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International Civil Society within the Theory of International Relations

Since 'global' and 'civil society' have become commonplace in the last decade, one of the main questions that this article tries to address is their meaning and their relationship. On the analytical ground, the concept of *international civil society* enables one to grasp structural changes in world politics. As far as the empirical challenge is concerned, a "third generation" of Transnational Studies has developed a new framework of analysis of the impact of transnational social movements and/or NGOs on the international decision-making process. On the normative ground, the reference to *global* or *transnational civil society* has become topical in recent scholarly debates. With regard to this, IR studies try to come to grips with one of the most disputed issues in the "global governance discourse", that is, the question of democratization of international governance. In this context, transnational civil society actors are considered the main source of legitimacy in the international decision-making process. The main aim of this article is to show how, whatever the terminology, be it international, global or transnational, this concept is by now part of the IR analytical toolkit.

The article proceeds through three steps. Firstly it carries out a literature review about conceptual definitions of civil society. Secondly, it describes types of actors and modes of action in the transnational arena, also reporting the findings of the LSE research team on Global Civil Society. Thirdly, the article tries to show in which terms and to what extent the "paradigm" of deliberative democracy and public sphere in world politics (which have moved on the central stage of the normative and theoretical debate in IR), can be connected to global civil society issue. In this context, the last part of the paper tries to illustrate analytically, the possibility of referring to a specific mode of governance, i. e., to a form of government rationality, or governmentality, recognizable in world politics. What we have here in this case, is the opportunity to distinguish a specific part, the cognitive-communicative part, of social construction processes of international politics.

1. Introduction

In the past three decades, the concept of civil society seems to have acquired a central position in the political debate, creating space for dialogue among specialized sectors of political science. With regard to International Relations, this concept is being increasingly adopted in various spheres of research (such as policy-making, culture and identity, or in connection with democratization processes of governance [see Falk 2004; Khagram *et al* 2002; Nash 2000; Risse 2002, 2004; Teheranian 1999]), and is also reflected in epistemological considerations, being referred to as "paradigm shift" [see Bonanate 2001 a; Walker 1993]. From a lexical point of view, it is, to some extent, possible to detect some slight shift in meaning, when civil society is termed as "international" (when analysis is focused on the structure of the international system), or

“transnational” (when highlighting the dimension of collectivities and policies), or “global”, when the two above said perspectives are joined [see Anheir *et al* 2001, 2002; Falk 2004; Kaldor 2003]. It is possible, on the other hand, to acknowledge the unquestionable appeal enjoyed by this concept within the scientific community, thanks also to the publication of a *Civil Society Yearbook* by some scholars from the London School of Economics, an annotated chronology of the main events which are rightfully part of the global civil society [see Anheir *et al* 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005].

On the basis of these preliminary remarks, when studying international politics, drawing an outline may help in the various contexts where civil society is seen as an analytical category, as an empirical point of reference, or a normative criterion. In these terms, we may refer to three different “challenges” [see Piattoni 2005] faced by the concept of civil society within international political science, that is to say, the analytical, the empirical, and, finally, the normative challenge, where some space is given to reflection on the legitimacy of decision-making processes in international politics. In this context, the debate on deliberative democracy and the public sphere comes to the fore.

2. The analytical challenge: a premise

The aim of this analytical premise is to ask what conceptual and normative implications may ensue from the adoption of the concept of civil society in the internationalist lexicon. For the last two decades, the concept of civil society has been brought back to the forefront by political experts and sociologists, both when debating democratic theories and when analysing the changes occurring in the globalised, political space. The concept does have, one may say, a strong connotation, when its gradual consolidation within political theory is considered, during evolvment within the nation-state dimension. So far, a conscious use of the concept of civil society is necessary, both with regard to its broad semantics, and its intent, or connotation. To begin with, this aspect may be examined by referring to the thesis which implies resorting to two alleged analogies in the use of concept of civil society in internationalist theory (as illustrated by Anderson and Rieff [2005]), that is, between ‘civil society’ and ‘global’ civil society, and between a ‘*settled domestic democratic society and an international society*’ [Anderson, Rieff 2005, 29]. This thesis abounds in normative requirements which should be kept in mind when consciously theorizing this concept. As we shall see, many scholars of international relations have carried out a selective analysis of the complex, manifold roots of the concept, in an effort to identify the best possible heuristic definition, to account for both the ontology and epistemology of international politics.

Moving from the field of “internal” political theory, we may refer to at least two critical reviews on the concept of civil society. Analysing the major, previous theoretical contributions on this subject

(from Hegel to Tocqueville, from Gramsci to Parsons and Habermas), Arato and Cohen [1995] identify a three-party model of relationships “state-market-civil society”, in which society acts as a mediator between the “systemic” and “life world” dimensions. Political society and economic society emerge as the specific contexts for such mediation. The acknowledgement of new politics of identity, the politics of reform of the economic system, the politics of inclusion in the political society, and, finally, the politics of influence, that is, the pressure aimed at changing the standards of quality and quantity (decisional contexts/actors involved) in the public sphere, are themselves contexts of “mobilization” in civil society. Therefore, civil society is entrusted with an institutional as well as critical role, in the existing balance of powers within a social system. In Mauro Magatti’s view [2005], the analysis of the “four ideas of civil society” in the western tradition of political thought, is linked with a “compound idea”, in which civil society, compared to other institutional spheres, maintains a role of “mediation” but also some potential for reform. The outcome of this “statist tradition” is an idea of civil society characterized by the priority given to the institutional dimension, as opposed to that given to social relations, where, instead, the former is seen as a prerequisite of the latter. The building process of a nation-state, of centralization of political power, therefore of a “functional” differentiation among various spheres of social life exemplify this model. The “individualist” model of civil society, only in part coinciding with the previously mentioned tradition, is that which coincides with the liberal idea of individual autonomy, safeguarded against any form of despotism on the part of political power; but, it is also the model which allows the autonomy of sociality to emerge, thanks to the birth of an “autonomous institutional sphere”, the market. From here, one may identify the shift towards the “associative” school of thought, which is above par to the relational vocation of human beings. Not only has the social dimension not been dried up by the market, but it is aiming at a repoliticization of civil society, at least in the sense that associations are recognized as being able to absorb some normative objectives (one may think, for instance, about the corporative tradition), typical of the state sphere and of the market. Finally, the “communicative” concept of civil society stems from Gramsci’s intuition, and follows, in Habermas’ elaboration, from the autonomy of the cultural sphere, as opposed to the economic and political sphere. Centrality in organized associations, the potential for “emancipation” in intersubjective communication and in the processes of production and reproduction of cultural identities, all converge in the public sphere of civil society. In particular, the relationship between the associative and communicative dimensions shows, as underlined by Magatti, a double potential, on the part of social movements, for the creation of new institutional spheres. The idea of a compound civil society has thus been drawn up by Magatti, starting from a “principle of sociability”, that is, from the relational-dialogical root of social life. Therefore, civil

society is recognized as a sphere of intersubjectivity, but also as a space for tension, or mediation between differentiated and interdependent institutional spheres. Magatti identifies the constituent relational nature of civil society somewhere between “social relations which establish” and “established social relations”. This constructivist interpretation of civil society (which brings us back to the relationship between agent and structure) sees the potential for an institutional renewal as stemming from the principle of sociality (establishing social relations), with the resulting institutional spheres (established social relations), in turn creating the framework in which this “structuring” process takes place [see Delanty 2000; Giddens 1985; Guzzini 2000]. Civil society, therefore, acts as a sort of membrane¹, as an area of mediation between the individual dimension and institutional spheres. With these premises, the issue of civil society is no longer raised in terms of the dichotomy between State and non-State. It is possible, instead, to think of civil society and its concrete historical expression as delimited by four different axes, with the State-market axes vs. community sphere-public sphere axes. The evolutonal and historical nature of the various balances among institutional spheres stems from this scheme of open relationships between institutionalised and ‘differentiated’ spheres, created when these axes cross one another.

A further challenge for this concept of civil society is, in Magatti’s thought, that of a new “unbalancing which establishes”, that is, towards a global civil society, in search of a “civil-human” dimension. This poses the question of understanding whether – and how – this renewed establishing potential may face the two crises created by globalization, that of the “global citizen’s solitude” – intended here as an “emptying due to privatization” of public spaces, where the requirements of the market prevail – and that associated with the legitimization of political and institutional processes of regulation, which are ever more frequently supranational. This should happen through a globally extended capability of intermediation among institutional spheres, a capability which civil society has, and then through the creation and stabilization of new institutionalized spheres, suitable for a “glocal” synthesis of social and political organizations. This means, however, taking the various consequences which may occur when referring to a socio-central view of politics into account, where social relations are themselves part of the political dimension itself, or from a political-central perspective, where political power, through an “authoritative” organization (so far, the state) builds communication channels for contrasting groups within the civil society [see Farneti 1971, 1990]. This problem occurs again in internationalist theory, which is constitutionally state-central, when pondering on the possible existence of a global civil society without a global state;

¹ The “structure” of civil society is organized in layers. This makes it possible not only to clearly distinguish among the spheres of private sociality (family), of primary public sociality (voluntary service), and secondary public sociality (institutional spheres), but also to identify areas taken up by hybrid associations which enrich social relations, both private and public.

this problem may often be answered by referring to a complex institutional framework of global governance [see Kaldor 2003; Shaw 2000].

There have already been, in international political science, a few critical reviews which have taken note of the various definitions of international-global civil society given so far, in the awareness that the effort to create a definition does not just satisfy a mere lexical need. On the contrary, it is claimed that the very definition of civil society produces two fundamental consequences: the first refers to the fact that the identification of a “suitable typology” of the actors of a civil society depends on the definition of such a society; the second, based on the choice of a definition which acknowledges the independence of civil society from the state, is reflected in the way international politics is looked at. If, in other words, civil society is not intended – as is often the case in the field of “internal” political theory – as an incomplete and imperfect version of the ethical state theorized by Hegel, this would strengthen the hypothesis according to which civil society acquires, in international politics, the form of an institutional space to possibly “overcome” the state-central structure [Mascia 2004]. There are also those who think that the problem is no longer to assess whether a global-international civil society exists or not, but rather to assess why it exists, what its role is in global politics and, above all, what sort of “power” it expresses [Lipschutz 2005].

3. International civil society: analytical challenge and structural implications

It is possible to identify, in the first place, a widespread trend (especially in neoliberal-institutionalist and constructivist disciplinary approaches) which brings civil society, back to the question of structural change in international politics, followed, in second place, by five further ways of perceiving international civil society. The first macro-analysis goes back to the fundamental distinction proposed by James Rosenau [1990, 1992] with regard to the structure of “post-international” politics, between “multicentrical” and “state-central”. This distinction was a forerunner in the question of transnational civil society, as well as in the establishment, for the last two decades, by now, of a most successful frame, created in internationalist political science: that of *governance without government*. Also, on this first semantic level, the “international democracy” approach can be identified. In this case, the actors of the global civil society would appear to be the protagonists of new international politics, changed, that is, into the “anarchical structure of the international system” [see Mascia 2004; Papisca, Mascia 1992]. Another meaning, close to the previous one, is that of cosmopolitical democracy and *humane governance*, where the question of international democracy and the UN reform are interwoven, with a new take on the human condition and development [see Held 1995; Falk 2004 a]. Another trend is the “prescriptional and political-institutional” one which appears, above all, in UN documents [see Commission on Global

Governance 1995]. In a fourth, “neo-gramscian” view, various analyses of the “power structures” of international politics are interwoven, aimed at change through collective action on the part of solidarity movements [Cox 1999]. Finally, in literature, civil society is dealt with above all in connection with partnership practices (the case of the European Union is emblematic) within a multilevel governance, where forms of cooperation occur between different levels of government, from supranational to the local [Hooghe, Marks 2001].

With regard to the first trend, the structural change of the international system, according to Ruggie [1998], may be analyzed at various levels. Firstly, at a theoretical-conceptual level, based on the adoption, by the scientific community, of a new epistemological *habitus* (thus justifying recourse to Kuhn’s category of scientific revolution) and of a “transformational ontology”. Secondly, at the level of the structure of the international system, referring to the extension of international subjectivity, no longer monopolized by the state. Thirdly, a structural change may be registered in connection with the impact of “micro-practices” carried out by transnational actors, in the “arena” of international policy-making, where there is room for non-governmental organizations, epistemic communities, networks of actors such as *transnational advocacy networks*, or new global social movements [see Haas 1992; Khagram *et al* 2002; Risse 2002]. In these terms, it is therefore possible to register a shift to a new age in international politics [Bonanate 2001]. The “world’s internal politics” is, in fact, a complex and contradictory network of interactions between political processes, which follow specific logics on a local, national and global level, in a new context of socio-political regulation, structurally marked by the shift from *government* to *governance* [see Piattoni 2005; Pierre, Peters 2000; Rosenau *et al* 1992]; the planet’s civil society is therefore the place where this world internal politics is created. Bonanate’s institutionalist perspective is focused on overcoming the anarchic conception of international politics. It would be necessary, in fact, to ‘expel anarchy as a category from conceivable human events’, so as to think of politics, both domestic and international, as an alternation of conditions of order and disorder, successes and failures, phases of institutionalisation and de-institutionalisation. In other words, the fabric of relations which make up the bulk of social relations would therefore have no solution of continuity, between internal and external political space, even if it were able to change form and consistency. This change of form and consistency leads to *«the observation that at the end of the last century international society started to become somewhat similar to an “international civil society”, where both States and citizens have lost most of their distinctive elements, whereby a “world internal politics” ensues, since boundaries, which prevent anybody from participating in other people’s business, practically no longer exist»* [Bonanate 1999, 21]. The genealogy of civil society as proposed by Foucault allows us to see the Great Divide under a new perspective, which derives

from an analysis of governmentality. As is well known, by governmentality Foucault refers to the 'political economics of power', to a government's rationality, and to various techniques of power which have characterized the modernization of politics. What emerges from Foucault's analysis, in particular, is the existing connection between the two mechanisms of power management which characterize the two spheres of politics, internal and external, with a 'Police State' in the internal sphere and a European balance in the external sphere. However, both may be traced back to a single form of governmentality, that of the 'Reason of State'. This, in fact, explains what runs between domestic and international politics. If the reason of being of a governmentality regime in a Police State lies in unlimited growth and strengthening on the part of the State, the reason of being of the 'European balance', on the contrary, consists in granting pluralism within the European society of states, keeping a balance, even if precarious, in the relationships among states, and at the same time limiting the states' uncontrolled growth, thus avoiding the possibility of an empire. The structure of modern governmentality is also characterized by the formation of the sphere of civil society. In this connection, the four factors identified by Foucault as the base of civil society may be considered.

According to the first factor, civil society is outlined as a 'natural, historical constant, in that human nature, being social, is intrinsically historical. Therefore, the existence of a natural aspect, as opposed to the non eliminable social one which characterizes mankind, cannot be hypothesized.

The second characterizing factor is also founded on the centrality of the social aspect. Civil society ensures a 'spontaneous synthesis of individuals', or the formation of social connections, and of 'networks' of connections. In civil society, though, connections of 'affection' are correlated with connections characterised by lack of benevolence. That is why, Foucault states, '*civil society will not coincide with mankind in general, but it will consist of various sets, at different or coinciding levels, grouping individuals within a certain number of nuclei*' [Foucault 2005 b, 247]. This idea of civil society does not seem so far from the idea of multilevel governance and network society, structured into numerous clusters, an idea which is now common terrain of theoretical reference, when analysing sociological and internationalist aspects.

The third factor of civil society refers to its condition as 'permanent matrix of political power'. As Foucault points out, different roles and positions of power derive from actual relationships among individuals.

The fourth factor, instead, looks at social changes. The principle of association-dissociation, the core of civil society, is also the principle of its historical transformation. Changes are caused by the interaction of various kinds of relationships, of benevolence and non-benevolence.

The main focus of Barry Buzan's analysis [2004] is a study on the structural dimension, where the prime objective is to rearrange the deep-rooted range of concepts of the English School

tradition; this is achieved by starting from the concept of *world society*, and then, by changing its contents and extension. As in a series of Chinese boxes, Buzan identifies the sphere of interstate society, the associative dimension of transnational society, and the dimension of community-identity of the so-called “inter-human society” within the macro-frame of world society. This approach makes it possible to portray each sphere of world politics in three different continuums, or spectrums, where the more or less thick articulations of the institutional and “ideational” (as well as material) structures of each sphere, are located. Three “anarchic cultures” operate within the society of states, that is a model of relationships between states relying, respectively, on coercion, the rules of co-existence, and co-operative processes. Within the trans-national sphere, the continuum goes from the extreme of the (hypothetical) non-existence of transnational actors, to a middle dimension (close to what Buzan considers the current situation in transnational civil society), to a neo-medieval framework of world politics, with a mutual coordination among functionally different decision-making levels, into a new political order. Inter-human society stretches out along the continuum of different cultural and political identities, from parochial identities, to tendentially universal communities [see Rosenau 2003]. This type of analytical articulation is then completed by Buzan’s resort to the “geographical” category of “sub-global” level distinctions in world society. Among the sub-global levels within global politics, the “supranational” area of the European Union emerges, which Buzan brings back to the culture of “convergence” in relationships among states, being characterized, as they are, by shared economic and social rules, as well as by institutions and values. Buzan adopts a critical position with regard to other analyses of global civil society proposed in literature². On an analytical level, a hypothesis which allows reference to the concept of global civil society as an omnicomprehensive interpretative category, is, in Buzan’s opinion, inaccurate. In this case, in fact, the extension of such a concept could only occur at the price of dilution (from a connotation point of view), that is, when the reference to global society is limited to the diffusion of functional cooperation processes, between states and multinational companies. In addition, according to political experts, there are some aspects of the “reality” of transnational societies which have not been considered with due attention, as in the case of what he calls the *dark side*, exemplified by the use of transnational channels for a organization of terrorist activities. In analytical terms, on the contrary, a distinction among the various dimensions would make it possible, in Buzan’s opinion, to maintain the specificness of each of the components of world politics, even within a unitary interpretation.

² In particular, Buzan refers to Dieter Jung (*The Political Sociology of World Society*, «European Journal of International Relations», 7, 4, 2001, pp. 443-474) or to Boli *et al* (*Constructing World Culture*, Stanford University Press, 1999), Anheir *et al* [2001] and Martin Shaw [2000].

The image of a patchy geography of international politics with distinct areas (horizontally) and levels (vertically), illustrates the structure of cosmocracy, also in John Keane's interpretation of global civil society [2003]. A new kind of social stratification emerges within this space, on the basis of a condition of "intersubjective inequality", which distinguishes between rich and poor states, peace and war zones [see Bonanate 2001]. The biosphere of this subtle, wide, pervasive but non homogeneous space, in which Keane identifies the structure of global civil society is made up of several ecosystems. Networking transnational circuits of individual and collective actors in local civil societies, the dynamics of global capitalism, the structures of global governance, together with the development of transnational network connections between local civil societies, are the main core of global civil society.

Martin Shaw [2000] and Alexander Wendt [2003] add another piece to the puzzle created by the analysis of the structural dimension of the international civil society. In this context, the problem to be solved is based by the two scholars, even if in slightly different terms, on the conviction that the "institutional form" of global civil society is too "weak" to carry the weight of global, socio-political transformations. Only a "world state" (intended as a community where all are safe, based on the principle of affiliation, after the model of multilevel governance, able to make decisions leading to deliberations within transnational public spheres) could bear such a post-Westphalian transformation in international politics. Both Authors, however, seem to propose a state-centric view, closer to Kant's liberal and cosmopolitical interpretation of international civil society, though in a milder version, with their reference to the participation of individuals and groups through a "global public sphere".

According to Mary Kaldor [2003], the historical experience of transnational mobilization of networks of actors from north-western European civil societies, following the 1975 Helsinki Agreement, represents the first step in the building of post-international and post-anarchic politics. The networking capability amongst these actors has created a series of opportunities which made opposition to communist regimes possible, also creating the prerequisites for the development of civil societies in central-eastern Europe. The construction of a global civil society which is no longer "territorial" is seen as the last phase of evolution gone through by the institution of a "civil society" from modern times on. According to Kaldor, transnational-global civil society, in its "activist" version (with NGOs and solidarity movements, as contracting parties), could change the form and contents of the "contract" of the modern state, which has guaranteed pacification and civilization within the boundaries of a state at the price of international anarchy. The assertion of the rule of law, supporting the multilevel structures of global governance, should be able to change the terms of this contract, so paving the way for pacification (and democratization), also for

international politics, too. A neo-Gramscian view of global civil society is proposed by the constructivist, Cox [1999]. Recognizing the characteristics, in terms of actors and processes from national civil societies in different areas of the world (from the European-Atlantic core, to Latin America, to East European and Asiatic countries, to continental Africa), Cox analyses the new structures of social exclusion, brought about by global capitalism. In these terms, global politics is mainly characterized by the loss of centrality of politics in favour of the market, for the formation of a transnational “power bloc”, and for the first signs of the formation of an anti-hegemonic bloc within the cultural-associative space in civil society. This political circle should be reactivated by actors in the civil society within an emancipation process for the construction of a state model which Cox calls civic state, referring to the constitution of a new form of political authority, on the model of participative democracy. The task of “organic intellectuals” in this context is to re-establish the fabric of civil societies and national politics in various world zones, when facing a political space which is fragmented and tormented by extremisms, anomy, political apathy, crime and terrorism. The emancipation plan, which may be realized through local civil societies networking for the construction of a new global order, is aimed at the creation of a post-modern, «collective Prince, through a coordinating of popular movements» [Cox 1999, 15], on a translocal-transnational basis, that is the formation of the social basis for a new political authority.

Lipschutz’s analysis [2005] is again focused on the problem of power, stating that global civil society is, in the first place, “bound” to the market, to the globalized economy. Therefore, it would not present itself as an alternative to market, but as part of its mechanism. Actors in global civil society are able, in Lipschutz’s opinion, to exert a certain influence within a specific political circle (or act within the institutional sphere of current governance structures), but the fact that they manage, for instance, through the pressure of international campaigns, to get a multinational company to acknowledge some principles of environmental responsibility, or consumers’ health protection, or even some workers’ rights (the above mentioned influence) does not imply that the structure of power in the global market has been disrupted. In Lipschutz’s view, therefore, the extension of the “private” logic of the market ends up with the prevalence of a technocratic downward turn, de-politicized of global governance, whose features are recognized in “governmentality”, and “control technologies” of a global population, used by economic and political institutions in global governance . There is, however, the possibility that, in this situation, through action at a local level, debate and “public deliberation”, new strategies may be adopted, to resist such a structure, or change it, starting from local micro-realities, from those micro-circles where global power is exercised.

The last theoretical vision on GCS that we report here, is the one developed by Nicholas Onuf. According to Onuf, if there is a global civil society (and for the father of constructivism there cannot be any doubt about this), it somewhat resembles Hegel's 'system of needs', a set of economic and bureaucratic relationships which structure a wide, functional architecture, produced by the global extension of systemic-functional processes of differentiation. There is, therefore, a global space which rests on a vertical axis of bureaucratic and economic organizations, and which also works through a myriad of associations (the horizontal axis) which end up forming a sort of 'lattice', an institutionally articulated spatial grid, which can be identified also in terms of a multilevel global governance. This architecture, in turn, embodies the 'victory' of the liberal model of international politics over the 'republican' model, and this is a central point in Onuf's conception; that is, to provide the constructivist approach with a historical-conceptual 'tradition', and to do this, he first identifies a sort of 'machievellian moment' in the theory of international relations, and then makes a distinction between a 'continental republicanism' à la Kant, and an 'Atlantic republicanism' à la Vattel. For the first option, Kant teams up, as such, with Grozio, Pufendorf and Locke, while Vattel identifies his Atlantic republicanism together with Harrington, Montesquieu and Hume. However, Onuf's complex and detailed historical-conceptual reconstruction of republicanism cannot be analysed here.

4. Transnational civil society: the empirical challenge

Analysis of the transnational sphere, after the first and second generation of studies in the 1960s and '70s, seems to have reached a new phase, characterized by its most recent season, post-Seattle research, inaugurated, that is, by the arrival of the *new global* movement on the scene [see Booth 1996; Della Porta, Tarrow 2005; Risse-Kappen 1995]. Apart from the shift of analysis (previously focused on multinational companies and economic interdependence) on new categories of transnational actors, the reference to the third generation of studies is explained by the identification of an analytical grid which can illustrate the ever more complex (national-international) network of the "structures of political opportunities", of the access of transnational actors to the international public sphere. This context sees the assertion of the use of new analytical patterns, such as complex multilateralism³ and internationalism, or of dynamic multilevel governance. In these terms, a sort of synergy is defined between comparative politics and the study of international relations. [see Della Porta *et al* 2005 O'Brien *et al* 2000; Sikkink 2005].

³ This kind of impact, linked to a more general process of pluralization of global governance, is described by those scholars who have identified the concept of complex multilateralism with regard to the relationship among movements, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations (such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) which structure the multilateral regime of the global economy [see O'Brien *et al* 2000].

In this context, Thomas Risse [see 1995 a, 2002] has contributed by analysing the various conditions which define the possibilities of accessing and reaching specific political objectives within the transnational sphere. The first condition regards the various levels of institutionalization of the international environment, identifiable mainly by policy areas; the second condition comes from structural diversity within national arenas, both with regard to the state sphere and that of organized civil society. In this way, it is possible to analyse the mutual interaction between the inter-state system and the transnational sphere and, therefore, the impact of this sphere on world politics.

Interaction among the various arenas emerges in an even more effective way in Kathryn Sikkink's [2005] description, particularly when she maintains it necessary to consider, from an analytical point of view, the degree of "openness-closedness" of the opportunity structures which determine the chance of succeeding in mobilizing collective actors, both at a national and international level. In other words, transnational social movements and NGOs would include both dimensions in their range of actions. Thus, four hypotheses could emerge. The first occurs when both national and international opportunity structures are relatively closed, with consequential reduced probabilities of successful, collective mobilization. Another verifiable hypothesis can be defined, which is based on two mechanisms, the boomerang effect, or the spiral model (which, in turn, is the outcome of a series of boomerang effects). This includes all those cases in which, due to the "closedness" of political opportunity structures at a national level, because of transnational networking dynamics, a sort of "recoil" impact is created (when shifting from closedness to openness) in the state-objective, as is the case, for instance, when human rights become diffused. Thus, this very mechanism works within the so-called "life cycle" of norms, which exemplifies the interweaving between national and international arenas well and, as a consequence, the relevance of the transnational sphere. In this case, the commitment of individual and collective actors, through a transnational organizational platform, favours the emergence and gradual consolidation of new norms, challenging those already existing. In these terms, the restoration of the process of "emergence/diffusion/institutionalization" of norms, makes it possible to identify three different phases for analysis, in which a complex two-level process takes place, culminating in the diffusion of new norms, which first arise at a national level, are then adopted by a critical mass of states in the international community, and up to reaching the stage of full institutionalization [see Finnemore, Sikkink 1998].

The third hypothesis is that of "defensive transnationalism", as defined by Sikkink, characterized by closed opportunity structures at an international level, but open at national level. Actors, in this case, try to modify the political line of intergovernmental organizations (such as

WTO, for instance) putting pressure on member governments. The last formulated hypothesis, finally, considers both sets of opportunity structures as being open, and therefore considers transnational actors as able to privilege the national sphere, seeing the possibility of accessing the international sphere as a complementary/alternative option.

It is also possible to draw a sort of identikit of the actors (mainly NGOs and solidarity movements) which operate within the transnational civil society, based on the kind of political culture which they have taken on themselves. They take their inspiration, in fact, from “universal values”, such as human rights and democracy, thus carrying out a role of legitimization of global governance, also based on their technical skills, operating so as “embryos of supranationality” and “international democracy” within international politics. They can be recognized, therefore, by a series of functions which they exercise in the global political system, where they may be said to be committed to the task of “delicate political-institutional engineering”. They are involved, in fact, in the task of agenda-setting regarding specific policies within the decisional-institutional arenas in which they operate, in universal law building, where the above mentioned dynamics of boomerang effect can clearly be included; peace building and democratic-institution building are among their tasks, which they carry out by “promoting” and “protecting democracy”. [see Mascia 2004; Schmitter and Brower 2000].

The adoption of new tools for analysis is also emerging at the level of the organizational structure of networks of transnational actors. Starting from the definition of network, intended as a form of organization characterized by «*voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange*» [Keck, Sikkink 1998, 8], international campaigns are referred to as processes of cognitive building of specific issues, in a context defined by given political opportunity structures. [see Della Porta, Tarrow 2005]. Within such a frame, transnational collective action may be considered as the result of the coordination of these international campaigns. With regard to the modalities adopted by these networks in pursuing their objectives, it is necessary to consider, in the first place, collection, adoption and management (in terms of processes of framing and re-framing of issues) of relevant information and information politics. Secondly, it is possible to refer to processes of socialization which operate through catalyzing events in symbolic politics. Thirdly, there is the emerging identification of some points of contact between social actors and leverage politics; finally, there is the pressure put on targets (governments, for instance), aimed at making them change their political line, or at reaching a higher conformity to accountability politics [see Keck, Sikkink 1998].

Among those new, relevant arguments in favour of a third generation of transnational studies, there is the impact of communication technologies on the organizational infrastructure of

networks of transnational actors, such as NGOs and movements, as well as on the very construction of “dominant interpretative schemes” now defined by global social movements [see Ceri 2002; Della Porta *et al* 2003]. From this perspective, a close connection can be seen between cognitive-ideational factors and processes of social building of international politics, as has been recently identified by constructivist research [see Finnemore, Sikkink 1998; Haas 1992; Risse *et al* 1999]. With regard to the networks of relationships, the use of technology (the Internet), facilitates the scale shift⁴ process, extending the transnational actors’ range of action and organizational structure, and at the same time increasing the likelihood of exercising its influence in the international public sphere [Bennett 2005]. There is integration, therefore, between relationships mediated by technology and interpersonal relationships, thus increasing the efficacy of transnational coordination. The outcome is a kind of synergy between an emerging inclusive, polycentric frame (which is gradually replacing the stronger ideological line of traditional social movements) and the application of technology which allows organizational infrastructure to be more open and informal. It is thus possible to talk, according to Bennett, of the need for a potential virtual-technological infrastructure of the prospective global civil society.

On first analysis of what has been said to now, it may be said that the changes which have been noted in the transnational sphere are, on the one hand, characterized by old tendencies, and on the other hand by the need for new processes of socialization-learning. Within the context of post-cold war international politics, in fact, the effects of the processes of transnational *diffusion* (intended as dynamics of organizational isomorphism), of *internalization* (in the sense of mobilization on an internal level, with regard to issues which have arisen on an international level) and *outsourcing* (due to the setting up of new movements in the supranational arena, triggered by issues which have arisen on a national level), are followed by those effects triggered by learning processes on the part of transnational actors, based on what they experienced during specific international events, such as the so-called parallel summits. This context sees the formation of a new “activist stratum”, identifiable by a series of features. These are, first of all, based on an “ideological” line, which may be defined as a “rooted cosmopolitanism” pertaining, therefore, to flexible and modular individual and collective identities; this is the outcome of a situation in which groups rooted in a specific national context are regularly committed to activities within transnational networks. Secondly, reference is made to the development of a model of “multiple actorships”, stemming from the interweaving of actorship in polycentric organizations with a wide-mesh structure. In third place, the building of new flexible, inclusive identities emerge, based on the

⁴ In the same collective volume, Tarrow and McAdam [2005] give a rich and detailed analysis of the various models of formation of transnational movements, based on non-relational diffusion, through mass-media, relational diffusion, or favoured by brokerage.

enhancement of diversities and on processes of mutual contamination of the cognitive and symbolic heritages of the various subjects. Two fundamental mechanisms of mobilization arise in this context, with regard to the construction of “tolerant” identities and to the “re-interpretation” of politics, in a democratic-participative sense, based on a critical attitude towards the representative democratic model [Della Porta, Tarrow 2005].

4.1 Global civil society: operationalization of this concept.

To date, the most ambitious attempt to achieve operationalization of the concept of global civil society from a theoretical and economical point of view, has probably been made by a group of scholars from the London School of Economics [Anheir *et al* 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005]. Through the publication of a sort of “yearbook”, these scholars analyse the theoretic-normative debate and empirical research on events with a high impact on international politics, particularly with regard to the influence of transnational actors on global policy. This “socio-sphere” is analyzed by examining various aspects: *organizational* – for instance, raising funds, or the impact of computer technology [see Anheir, Themudo 2002; Naughton 2001; Pinter 2001]; *political-institutional* – through the analysis of the process of ‘agenda-setting’ in the global political system and the influence of transnational activists on it (see Pianta 2001; Risse 2002); *political-decisional* – with regard to specific policy areas, such as the institution of an international criminal court [see Glasius 2002], or policies of humanitarian intervention [see Kaldor 2001]; *cultural* – regarding the complex relationships between different cultures within a global society [see An-Na ‘im 2002].

The articulation of the above said profiles stems from the methodology chosen for the definition of concepts adopted, and the identification of analysing units and indicators. With regard to the retrieval and analysis of data, experts complain about the obstacles caused by “methodological nationalism”. In other words, the use of retrievable national data is the starting point for constructing a “global civil society index” (GCSI), while in the long run it might be possible, in the experts’ opinion, to further develop data collection, adopting new criteria, different from the current, national ones, based, for instance, on regional or city networks, or global organizations [see Anheir 2001; Anheir, Stares 2002]. Therefore, the aim of the GCSI is to identify, on a comparative basis, the terms of “participation” and “inclusion” of national political communities in a global civil society. Such terms are defined by the two main analysing units (individuals/organizations), which are articulated⁵ into further sub-dimensions, linked to the

⁵ For further details on methodological remarks, see Anheir, Stares [2002].

organizational infrastructure of global civil society. Society is represented on the basis of the “density” of non-governmental organizations and associations. In this case, three features are examined, i.e. the geographical “extension” of the range of action of these organizations, their “intensity”, that is, the extent of their interconnections, seen as a network, and their “frequency, or the amount of interaction between actors and organizations. With regard to individuals, analysis of the organizational dimension measures the degree of relational connections in associative networks, the forms of participation, the amount of contacts and interactions. With specific regard to the individual dimension, a further articulation measures the degree of *civility*, intended as the adhesion to cosmopolitical values, such as tolerance (the attitude, for instance, towards immigrants), solidarity, environmental sensitivity, and the extent of participation in voluntary services, or of political commitment and, finally, the degree of identification with various, territorial political communities, from cities, to regions, to nation-states, to “world society”. There is also the analysis of “structural data”, regarding the main dynamics of the processes of globalization. These data include the economic dimension (analyzed through data regarding world trade flows, or the growth of major multinational companies), of the mobility of subjects (data regarding students staying abroad, the number of emigrating workers and their destinations, tourist flows), the cultural dimension, considered on the base of the amount of exchange of “cultural goods”, the diffusion of major religions and the most spoken languages, and the flow of communication through the media.

The work of the research group continued with monitoring empirical data regarding the patterns of the “transnational interconnection infrastructure”. The subsequent issues of the year-book are, in fact, referred to additional parameters of analysis. The observers’ study was focused on the possibility of drawing a “geographical” view of globalization. This can be done by collecting and analysing data regarding economic development, political participation and diffusion of “cosmopolitical values”, connectedness, in terms of media diffusion, still being linked to the level of guaranteeing human rights [Anheir, Katz 2003]. The resulting “map of global flows” shows a picture of a global civil society, whose core lies in the planet’s developed areas, i.e. Northern Europe, North America, Japan and Australia. The empirical evidence collected in the latest year-book draws the observers’ attention to the “infrastructure” of global civil society, based on a specific methodological approach, that of network analysis. Due to its characteristics, this approach makes it possible to highlight not so much the “attributes” of the social actors (that is, through sociological categories resulting from traditional surveys analysing actors according to age, sex, economic level), as, rather, their relational characteristics. The underlying hypothesis is that the various relationships and connections observed among individuals have an influence on the behaviour and identity of these subjects [Scott 1997]. The researchers’ objective is to shift from a

basically metaphorical concept of *network society* regarding the structure of global civil society, to a more strictly analytical approach, capable of fully developing the heuristic potential of *network analysis*. Research carried out to date, especially with regard to the relationships among organizations in the civil society (mainly NGOs), their actors and specific events (world forums, for instance), shows how the transnational infrastructure of the civil society appears to be bifurcated. In the proximity of a central area, thick with connections among organizations and groups (corresponding to the above mentioned core in the map), there is a vast “multitude of organizations”, which are less interconnected; the resulting structure, on the whole, is a macro-network⁶ divided into two parts [Anheir, Katz 2005]. In particular, if, on the one hand, these latest trends in the analysis of global civil society, do rescale the size of its hypothesized global extension, on the other hand they help in accounting for the changes of a fluid, evolving reality, as well as in making its analysis and conceptualization more rigorous.

5. Transnational civil society and public sphere: the normative challenge

Moving to a normative level, analysis of the structural and procedural characteristics of transnational civil society is replaced by a study of the role of the civil society as both setting and reserve of democratic legitimization of global politics. The dilemma posed by Dahl on democracy “beyond the state-nation” is discriminating, in this debate; in a “post-national” context, it will not be possible not to choose, in Dahl’s opinion [2001], between the efficiency of decision-making systems and citizens’ participation. The reflections, expressed from here on to the end of this work, stem from the analysis of some of the most significant counter argumentations to the clear-cut alternative posed by this dilemma.

Following the approach of cosmopolitical democracy, international civil society appears to be the institutional and cognitive framework of the diffusion processes of democracy [see Archibugi *et al* 1998; Bonanate 2000, 2001]. However, macro-frame of cosmopolitical democracy projects does not put an end to the debate on transnational civil society or the potential to form transnational, interconnected public spheres, rooted in society. It goes hand in hand with an analysis of the transnational political sphere, its actors, the modalities of collective mobilization and access to international policy-making arenas, and the tri-sectorial structure of global governance arrangements [see Reinicke, Deng 2000; Risse 1995, 2002]. Many papers describe the extent to which global civil society actors (interest groups, together with NGOs and solidarity movements)

⁶ It is necessary to point out that network analysis has reached a high level of formalization, through the identification of various, analytically relevant dimensions, which characterize social relations [Scott 1997].

are involved in specific governance arrangements, which allow them to act in decision-making political arenas. A new definition has been used in literature, that of *global public policy networks*, “transnational bridges”, that is, between the public sector, the private sector (business and professional) and civil society (associations and movements). The likelihood that the actors of these networks, given their complexity, can “account” for their decisions and for the way these are made, calls for the establishment of a “multidimensional accountability system”, characterized, that is, by multiple alternative mechanisms. It is therefore possible to refer to mechanisms through which their responsibility as actors may be expressed, such as *professional/peer accountability* and *public/reputational accountability*. Other mechanisms, instead, refer to process-oriented governance, with regard to, that is, transparency of procedures, but also criteria of selection of actors in decision-making processes, and the use of the funds they receive. Finally, there are mechanisms oriented towards the accountability of outcomes, to assess the “added value” which civil society actors are able to bring to the policy-making process, with regard to the capacity, for instance, of «making technically correct and politically feasible proposals, involving national lawmakers, monitoring all phases of a decision-making process, of mobilizing public opinion, and so on.» [Mascia 2004, 143].

At this stage, it may be useful to propose a further analytical distinction, for a better introduction of the considerations to follow. Three different levels of governance, and three different ways of acting are in fact distinguishable [Kooiman 2003]. First order governance is at the level of implementation and administration of political decisions. The participation of civil society actors at this level implies being involved in the implementation of policies. Second order governance governs the building of *governance arrangements*; this is when an institutional frame is built, delimiting the public sphere. Third order governance refers to the moment of “defining a situation”, identifying the paradigms and logic followed by social actors; a logic of “negotiation”, or bargaining, may prevail, or of arguing. If one looks at the structure of international governance (second order governance, or governance arrangements), it clearly emerges how the critical factor in terms of legitimacy, is defined by the boundaries of the public sphere, both in the sense of including various categories of actors, and with regard to issues and objectives identified in decision-making processes [see Pellizzoni 2003; Schmitter 2002]. With regard to the first aspect (participation in decision-making arenas) and, therefore, selection criteria of actors, “participative governance” arrangements (*European Governance Arrangements*), analyzed particularly in the context of European Union polity, are characterized by different entitlements in having participation legitimized. According to Schmitter [2002] in fact, apart from the traditional entitlement defined by citizenship, actors have other terms of identification. It is possible, therefore, to look at the

entitlement which derives from belonging to a territorial political community (speaking, in this case, both of citizens and “residents”, or immigrants); then, at an entitlement based on the candidates’ “cognitive competence” for participation (one may think of the distinction between expert knowledge and local knowledge), as well as on interests and representation (with regard to the various constituencies, keeping in mind the dividing lines between the various categories of transnational actors, economic actors, non-governmental organizations, associations, transnational movements, local subjects); finally, at an entitlement which legitimizes the participation of stakeholders, those who are directly or indirectly affected by a decision. In this context, it is possible to quote a study, carried out by Carlo Ruzza [2005], on the role of civil society in the socio-institutional structure of the European Union. Through the analysis of institutional documents, a cognitive and “functional” description of civil society emerges, which basically confirms normative references to legitimization potentials. In particular, civil society actors are seen to carry out various activities, such as holders of important knowledge in various areas of policy, monitoring, especially in the context of policy implementation, and establishing connections between different levels of government. Above all, the role of civil society, in terms of “communication potential”, and impact on media, with regard to the public sphere, is recognized. According to Thomas Risse [2000], in the various “institutional arenas” defined in governance arrangements (or particular public spheres), its actors – states and civil society organizations – act and interact together, sometimes following a logic of consequentialism, other times according to the normo-oriented logic of adequacy within an institutional frame, or a rational-communicational logic (oriented towards consensus). The relationship between such rationality models (third order *governance*) is not defined in terms of a zero sum game, since these different logics may coexist in different contexts, while certain “sufficient conditions” determine, to some extent, which shall prevail; in particular, they determine the possibility of some window of opportunity for the success of argumentative logic. In this case, the willingness of actors to be persuaded (even to change their own preferences, during deliberative processes), the inclusion of the actors’ identity in the decision-making process, the influence of socialization processes in such contexts (based on the norms of the international community), all these increase the probability of a change of behaviour on the part of actors in international public spheres, aimed at finding an agreement with one another.

The reference to the logic of arguing can be traced back to the paradigm of deliberative democracy, which has now gained a solid position in democratic theory, at national and international level [see Risse 2004; Zürn 2000]. More simply, it may be said that when speaking of deliberative democracy, one refers to a process based on a public debate among free and equal individuals, which renders it legitimate [see Bohman, Rehg 1998; Pellizzoni 2005]. However, at

least two aspects need to be specified. One regards a sort of intrinsic rationality in deliberative processes, the other concerns the institutional dimension. With regard to the first aspect, it may be generally stated that while strategic or contractual deliberations imply strategic arguing in a context defined by tendentially selfish actors, non-strategic or dialogic deliberations are based on the socializing potential of the logic of arguing. This leads to two possible outcomes: either a deep change in the actors' orientations (or ultimate preferences), or the start of a collective learning process, that is a change in the way actors interact with one another, and identify the problems, before the solutions. At the end of the deliberative process, the decision reached is either the outcome of a consensus due to the fact that a certain choice is preferable, even if with different motivations, or of a convergence on the motivations themselves for the choice [see Lanzara 2005; Pellizzoni 2005]. With regard to the institutional arena, this can be intended in a strict sense (as in the case when deliberations are made in a context of negotiated planning) or in a loose sense, as in the public sphere, considered as a context in which deliberations are made without restrictions. Reference can be made, from a normative point of view, to two models of public spheres. Habermas' model, in particular, may be seen as a "deliberative system" which includes institutions, and the public and private sphere, and which operates according to a "double track" logic, since it is up to the public sphere to thematize issues, while the task of political-administrative institutions is to render such issues authoritative. Dewey's model of public sphere, instead, looks at the deliberative dimension based on a less "demanding" normative attitude towards the concept of public, which is identified, as all those subjects affected by the direct and indirect consequences deriving from certain decisions. Having said this, it is probably the sharing of a problem that constitutes the sphere of public deliberation, rather than the acknowledgement of a common system of values, duties and rights. With regard to the boundaries of the public sphere, this model seems to offer wider margins of mobility and inclusion, compared to Habermas' model (even if Habermas [1996] refers to a multilevel, general public sphere, made up of particular public spheres). The study carried out by Pellizzoni [2003] identifies those elements which define the "structure" of the public sphere, or a set of rules establishing: a) which subjects may have access to the public sphere (the boundaries of the community of discussion); b) how wide the margins of the debate are with regard to the. Through an analysis of the way in which these rules interact, of the consequent effects of inclusion/exclusion (with regard to the participation of various actors), a close connection emerges between distinctions resulting from debates, and dynamics of exclusion in the context of the definition of a political agenda. In other words, the way in which "rules" establish the truthfulness, legitimacy and relevance of debate on a cognitive and normative level (two aspects, incidentally, intrinsically linked), shows a specific dimension of power, that of "situation defining" (the

definition of the situation) [see Guzzini 2000]. Various logics have contributed to the change, organization (in terms of “mobility” and permeability of boundaries) and functioning of the public sphere. These logics determine the relationship between inclusion and exclusion of themes and subjects, the breath and limitation of debate, and modalities of decision-making. With regard to global governance arrangements, the difficult aspect regarding the possibility of defining the boundaries of the public sphere in terms of mobility and inclusion, has to do with the way in which these logics operate in a multilevel framework (from local to global) of interconnected transnational public spheres, and, in turn, with the fact that they are structured in such a way as to make it possible, for as many subjects as possible, to access and move from one sphere to another, depending on the question in hand [see Cochran 2002; Pellizzoni 2003]. The logic of the inclusion and mobility of boundaries in building participative governance arrangements relies on an “associative” logic which, with regard to various issues, overcomes the functional and territorial boundaries of political communities involved in public deliberation. Some governance arrangements, on the other hand, even if certain categories of subjects are “included”, strictly follow specific selection criteria, if, for instance, they deem experts’ “voice” as being more important than that of the citizens, or “organized interests” which only have a limited representativeness, compared to wider constituencies. According to Pellizzoni [2003], the building logic of the public sphere, pertaining to solidarity movements, answers, above all (even if with difficulty, from the point of view of the institutionalization of this very logic), to the double need of inclusion and mobility of boundaries of the public sphere. One of the possible exemplifications of the role attributed to transnational civil society actors in this context, is well described by Nanz and Steffek [2004], regarding the role of interface, or drive belt, that may be played by transnational civil society actors, reputed as being able to create “sectorial publics”, which would in turn lead to a legitimization of decision-making processes.

The same problems have been faced, even if from a slightly different point of view, by Thomas Risse. In a recent analysis of transnational governance, Risse [2004] carried out a detailed examination of the concept of legitimacy related to deliberative processes in the context of transnational governance. Risse’s analysis is in two stages. First, he makes the traditional distinction between *input legitimacy* (participation) and *output legitimacy* (problem-solving, efficacy); then, he traces accountability back to the existing relationship between “principle” and “agent” [see Scharpf 1999]. He then distinguishes two dimensions of accountability, an internal and an external one, considering both as an internal ramification of input legitimacy. Instead, with regard to legitimization from the output point of view, Risse only identifies the external accountability dimension. This complex network of distinctions appears to be clearer if it is applied,

following Risse, to the various categories of international actors. In the case of intergovernmental organizations, in fact, while the dimension of internal accountability is fulfilled by the democratic nature of regimes in each state, the dimension of external accountability is still quite weak. This happens both from the point of view of input legitimacy, given the low level of participation margins of stakeholders affected by external accountability, and from the point of view of output legitimacy, where, due to the non-participation of the subjects involved, there are reduced margins of policy implementation. With regard, in particular, to transnational civil society actors, such as NGOs and social movements, the sore point, so to say, in terms of legitimacy, this time refers to internal accountability (in input legitimacy), since there are no internal control mechanisms which increase these organizations' responsiveness to their "principals" (the associates). In terms of external accountability, two problems arise: the first regards the organizations' low representativeness in transnational civil society; the other concerns the role, by now consolidated, of a civilized world conscience, assumed by subjects, but which is still quite frail. This could be the diagnosis. Regarding a prognosis, Risse focuses respectively on the subjects' inclusion/exclusion relationship in governance arrangements, on the secrecy/transparency relationship (with regard to the quality of deliberations), and on the tension which characterizes the relationship between accountability and deliberation. A reasoned consensus may then be better reached "in camera", while transparency of decision-making processes is now considered a fundamental element of transnational governance legitimacy. As Risse puts it, *trade-offs* between inclusion and selectivity, transparency and secrecy, efficacy and margins of accountability, could be overcome by foreseeing informative feedback between international and national arenas, or a sort of two-level arguing game⁷ between negotiators (agents) in international arenas, and national constituencies (principals), thus ensuring success for deliberative processes, through the involvement of such constituencies (now actors of the transnational public sphere) in the reasoned consensus building process. How this two-level deliberative game may help in building and consolidating transnational public spheres, remains to be seen. Risse suggests that an evaluation of the impact margins of deliberations, should be contextualized, since, in the various contexts, different equilibriums may be identified, between quality of deliberations, inclusion and decision-making capability. The European policy-making process is a paradigmatic case-study, actually made up of many contexts of analysis within the European Union's complex institutional system.

⁷ This refers to Robert Putnam's concept, now a classic, in *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics. The Logic of Two-level Game*, «International Organization», 42, 2, pp. 427-460.

Framing and deliberating in world politics: “cognitive governmentality in world politics”

Politics within transnational civil society and its public sphere seems to consist of two main functions, *framing* and *deliberating*, which give a sense and create communicative interaction. From a “structural” point of view, transnational civil society seems to be solidly founded on organizational *networking* activities, the building of relationships among subjects on an international basis, and processes of collective learning for the diffusion of norms [see Finnemore, Sikkink 1998; Keck, Sikkink 1998; Mascia 2004]. The public sphere then, can be seen as an arena in which the “cognitive images” of international politics are conveyed, debated, tested and diffused [see Kooiman 2003]. By now, there are numerous examples in literature, confirming this manner of interpreting international politics. From a structural point of view, the learning mechanisms identified by the boomerang effect and the spiral model seem to account for the solid infrastructure of this political space. Other contributions, true “mappings” of the political ideals diffused in this public sphere, account instead for the cognitive *frameworks* on which the embryo of a global political society seems to be founded [see Luard 1990; Kaldor 2004]. With regard to this aspect, the creators of the Global Civil Society Yearbook have identified certain individual and collective “attitudes” within the “global public sphere”. These consist of four different “stands” against globalization, which respectively answer the positions of “supporters”, pro-globalization, enthusiast supporters of globalization as it is; of “rejectionists”, who would like to resume a Westphalian political and social organization, as it was before the big bang of 1989 and the globalization of financial markets; of “reformists”, who would like to change the course of globalization, including, together with market considerations, human rights, social justice and democracy; and finally, of “alternatives”, who wish to demolish the organizational logic of globalization, considering themselves outside of its dynamics (just to quote an example, creating havens of ethical consumption). The list proposed by Rosenau [2003], of “simmelian types”, new model identities of a multicentric, global civil society, is not so different. Some variations within each type lead to a good twelve different identities, which can be then classified among globalists, localists and alienated (these being unable to take any “political” position, or even acknowledge globalization). The taxonomy of cognitive and political models may also be analyzed more in detail, so as to identify various cognitive, symbolic and ideological constructive elements, referable to the continuum of the attitudes of the detractors-supporters of globalization. Neo-liberals go together with cosmopolitans, with supporters of inter-civilizations dialogue, and with those who contest

alter-globalists [see Pianta 2001; Marchetti 2006]. As for the consistency of the “questions” debated within this public sphere, and considering the role as collection of these flows, played by various – traditional or non- – communication media, Nancy Fraser [2006] remarks on their erratic character; the political efficacy of the questions debated in fact depends on the transformation of the political public sphere in a post-Westphalian sense, towards the construction, that is, of “new , public transnational powers”, which may coincide with new transnational democratic circuits within the public opinion. Analyses focused on specific policy arenas point to the existence of multiple public spheres, “located” within a specific political context. But the borders themselves of these arenas, and, therefore, the contents of policy-making processes, have been preliminarily defined, from a cognitive point of view. The contractual nature of social reality and processes of knowledge construction emerges in those all analyses which, focusing mainly– with regard to actors – on social movements and NGOs, show how, through a double selection process, on a structural level (with regard to political opportunities) and on a deliberative-cognitive level (framing and re-framing processes, or cognitive adaptation), these arenas produce policies, the content of which stems from all these political and cognitive “negotiation” processes [Ruzza 2004]. In this way, building cognitive bridges (through a process of frame-bridging) allows a “synthesis” between the prevailing ideas diffused in the ranks of social movements, and those present in political (and administrative) culture of institutional actors.

Seeing all this, theoretically a new form of interpretation might be proposed, that of identifying not only a specific analytical category for the bulk of cognitive and communicative processes which structure politics within world polity, but also of explaining a specific form of “governmentality” to go along with the political, economical and communitarian governmentality in world politics. Within such frame, we would like to propose a would-be commonly accepted definition of cognitive governance, referring to Foucault’s concept of governmentality and to intersubjective processes of making sense. These are, in other words, framing and deliberating processes. The deliberating process pertaining to governmentality in the sense of cognitive governance, is outlined, on an analytical level, as a further level of governance, a sort of meta-governance, based on epistemes, the different levels of meaning and debate on which society dwells. In particular, the concept of epistemes we are referring to is that elaborated by Adler and Bernstein, who define it as *«the collective understanding and discourses about material capabilities, knowledge (normative, ideological, technical, and scientific) legitimacy (the acceptance of the right to rule by relevant communities) and fairness (which in our account may include notions of accountability, representation, and responsibility)»*. [Adler, Bernstein 2005, 300]. This sort of cognitive ‘bubble’, of debating space (made up of cognitive expectations, perceptions, interests, identities, *habitus*)

becomes a process, activating itself, that is, during processes of social cooperation which produce – and adopt – intersubjective knowledge and ‘politics’. This process can be thought of in terms of ‘cognitive regulation’, meaning the fabric of the processes and practices of making sense which precede *«the setting up of institutions, or, if such institutions are already established, are in conflict with the social structure which supports the said institutions»* [Gangemi 2006, 46].

Therefore, making an analytical distinction within the whole process of social interaction, from where the spheres of politics, market and ethics stem – an idea proposed by some authors [see Bagnasco 2004], and, in particular, by Gangemi [2001; 2006] – means identifying various forms of government rationality, each corresponding to a logic in social action. The interactions which create the market, correspond to economic rationality; communitarian rationality corresponds to the logic of participation, identity and the communitarian dimension; political rationality corresponds to a control logic, or defining the relationship between Government and subjects. There is, instead, a fourth form of government rationality, when reference is made to processes of making sense, or a kind of social practice which precedes the constitution of institutions. In particular, Gangemi refers to the distinction made by Merton between the “cognitive structure of knowledge” (all which is pure communicative strategy, not taking into account the role played by specific actors) and the “social structure of knowledge”, where actors, institutionalized in specific roles, decide on the boundaries of the public sphere and the political agenda, based on roles, benefits, force equilibriums. This distinction may supply a useful tool for interpreting those processes of cognitive adaptation carried out by the actors of transnational civil societies, and defining decisional arenas, as well as the contents of politics [Ruzza 2004]; and this is the case, even if this conceptual proposal has been made with regard to the “internal” dimension of policy. On the other hand, the fifth idea of civil society which emerges from Magatti’s analysis may be considered as a “cognitive” idea of civil society, where the “intersubjective infrastructure”, or the associative nature of civil society, forms a membrane between individual and institutions (“agent-structure”), a sort of cognitive filter between the subjective level and the bulk of rules, norms, values, which tend to crystallize in institutions. In these terms, it may be said that the interactions, the innumerable micro-events which take place in society, not only support processes of institutionalization (when building new institutions), but are also in conflict with the social structure which supports already existing institutions. It may be said then, that the concept of governance/cognitive regulation answers a specific “government rationality”, or, possibly, another face of Foucault’s governmentality [2005 a,b], that of making sense. These processes of making sense are realized through deliberative routines. Cognitive governance may be intended, then, as the set of deliberative processes where each form of government (as opposed to various spheres in social life) becomes an object of

reflection. This dimension may be thought of in terms of a more ample reflexive process; this idea, to some extent, is referable to the third order of governance identified by Kooiman's analysis; that of a sphere of images, metaphors, cognitive construction, and information which precedes and follows the actual activity of a government, indicating ends and evaluating outcomes (from a normative point of view). In this sense Kooiman [2003, 188] describes this order of governance as a fundamental part of social and political governance, since this contributes to define a sort of forum in which normative principles are formulated and tested. The idea of cognitive governance could thus be included in the analytical framework proposed by the author, when he proposes some normative criteria used in this meta-dimension, such as those of responsiveness, efficacy, legitimacy, and moral responsibility, including norms, reference parameters of social regulation activity in each order of governance (from governmental activity, to the designing of institutional arenas, to the evaluation of governance as a process) [Kooiman 2003]. Also the proposal made by constructivist theorists of an analysis of political communication within the context of international politics may be welcomed. In particular, critical theory in international relationships shows that if international politics is the outcome of communication practices based on intersubjective spheres, the analyses of learning processes, then, of their cognitive and discursive component, is the one which can best contribute to explaining the nature of international politics [Stocchetti 2002]. More specifically, an analysis of metaphors in political debating (also aimed at identifying the latent dimension in the process of political communication, following the guidelines of critical theory), may also be carried out considering the communicative dimension of politics as sort of an interface between the cognitive and operative dimensions in political behaviour. Metaphors, in fact, play a fundamental role as tools for building inter-subjective relationships; it is no coincidence, therefore, that scholars studying mobilization processes on specific issues organized by transnational advocacy networks, highlight the communicative potential of metaphors, also in terms of trans-cultural dialogue [see Keck, Sikkink 1998; Ruzza 2004]. In this sense, perhaps, these contributions from empirical research may be usefully ascribed to a tendentially unitary interpretative category, that of cognitive regulation, so as to further stress the role of an "intersubjective construction of social reality and knowledge", proposed by a constructivist approach within world politics. All this holds, in the awareness that international politics, being a social reality, is made of physical and cognitive relationships, of material and immaterial factors (according, at least, to some constructivist interpretations), acquiring different meanings depending on the identities and contexts in which actors find themselves [see Adler 2002; Guzzini 2001; Stocchetti 2002]. In this sense, an

analysis of the “processes of making sense”⁸ should be carried out within specific contexts, of varying amplitude, depending on the level of analysis identified.

⁸ In the context of the constructivist approach, Emanuel Adler [1997] formulated the concept of cognitive evolution, to enhance the importance of ideational factors in structural change processes in international politics. The constitutive phases of innovation, selection and diffusion, reveal the morphogenetic function of the intersubjective process of sense-making. Accordingly, ideas must be analytically addressed to capture the dynamics of international politics, but, “for ideas to have structural innovation capacity, they must be institutionalised, they must therefore become a guide for actors’ behaviour” [Caffarena 1998]. Most of the contributions that we have considered, seem to support this thesis. We can also trace the concept of cognitive evolution back to cognitive governance, as previously described.

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