

# 1. Introduction into Theories and Concepts of Civil Society

公民社会的理论与概念简介

*Gōngmín shèhuì de lǐlùn yǔ gàiniàn jiǎnjiè*



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# *What means civil society?*

什么是公民社会？

Shénme shì gōngmín shèhuì?

- Definitions of civil society and the evolution of the concept.
- Values associated with civil society,
- Normative and descriptive conceptions,
- Different types of organizations (social, legal, economic and political perspective),
- movements (e.g. social and environmental groups and campaigns) and initiatives.

# Definitions of Civil Society

- The CSI defines civil society as *“the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interests”* (CIVICUS)
- The concept of Civil Society has a normative, functional and actor oriented dimension.
- Civil Society as Associational Life
- Civil Society as the Good Society
- Civil Society as the Public Sphere

# Civil Society as Associational Life

- “Civil society gains strength when grassroots groups, non-profit intermediaries and membership associations are linked together in ways that promote collective goals, cross-society coalitions, mutual accountability and shared reflection.” (Edwards 2004: 32)

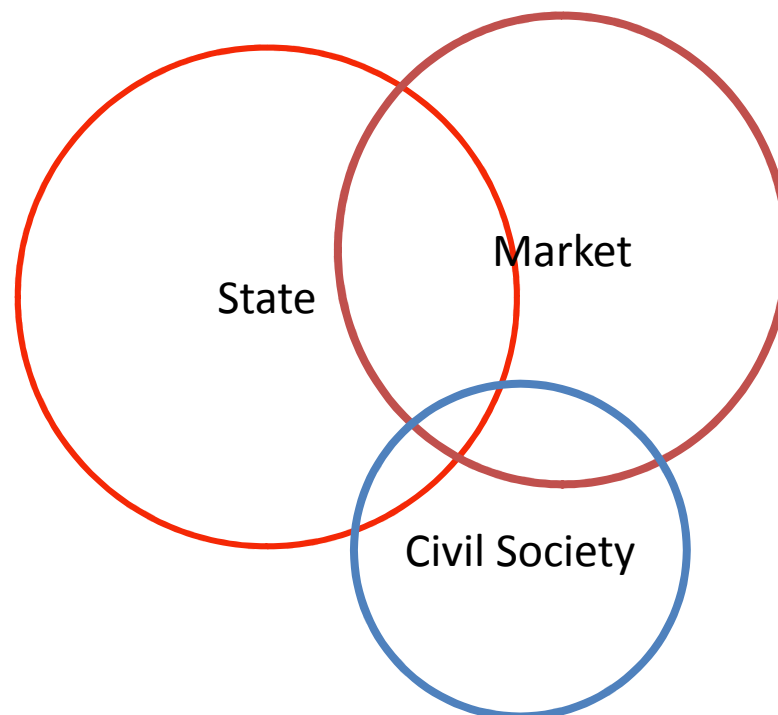
# Civil Society as the Good Society

- ...high levels of generalized trust and cooperation, developing and disseminating of social norms, norms and behaviors that infuse institutions with value-based energy...towards the global ethical community...(Edwards 2004: 39).

# Civil Society as Public Sphere

- “In its role as the public sphere, civil society becomes the arena for argument and deliberation as well as for association and institutional collaboration: a non-legislative, extra-judicial, public space in which social differences, social problems, public policy, government action and matters of community and cultural identity are developed and debated.” (Edwards 2004: 55)

# State, Market and Civil Society



## Organizational Principles

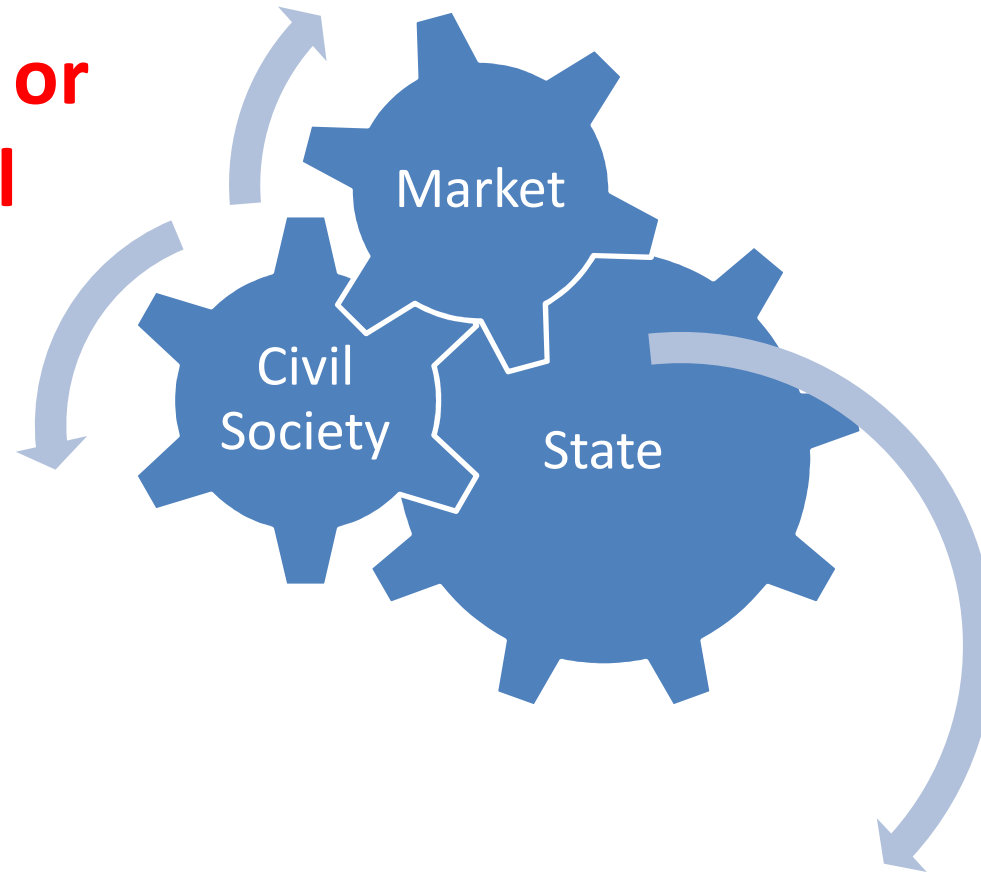
- Political Power, Hierarchy and Procedures
- Profit seeking contractual transactions
- Solidarity, altruism, reputation

## Political Science Concepts

- principle of subsidiarity
- multi-level and multi stakeholder governance
- comparative institutional advantages

# State-Market-Civil Society

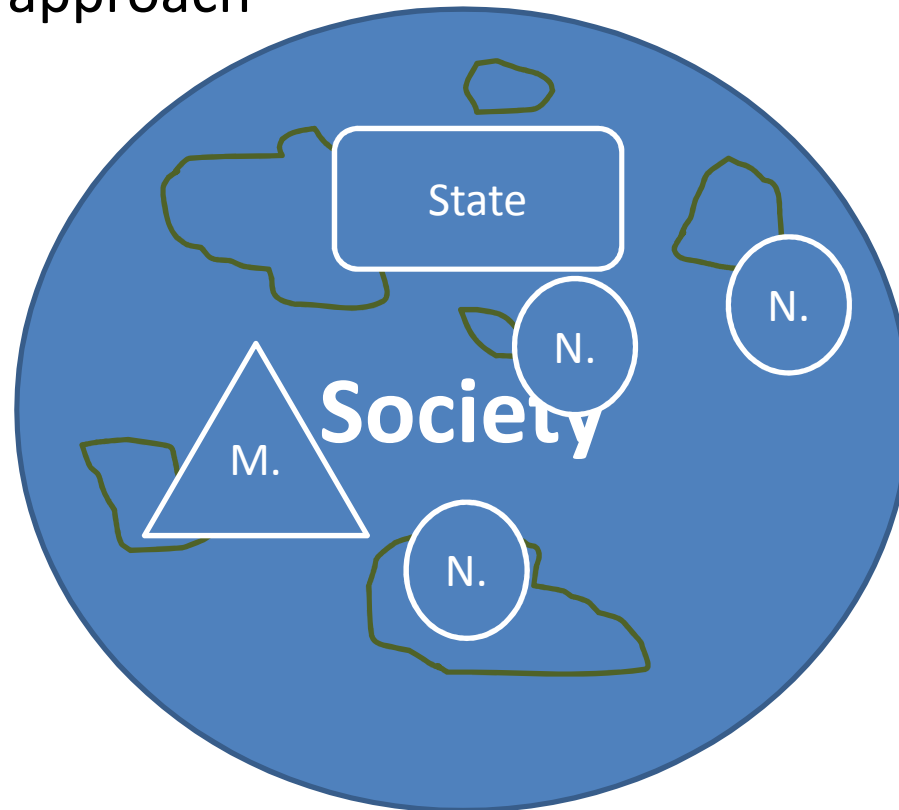
**Centrifugal or  
Centripetal  
forces?**





# “Fragile Eco-System” (Edwards)

Behavioural approach



# Non Governmental Organisations/ Non Profit Organisations

- private non-state organizations/voluntary membership
- organisations/formal institutions
- self-governing/independent
- not-for-profit distribution

Associations, foundation, charities, trust,  
social/public benefit enterprises

...are an important part of civil society which also includes movements, campaigns, informal groups and action networks.

# Idea, Concept, Theory?

- “...the idea of civil society remains compelling, not because it provides the tidiest of explanations but because it speaks to the best in us, and calls on the best in us to respond in kind” (Edwards 2004: 112 final sentence).
- The concept of civil society generated so much attention because it connects well to different theoretical schools of thoughts, provides a conceptual framework to multiple forms of people’s action and cuts across various academic disciplines and areas of social action (Berthold Kuhn).

# *How did the concept of civil society developed in historical perspective?*

公民社会这一概念的发展历史是怎么样的？

Gōngmín shèhuì zhè yī gài niàn de fā zhǎn lìshǐ shì zěnme yàng de?

- The ideal of civic virtue and public responsibilities (Classic Greek and Roman ideals);
- historical roots of civil society in Asia;
- reference to the era of enlightenment;
- the role of the middle class;
- reference to transnational cooperation,
- reference to the debate on big state versus big society

# Civic Virtue and Public Responsibility

- Acting for the common good, practicing civic virtues of wisdom (Plato)
- Civic virtue, duties towards the community and the public, Athenian polis, Roman empire
- Religions; no state administration or economic system will work without a *virtue*-based ethical system based on respect for other human beings and the nature, solidarity and compassion for each other. Human beings may strive for perfectionism but also need to humbly acknowledge that they may not achieve it on earth.
- Renaissance: Humanists wanted to reinstate the ancient ideal of civic virtue through education
- Enlightment: Freedom became popular. But people can only be free by containing their emotions in order to keep some space for others.

## Example:

### Boy Scouts of America Scout Oath:

- *On my honor I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country  
and to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong,  
mentally awake, and morally straight.*

The **Boy Scouts of America (BSA)** is one of the largest youth organizations in the United States, with over 4.5 million youth members.

# Enlightenment

- Movement of intellectuals in Europe in the 17/18<sup>th</sup> century
- the liberation of the human mind from the dogmatic state of ignorance .
- Spinoza, Locke, Newton, Voltaire, Kant
- The ideals influenced the American Declaration of Independence, the United States Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and the Polish–Lithuanian Constitution of May 3, 1791

# Communitarism

- Communitarianism emphasizes the connection between the individual and the community, be it the family, life or work place.
- Values and beliefs are formed in public space.
- Unlike classical liberalism, which construes communities as originating from the voluntary acts of pre-community individuals, it emphasizes the role of the community in defining and shaping individuals



# Social Capital

- Bourdieu (1930-2002) pioneered theoretical work on cultural, social, symbolic capital,
- Developed concepts of habitus, symbolic violence etc. to reveal the dynamics of power relations in social life.
- Social capital: the collective value of all 'social networks (Putnam).
- norms and networks of voluntary cooperation and social trust and their distribution in society, is seen as making civil society and democracy work (Putnam 2002).
- A high level of social capital prevents modern societies from apathy, social misbehavior and deteriorating political conditions.

*Putnam, R. D. (Ed.) (2002). Democracies in flux. The evolution of social capital in contemporary society. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*

# Liberalism and Civil Society

- **Liberalism** (from the Latin *liberalis*) is the belief in the importance of liberty and equal rights (sparked by John Locke).
- Focus on the personal, economic and political freedom of individuals.
- Powerful force in the Age of Enlightenment, rejecting dogmatic assumptions of traditional dominance by absolute monarchy, nobility, established religion, ideologies.

# Associational Life and Democracy

- membership in organizations provides benefits to individuals and to society,
- allowing people to influence processes that affect their lives
- achieving collective goals requires organizations.
- Ideas sparked by the works of *Alexis de Tocqueville, (1835/1840)]. Democracy in America, Paris.*

*Is civil society a concept of Western philosophers and Western social scientists?*

公民社会这一概念是西方哲学家和西方社会科学家的吗？

Gōngmín shèhuì zhè yī gàiniàn shì xīfāng zhéxué jiā hé xīfāng shèhuì kēxuéjiā de ma?

- The global, transnational, national and community perspective of the concept.
- Contested functions of civil society: substituting, complementing or challenging the state?
- The principle of subsidiarity;

*Is civil society a concept of Western philosophers and  
Western social scientists? Ctd. 2*

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- the discourses on engagement and mobilization,
- the discourse on ethics and social responsibilities of the private sector,
- Global Public Goods

*Is civil society a concept of Western philosophers  
and Western social scientists? Ctd. 3*

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- the term civil society in different languages, example Germany (Buergergesellschaft, Zivilgesellschaft);
- civil society in different legal environments and regulatory frameworks.

# References and Quotes on civil society in China

- “In the late thirteenth century, Marco Polo was struck by the vibrancy of associational life in the Chinese city of Hangzhou, noted for its charitable institutions as for its pleasures. Public hospitals, market associations, free cemeteries, cultural groups and homes for the elderly abounded.” (Michael Edwards 2004, *Civil Society*, p. 18)

# References and Quotes of Civil Society in China ctd. 2

The presence of inclusive temple associations were the best predictor of higher levels of public services (paved roads, good schools, and running water). These groups created social connections that crossed state–society (and society–society) boundaries and facilitated channels of moral suasion.

Tsai, Lily (2007). *Accountability without democracy: How solidary groups provide public goods in rural China*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.



# The principle of Subsidiarity

- The Oxford English Dictionary defines subsidiarity as the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.
- The concept is applicable in the fields of government, political science, cybernetics, management, military (Mission Command) and, metaphorically, in the distribution of software module responsibilities in object-oriented programming (see wikipedia).

*Why did the concept of civil society gain such momentum from the 1990s onwards, especially in international cooperation?*

*为什么在20世纪90年代之后，特别在国际合作领域，公民社会这一概念获得如此好的发展势头？*

*Wèishéme zài 20 shìjì 90 niándài zhīhòu, tèbié zài guójì hézuò lǐngyù, gōngmín shèhuì zhè yī gàiniàn huòdé rúcǐ hǎo de fǎ zhǎn shìtóu?*

- Comparative advantages of civil society organisations;
- Civil society organisations in relief and rehabilitation,
- Civil society organisations as advocacy networks and service provider;

# Comparative Advantages of Civil Society Organisations

- local knowledge (versus central knowledge)
- participatory approach (versus top-down)
- access to marginalised communities
- visionary, inspirational, innovative, experimental approaches
- mobilising capital and volunteers for good causes
- networking
- more flexible (foundation, action, dissemination)

# Critique on Powerful States and Corporations (New and old Empires)

- The development of empires about 5,000 years ago initiated unequal distribution of power....
- Critique on powerful states and corporations: social organizations based on hierarchies, chauvinism, and domination through violence.
- The generation model of civil society organisations. From Rehabilitation to Advocacy Work on Sustainable Development.
- Korten, David C. 2006: *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, New York.

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- the role of civil society in international conferences and development cooperation?
- Civil society organisations as agenda setters, civil society organisations in sustainable development, civil society organisations and marginalized communities.

# Civil Society and International Conferences

- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Rio Summit, *Rio Conference*, Earth Summit, with focus on sustainable development, from 1992 onwards.
- UN World Conferences (Human Rights in Vienna 1993; Women in Beijing 1995, World Urban Forum Habitat, biennial gathering , 2002 Nairobi, 2006 Nanjing, 2012 Napels)
- The rise of summits and parallel summits, G8, G 20, WTO, World Economic Forum: new supranational decision-making power, accountability?
- World Social Forum, annual meeting of civil society organisations, 2001 Porto Allegre, 2011 Dakar Senegal, 2012
- Climate Change Conferences (Bali, Cancun, Copenhagen December 2010, Durban 2011)
- Aid Effectiveness Conferences in Paris (2005) and Accra (2008)
- European Commission civil society dialogue
- World Bank civil society dialogue

# *Who is concerned by the concept of civil society?*

*公民社会这一概念关注那些群体？*

*Gōngmín shèhuì zhè yī gàiniàn guānzhù nàxiē qúntǐ*

- Policy makers aiming to promote welfare society, social inclusion and participation, environmental awareness,
- Stakeholders in Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Private Partnership Initiatives,
- VIPs
- professional bodies and
- marginalized communities,
- citizens including youths.

# Corporate Social Responsibility

- Social, environmental and community concerns of corporations.
- to maximize the satisfaction of customers, employees, and the community as well not only shareholders.
- In the twenty-first century, the focus of corporate social responsibility has broadened to include the role of corporations in addressing environmental sustainability as well as social crises

*Laszlo, C. (2003). The sustainable company. Washington, DC: Island Press*



# Policy Makers, Advocacy Networks and Service Providers

- Welfare State and Welfare Society
- Agenda setting
- Dialogue, Expertise and Consultation, formal and informal.
- Policy advice.
- Input to laws and regulation making.
- Provision of services, managing projects

# VIPs: Example Nicole Richie

- In November 2007, Richie and partner [Joel Madden](#) created "The Richie Madden Children's Foundation".<sup>[64]</sup>
- In May 2008, Richie and Madden shot a [UNICEF](#) public-service announcement to generate aid for the cyclone-devastated [Myanmar](#).<sup>[69]</sup> Richie and Madden have also written blogs on the [UNICEF](#) website and encouraged people to help children in need.<sup>[70]</sup>
- Richie has been a board member of the Environmental Media Association for several years and took part in their awareness program in May 2009.<sup>[71]</sup> Each member "adopted" a school to raise awareness.

# Professional Associations

- usually a nonprofit organization seeking to further a particular profession, the interests of individuals engaged in that profession, and the public interest (Wikipedia).
- health, education, agriculture, fishery, culture...
- business organisations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce), labor unions, trade unions.

# Youths

- sports, music, theatre, leisure
- Example: [www.AIESEC.org](http://www.AIESEC.org)
- Mission: Present in over 110 countries and territories and with over 60,000 members, AIESEC is the world's largest student-run organisation. Focused on providing a platform for youth leadership development, AIESEC offers young people the opportunity to be global citizens, to change the world, and to get experience and skills that matter today

# Marginalised communities

Political, economic, social marginalisation

- Those people and communities who have not the power or ability to partake in social, economic and political processes which outcomes affect their life.
- People and communities who depend on the transfer of resources.
- e.g. displaced persons, ethnic minorities, handicapped people, elderly people .

# Key Literature

- Alagappa, Muthiah 2004: Civil Society and Political Change in Asia, Stanford (US).
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# Key Literature

- Edwards, Michael 2004: *Civil Society*, Cambridge (GB), New York (US).
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- Kuhn, Berthold 2009: *市场与国家之间的发展政策:公民社会组织的可能性与界限*, **Beijing**.