in developing countries is informed by remnants of these notions.

In a significant shift, Glasius (2001) points out that Hegel perceived of civil society as 'society minus the state'. It is important to note that it included what is now termed the economy. After all, civil society consisted of men trading and interacting socially. Wood (1990) notes this origin arguing that the current usage of civil society and its conceptual opposition to the state "has been inextricably associated with the development of capitalism" (60). Habermas (1985) observes that Hegel was the first to separate the political sphere of the state from civil society. Anheier and Carlson (2002) assert that the growth of ideas such as civil society marked the broad decline of status based social order. Hegel (cited in Glasius 2001) also viewed civil society as an arena of contradictions and that these contradictions could only be reconciled by the state in its capacity as the custodian of the highest ethical ideals of society. Following from Hegel's work, Marx saw civil society as a sphere of conflicts between competing private interests. To Marx, these conflicts took the form of class struggles and the state could become a victim of these conflicts. Marx had "a very negative view of civil society", seeing in its German translation, 'Bürgerliche Gesellschaft', as bourgeois society, and narrowed it to only economic life in which everyone pursues his own interests" (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1).

3.2 Civil Society: New Perspectives

The notion of civil society is highly contested. Van Rooy (1997) contends that the term civil society has a long history in political philosophy and that its definition has "altered with Roman, Liberal, Hegelian, Marxist, Gramscian and post-modern interpretations long before it was resurrected in the 1990s" (5). But what is clear, according to Beckman (1993), is that "a range of political forces across the political spectrum think that civil society has been constrained by the state and needs to be liberated" (20). Given that civil society is said to occupy the space between the family and the state, this

contestation is understandable. For instance, the *Centre for Civil Society* at the *London School of Economics* (2001) defines civil society as the set of institutions, organisations and behaviours situated between the state, the business world, and the family" (CCS 2001: 4). However, it cautions that this is not without controversy. Riddell and Bebbington (1997) note that civil society is a 'notoriously slippery concept', while Hearn (1999) has observed considerable debate about the meaning of civil society.

Broadly, there are three approaches to analysing civil society: firstly, the Marxist approach; secondly, the liberal or neo-liberal or the liberal pluralist approach anchored by Tocqueville and Putnam; and thirdly, the Habermasian tradition. Looking specifically at non-governmental organisations, Salamon and Anheier (1998) distinguish between four non-profit regimes: the liberal, the social democratic, the corporatist and the statist. However, they caution that these categories are only heuristic devices intended to demarcate broad tendencies.

Critical to the manner in which the notion is viewed today, Gramsci (1971) divorced civil society from economic interaction. He argued that civil society stands between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and coercion (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci (1971) saw civil society consisting of cultural institutions, such as the church, schools, associations and trade unions. It is probable that the present day contestations about the notion originate with Gramsci. To begin with, Gramsci (1971) was ambiguous. "On one hand, it is through this 'cultural superstructure' that the bourgeois class imposes its hegemony, using it to keep the working class in its place. On the other hand, it is a kind of wedge between the state and the class-structured economy, which has the revolutionary potential of dislodging the bourgeoisie." (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1). This complexity arises out of the fact that the "dominant group must concede to the needs of other groups so that their interests are aligned, and at the same time it must promote its parochial interests as representative of the interests of all social groups" (Litowitz 2000:522).

Gramsci (1971) noted that people exploited by capitalism and in his time by Italian fascism, were often the strongest supporters of capitalism and fascism and that they willingly consented to their own exploitation. In attempting to account for this situation, according to Litowitz (2000) Gramsci came to believe that the dominant group "was able to disseminate its values in churches, schools, and popular culture, which meant that physical force was only one aspect of domination, the other being persuasion, or

leadership, which always entails some form of voluntariness" (522). In this perspective, domination is a considerably more nuanced phenomenon than previously expounded by Marxists who focussed exclusively on the factory and the parliament as the locus of oppression (Buci-Glucksmann cited in Litowitz 2000).

For Gramsci, domination becomes encoded at all levels of a system, resulting in a kind of multilevel homeostasis where a dominant group (or a particular class of people) controls the repressive power of the police force as well as the intellectual means of production, namely the schools, news media, entertainment, and other mechanisms for the molding of popular culture... domination requires the establishment of an entire way of life as standard and expected, the identification of the dominated with the dominators and the subtle establishment of the prevailing ideology as natural and inevitable, indeed commonsensical. When domination reaches the internal world of the actors, resistance is almost unthinkable (Litowitz 2000:528).

Gramsci (1971) developed a theory of political change based on his conception of civil society. Drawing contrast between Russia and the West, he argues that civil society was inchoate in the former. While "the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous" (Gramsci cited in Morera 1990: 163). Gramsci (1971) further contends that this had allowed for a direct violent assault on the state as in Russia in 1917. On the other hand, Gramsci (1971) argues that in the West civil society was strong and this strategy would be unworkable. For Gramsci, (1971) institutions of civil society formed the 'outer earthworks' of the state, instruments through which the ruling classes maintained their hegemony over the rest of society. In looking at his own country, Italy in the 1870s, Gramsci (1971) acknowledged that there was indeed a separation between state and civil society but because civil society was 'something amorphous and chaotic' it was possible for the state to dominate it. Transformation of civil society was therefore necessary to create an alternative hegemony of the subordinate classes in order to challenge the state.

In his hegemonic theory of civil society, Gramsci (1971) viewed transformation as both a cultural and political process and saw a central role for intellectuals. Gramsci (1971) argues that while each class developed its own intellectuals, these groups contributed to maintaining the existing hegemony. Gramsci (1971) asserted that a counter hegemony of the working class would require its own organic intellectuals and beliefs.

Marxist theorists such as Gramsci (1971) identify civil society as an important arena for mobilizing the exploited and dominated classes. It is important for a number of reasons.

According to Morera (1990), Gramsci suggests that hegemony is a permanent feature in all societies - "that is, that no society exists without a certain degree of hegemony, however slight that degree may be" (Morera 1990: 162). Gramsci (cited in Morera 1990) perceived that public opinion, which "is closely connected with political hegemony inasmuch as it is "the point of contact between 'civil society' and 'political society', has always existed" (162). It is important to note that Gramsci presupposed a capitalist order. Morera (1990) takes up the point further:

This being so, one must conclude that the difference between modern capitalist societies and other societies is not the existence of civil society and hegemony in the former, and their absence in the latter; rather, the difference is in the degree of development of the institutions of civil society and hegemony...Perhaps this is applicable to the development of the modern state; the proliferation of the private institutions of civil society, and the corresponding growth of the dependence of hegemony on these private organisations, results in qualitative change. (Morera 1990:162)

While acknowledging the possibility of the existence of tremendous coercive state power, Gramsci (1971) argues that even such a state could lose legitimacy when challenged by a counter hegemony. While there resides in the state coercive power based on the use of monopolized violence as an instrument of class domination by the ruling class, civil society is an arena of moral and cultural hegemony. This is a crucial point for this study, which it will return to.

Van Roy (1997) contends that the liberal pluralist version presumes a market capitalist system and a legitimate constitutional order in which the state acts to balance the varied contending interests articulated by civil society. Civil society is taken to be plural, diverse and represents various interests. While issues of power incongruencies may arise they are not taken to be overwhelming. The essence of the liberal understanding of civil society is that civil society is a sphere of private life independent of the state and serves to limit the intrusive exercise of political power. Salamon and Anheier (1998) assert that in practice the liberal regime is characterised by low government spending on social development while the non-profit sector or civil society is well developed and privately funded. For Tocqueville (1994), an important thinker in this tradition, voluntary associations are necessary for developing alternatives in dealing with issues of common good problems and curbing unbridled political (governmental) power. Janover (1998) also argues that the growth and development of civil associations provides safeguards for checking political despotism.

In the Habermasian approach, civil society is divorced from both the state and the market (Cohen and Arato 1992). Habermas (1989) uses the concepts of public sphere and "lifeworld". According to Habermas (1992: 443), the core of civil society is made up of nongovernmental and non-economic constellations and voluntary groups that underpin the communication structures of the public sphere in the society component of the "lifeworld". Historically, Habermas (1989) asserts, the public sphere developed in contrast to the private sphere due to the demise of the feudal order and the growth of the nation state, commerce and middle class. While the public sphere began in 'salons' and 'coffeehouses', it has dispersed to mass media such as journals and newspapers (Habermas: 1989). According to this conception, civil society consists "more or less of spontaneously created associations, organizations and movements, which find, take up, condense and amplify the resonance of social problems in private life, and pass it on to the political realm or public sphere" (Habermas 1992: 443).

It is apparent that the public sphere is an important arena for democracy because it is there where important public debates can take place. Cohen (1998) defines the public sphere as an spaces within which people discuss issues of mutual concern and exchange perspectives. These exchanges occur in different spaces therefore it is possible to speak of multiple "public spheres" or "civil publics". Cohen (1998) says there is a larger public sphere that creates balance between the various mini-publics that emerge within and among organisations of citizens, and informal social networks in the formation of public opinion

According to Habermas (1989), the public sphere is an important arena for modern society, because of the presence of what he terms a 'bifurcated 'lifeworld.'" Habermas takes "lifeworld" to mean the shared common understanding, including values, which develop through face-to-face interaction over time and in various groups. In the "lifeworld" resides what a people or peoples believe in, morals and norms, what they aspire to, what they sacrifice, what they won't sacrifice and so on. Therefore the establishment of an active civil society, in which common will and collective decision can be reached is a necessary measure to deal with this situation. For Charney (1998), the public sphere is separate from the apparatus of the state and economy. He asserts that it is where citizens freely debate, deliberate, and engage in collective democratic will formation. He further charges that it is here where one finds and understands the opinions of constituents' opinion and the service claims that people make to

government. This public opinion, arrived at by discourse, can ordinarily be expected to have an impact on the debates in state institutions such as parliament and the courts. The extent of openness of access and level of participation of ordinary citizens is an important cornerstone of any political dispensation claiming democratic legitimacy. According to Cohen (1998), it should be the right of all citizens affected by public policy and laws to articulate their views on an equal basis. Under the Habermasian approach, the concept of the public sphere is the normative anchor of the idea of civil society and sits at the centre of Western conceptions of liberal democracy.

Using Habermas' work, Cohen and Arato (1992) propose a three-part framework for understanding civil society. They employ the concept of 'lifeworld' to delineate the extent of civil society. To Cohen and Arato (1992) the concept of communicative action is critical to the rationalisation of the 'lifeworld'. Communicative action is perceived as an exchange of subjective experiences which then leads players (various people or groups of people) to re-interpret norms, coordinate their interaction and reach common ground. Leet (1998) asserts that Habermas views this as a channel through which consensus can be achieved sustained and renewed. It is an area of critical importance, which must function adequately if society is not going to fall into crisis or de-legitimacy.

Postmodernists such as Lyotard (1987) see the current world as a pastiche of fragments and difference. "The systematic unity of capitalism, its 'objective structures' and totalising imperatives, have given way (if they ever existed) to a bricolage of multiple social realities, a pluralistic structure so diverse and flexible that it can be rearranged by discursive construction" (Wood 1990: 60). According to Docker (1994), in the post-modern age "we no longer have a positivistic science that claims to know the truth; rather science [...] now tells stories, competing stories [...] We no longer see society as a uniform whole" (109). Postmodernism contends that the traditional capitalist system has been replaced by a post-Fordist fragmentation, where every fragment creates openings for emancipatory struggles. Crucially, the constitutive class relations of capitalism are said to represent only "one personal 'identity' among many others, no longer 'privileged' by its historical centrality" (Wood 1990: 60). Marxism is dismissed as a theory of "an outdated industrial society, for Marxism postulated society as working only on a duality, a single difference, as between labour and capital" (109). Within the post-modern perspective, it can be advanced that civil society is located in many fragments engaging in struggles to promote particular interests. The existence of these

pockets of struggles is one of the defining features of postmodernism. Wood (1990), a critic of postmodernism, contends that despite the enormity of diversity of current theoretical trends on the left, "they often share one especially serviceable concept: 'civil society'" (60).

According to Swilling and Russell (2002), the liberal regime arises when there is a strong, ascendant faced with weak or unthreatening landed elites and/or working class movements. "Private support for social development via NPO (not for profit organisations) is preferred to using the state for this purpose" (Swilling and Russell 2002: 66). Under a social democratic dispensation the NPO sector does not have a service provision role as the state is engaged in extensive social development. Swilling and Russell (2002) assert that a Keynesian economic perspective underpins this while the NPO sector is relatively weak. The corporatist regime is characterised by extensive state expenditure on social development, but in league with segments of the NPO sector. "NPOs act as the conduits for delivering services, in place or in partnership with state agencies" (Swilling and Russell 2002: 66). Swilling and Russell (2002) argue that this dispensation comes about when elites in control of the state must accommodate other elites and classes whose power resides in well-organised, non-profit structures (civil society institutions). The duo also point out that this rapprochement often comes about as a result of an attempt to counter greater threats from more radical anti-capitalist social movements. Salamon and Anheier (cited in Swilling and Russell 2002) see a fourth regime, the statist. This state of affairs is characterised by low levels of state support for social development without the hoped for development of non-profit sector with significant capacity to substitute for the state's neglect.

This regime emerges when economic or self-serving political elites gain control of the state and face no pressure or obligation to support social development, either via the state or privately via a philanthropic middle class. Movements of poor and working people will have either been repressed or systematically disorganised for various ideological or cultural reasons (Swilling and Russell 2002: 66).

Swilling and Russell (2002) add to Salamon and Anheier's typology of state-civil society relations a fifth regime, the colonial. Under this order there is limited social spending by the state and an autonomous non-profit sector subsisting in the colonised people based on survival and opposition. Social formations would include the external colonial power allied to a settler class in control of state power, the politically disenfranchised indigenous middle class, working class and peasantry. According to Swilling and Russell (2002) as urbanisation and industrialisation takes place, "a politically aspirant urbanised

(nationalist) middle class is generated" (67). The result is that these oppressed classes led by middle class elites mount oppositional movements through civil society organisations (NPOs/CSOs) to seize state power (Swilling and Russell 2002). The kind of state-civil society regime instituted will depend on the constellation of forces within the opposition and subsequent alliances as well as the resources available to the state to meet popular demands.

3.3 Civil Society: Current Issues

According to Bratton (1994a), the concept of civil society offers an opportunity to understand, and influence, the process of democratisation. But CCS (2001) charges that the present popularity of civil society hinges on:

[I]ts very fuzziness – it can be all things to all men. There is conflation of an empirical category – often referred to as the voluntary or non-profit sector- with a political project. On one hand it is a label for something that is both non-profit and non governmental while on the other, as in the Central European and Latin America experience, it is a political project, a sphere through which to resist, pressure or influence the state, and more recently the market (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1).

Wood (1990) charges that "this versatile idea has become an all purpose catchword for the left, embracing a wide range of emancipatory aspirations, as well – it must be said – as a whole set of excuses for political retreat" (60).

To Riddell and Bebbington (1995) civil society is a "notoriously slippery concept." They continue:

It has entered donor terminology without careful definition. In many respects, the term is used as a code for a set of ideas related to participation, good government, human rights, privatisation and public sector reform" (23).

Bratton (1994a) echoes this arguing that there are essentially three common elements in the civil society discourse namely a critique of state domination of public life, a preference of reform over revolution and a strategy for political change based on negotiations and elections. CCS (2001) argues that the ideal civil society has various characteristics, all of which are hotly debated. One contention is that of social capital.

Putman (1993) stresses that 'civic community' is founded on norms and networks. Such norms and networks comprise a stock of 'social capital' which social actors draw upon when they go about their everyday business. In very elementary terms social capital refers to the trust generated when people come together and the resultant reduction in the cost of an assortment of activities. Bratton (1994a) sees trust and reciprocity as important values for the construction of civil society as crucial for the reduction of transaction costs. Political tolerance is another important virtue in that it allows the emergence of diverse and plural forms of association. Gellner (1991) argues that the civic spirit provides the spirit that fulfils contracts and obligations without which there would be endless enforcement. These values and norms are taught not only in the family but also in civic society organisations such as schools, churches and other community groups. (Bratton 1994a). The upside is that this contributes to economic growth (Gellner 1991). Another contention is that civic life needs to be institutionalised, meaning that it must find expression in organisations. According to Bratton (1994a) the most common organisational structure in civil society is the voluntary association, which is a grouping of citizens who come together by reason of identity or interest to pursue a common objective. Walzer (cited in Bratton 1994a) contends that civil society breeds "communal men and women...the picture here is of people freely associating and communicating...forming and reforming groups of all sorts... for the sake of sociability itself" (3). Cohen and Arato (1992) view ordinary people as the agents of the modern civil society, creating it through "forms of self constitution and self mobilisation" (17). Civil society comes into being when citizens create "a sphere other than and even opposed to the state...includ(ing), almost always unsystematically, some combination of networks of legal protection, voluntary association, and forms of independent expression" (Cohen and Arato cited in Bratton 1994a: 3).

Blair (1993b) notes that while policy advocacy groups may have the largest and most direct impact on national political life, they do not exhaust the relevant organisations in civil society. "Whether or not they are explicitly oriented to civic or political functions, all types of voluntary association help to populate and pluralize civil society" (Bratton 1994a: 2). A third element that Bratton (1994a) sees is public communication. He argues that in order for citizens to be politically active they "require means to communicate with one another and to debate the type of government they desire for themselves" (2). While civic discourse can take place in various for a, the existence of a

diverse and plural public communication media, unconstrained by state or private monopoly is crucial.

According to the World Bank civil society organisations (CSOs) can perform a range of essential functions for development. CSOs can:

- provide a means for amplifying the varied and complex needs of society, particularly the disadvantaged;
- motivate individuals to participate as citizens in the affairs of their societies
- provide services which can target the poor, and are efficient and flexible;
- promote accountability of both governments and the market;
- serve as vehicle (s) for reaching a consensus about trade-off strategies of developing content and sequencing of social policies
(www.inweb18.worldbank.org)

According to the *United Nations Development Program* (1993) civil society along with the state and the market lies at the foundation of democratic societies. The *UNDP* continues:

Civil society is the sphere in which social movements become organized. The organizations of civil society, which represent many diverse and sometimes contradictory social interests, are shaped to fit their social base, constituency, thematic orientations (e.g. environment, gender, human rights) and types of activity. They include church related groups, trade unions, cooperatives, service organizations, community groups and youth organizations, as well as academic institutions and others (*UNDP*, 1993:1).

According to *CCS* at the *London School of Economics* (2001), the problem with a purely normative definition of civil society is that defending civil society as a 'good thing' becomes tautological: civil society is a good thing, because it espouses the values we hold. "Anyone who fails to hold these values is not part of civil society. And whose values, anyway? The desirability of absolute non-violence, for instance, not something about which everyone agrees" (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1). For instance Robinson (1995) notes that the liberal approach "tends to obscure conflicts between different categories of civic associations and fails to give adequate recognition to the existence of divisive social forces which are averse to democracy, but nevertheless form part of 'civil' society" (78).

In the classical sense, taking your place in civil society meant renunciation of violence and interaction with other human beings in more complex ways. "A problem with the modern use of 'civil society' is that we might want to preserve the connotation of non-violent interaction, while we disavow the Euro-centric assumption of savages versus civilised people, but the two are historically connected". (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1). "Also based partly on the classical, 18th century notion, civil society is seen as essentially non-violent, and resisting violence, for instance, through Gandhian forms of civil disobedience" (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1). Another addition of the modern understanding is the commitment to common human values that go beyond ethnic, religious or national boundaries.

The *CCS* at the *London School of Economics* (2001) argues that a middle ground between these two conceptions could be to conceive of civil society as an empirical category with normative traits. This conception would contend that civil society contains elements of public spiritedness, social trust, non-violence and tolerance. "Unlike the purely normative conception, however, it would not exclude self-interested, narrow-minded, violent and fanatical manifestations of social interactions from civil society. It would recognise that these groups also exist, move in the same sphere, as the 'nice' groups" (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ccs/pdf/Glasius_briefing1). It is the contention of this dissertation that civil society is neither homogeneous nor consensual, but rather it should be viewed as an arena where actors pursue their different interests both in competition as well as in collaboration.

Van Rooy (1997) asserts that civil society organisations (CSOs) are seen in aid agency language as "fomenters of subversive ideas (when communism was seen to be worth subverting), the 'genuine' voices of the economically (and otherwise) oppressed, and the underdogs scratching away at the underpinnings of autocracies in China, the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America" (3). With changes in the world following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the appeal of civil society, according to van Rooy (1997) "lies in the possibility of a different, moral socio-political vision which matches the emancipatory vision of socialism, yet which embraces western democratic notions.

The terms of civil society, its attractive combination of democratic pluralism with regulation and guidance, make it appear hopeful to societies seeking to recover

from socialism...Socialism has lost whatever appeal it once possessed (Kumar 1993: 375)

Van Rooy (1997) charges that aid watchers and practitioners have muddled through the tasks of definition, usually without a satisfactory answer (3). In looking at the issue of assistance Carothers (1997) argues that civil society assistance is potentially all embracing given the multi-faced nature of civil society organisations, which range from burial societies to service provider NGOs. Wood (1990) cautions against the wholesale embrace of "this conceptual portmanteau, which indiscriminately lumps together everything from households and voluntary associations to the economic system of capitalism, confuses and disguises as much as it reveals" (65).

Roper-Renshaw of *Oxfam US* (cited in Van Rooy 1997) cautions against the appeal of an unexamined rush toward 'civil society' "because development is so complex, an organising concept like civil society is very appealing. ... However, oversimplifications lead to distortions, poor analyses and poor outcomes," (6). Fowler (1990) argues that civil society has been equated with organisations: advocacy groups, NGOs, organisations within social movements and human rights organisations. Carothers (1997) notes:

The single most favoured area of US civil society assistance is that of advocacy NGOs, such as human rights groups, election monitoring organisations... the crucial feature that distinguishes such organisations... it that they seek to influence governmental policy on some specific set of issues. It is this policy-oriented advocacy function that US aid officials' hold to be the crux of the pro-democratic function of civil society (1997:114).

While Fowler (1997) regards defining civil society from an operational perspective as problematic Hearn (1999) contends that in spite of the absence of theoretical clarity and conflicting understandings of the notion, "in general when foreign donors refer to civil society they are alluding to a very narrow, specific section of it." This section, echoing Carothers (1997), Hearn (1999) argues, essentially comprises organisations that seek to influence governmental policy on certain public policy issues. And this has implications. Whaites (cited in van Rooy: 1997) the ways in which "development NGOs perceive civil society, and consequently plan projects to facilitate and enhance the work of civil associations, can have a significant long-term effect on the evolution (or lack of it) of civil society in the countries in which they work" (6). Van Rooy (1997) charges that this is especially the case in countries where there is little tradition of civil society, where the

imported notions of donors often go unchallenged. "Indeed, those interventions may be *counterproductive* to the project of social transformation" (van Rooy 1997: 7).

3.4 Some assessment of the perspectives

According to van Rooy (1997), "it is becoming apparent that donors are wielding the vagueness of 'civil society' as the solution to a very *particular* set of problems" (7). This was in the areas of social and economic development, democracy and what van Rooy (1997) calls "the other agenda". Noting the advance of the non governmental organisation sector in the 1980s in particular sectors (ability to reach the poorest), van Rooy (1997) argues that this 'non governmental way' has become part of the way foreigners have reacted to a mixed success in promoting social and economic development in other countries. Within this perspective "the worthiness of NGOs as a resource for - or accompaniment to - foreign and domestic government interventions has been broadened" (8). Van Rooy (1997) notes a shift to CSOs whose numbers include but are not limited to the familiar corpus of NGOs. "The distinction is important because the policy - and power - implications are different" (8).

CSOs broadly are supposed to aid development in four main ways. According to van Rooy (1997), CSOs can help generate economic growth, improve equity; function as replacements for waning state services; and they can glue communities together with social capital.

Van Rooy (1997) asserts that support for "civil society" is felt by some to be a direct measure of support to the privatisation of the economy, and much of US talk, about civil society in the former Soviet Union in particular, approaches the debate from this angle. For instance Hansen (1996) of *USAID* contends "that the transition from statist to market based economies can be more effectively consolidated with growth of advocacy groups that champion such reforms" (2). In China the link between civil society and the free market has been noted (Howell, 1994; White 1993). Van Rooy (1997) says that the debate has focussed on the degree to which support to entrepreneurial organisations, in combination with privatising reforms to government structures, will open up the economy to external intervention. White (1993) argues "there is a close relationship between the spread of market relations and the differentiation of ownership brought by

the Chinese economic reforms on the one hand, and the rise of new forms of social organisation and the adaptation of existing social organisations on the other" (1993: 67).

3.5 State-Civil Society Relations in South Africa

Gramsci (1971) asserts that one of the functions of the modern state is to adapt civil society to the economic structure. "Thus, whereas private institutions can be formed independently of the power of the state, their potential for real opposition, whether it is progressive or regressive, must be continually checked by the state" (Morera: 1990:163). Keane (1988a) while acknowledging the democratising role of civil society echoes this adding that "civil associations always depend for survival and co-ordination upon centralized state" (Keane, 1988a: 50). Swilling and Russell (2002) in their book titled *The Size and Scope of the Non-profit Sector in South Africa* argue that the nature of the South African state and its political considerations entailed relating differentially to the 'various civil societies' for much of the twentieth century. Attempts were made through various colonial 'divide and rule' strategies to break up the potentially threatening colonised mass into a range of sub-groups, culminating in 'grand apartheid' from the mid-1900s. As Gramsci (1971) writes about the post-1870s Italian state, the colonial state and its apartheid offspring could easily 'overcome the conflicts that from time to time, would emerge sporadically, in a localised fashion, without national nexus or simultaneity' (Gramsci cited in Morera 1990: 163). Swilling and Russell (2002) charge that in 1910, the British colonial power and English speaking settlers entered into a corporatist pact with rising, armed Afrikaner social movements anchored in agriculture. It is important to stress that this pact was racially structured and restructured through to the 1970s. "Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, successive waves of industrialisation and urbanisation resulted in the formation of an Afrikaner working class and middle class, extremely well organised into NPOs across a range of sectors" (Swilling and Russell 2002: 68). The state civil society relationship was corporatist and involved administering health and welfare benefits to white society. Swilling and Russell (2002) contend that brute state coercion initially sustained this state of affairs but collapsed from the onslaught of democratic forces. For Morera (1990) this is to be expected because "once civil society has developed, that is, once there is some national unity and hence simultaneous action at the national level is possible, then the state

must change its relation to private institutions, for it can no longer dominate them and overcome conflicts in an easy way" (163).

Turning to the relationship between the white state and black civil society, Swilling and Russell (2002) argue that in general the colonial and the apartheid state tolerated the extensive growth of a diverse and complex black non-profit sector "as long as it remained apolitical" (69). A philanthropic middle class neither sustained this black non-profit sector nor did it consist of formalised, apolitical welfarist NPOs similar to Salamon and Anheier's typologies. And the apartheid state made some ideological mileage, sustaining throughout the century a racist discourse that justified the denial of black social development by reference to the ability of blacks to 'look after themselves' in their own areas and in accordance with their native custom. According to Swilling and Russell (2002) the black non-profit sector was a mix of largely localised and less formalised survivalist and oppositional NPOs. "In many ways, the relationship between the white state and black civil society was almost liberal, in Salamon and Anheier's typology: there was limited state support for social development and a large non-profit sector" (Swilling and Russell 2002: 69).

Swilling and Russell (2002) assert that the social movements that provided the cutting edge to the struggle against apartheid emerged from these "multi-layered and deeply embedded networks of NPOs" (69). According to Swilling and Russell (2002) these same organisations (ostensibly shone of their social movement dynamics) have entered into a non-racial corporatist agreement with the democratic state.

It is apparent that the nature of the state plays an overwhelmingly significant role in the development and space within which civil society can function. Swilling and Russell (2002) argue that even the vocabulary comes out of context. They contend that between the mid- and late 1990s a choice was made as what to call civil society organisations. "The policy makers and key NGO partners settled on 'NPO' (non profit organisation): a nice, depoliticised term that transcended the NGO-CBO discussion and delineated the sector from the private sector" (Swilling and Russell 2002: 6). The nature of legislation governing associational forms plays a fundamental part. The Act 108 of 1996 guarantees freedom of association (www.etu.org.za). This allows CSOs to constitute themselves as legal structures and regulates the manner in which they operate. The Non Profit Organisations Act (1997) defines non-profit organisations as follows:

A trust, company or other association of persons established for a public purpose and the income and property of which are not distributable to its members or office bearers except as reasonable compensation for services rendered (Non profit Organisations Act (1997), cited in Swilling and Russell 2002).

What is also becoming increasingly evident is the extent to which donors act to reconfigure the internal state dynamics. As has been demonstrated throughout this section depending on the configuration of power within countries, the civil society can often act at the behest of the state. It is the principal argument of this research that civil society organisations are acting to impact policy in directions that are fundamentally directed by a narrow group of donors.

CHAPTER FOUR

ORGANISATIONS

This chapter sketches out the individual histories of the organisations making up the study. An attempt will be made to explain the economic and political conditions that have determined policy directions. Where possible main areas of criticism are articulated.

4.1 German Political Foundations *Stiftungen*

According to Lingnau (1997), the system of the German political foundations has been unique for twenty years. This is due to the fact that these institutions, which were initially set up to provide civic education to the German public, enjoy a high degree of independence and autonomy (Lingnau 1996a). He draws contrast between these foundations and others doing similar work. For instance while the Foundations obtain almost all their funding from the government through the Ministry for Economic Co-operation they are highly autonomous institutions (Lingnau 1997). While they must apply for funding on a project or programme basis, the application is nothing more than a formality (Mair 1996b). According to Mair (1996b) "a fixed sum is set aside in the government's budget for the international activities of the "*Stiftungen*" - about 350 million DM (approximately 175 million Euros) in 1996 (= 4% of the total foreign aid budget) - and the allocation of this sum is based on a ratio which is roughly determined by the size of the parliamentary groups of the parties, the "*Stiftungen*" are affiliated with" (1).

Pinto-Duschnisky and Mair (1991) point out that it was not until the mid-eighties that the United States, Great Britain and some other countries attempted similar initiatives. (For instance the creation of the West Minister Foundation in the United Kingdom and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), affiliated to the Democratic Party and the International Republican Institute allied to the Republican Party). The Ministry for Economic Co-operation, which has since the late 1960s funded the activities of German Foundations or *Stiftungen* officially defines the their mandate as:

providing support to partners who have a structurally important contribution to make to the realisation of social justice, the promotion of broad political participation and to the strengthening of national political independence in accordance with the aims laid down in the UN Declaration of Human Rights" (www.ecdpm.org)

The Foundations generally also work to build and sustain contacts with the "most important economic, social and political forces abroad" (www.oneworld.org/ecdpm).

According to Mair (1996a) two features distinguish the work of German Foundations from other organisations involved in political work: long-term partnerships and the short-term funding of new political initiatives. For instance Mair (1996a) notes that the activities of the *Stiftungen* in a certain country are not based on an elaborate framework or rigorous academic analysis of the respective political environment. "Instead, the "Stiftungen" are committed to the partisan support of specific sections of the social and political realm whose existence is - in their opinion - a necessary ingredient for the functioning of a pluralistic democracy" (6). The choice of partners will then depend on political values and convictions of the particular Foundation.

Mair (1997) sees value in this approach while noting ostensible advantages in the approach of other democracy actors. For instance while other organisation involved in democratisation work profess non-partisan and less interventionist strategies, *Stiftungen* follow a "clearly partisan approach" (Mair 1997: 7). While this approach has merit, it "also disregards the importance of political parties in establishing democracies and their role as a link between civil society and the state. Many newly established democratic regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa suffer from the weakness of opposition parties which are not able to achieve their main functions: to control the government and to develop alternative policies" (Mair 1997: 8). Mair (1997) argues that while the non-partisan approach tends to frame political transition in mechanical terms, the approach of *Stiftungen* acknowledges the importance of individual actors, organisations and timely intervention in democratisation processes. "The decisive actors often need a long-term perspective of assistance based on close personal relationships to their sponsors, and objectives which were completely adequate in a certain period of the transition process can lose any importance within a few months" (Mair 1997: 7).

Political parties are an indispensable ingredient of liberal, multi-party democracies - systems that were almost unanimously adopted by most African states. If they are weak they should be supported to overcome their structural deficits and not be sidelined and reduced to a pariah status. Their potential to develop programmes and policies as well

as their organisational capacities should be strengthened. Internal democratic procedures, transparency and accountability should be promoted (Mair 1997: 8)

The activities of the German Foundations are broadly structured in such a way that they aim to attain or reflect the political consensus in Germany:

- the principle of peaceful conflict resolution
- a democratic form of state order
- the rule of law, horizontal and vertical division of powers
- the protection of human rights and fundamental political rights
- a pluralistic society, a social market economy and integration into transnational bodies. (Mair 1996a: 2).

Lingnau (1997) argues that within this general values framework, *Stiftungen* then fashion activities in such a way that they focus on the political beliefs or areas of stress of the political parties they are affiliated to. Broadly the *Stiftungen* have focused on strengthening of free trade unions and political parties by supporting their educational and training facilities, civic education, support for parliaments, rule-of-law-programmes, mass media and research institutes in social sciences as well as decentralisation.

According to Mair (1997), the German system of political *Stiftungen* has many advantages when compared with other ways of funding political work. The principal advantage he continues lies in a pluralistic and value-based approach.

The clearly recognisable values and stance of each foundation has been the basis of a trustful, long-term and reliable co-operation between them and their partners. Pronounced value orientation would be a problem if there were only one donor organisation available to civil society groups or parties and if those values were not made explicit... Value-orientation without pluralism on the part of the donors implies the danger of imposing certain values on a society in transition. But in the case of the German political "Stiftungen" almost each civil society organisation or party in African countries has the chance to select a suitable partner. The present range of potential partners will even broaden if the German post-communist party succeeds in establishing a foundation of its own (Mair 1997: 9).

Mair (1997) further argues that plurality and clear value orientation is considerably more feasible when democratisation assistance is run by non-governmental organisations. According to Mair (1997) this is because NGOs can be partisan. This can be contrasted with government agencies that can barely define political values beyond a general commitment to socio-economic development and democracy. "They also cannot risk explicitly taking the side of the partner when they run into a confrontation with the

government because of the repercussions such an intervention has on the diplomatic relationship of the donor country to the recipient country" (Mair 1997: 10).

4.2 *Stiftungen* in Africa: The Past

According to Mair (1996b), claims by the foundations that they have been involved in democratisation work for the last thirty years are without foundation. The claim appears more plausible for the last 10 years. "Up to the late eighties the HSS (Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung), FES (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung) and KAS (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung) cooperated with many authoritarian regimes and single parties. Such cooperation raised a lot of suspicion in the German public" (Mair 1996: 3). Mair (1996b) contends that the role of German Foundations in Sub-Saharan Africa is tainted by engagement with post independence dictatorships. He points out that the long-lasting engagement of German Foundations in Zaire; Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire "casts a cloud on their activities" (4). It also indicates that for many years the pursuit of the promotion of development and the pursuance of partisan foreign policies was paramount rather than the promotion of democracy.

Mair (1996a) argues that the engagement with authoritarian regimes was underpinned by the "central assumption of the modernisation theory which claims that - for a transitional period - development needs a strong and authoritarian regime." In this period the Foundations were more development-oriented than democracy-oriented. "Their more politically motivated work was very much directed towards the state, its institutions, the ruling party and mass movements affiliated to them" (Mair 1996a: 5).

Mair (1996a) contends that all German Foundations ran programmes aimed at strengthening the capacities of respective public administrations. For, instance the FES supported many trade unions and women's associations that were merely appendages of ruling parties. "Ruling parties in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Zaire, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Togo and many more were assisted by the German *Stiftungen* in improving their organisational structures, professionalising their staff and elaborating their programmes" (Mair 1996a: 6).

The question that immediately arises is why these Foundations helped prop up these unsavoury regimes. According to Mair (1996a) the Foundations justify their work from a

number of angles. Firstly any attempt to help critics of the regimes would have been unviable, they would have been expelled. Secondly, more controversially, "the demand for democratisation assistance was very low" (Mair 1996a: 5). They claim controversially opposition groups sought not to replace the incumbent regimes with "more democratic and liberal systems but by themselves" (Mair 1996a: 5). Mair (1996a) claims that these considerations forced the Foundations to embark on a long-term and indirect approach to democracy promotion. They sought to achieve the following:

- the establishment of democratic structures in their partner organisations
- to expose their leaders and members to democratic ideas and values
- to support the careers of those who seemed to be committed to democracy
- to train journalists to professionally play their part in the political game (Mair 1996a: 5)

Traditionally the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)* was committed to the worldwide pursuit of social justice, while on the other hand, the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)* and the *HSS* saw their role predominantly in aiding the growth of market economies. However following the end of the Cold War, ideological differences between the Foundations have evaporated. Stemming directly from this situation, a consensus has arisen among the Foundations: that their primary role should be to contribute to the extension and promotion of democracy worldwide and that they should complement each other's efforts (Mair 1996). It is for this reason that the research chose one German foundation for the study.

Mair (1997) argues that while the political environment or the nature of the transition does not determine the selection of partners it influences the means used to support them. This means that in a very repressive environment the *Stiftungen* resort to an apparently apolitical assistance to certain sections of the society trying to guarantee their survival until a window of opportunity opens up in which they can openly promote political and opposition role of their partners. In decisive stages of a transition period the financial and administrative flexibility of the *Stiftungen* enables them to mobilise funds at very short notice to support the activities of central actors (Mair 1997: 6)

According to Mair (1997) the foundation for both the long-term partnerships and the short-term initiatives is the presence of a field representative in the country or the region. "He/she provides the thorough analysis of the political process, which is

necessary to identify the right partners as well as the right instruments and to react in a flexible way to changes and opportunities" (Mair 1997: 7). Mair (1997) further asserts that the presence of country representative personalises the commitment of the Foundations to a trustful and long-term relationship.

4.3 *Stiftungen* in South Africa

According to Mair (1996a), the *KAS* provided financial and material support to the *Inkatha Party* by funding its think tank the former *Inkatha Institute*, now *Institute for Federal Democracy*. Away from politics it also implemented two socially oriented programmes, a cooperatives development project and a community service-training project in KwaZulu Natal. In the early nineties, Mair (1996a) asserts that the *KAS* broadened their activities in South Africa ostensibly as a result of the "realisation that Inkatha had not delivered what the KAS expected" (5). Through a project called *Political Dialogue in South Africa*, they worked with a range of 'changing partners': women groups, business associations, economic and political research institutes and political parties such as the Democratic Party and National Party. In 1997, they started a decentralisation project in Northern Province, an area overwhelmingly supportive of the ANC.

Mair (1996a) sees the activities of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation as less controversial vis-à-vis the other *Stiftungen*. For instance they funded the *Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA)*. *IDASA* aimed to serve as a forum and mediating body for discussions and negotiations between blacks and whites within South Africa. Mair (1996a) asserts that by providing assistance to the diverse spectrum of groups in South Africa *Stiftungen* contributed significantly to peaceful change and democratisation. The cornerstones of this contribution were:

- long-term and close partnerships with political and social organisations opposing apartheid;
- enabling critics of the apartheid system to stay and earn their living in South Africa;
- promoting moderate forces in the opposition movement who are committed to peaceful means;

- providing fora for political opponents in which they can meet, discuss and build up mutual trust;
- and reacting in a very flexible way to promising, new political initiatives by providing material and financial support (Mair 1996a).

According to Mair (1996a), the success of this strategy in South Africa has had an impact on the approach now employed by the Foundations in their democracy promotion work in other Sub-Saharan African countries since the late 80s.

4.4 Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Civil Society in South Africa

The *Konrad Adenauer Foundation* contends that since the end of apartheid "South Africa has become the most outstanding example of a sustainable shift towards democracy and political pluralism on the African continent" (www.kas.org.za). The motivation for the organisation's work in the country is to support the process of political social and economic transformation towards a modern democracy.

The existence of a set of functioning political parties is indispensable for a democratic society. This includes that these parties are democratically structured internally as well as that a number of parties with different views and visions engage in a fair political contest bringing about political compromise, which in itself reflects the variety and weight of opinions in the country. Furthermore, all constitutional powers - judicial, legislative, executive - must be enabled to operate effectively and efficiently, on the basis of overall societal consensus as well as the law.

The foundation sees civil society as central to its endeavours. This work entails activities to mobilise civil society organisations, such as human right groups, environmental protection organisations and other lobby and self-help groups, "since every democracy is in dire need of civil society organisations representing political and societal pluralism" (www.kas.org.za).

4.5 USAID

The *United States Agency for International Development (USAID)* is an arm of the United States government that implements foreign, economic and humanitarian assistance programmes. The history of *USAID* dates back to the Marshall Plan, which sought to reconstruct Europe after the Second World War and the Truman Administration's Point Four Programme. However the formalisation of the agency only came into effect in 1961 following the signing in law of the Foreign Assistance Act into law by President Kennedy (www.usaid.gov/).

Since that time, the agency has been the principal vehicle for the US to assist countries "recovering from disaster, trying to escape poverty and engaging in democratic reforms" (www.smb-support.org). The agency receives guidance from the Secretary of State. Broadly however US foreign assistance has always "had the twofold purpose of furthering America's foreign policy interests in expanding democracy and free markets while improving the lives of the citizens of developing world" (www.usaid.gov).

Areas of interest include the following:

- economic growth and agricultural development
- population, health and nutrition
- environment
- democracy and governance
- education and training, and
- humanitarian assistance

The agency works in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and Eurasia. *USAID* works in partnership with non-governmental organisations, indigenous organisations, universities, American businesses and international agencies.

According to Blair (2001), starting in the 1990s democracy became one of *USAID*'s principal objectives. At the same time, he points out, civil society surfaced as a central component of the democracy sector and crucially the focus of an increasing number of program activities. "At the end of the 20th century civil society had become the largest single component in the Agency's Democracy and Governance Sector, with programs active in 63 countries" (Blair 2001: 1).

4.6 IDASA – Chapter 2 Network

Set up in 1987, *IDASA* is a nationally recognised public interest organisation in South Africa. It has offices in Cape Town and Pretoria and has international links with many similar organisations. Its programmes primarily involve the monitoring of government behaviour. It employs permanent and contract staff. "These contracts are related to particular programmes and projects of the institute – some are short term, other have a three year cycle" (www.idasa.org.za).

IDASA works with all the main political parties and "ideological tendencies inside the country to achieve democratic outcomes". According to its home page, *IDASA* "maintains its independence and capacity through a range of diverse funding mechanisms" (www.idasa.org.za). It has a partnership relationship with many international donors - both government and private sector. It has a fee-for-service component and a domestic fund-raising programme. Since the 1994 elections and the establishment of democratic government it has provided services to national, provincial and local government. These include tripartite agreements - between a donor, the government and *IDASA* - and fee for service arrangements (www.idasa.org.za).

IDASA bids for projects on its own or in partnership with other non-governmental organisations and commercial companies. An advantage acknowledged on its website is that "it meets the accounting and project requirements of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish Development Agency (SIDA), Danish Development Agency (DANIDA), Swiss Development Corporation (SDC), Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, Ford Foundation, European Union and *USAID*" (www.idasa.org.za). An important criterion is that the projects should aim to enhance its mission of consolidating democracy.

4.7 Democracy Development Programme (DDP)

This initiative was started in 1993. The *DDP* has operated predominantly in KwaZulu Natal but has recently opened an office in the Northern Province. The organisation aims to promote "those values and institutions in keeping with an open and democratic society" (www.racism.gov.za/pr/workshop). *DDP* believes that all aspects of civil society should be mobilised and empowered to consolidate and enrich democracy. The

organisation sponsors a vigorous and enlightened civil society that is not dominated by the state and embraces respect for minorities and plural views.

Its principal aims are as follows:

- To provide capacity building workshops for the smaller parties, local government structures and communities in order to strengthen political participation and promote divergent views;
- To provide capacity building programmes for the previously disadvantaged groups (women, the rural poor and the marginalized youth) so that they are able to interact meaningfully with local government structures in order to increase political participation as well as to ensure effective service delivery;
- To provide forums where controversial and vigorous political debate is encouraged;
- To work together with other like-minded NGO's and institutions in order to create more sustainable programmes that contribute to the effective fulfilling of our vision;
- Providing political education and elaborating through ongoing action research, the provision of advice to the scientific foundations for political action. (www.racism.gov.za/pr/workshop).

As a consequence, *DDP* works with a cross section of civil society. Among them are the following:

- Political parties
- Community and Civic Organisations
- Youth Organisations
- Students at Tertiary Institutions
- Women's Groups
- Local Government Councillors
- Traditional Leaders
- Ward Committees

The organisation hosts political forums where leaders from different political groupings speak, while a cross section of civil society is in attendance. The audience is encouraged

to interact both with the speaker and fellow participants in order to promote an enlightened and vibrant civil society.

DDP has in keeping with recent practice a women's empowerment programme. "This programme was launched in order to further capacitate women for greater involvement in the political arenas well as to discuss critical issues affecting the rights of women under our present Constitution" (www.racism.gov.za/pr/workshop). According to Naidu, programme director at *DDP*, the Forum serves both an advocacy and lobbying function, while providing capacity building programmes.

DDP is a member of a number of organisations. It is a member of the Pan-African Civic Educators Network (PACE-NET). Formed in 1996, by 30 NGO's representing 12 African countries working in the field of civic education, PACE-NET aims to provide an effective African civic education network. This will be done through the sharing of resources and expertise in order to "in-root a democratic culture for sustainable democratic practice in Africa" (www.racism.gov.za/pr/workshop). Another organisation that *DDP* is a member of is the South African Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition (SANGOCO). Launched in 1995 with a focus on funding and organisational issues facing NGO's in South Africa, SANGOCO is made up of a wide cross-section of NGO's. The coalition is a powerful lobbying body (www.racism.gov.za/pr/workshop). At the global stage *DDP* is in the African chapter of the CIVICUS, which is a global body that aims to elevate the role of civil society in decision-making and development.

4.8 Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)

The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa focuses on elections, electoral practices and seeks to promote democratic governance throughout the Southern African region. The organisation aims to achieve these objectives by "promoting free and fair elections and a popular appreciation of democratic practices and principles" (www.eisa.org.za). The organisation is a number of arms. The Democracy Development Unit "identifies and conducts research projects designed to promote democracy and good governance" while the Democracy and Electoral Education Unit offers education and training programmes with the intention of promoting the goals of free and fair elections and democratic governance (www.eisa.org.za). The Programme Development and Consultancy serves as a project manager and secretariat for major projects in the

regions such as the Elections Commission Forum of SADC countries and the NGO Network of Electoral Support in Southern Africa.

Principal donors include the European Union and USAID

4.9 Centre for Public Participation (CPP)

The CPP began as the Provincial Parliamentary Programme (PPP) in 1998. Organisations instrumental in the setting up included the IDASA, Black Sash, Institute for Multi Party Development (IMPD) and Lawyers for Human Rights. In 2002 it registered as an independent organisation called the Centre for Public Participation. The CPP aims to accomplish the following:

- To increase civil society participation in government processes
- To empower civil society to hold government responsible for the delivery of accountable and accessible governance
- To provide information, networking, training and advocacy support to strengthen community advocacy initiatives
- To advocate for effective government mechanisms to facilitate public participation.

The organisation is structured into two units namely the Communications Unit and the Training and Advocacy Unit. The Communication Unit has a number of objectives such as monitoring and explaining developments and implementation of national and provincial legislation. The aim is to assess the space for public participation in the processes. "CPP staff work with government stakeholders to implement and strengthen public participation structures and mechanisms to facilitate this process" (www.cpp.org.za). To bring substance to this the organisation produces newsletters in English and Zulu to update civil society on policy and legislative structures and the opportunities open for citizen participation. Through its Training and Advocacy Unit, CPP runs initiatives to build capacity at the district level for civil society organisations to monitor local government processes such as the implementation of the Integrated Development Plans. "The CPP produces a range of training material and publications enabling civil society groups to understand and access local government structures and processes" (www.cpp.org.za). In addition to these efforts the centre is a member of a

local consortium, which provides training at municipal level for representatives from councillors, officials, traditional leadership and community stakeholders. This is intended to build relationships, deepen partnerships and facilitate heightened public participation. The CPP also runs workshops for rural based community based organisations (CBOs) in the 11 local government districts of KwaZulu-Natal. These are aimed at making bare the processes of government and proffering strategies for engagement.

Donors include USAID, Mott Foundation, Ford, Open Society, Danish Embassy and DFID. The director was interviewed for this study.

4.10 South African Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition (SANGOCO)

According to the SANGOCO website (www.sangoco.org.za) the coalition came about as a result of the need to "coordinate NGO input into the Government policy and ensure that the rich traditions of civil society – forged in the resistance to apartheid – continue to serve the people of South Africa". SANGOCO is the largest single NGO umbrella body in Southern Africa.

The constitution of a democratically elected government in 1994 with the stated aim of ending poverty through various policy initiatives among them "democratising the state and strengthening civil society" (www.sangoco.org.za), spurred SANGOCO to support these endeavours. But following "a number of significant policy shifts" (www.sangoco.org.za) on the part of government the coalition has reassessed its role. The shifts centre on a new economic framework which "was meant to redistribute wealth, create jobs and generate economic growth but the opposite is true because of its neo-liberal character" (www.sangoco.org.za).

SANGOCO is made of a National Assembly, which is the highest decision-making body. The National Assembly constituted by Provincial and Sartorial delegates reviews the coalition's progress, adopts resolutions and elects a National Executive Committee every two years.

Provincial Assemblies, Councils and Executive Committees are "constituted in all nine provinces of South Africa to coordinate the Coalition's work at the regional level and local level" (www.sangoco.org.za).

SANGOCO is funded entirely by Atlantic Philanthropies. The acting regional coordinator in KwaZulu-Natal was interviewed for this research.

4.11 Centre for Civil Society (CCS), University of Natal (UND)

The Centre, established in 2001, seeks to promote study of the non-profit sector “as a legitimate and flourishing area of scholarly activity” and to nurture collaboration in knowledge sharing and capacity building in civil society (www.nu.ac.za/ccs). Strategies to achieve these objectives include providing research grants to outside scholars, institutes and CSOs, running its own research unit with internal research programmes, post graduate and skills training for CSO workers and an information agency that acts as “a nexus for civil society and for the study of civil society” (www.nu.ac.za/ccs).

Funders include Atlantic Philanthropies, the Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, the National Development Agency, and USAID. The Director of the Centre was interviewed for this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter explores the conditions under which civil society organisations operate. It attempts to measure the extent to which civil society is carrying out its perceived roles given the circumstances. This will be done through an examination of both the manner in which *USAID* and the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation* assist civil society and the broad response of selected civil society organisations to these endeavours. At the same time the role that civil society is supposed to play in a plural democracy provides a soundtrack. Tied to the above the research will reveal how the civil society organisations, namely *Chapter 2 Network*, *Centre for Public Participation (CPP)*, *Centre for Civil Society (CCS)*, *Democracy Development Program (DDP)* *Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)* and *SANGOCO*, interviewed for this study understand their role and the means through which they have acted to promote it.

5:1 Analysis of Findings

Examining the impact that donors are having on the civil society terrain in South Africa is essential. It is important in the beginning to interrogate the claims that civil society is critical for democracy. At the same time, it is important to unpack the power asymmetries in the sector and arrive at a realistic understanding of what is happening in the sector, and to then assess whether this is, indeed, important for democracy. This is particularly urgent given many competing interests making claims on the post-Apartheid state. This research contributes, in an impressionistic way, to this understanding and sheds some light on the relationship between selected donors and some civil society organisations.

Interviews conducted with key personnel at both the *USAID* and the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* reveal that there are no specific endeavours aimed at capacity building at the macro level of civil society. While for instance *USAID* rhetoric attaches importance to capacity building in civil society as a sector the manner in which their civil society programme is structured has the effect of selectively intervening to strengthen particular civil society organisations and particular civil society activities. Nomea

Masihleho¹ points out the recent adversarial relationship of the state and civil society during the apartheid years. "This programme supports South African efforts to address the need for a full and sustainable transition of civil society from struggle against an illegitimate government to increasing collaboration with a legitimate democratic government to achieve a shared developmental vision" (*USAID* 2000). Masihleho asserts that the Agency does not fund "community based organisations or social movements [...] these groups could access support through the workshops and projects run by our partner organisations" (Masihleho in interview, 2002).

It goes without saying that *USAID* strategies aimed at building capacity across the sector are anchored by this conceptual approach, specifically in terms of how they frame the role of civil society. This approach excludes those elements of civil society such as social movements and community based organisations (CBOs) that also seek to influence policy. According to Janine Hicks² and S'bo Zamisa³ this approach effectively leaves out a large group of organisations that are close to the 'ground'. Zamisa contends this is a serious problem requiring attention because "you will find that these are the organizations that respond to the immediate needs, specific issues, that are directly affecting the people" (Zamisa: interview 2003). Adam Habib⁴ contends it is unarguable that particular discourses predominate as a consequence of the direction of funding. Claude Kabemba⁵ charges that certain organisations "are sitting on huge amounts of resources" (Kabemba: interview 2003). Zamisa agrees that these are traditional white organizations "such as IDASA that are known, that are well established ... having interest in terms of issues of development both at national and international level. There's a lot of resources then" (Zamisa: interview 2003).

Masihleho stresses the importance of equipping civil society to assume "its rightful role in a democracy" and that role "should shift from a conflictual one to a collaborative engagement with the state" (Masihleho: interview, 2002). According to *USAID*'s Civil Society Strengthening Program (2000) the "theme of the challenge faced by civil society as being the transition from civil society in a 'struggle' mode to civil society in a

¹ Nomea Masihleho is head of *USAID*'s Civil Society Strengthening Program in South Africa, interview 16-10-2002

² Janine Hicks is director at the Centre for Public Participation, in Durban, interview April 2003

³ S'bo Zamisa is acting provincial coordinator for SANGOCO in KwaZulu-Natal, interview April 2003

⁴ Prof. Adam Habib is the director of the Centre for Civil Society, University of Natal, Durban, interview April 2003

⁵ Claude Kabemba is senior researcher at the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) in Johannesburg, interview March 2003

'partnership' mode was consistently highlighted by CSO representatives through the consultative processes held for the design of this program" (1). Masihleho (electronic mail: 2002) sees "engaging with government in addressing development priorities" and addressing "the leadership brain drain the sector has suffered since 1994" as the biggest challenges facing civil society in South Africa.

According to Shubane (cited in Habib and Kotze 2002), some commentators see government's annoyance (with criticism) as expressive of a "desire to ensure that civil society organisations move away from policy debates into direct service delivery in partnership with itself – a role which, of course, would not pose any direct challenge to government decisions and would create an interdependence which would reduce civil society's freedom of action" (12).

Scholars such as Howell (1995) make a distinction between mainstream and alternative approaches to civil society. She contends that the mainstream approach, which dominates donor thinking and research, has viewed civil society as part of a problem-solving agenda for addressing poverty and inequality. In essence this incorporates a consensual view of relations between civil society, the market and the state within the context of socially responsible capitalism. According to Howell civil society is viewed instrumentally as a benign policy alternative to the developmental state, within a neo-liberal economic agenda.

On the other hand, the alternative approach of some radical European NGOs and grassroots movements sees a more robust or conflictual role for civil society in countering the deleterious impacts of the state. They see this role as emphasizing the critical role of civil society in nurturing new ways of taking part in decision-making; with the crucial question being how the poor and marginalized can create space to effectively take part in social and economic life.

Crucially to this research Christina Teichmann⁶ says the *Konrad Adenauer* involved in democratisation work meet "regularly with other German Foundations in order to avoid overlap and to ensure that we are not doing the same thing or funding the same organisations. We do this because we have the same goal: to promote democracy" (Teichmann: interview, 2002). While Teichmann points out that "our intention is not to

⁶ Christina Teichmann is Programme Officer at the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Foundation), interview 17-10-2002

impose German values on South Africa" the existence of coordination with other German political foundations, with *USAID* and other donors such as the European Union (Masihleho: interview 2002) mean that donors may be deciding disproportionately which civil society organisations are equipped to play a role in society. Teichmann explains *Konrad Adenauer's* approach to finding civil society partners:

As an organisation we have broad guidelines on areas that we are going to fund. We then call for proposals. These must be structured in a particular way. We have a strategy behind what we do. It is this strategy we use when we decide on what we do, that there is a match between what we want to do and what the organisation wants. We then check if it falls in our framework of activities. We do not choose as someone would choose in a supermarket. This is a nice parcel, that one is not and so on. However our intention is not to impose German values on South Africa. We want to promote positive things (Teichmann: interview, 2002)

According to Mair (1997), the following citation explains the system of German Foundations:

The clearly recognisable values and stance of each foundation has been the basis of a trustful, long-term and reliable co-operation between them and their partners. Pronounced value orientation would be a problem if there were only one donor organisation available to civil society groups or parties and if those values were not made explicit... Value-orientation without pluralism on the part of the donors implies the danger of imposing certain values on a society in transition. But in the case of the German political *Stiftungen* almost each civil society organisation or party in African countries has the chance to select a suitable partner. The present range of potential partners will even broaden if the German post-communist party succeeds in establishing a foundation of its own (Mair 1997: 9).

The conceptual approaches can be expected to influence the methodologies used for interventions. The range of realities becomes apparent. These organisations are setting out to build capacity within particular civil society organisations with the express aim of influencing public policy. The critical question that arises is why influence particular policies and why not another set of policies? The next question that arises is: what is the purpose of advocating certain policies and who is determining the answer to these questions. According to Rama Naidu⁷ at the *Democracy Development Programme* in KwaZulu-Natal there have been attempts by donors, specifically the European Union, to not only determine civil society activities but the geographical location as well. As Naidu states:

They will try and stipulate where you work. Some are interested in Durban and some of them, like the EU for example, ...they tried to change our proposals. They said we

⁷ Dr Rama Naidu is head of the Democracy Development Programme, a partner organisation of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, interview 23-8-2002

must work in Durban Metro because we have infrastructure there and I said no we shouldn't be working in Durban, they don't need the resources, you know that kind of debate...(Naidu: interview, 2002)

Samantha Fleming⁸ and Naidu of *DDP* perceive another contentious issue: a herd mentality at the behest of donors. Naidu explains that:

[t]here was a time when it was gender, gender... right now the big thing is HIV/AIDS. They (donors) only help when they find the problem on HIV/AIDS as if there is other development (do not exist)... you know there is sort of fashion of the day. There is the grant of 700 million Rands from KwaZulu- Natal for HIV... there's been a lot of money for AIDS from international governments and people see opportunities and go for it (Naidu: interview, 2002)

Zamiso echoes Naidu's contention, adding that "now we have been told that the next big thing is child rights" (Zamisa: interview 2003). Adam Habib contends "its not about resources only...its about what's sexy, what's not" (Habib: interview 2003). For Fleming the influence is perceptible even in the vocabulary.

I think funders do have more power. When I was doing workshops a while ago you ask people what they do... sometimes you hear words advocacy, lobbying, democracy. Actually you know 10 years ago a couple of people used the word democracy, you know what I mean, but in our days its everywhere ...that's great if that's true but a lot of the time its just what they think the funders want to hear (Fleming: interview, 2002).

Both Fleming and Naidu contend that certain issues are being neglected and that may be a result of the absence of funding to tackle them. Naidu points to the high unemployment especially among the youth as an example. In their work titled *Non-governmental organisations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An impact assessment*, van de Merwe et al (1999) found little manoeuvrability in terms of selecting which projects they engage "as their funding is generally tied to specific projects" (www.csvr.org.za/papers).

Another crucial point is the perceived embedded nature of the relationship between established CSOs and the donor community. Zamisa points out an associated additional problem; the existence of chains or consortia at the top of which are well established of CSOs who then act as conduits for funding. Kabemba evaluates the situation;

I will put it bluntly the relationship between the director of the institution and donors has become more friendly and more personalised. As a result there is

⁸ Samantha Fleming is Project Manager for Chapter 2 Network at *IDASA*, a programme which provides support for civil society organisations involved in advocacy in South Africa 5-7-2002

discussion between the donors and the organisation in terms of what needs to be funded (Kabemba: interview 2003).

Hicks argues that from her experience ‘‘you’ve got to be part of that network. You’ve got to be seen as a leader in your sector’’ (Hicks interview: 2003). Zamisa adds that these networks typically include organisations that are like-minded:

Now these guys from rural areas do not know what is happening in urban areas. They don’t know if funders are more interested into certain programs, areas. They don’t have any relations with partners with funders. As often funders look for a well-known organization and CBOs in rural areas do not have the capacity. But in a way this is dis-empowering because it doesn’t open opportunities and chances for emerging organizations to access funding...our challenge is to ensure there’s funding that is being allocated to people (Zamisa: interview 2003)

Historically, answers to issues of areas of engagement have been found in the configuration of power between donors and the receivers of aid. According to Clayton (1996) capacity building programmes are often shaped by the donor’s own requirements for effective project implementation and reporting, and based on the donor’s sectoral priorities. Recently these have included poverty reduction, democratisation, environmental change or conflict reduction and decentralisation. Some commentators such as Lipson (www.intrac.org) point out that this results in a tendency for civil society capacity building interventions to be compartmentalised and short-term, failing adequately to assess the totality of the environment in which civil society organisations exist and function. Zamisa explains the politics of funding

Now the politics is between the interest of the funders and of the community because CBOs or CSOs can develop programs and projects on the basis of responding to the needs of the community. You’ll find that interests of funders lead them away from their own programs and their own interest. NGOs might ... change their programs to suit the funders needs. At the end of the day, the communities are not the beneficiary in the real sense though there’ll be some kind of delivery ... the organizations were not started on the basis. Now that’s the whole political aspect.

In a trenchant critique of the mainstream approach, Howell (1995) asserts that a key weakness in practice has been the lack of appreciation of the contextual understanding

of civil society in different countries. With the result that, according to Naidu, civil society organisations, have acted in ways that appear determined by those paying the piper.

NGOs have often crossed that line and they often cross that line. It is either because of funders and because of donors...they come with their own agendas, you know, if the donor is closer to the ruling party they want projects to stay with particular group. They trust that geographical location, they trust their subjects (issues) and this can be manipulated very easily and the same thing with opposition party. I think that has happened, as is the case in many countries (Naidu: interview, 2002).

While acknowledging these issues Hicks is not disillusioned:

I'm not cynical about donors controlling an area...that's stupid. We've been able to overcome that within our organization. What I am cynical about is certain organizations who know that there's funding for XYZ, so they quickly go into a program in XYZ until they can get funding. Then to that extent the donor institutions are controlling program areas that NGOs are undertaking. But this is not because of donor organization...it's because of NGOs wanting to access donor funding networks. There's a lot of funding to do projects, we must get each project going. I think it's very superficial to blame donors for that. Donors can't force organizations to do the work. You can't force an NGO to do work. They have said that there can be critical questions about how they come up with their priority areas

According to Naidu, the manner in which *DDP* has related with donors has been to consistently assert their independence as an organisation in the programmes and projects they implement. Weaker organisations may not be able to achieve this given the perceived power of donors.

We had a problem with the European Union. They tried to change our programmes to their ends and we said no, we can't do this. We spent considerable time doing it... and all the other societies appreciated the honesty. And I think professionalism is the approach to the world...I think that is the way that NGOs have to stand to structure themselves now... this is our capacity; this is where we are working. Here is our track record, now...this is our programme we want to do it as promised, if you want to come on board as part, come along so we changed the door to NGOs relationship and is interesting because we actually have a very positive feedback from the donors. Its normally, we tell you guys what we need. But what we mean this time; you came to us and told us to join. This is what we want, they like the approach. They like the approach of NGOs working together, they like the approach of us taking the ownership of the programme and taking on as partners not in terms of... in fact in terms of donors staff soon we don't want your money because you have too many other things attached to this (Naidu: interview, 2002)

Hicks believes that 'in the main, I think donors are becoming more responsible. I think yes, maybe five, ten years ago definitely, five (they) were dictating, (in the past) three years there was no agenda (in civil society) but now I think everyone is working pretty

much on professional basis. They (donors) know they can't be arrogant to come up with whatever other program areas, they've got to talk people in the field" (Hicks: interview 2003). In an effort to attend to these issues donors have developed processes to address these concerns. Hicks argues that professionalism in civil society has earned respect and has begun to yield some positive results.

Some of them... have consultation, good processes where they will invite callers from their sector. They want other issues. Where are the gaps? What should we focus on? How should we as the donor partner go by claiming our support to the sector based on the input from the civil society stakeholders? They will come up with the program area. USAID also did a big consultation process with civil society groups to hear what should be their primary objective. Which area should they be concentrating on?

While noting the importance of this development, a number of key questions need answers. For instance, while, the setting up consultative processes with "CSO representatives" is to be applauded, the extent to which the design reflects the diversity of civil society is difficult to ascertain chiefly because of issues around the representativeness of "CSO representatives". What comes out of the interviews with both sets of organisations (donors and civil society organisations) is CSOs are undertaking an agenda reflecting largely donor concerns. As a consequence CBOs which like social movements are, in theory seen, as 'occupying and expanding a 'public sphere' within civil society" fail to bring up new issues and values into this sphere (Foweraker 1995: 31) In addition the absence of appropriate capacity assessment methods at the civil society level exacerbates this tendency. Anne Garbutt's (www.intrac.org) work on Central Asia found that much donor practice in the region has been based on and informed by models of development experience from very different regions of the world, with a lack of understanding of Central Asian societies.

But what is the role of civil society in South Africa according to civil society organisations? According to Fleming the challenge is to bring about the realisation of social and economic rights as enshrined in the constitution.

The role of civil society in democracy is one of probing and antagonising and pushing...After 1994 people were happy to give it in time and happy to celebrate the fact that they had political rights... but the reality is that, now couple of years down the line, people are asking some for change. Then you have the arms deal where government is spending billions... This does not seem to reflect the economic needs of its citizens...people are starting to be aware that they actually have a right (Fleming: interview, 2002).

Fleming asserts that the pre-1994 problems still afflict people. "People are starving, there are problems of access to water, services." (Fleming: interview 2002) But there is increased questioning. Fleming attributes this to civil society organisations. In response government has often countered by questioning the legitimacy of civil society. That the organised voice in civil society consists in the main of "well established white liberal organisations" has given some credence to government charges (Zamisa: interview 2003). This raises the issue of accountability which has long been a thorny subject in the sector. While there is broad agreement as to the importance of accountability there is little agreement on the meaning of the term. Edward and Hulme (1995) contend that "accountability is generally interpreted as the means by which individuals and organisations report to recognised authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions" (9). They argue that "organisations tend to avoid accountability as much as possible" (9).

Fleming agrees that accountability is a contentious issue in the sector. Smillie (1997) explains the nature of civil society organisations and other NGOs.

They are accountable to their boards and members. this accountability may be weak or strong, as it can be in the private sector. they are accountable to their staff. they are accountable to their donors both small and large. failure to please will mean a reduction in income. they are accountable to the media, upon which they rely for much of their publicity. they are accountable – perhaps in most cases more in aim than in deed – to their beneficiaries. they are accountable to their peers, an accountability sometimes expressed as a code of conduct (Smillie 1997: 575).

Fleming recognises this when she asserts that "we are not accountable to anybody in any formal structure unless it's a matter of becoming a membership of an organisation but even then an organisation such as SANGOCO claims to be motivational" (Fleming: interview 2002). Naidu sees way out: professionalism within the organisation. Edward and Hulme (1995) encapsulate this:

Effective accountability requires a statement of goals (whether in adherence to certain rules or achievement of identified performance levels), transparency of decision making relationships, honest reporting of what resources have been used and what has been achieved, an appraisal process for the overseeing of authority (ies) to judge whether results are satisfactory and concrete mechanisms for holding to account (i.e rewarding or penalising) those responsible for performance (Edward and Hulme, 1995: 9).

Both *USAID* and the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* emphasized the primacy of financial accountability. In an apparent attempt to ensure continued access to financial support

from donors *IDASA* and *DDP* can be said to focus on employing performance measurements which may:

[...] distort accountability by overemphasizing short-term quantitative targets, standardising indicators, focusing attention exclusively on individual projects or organisations, and favouring hierarchical management structures – a tendency to ‘accountancy’ rather than ‘accountability’; audit rather than learning (Edwards and Hulme 1995: 13).

Masihleho (personal communication, October 30, 2002) asserts that *USAID* uses annual audits, submission of monthly expenditure reports and annual financial statements to handle accountability issues and reporting arrangements. Fleming at *IDASA* sees real problems for smaller organisations which may exacerbate this tendency to ‘accountancy’.

I think that smaller organisations don’t always get opportunities to engage with the funders. Also the bigger funders tend to take a little more time about it so. If you want more money you may have to go to a longer negotiations process and have a bigger capacity to deliver on project and have more people to do it and the administrative systems good accounting systems all that kind of stuff... [This] is not easy for small organisation to have all these things... we do have those structures we have accounting systems we have finance managers. We have [...] all those kind of people who know the system and those kinds of things. It makes it easier for us [...] oh we’ll do all the proposals and I do reports as well but when it comes to finance I have a lot of help for finance people which we have. I think as bigger organisation we have excess to people of capacity that’s why the organisation... (can) engage with bigger funders In a small organisation project managers have to do all that. its tough! (Fleming: interview, 2002)

Hicks asserts that due to these capacity issues that CBOs “don’t seem as being reliable, accountable or skilled enough. You know they (donors) want an organization that’s not going to die in three month’s time. We know of how CBOs died down when they ran out of funding. They (donors) want to see all the financial statements for the past three years. Description of whether they have ever done a financial statement before. They don’t have money to pay an accountant..” (Hicks: interview 2003). Fleming argues further that different funding organisations “have different requirements” and reporting requirements. While these conditions may be handled satisfactorily in a large civil society organisations or university (Habib: interview 2003), the same is not true for community based organisations, social movements and small civil society.

Habib and Kotze (2002) while noting this bias towards bigger, more formalised NGOs and the fact that they have “become mere implementers of donor and government ‘development’ agendas” (13) question the will of CSOs for developing an alternative

development agenda. They argue that given CSOs' general dependency on external funding, donors tend to have "undue influence on the shape of civil society" (33). Habib and Kotze charge that an alternative agenda lies with smaller, more radical grassroots organisations and movements, which this research found to be out of the funding loop. According to Hicks the lack of support for CBOs is "creating division between NGOs and CBOs because CBOs, for example, do the actual work in rural areas. ...They are doing it out of their passion and their conviction and out of their inspiration because otherwise they are not going to fit into this. They are not being funded and in the main, speaking about dollars, they (donors) don't want to fund small CBOs" (Hicks: interview 2003).

Grassroots organisations are the ones who really do the work, they are the ones who give all ideas, getting involved but they are not funded. But NGOs (CSOs) work with media receiving all the funding, doing training... You know NGOs aren't comfortable with CBOs, that's exactly the problem on the floor. At the moment they (CBOs) are almost trapped because they are desperate for some sort of help, NGOs come with resources but NGOs are accountable to their boards...(Hicks: interview 2003)

By supporting big professionalised NGOs, with the capacity to meet complicated funding requirements donors make a value-laden choice in favour of one section of society to the direct detriment of others. There is no doubt at all that many CSOs in South Africa, for the sake of survival, tailor their funding proposals to the known priority areas of particular funders. "Compromises and trade-offs thus become the order of the day and development becomes unavoidably donor-driven" (Habib and Kotze 2002: 33-34).

Edwards and Hulme note that NGOs, grassroots organisations (GROs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) can be accountable upwards and downwards. Upwards relates to accountability to trustees, donors and government while downwards relates to staff, partners and supporters. According to Smillie (1997), while there is a perception that NGOs lack legitimacy or that they are not accountable to anyone they in fact have multiple accountabilities. When in balance these accountabilities have a positive influence on an organisation allowing for the amicable management of the interests of different stakeholders (Smillie 1995: 575). But it is often the exception when the interests of different stakeholders are in equilibrium. A general situation is that accountability to a specific stakeholder takes precedence over others. For instance donor objectives can be at variance with the interests of other stakeholders, a compromise will reflect the power dynamics within the individual organisation. Hicks sees a similar dynamic in the way CSOs relate to CBOs;

They (CSOs) are not asking them. They always come and ask them, "are you happy with what we providing? Funding to the organizations, that are doing work in your areas"? Many of these NGOs are going to be asking those questions about the CBOs. No one is asking them (CBOs) for their opinion... or channelling feedback or criticism to them ... So there's a real problem there

Habib and Kotze (2002) argue that "the primary line of accountability is most often to donors. And, generally, in this unequal playing field, it is the more organised, more articulate, urban-based players that walk away with the prize" (34). The *Civics Index on Civil Society South Africa Country Report* (2001) found that there was "a perception that CSOs are more accountable to their donors than to their beneficiaries" (50). How to overcome this divide is a central problem. The central challenge is how to create conditions for what Habermas (1987) termed "communicative action". While Habermas (1987) believed that societies need integration, he also recognised that they were in crisis because as advanced capitalism has taken hold, the integrative function of communication has increasingly faltered. As a consequence the legitimization of social institutions is questionable. According to Habermas (1987), legitimization refers to the general sense on the part of the citizens that the institutions that govern them are just, good and deserving of support and adherence. A legitimacy crisis arises when communicative action has been colonised by a particular discourse, or particular interests. This 'colonisation' undermines legitimacy, and it can be argued that the influence of donors constitutes a crisis of legitimacy for civil society in South Africa. In the recommendation section, this study proposes to describe the conditions that would lead to the re-constitution of the 'lifeworld' or the overthrow of what Habermas (1987) called the "colonisation of 'lifeworld' in order to restore legitimacy.

Functional accountability refers to responsibility for, and use of, resources and the consequent impact of those resources (Edwards and Hulme 1995). Success or alternatively failure is then measured in terms of the extent to which a project or programmes deliver on stated goals. Strategic accountability which is more complex consists of attempting to account for the impact of organisational actions on other organisations as well as the wider environment or country. Measurement is subjective and success or failure is dependent on how important stakeholders see organisational progress rather than merely accounting for financial probity

Effective accountability requires a statement of goals (whether in adherence to certain rules or achievement of identified performance levels), transparency of decision making relationships, honest reporting of what resources have been used and what has been achieved, an appraisal process for the overseeing of authority

(ies) to judge whether results are satisfactory and concrete mechanisms for holding to account (i.e rewarding or penalising) those responsible for performance (Edward and Hulme, 1995:9).

Teichmann of the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* confirms:

We are still in the process of developing evaluation tools. We do not have a strategy in place for determining the long-term effects of our work. It is difficult to tell what influence the Foundation is having on South African democratisation (Teichmann: interview, 2002).

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial in attending to the critical conceptual questions: does a stronger civil society actually lead to improved democracy? Does democracy lead to improved services, greater equity and improved advantage for weaker social groups? A question that follows directly from this: Does strengthening civil society result in pro-poor policies?

According to Pratt (www.intrac.org), a central challenge in developing monitoring and evaluation is, the absence of conceptual clarity underpinning many civil society, strengthening programmes. He identifies three specific challenges:

2. Attribution: given the long chains of causation, it is difficult to know what effect can be attributed to the intervention.
3. Being realistic about goals and setting clear objectives within the resources available.
4. Clarity over time frames: too many programmes are very short-term in design and in vision. It is important to distinguish between short and longer term objectives and the methods to monitor them (www.intrac.org).

Tandon (1995) contends that governance determines the rules and boundaries which form the basis of an NGO's accountability and guide the approach to development, the use of resources and aims of the organisation. Accountability is assured when NGOs embrace good governance. Good governance achieves the following:

[It] ensures that programmes follow the requirements of the NGO mission; promotes a performance orientation and accountability in the institution; and requires that the values (integrity, participation, professionalism, quality and commitment), statutes (reporting and legal standard procedures) and norms or socially concerned civic institutions are articulated, practiced and promoted. An effective structure and process of governance in an NGO is absolutely critical for ensuring accountability in a wider sense (Tandon 1995: 48).

In an apparent attempt to please donors, NGOs increasingly use performance measurements which may:

[...] distort accountability by overemphasizing short-term quantitative targets, standardising indicators, focusing attention exclusively on individual projects or organisations, and favouring hierarchical management structures – a tendency to ‘accountancy’ rather than ‘accountability’; audit rather than learning (Edwards and Hulme 1995: 13).

Edwards and Hulme note that NGOs, grassroots organisations (GROs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) can be accountable upwards and downwards. Upwards relates to accountability to trustees, donors and government while downwards relates to staff, partners and supporters.

Expansion of the networks involving donors, governments, recipient communities and other NGOs can mitigate the influence of one actor vis-à-vis others. According to Edwards and Hulme (1992), a large network can also broaden the ability of an CSO to pick and choose players it wishes to work with. A viable option may be to encourage multiple accountabilities which can lessen the influence of powerful organisations.

Teichmann speaking for the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation* argues elsewhere that donors have guidelines that determine areas of engagement. While this is understandable, in that the activities they undertake must be informed by the interests of their constituents in the home country, this brings up many questions. *USAID* for instance contends that

It appear that the determination by these donors of areas of engagement and the formalised manner in which funds can be accessed (through tenders, proposals and so on) clearly favours professionalised civil society organisations over grassroots and social movements. This situation has resulted in some instances in the growth of professionalised fundraising departments within some civil society organisations. The focus within these departments is on scanning areas of donor interest, attempting to forecast areas of interest and then designing project or programme proposals accordingly. Piven and Cloward (1977) in their work on social movements argue that ways of participation and the “degree of influence that resulted, are [were] consistently determined by location in the class structure” (3). This issue brings into question the claims by proponents of civil society as a check on the power of the state. For instance Habib and Kotze assert that “new plans and funding preferences of technocrats, however, have led to more fingerpointing and fiercer competition between NGOs and

have opened up a growing divide between the formal structures and their smaller grassroots-based counterparts” Habib and Kotze (2002: 13).

Notwithstanding the high sounding rhetoric of the donor policy statements such as ‘making globalisation work for the poor’, any one seriously concerned about the true democratisation of the third world societies and following the developments cannot be sure whether the donors are interested, or will ever be interested in raising those fundamental issues without which it is unlikely that the rhetoric could ever move in the direction of realisation” (Kakarala 2001: 3).

Can professionalised civil society organisations, manned largely by middle class elites champion the interests of the marginalized and poor? Habib and Kotze (2002) argue that answers may be found in accountability. “The primary line of accountability is most often to donors. And, generally, in this unequal playing field, it is the more organised, more articulate, urban-based players that walk away with the prize” (Habib and Kotze 2000: 34). But is this something unusual? Piven and Cloward (1977) contend that situations when protest or contestation is possible among the poor, “the forms that it must take, and the impact it can have are all delimited by the social structure in ways that usually diminish its extent and diminish its force” (3) and in this case by eliminating critical issues from the agenda of CSOs the donors are limiting space for the lower classes to press for their class interests. According to Habermas (1986) class structures persist as long as the means of production and labour are deployed in ways that reflect sectional interests in society. The challenge is therefore to expand space for the lower classes through donors channelling funds to the grassroots community based organisations (CBOs) and to emergent social movements and promoting independence of the mainstream CSOs through liberal funding.

An approach that seeks to broadly build the capacity of all manner of civil society organisations to engage and make claims on the state on behalf of various constituencies may be effective. If the intention is to nurture a civil society, which is not only reflective of South Africa’s broad temperament, there is a need for a more developmental approach to capacity building. Clayton (1996) defines capacity building as an ongoing process of helping individuals, groups of people, organisations and societies to improve and to adapt to the changes. It is important to stress that this is deliberate intervention. According to INTRAC (www.intrac.org) interventions aiming to entrench the capacity of civil society must out of necessity go beyond short-term, compartmentalised and donor-driven approaches. “Instead, such interventions need to be based on a deep contextual analysis of the state of civil society development in a

given country combined with an understanding of the nature of organisational processes, both internally and in terms of external relations between organisations” (www.intrac.org).

This is consistent with past practice between Third World states or organisations that donors set conditions or more accurately conditionalities. The manner in which the deliverance of the Third World’s masses from poverty and underdevelopment to a new era of enlightened democratic rule and development with civil society as one of the guiding principles requires that ways of doing things must change. If civil society is going to play a meaningful role, a democratising role, it cannot depend on foreign funding to a “select few organisations” influencing public policy.

These findings suggest however, that while there may be room for civil society organisations to manoeuvre, the resource weakness of these organisations points to donor organisations having far-reaching impact on the sector. Previous research suggests that donors tend to support certain organisations engaged in particular activities (Hearn 1999). Habib and Kotze (2002) argue further that shifting donor priorities often determine which “CSOs will live and which are to die, and in the process, consciously or unconsciously transplant their own values and worldviews on the recipients of aid” (33). While research found tentative signs that civil society organisations were finding ways to engage donors on their own terms this is only partially borne out by this work. This research found that donors were largely setting the agenda. The analysis suggested that civil society organisations were being corralled into activities that were broadly determined by the availability of funding.

This situation gives ammunition to those who speculate that the civil society dynamic offers new arguments that justify intervention in developing countries, if necessary bypassing local states or governments. According to Habib and Kotze (2002) these pressures emanate from “neo-liberal technocrats’ desire to contain the state and transfer its responsibilities to non-state actors” (13). Kakarala (2001) argues that at one level donors tend to perceive strengthening civil society vis-à-vis the state as a progressive move. Vigilance on the state is the central role for a strong civil society in any democratic society. Kakarala (2001) further asserts that there are deep inequalities – political, economic, social and cultural – in civil societies, which results in undemocratic dimensions. On their side donors acknowledge “at least in words if not

deeds, that societies in third world are 'complex' and their policies must be formulated carefully" (3).

The overall results of this research show that donors are having a selective impact on civil society in South Africa: certain elements, capabilities and organisations in the sector are being empowered vis-à-vis others. Kakarala (2001) identifies three streams of donor funding generally. The first focuses on assistance to disempowered section of society. Hearn (1999) identifies a second, which is the strengthening of civil society vis-à-vis the state. Moen Mathiot (cited in Kakarala 2001) contends that the successful area of activity in civil society building has been urban-based professional elite NGOs whose main focus is scrutinising the activities of the state. A third strand supports individuals, institutions and programmes that "subtly as well as loudly work for the realisation of a 'free market' economy" (3).

Through their control over resources, these selected donors are able to set the agenda for CSOs, which tends to reinforce the hegemonic position of the dominant classes in the country and that of their allies in the North. The donors have some links with Northern governments and dominant classes there. This they achieve primarily through moderating the activities of these CSOs and excluding critical and controversial issues from receiving funds and indirectly eliminating them from the agenda of these CSOs. This however, is not to argue, as Edward and Hulme (1992) have demonstrated, that the existence of a variety of donors does not open up spaces for CSOs to pick and choose partners for activities that they want to do as organisations. In this regard, Naidu of *DDP* and Hicks at *CPP* has pointed out some CSOs are coming up with a framework of activities that they would like to do and then approach different donors to resource particular activities. It will be proposed in this study that donors should widen their understanding of civil society. In addition, it will be proposed that CSOs should be encouraged to develop multiple accountabilities so as to lesson the negative influence of donors.

Hearn (1999) demonstrated that civil society organisations committed to promoting liberal democracy and economic liberalism were the most popular with donors while looking at civil society in South Africa, Uganda and Ghana. As stated above, through making funding for particular activities or programmes in these organisations this research also found that donors may be having a disproportionate impact on agenda setting on the South Africa's civil society terrain. For instance the research found that

civil society organisations aiming to work with both *USAID* and the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation* have to apply for funding following calls for tenders or proposals in areas that are clearly spelled out by the donor organisations. While donors making funding available for civil society activities in South Africa constitute a handful of organisations their impact is telling. For example areas regarded as priority areas hinge largely on donor's perceptions concerning areas of interest and their own requirements for effective project implementation and reporting. Even activities that ostensibly seek to build capacity across civil society as a sector ultimately are selective in addressing capacity limitations in that not only must donors recognise that limitation they must also be prepared to fund activities to address that shortcoming. Habib and Kotze (2002) contend that while donor and government contracts may be useful for implementing programmes and agendas, this must "imply the loss of the very quintessence of civil society, namely its freedom and independence" (11).

The ability of civil society organisations to question and challenge those in power tends to make (donors and governments) uncomfortable and its therefore in their interest to involve them in ways that would lead to their de-politicization and bureaucratisation (Habib and Kotze 2002).

It came out strongly with *USAID* and the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation* that calls to tender or project proposals were largely determining or at the very least skewing areas of civil society activity. It is reasonable to argue that beyond minor or cosmetic changes there is little CSO participation in the formulation of local projects they implement. In fact it can be argued that CSOs have not had a role beyond acting as implementing agencies for donors. In a situation in which civil society organisations are not so weak financially and there are competing sources of funding the role of particular players may be mitigated.

Habermas (1987) makes an important contribution about the nature of media, which can also be applied to civil society. With one type of media, in our case civil society, money and power (votes) are quantitative, that is both money and votes can be counted and whoever has the most wins. Another media by contrast is qualitative, that is, it cannot be quantified because communication between people or groups can only be experienced and not felt. Using this analysis in the South African case, it is clear that donors have a quantitative advantage with regard to money. What is less clear is the impact that they are having on the qualitative front. They can only be two possibilities the first is the one already stated that their agendas are 'colonising' or have colonised

this part as well. The second possibility is that they have failed to attain this but because of the resource weakness of the un-favoured social movements and CBOs, civil society fails to articulate a spectrum of sectarian interests. In both cases civil society fails to act as a democratic watchdog vis-à-vis the state, fails in its democratising role and cannot be said to be close to the poor or the marginalized.

In summary there appears to be no attempt to arrive at an understanding of the type or form of civil society that would be consistent with entrenching democracy. There appears to be nothing beyond the mantra of civil society is good for democracy. The research did not discern an appreciation of methodological changes in the approaches of the donors that would equip civil society organisations beyond the professionalised ones to channel the concerns of all sections of South African society. But is this civil society taking shape in South Africa at the moment necessarily good for democracy? The research found that there is no real conscious effort to theorise on the part of donors the kind of civil society that would be good for South Africa's democracy. The result is that donors have essentially intervened to implement their own projects. "We support several organisations to implement programs related to the objectives of our civil society strengthening program. USAID also provides support to CSOs in the area of HIV/Aids; Violence against women and children; housing and small enterprise" (Masihleho personal communication, October 30, 2002).

5:2 Approaches and Methodologies

While the selective intervention of the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* has a rigorous conceptual basis, balanced by the presence of other German political foundations doing similar work with different players and ironclad financial independence, the approach of the *USAID*, while employing a similar selective approach in finding partners to work with, is markedly different. According to Masihleho (interview: 2002), *USAID* aims to promote US government policy and that policy may change from time to time depending on the ruling party.

As noted elsewhere German political foundations obtain almost all their funding from the government through the Ministry for Economic Co-operation but they are highly autonomous institutions (Lingnau 1997). For instance, while they must apply for funding on a project or programme basis, the application is nothing more than a formality (Mair 1996b). The *USAID* on the other hand is an arm of the US government implementing

government policy, which can be expected to pursue US interests as enunciated by an incumbent administration. This approach is problematic for a number of reasons. As highlighted earlier, Naidu (interview: 2002) and Zamisa (interview 2003) have noted there is a tendency to '*a flavour of the month*' with many of the donors. This can present insurmountable problems for civil society organisations attempting to build sustainable institutions. For example, the current Republican Administration in the United States has ruled out the use of US aid funds for abortion and abortion related activities. One major casualty may be the United Nations Population Fund. At a stroke, organisations and services have had to find alternative funding or fold up. There have been accusations that this may be undertaken for domestic political considerations (www.globalpolicy.org/finance/unagencies/unfpa). This vulnerability to external demands or resources clearly points to the inadequacy and the problematic nature of external intervention in moulding local institutions.

While the German model for developing civil society has considerable merit - taken to its ultimate conclusion, it requires widespread intervention in South African politics to be able to create the kind of pluralism and diversity the system theoretically aims to produce. At the same time, it would be essentially reproducing political schisms reflecting broadly the general political consensus in Germany. While it can be argued that a kind of synthesis would result from the interaction of a German political Foundation and a partner South African civil society organisation, the extent of involvement required would not only be impractical but appears politically unacceptable. It is apparent that the current approaches are falling short of the ideal of assisting to nurture a civil society truly reflective of South Africa's diverse community. It has been argued from various positions that civil society organisations are important in society, it can then be further advanced that as vital components of society, where these institutions are absent or under-funded problems can arise. This research takes this theme further and argues that civil society organisations are beholden to external pressures and as a consequence they may not necessarily work to articulate broad societal concerns. As this appears to be largely the case, civil society organisations cannot function in aid of democratisation.

5:3 Recommended Approach

A strategy that builds civil society capacity must begin from the premise that strengthening of civil society should be an end in itself. Put another way, the end is to enable civil society organisations to attain whatever objective they determine for themselves. Garbutt (www.intrac.org) stresses the importance of supporting the emergence of analytical, freethinking leadership of civil society within transitional countries that will be able to forge its own models of engagement with both the state and the market. Clayton (1996) sees capacity building as an element of empowerment, which allows civil society to play its role of being a counterbalance to the state and to market forces.

Lipson (www.intrac.org) puts forward a developmental approach to civil society strengthening initiatives, rooted in an integrated understanding of CSOs and how they develop within a particular context. She lists the following issues as critical to this exercise:

- a clear contextual analysis of the nature of civil society and its level of development in the country or region in question;
- a contextualised understanding of organisational life cycles and how these influence the capacity of CSOs to engage in proposed interventions;
- an integrated analysis of linkages at all stages during the capacity-building intervention, recognising and working with vertical and horizontal linkages between society and the individual;
- addressing issues of behavioural and organisational change. This involves not merely accepting cultural norms such as attitudes to authority, decision-making and gender relations, but also changing them;
- clarity concerning how the intervention will incorporate learning and knowledge management throughout its timespan;
- openness on the part of resource providers to articulate their own agenda and make themselves part of the capacity building process; in others words, a willingness to change. Donors need to adapt very different tools and timeframes in strengthening civil society to those used in the more familiar output-oriented projects and programmes;
- a truly developmental approach to civil society capacity building must have at its core the subjects themselves as principal protagonists (Lipson www.intrac.org).

It is quite apparent that there is no strategy on the part of *USAID* to undertake any project of this magnitude. While the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation* has a limited mandate given the parameters set out by the political party, which it is affiliated to, the presence of other German political foundations affiliated to other political parties should in theory produce a certain political diversity. According to Mair (1997), successful political aid needs the following:

- values and plurality on the part of the donors;
- a long-term, but flexible approach in implementing programmes;
- professional and thorough analyses of political development;
- accountability and transparency on the part of donor organisations;
- a minimum of political space for civil society organisations (Mair 1997: 10).

The research found little diversity in the work of donors, in fact it found significant coordination, in which the donor organisations essentially funded similar activities. Coordination aimed to avoid 'overlay' and funding the same activities.

The relationship between availability of funding and activities undertaken is the most compelling. As hypothesized, the availability of funding and by extension donor sanctioned interests appears to determine the areas of engagement of civil society organisations. The hypothesis of this research was largely supported by the findings: while there were attempts by civil society organisations to craft their own areas of interest and selectively seek funding from a variety of donors, the limited diversity in terms of areas of interest of donors and donors efforts at coordination of activities meant that these efforts had little significance in terms of extending areas of coverage. These findings suggest that the influence of donor on civil society calls into question the role of civil society in pursuing policy issues, which anchor democracy. How often do the interests of donors coincide with the interests of average South African citizens?

5:4 Policy Recommendations

These findings should be taken into consideration when designing policies and programs to build a civil society that is truly reflective of the broad spectrum of civil society concerns in South Africa. In particular, policies, which aim to build capacity across civil society as a sector, should be encouraged if civil society is to act as pressure valve for societal concerns. Particular attention should be given to designing interventions that

enable organizations representing or organizations from poor, rural and marginalized areas to articulate their concerns. This will take a lot more involvement from donors and other players than has hitherto been the case. If undertaken this will give credence to claims that civil society can act in the interests of democratization and democratic consolidation.

The results also underline the need to confront the prevailing power incongruences that underpin policy influences in the society. According to Habib and Kotze (2002), the divide between the formalised professionalised NGOs and smaller grassroots-based counterparts seems to mirror wider inequalities and divisions in societies generally. While this may not be in itself problematic, the reality that those organisations that are best disposed to articulate their interests are the ones that have consistently been able to access support from donors presents fundamental challenges to the ability of civil society to play a democratising role, or indeed act as a forum to articulate policy alternatives. Thus, it is important to pay particular attention to power dynamics in programs undertaken by civil society. Challenging these issues and illuminating the role that civil society is playing in South Africa is an important first step in bringing clarity to the concept and its practical implications. This is important in that where significant portions of civil society fail to play this democratising role or watchdog role it would therefore be critical to encourage the growth of other institutions that can undertake this role.

In recent years, there has been a tendency in developing countries for the smaller CBOs that are truly closer to ordinary people's lives, to start organising around the human fall-out of neo-liberal programmes. They tend to organise around quite specific issues and identities, broadly related to issues of economic and social exclusion and exploitation. Social observers and analysts are always speculating about the significance of these developments and whether they have the potential to be harnessed into broader-based social movements with real potential to challenge the status quo (Habib and Kotze 2002: 13).

Thus, although these findings only partially support the hypothesis that donor funding is acting to corral civil society in particular directions and therefore impacting on the form that civil society is taking in South Africa this research does highlight the limited opportunities open to innovative CSOs. But the resource weakness of the sector needs urgent attention. Acquainting donors with the broad interests of key civil society organisations across the spectrum of the sector is an important first step, as is forcefully making the case that merely supporting urban-based elite organisations with powerful connections falls far short of ensuring that civil society plays its potentially

democratising role. The fundamental objective though, should be to confront or rather re-configure the imbalances of power that skew national policy at the expense of politically weak groups.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to locate pressures determining the direction of key civil society activities. The resource weakness of South Africa's civil society places significant challenges on the sector's ability to play a democratising role. It also highlights the lack of substance in terms such as partnerships, participation in the current globalising context. The external aid dependence of much civil society strengthening has led to a situation that undermines the long-term sustainability of civil society. Resource weakness in the civil society exacerbates this tendency. It is plausible to speculate the notion of civil society, as a tool to deal with the problems confronting South Africa may be irrelevant. Part of this may be explained by the manner in which epochs shape context and by extension institutions such as civil society. For instance, in Latin America and Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s the term civil society pointed to struggles for autonomy from oppressive regimes. In the 1990s as the term has entered development lexicon it has been deployed to attain an omnibus number of objectives. This general lack of conceptual clarity on civil society complicates the situation.

Echoing the position of Howell (1995), this research takes the view that civil society does not lend itself to "external manufacturing." While external funding places discernible pressures on the operations of civil society, this research, however found that civil society organisations are finding space within the broad funding framework to pick and choose partners for activities that they want to do as organisations.

In light of the manner in which civil society is fundamentally functioning in South Africa, it is credible to speculate that it is aiming to broadly legitimate and support a policy regime that is essentially neo-liberal while not primarily working to elevate citizen work with regard to public policy. This is particularly apparent when looking at activities that are receiving support. At the international level, it has been speculated that donor countries, international financial institutions and governments have employed the notion of civil society in ways that allow states to corral citizen action in ways that suit governing agendas while not encouraging the mobilisation of social activity. Do the activities undertaken by civil society organisations in South Africa speak to the needs of

the majority of South Africans? While these issues would remain whatever tool was being employed, it does question the usefulness of civil society as an organising concept to advance development and democracy.

The challenge must be to go beyond the rhetoric of partnership, ownership and accountability. It is apparent that without altering the present power incongruencies there is little possibility in talking of recasting the relationship between donors and civil society groups. An ideal likely solution may be to get donors to 'put their money where they mouth is' or 'walk the talk' and 'understand' that the consolidation of democracy is in everyone's interest (including them). A practical solution, which may have immediate validity, may be to encourage multiple accountabilities, which can lessen the influence of powerful organisations such as donors.

Having pointed out the shortcomings of civil society organisations, it is also important to stress that as problematic as they are presently constituted, they play an important role in holding the government accountable for a range of responsibilities. For instance, they have attempted to bring substance to the constitution by pointing to social and economic rights as areas where government falls short.

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