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**RACISM, DEMOCRACY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN BRAZIL:
COMPARING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
WITH NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS
IN THE STATE OF BAHIA**

By

BERND REITER

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York**

2003

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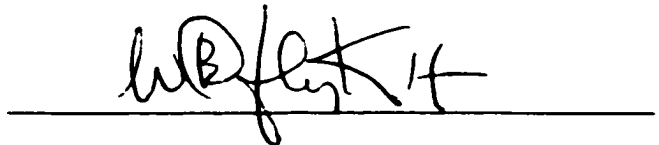
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ABSTRACT

RACISM, DEMOCRACY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN BRAZIL: COMPARING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS IN THE STATE OF BAHIA

By

Bernd Reiter

Adviser: Professor Kenneth Paul Erickson

This dissertation analyzes the most salient obstacle to consolidating democracy in Brazil, namely that society's deeply rooted racialized exclusion. Such exclusion has become "normal" in Brazilian society and is part of the prevailing common sense. Symbolical whiteness has been used by elites to justify their own privileges and to exclude the majority of Brazilians from the exercise of their rights as full and equal citizens. Civil society has the potential to alter this hegemonic common sense, creating and sustaining democratic spaces where excluded groups participate in rational discourse on equal terms. But not all groups acting within Brazilian civil society are alike. To be able to differentiate, I argue that for a civil society group truly to contribute to the proliferation and institutionalization of democratic spaces, it must have a democratic "praxis," which refers to pursuing democratic goals through democratic means. Analyzing the historical development of Brazilian civil society, I find that Non-Governmental Organizations

(NGOs) have gained more space and visibility within Brazilian civil society, replacing older, more traditional forms of civic organizing. Comparing NGOs in Salvador, Brazil, with local neighborhood associations, I find that most NGOs in fact do not follow such democratic means, and therefore they reproduce racialized exclusions. At the same time, the characteristics of local politics and power structures have forced independent neighborhood associations into opposition to the state. Comparing Bahian NGOs with neighborhood associations points to the importance of maintaining political and economic independence from states and international donors in order to be able to pursue counterhegemonic goals and to maintain internal democracy of collective decision-making. The perpetuation of traditional power-politics, rooted in cacique-style strongmen that still dominate Bahian state and local politics, has restricted civil society's options and hindered a fruitful cooperation with the state. The concentration of political and economic power in the hands of these traditional elites points to the importance of including the analysis of how power is accumulated and distributed into the framework for understanding Brazilian civil society and its relation to the state.

PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of doubts that arose while working as an NGO activist. I started my “NGO career” at the age of 16 in southern, conservative Germany, still as a student of the local high school. In my little Bavarian hometown, I was member of a group called “Cocoyoc – One World.”¹ We were a group of some 15 teenagers, led by a Protestant “brother” who didn’t fit into my image of a religious man as he was politically radical and personally unconventional.

We held weekly meetings where we discussed relevant issues – taking our work very seriously. We were active in organizing public talks, meetings, and similar political activities. We went to protest for peace, against the construction of a nuclear recycling plant (WAA) in our region (Wackersdorf), marched in the small-town to remember the deaths of Hiroshima. After a while, I was also involved in a “Peace Initiative” and a local organization to support the badly mistreated political refugees that the Bavarian state government had placed in our midst.

Fighting against the planned Nuclear Power Recycling Plant (WAA) was a crucial experience, as for the first time I saw the police fighting the people – and the people fighting the police. I got a taste of tear gas and rubber bullets, of burning police cars, and I learned how a “Molotov Cocktail” looked like. A visit to the government in Bonn –

¹ Cocoyoc is a Mexican town where in the 70s UNCTAD – the United Nation’s Conference on Trade and Development – met and produced a declaration about what “development” could mean from a southern or third world perspective.

following an invitation of the local Social Democratic representative – was another crucial experience. It left us with the strong feeling that something was not working right in our representative democracy. It was frustrating to witness that most members of the parliament didn't show up to the talks of their colleagues and only came to the chamber to vote according to their party line. We witnessed a very touching speech by a Green representative about the violations of Human Rights occurring in Tibet – made in front of a nearly empty plenary, with some people seemingly sleeping, some reading the newspaper. At the end of her speech, the present representatives voted *en group* – the right against any action, and the left for it. The right won. Apparently there was no need to listen to the talks - as everybody knew how he (mostly men) had to vote.

As I turned 18, the German military called me, just like all the other German males of my age. I decided not to join and to do a legally authorized service in social work instead. My “third world background” pushed me to look for a working experience in a third world country – and I found a Lutheran group in Kassel that was sending a handful of people to a Catholic project in Medellín, Colombia. The project there was called “Ciudad Don Bosco” (Don Bosco City) and I was accepted. It would be a 22-month stay recognized by the German government as fulfilling the requirements to replace military service. We had some meetings in Kassel, and it was the first time that I had left my southern home to travel to what felt to me like “northern Germany.”

In Colombia, I worked for more than a year in a project for street kids, and the last half year in a Mission station the priests had in the Pacific coast, in the Chocó. There I not

only suddenly found myself living in an Afro-Colombian rural community, but I also made friends with a team of German doctors of the NGO “Cap Anamour.” They were building basic health-care stations in this region. In 1990 I returned to Germany and animated by my field experience, I started the study of sociology, Latin-American Studies, and Anthropology at the University of Hamburg.

After only three semesters I went to Salvador, Bahia, in the Northeast of Brazil, at first looking for a place to live and study issues that had by then had captured my curiosity: Afro-Brazilian history, culture, and social relations. After finishing my studies with a masters-thesis on racial inequalities in Bahia – written for the University of Hamburg – I settled in Salvador. By then I had a Bahian wife and child, I just had left University, I was unemployed, politicized, and I needed money.

My first job was that of a “NGO consultant.” I worked for three years in Salvador, Bahia for different NGOs. For one year I was a consultant for an international NGO – receiving money from USAID but most of the time I worked for local groups. I helped planning and building up a school for “street musicians” and worked as a trainer for human rights in the Amazon. I supported a group of poor black youths in their effort to become better organized, and I was advisor to a group of mayors that convened to bring “sustainable development” to their valley. I was sent to training programs where I was trained in NGO fund raising, project writing, and management – all organized by USAID.

After three years of hard work, I started to wonder about what kind of influence – if any - these groups might have. I decided to take some time off and dedicate myself to study NGOs, and I applied to several Universities. The City University of New York accepted me. I had never before been in the US. But I came highly motivated. All the seminars I took and all the papers I wrote had a direct connection to this question – at least for me.

This dissertation is therefore the fruit of a long reflection. In a way all my previous experiences are influencing my current thought about NGOs and their importance. Three years of studies at the CUNY Graduate Center helped me to find some answers and to ask new questions. When I arrived in New York I was thirsty for theory, as I felt I had the empirical knowledge, but lacked the theory to help me understand. The constant dialogue with professors and colleagues and the readings they suggested helped a great deal to satisfy this curiosity. By now I have the feeling too many conflicting theories are confusing my mind. The people that most helped me on my way were my advisers Kenneth Erickson and Marilyn Gittell. They supported me intellectually, morally, and financially, and I wouldn't have been able to stay in New York without them. The same is true for W. Ofofuey-Kodjoe, executive director of the Political Science program at the CUNY Graduate Center and Melvin Richter, professor of political science. They all were challenging, comprehensive, and most of all supportive. At times I thought about abandoning the program, as I had no money. Damien Pwono and Cesare de la Rocca, offered me crucial help in crucial times so I could carry on. Leonardo Drew offered me help and over the time became my dearest friend. I never have learned such a lot. France Morin introduced me to people that became important in my life and enabled me to travel

back to Bahia to work for her on her beautiful project about Art and Street Children in Salvador. The seminars and dialogues I had with Mark Blasius, Michelle Fine, Lenny Markovitz, Howard Lentner, Francis Fox-Piven, and Claus Offe provided me with challenges and made me read more and think more. During my graduate studies I wouldn't have been able to go on without the fellowships from the CUNY Graduate Center, the Spencer Foundation, the FRIDE Foundation, and the research position that Marilyn Gittell offered me at the Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center. My deepest thanks go to all of them. Barbara Souza helped me while in Salvador, Bahia, with the data collection. She did a great and reliable job.

I want to dedicate this work to Mali Gabriela, my daughter, and to my mother.

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INTRODUCTION

Modernity has produced a worldwide system where structural inequalities and systematic exploitation of great parts of humanity provide the basis for the economic success and cultural flourishing of a small number of elites.¹ Almost everywhere race and gender have been used to justify the economic and political exclusion of large groups of peoples. Almost everywhere, this exploitation has been sustained by the creation and maintenance of a hegemonic common sense where racialized and gendered social hierarchies² appear at the same time as “normal” and the “norm.” This dissertation analyses the ways in which racialized social hierarchies have been created historically in Brazil, and how they are sustained until today. It further addresses the question of how such “normalized” racial hierarchies³ can be ultimately overcome.

¹ Amongst others, Howard Winant (2001) has demonstrated how race is used to justify privileges through the symbolic construction of “white merit” in his comparative study of Latin American, European, and North American cases. Paul Gilroy (2000) has pointed to the ways modernity and Enlightenment have been achieved by some groups through the construction of “uncivilized others,” a category invented by western elites to justify their own privileges.

² I use “racialized” and “gendered” instead of just “race” and “gender” in order to call attention to the procedural character in which these categories work. Both race and gender, as the theoretical work of such authors as Nancy Fraser (1997), Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994), Michelle Fine, Linda Powell, Lois Wise, and Mun Wong (1997), Mary Waters (1990), Paul Gilroy (2000), and many others have explained, are reproduced continuously by social interaction and by value-laden, racist discourse that confirms and renews racist social orders. Those who are able to successfully claim their whiteness assert their top positions. In addition, as Powell (1997, in Fine et. al.) has shown, such discourse constructs whiteness as being “normal” and forces nonwhites, appearing as exotic “others” under this prism, to continuously prove their normality.

³ The use of the term “normalization” goes back to the work of Michel Foucault (1995), who called the process of ranking different cultural and ethnic groups against the ideal type of the western male “normalization.” Normalization therefore stresses the two processes that historically have worked together in the creation of white supremacy. White males have been using science ever since the late 19th century in

Civil society has the potential, according to German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1984 and 1989), to create and sustain social interaction based on solidarity and mutual understanding. Such social interaction can challenge deeply rooted inequalities, giving voice to historically excluded groups. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), democratization depends on the proliferation of such democratic spaces. But civil society cannot create and sustain democratic spaces always and under all conditions. A-priori judgments about the positive relationship among civil society and democracy must therefore be evaluated critically. Comparing civil society organizations of different Brazilian states and municipalities points to the importance of analyzing the different roles states can play vis-à-vis local civil society organizations, ranging from coercive to supportive.

Independence from states and donors is an important condition for democratic and critical civil society activism. In addition, the democratic quality that characterizes the decision-making processes and the organizational structures of a civil society organization must

order to demonstrate that development and evolution necessarily find in western civilization its highest expression. Nonwestern cultures were therefore declared "primitive" and underdeveloped and their worth had to be measured against the achievements of western society. By the same token, nonwhites became the object of scientific inquiry of male dominated, modern western science. Subjected to their measuring and categorizing power (or "gaze" as Foucault has called it), such endeavor as Harding (1991 and 1993) has demonstrated, transformed nonwhites into exotics, elevated Europeans scientists to neutral observers, and set European culture as a standard against which other cultures had to be measured. In other words, European culture became "white culture" and a norm, because it became established as a standard for development, civilization, and evolution. It also became normal, as western science invested it with objectivity and neutrality, transforming European scientists into neutral observers and analysts of nonwhite, Non-European exotic others who were not normal.

allow for excluded groups to overcome their status of being judged inferior and held invisible and to actively promote their empowerment. Not all groups acting within civil society accomplish this. I have compared Brazilian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), appearing in the 1970s, with Brazilian neighborhood associations that were active since the 1940s. Political and financial opportunities increased for NGOs since the 1980s, producing a vast proliferation of such groups (Landim 1997). Also in the 1980s, neighborhood associations of some Brazilian cities and states found new opportunities to collaborate with progressive political forces coming into power in some municipal and state governments (Abers 2000, Avritzer 2002, Tandler 1997). But in the Brazilian state of Bahia, part of the impoverished Northeast, traditional political elites have been able to perpetuate their power, co-opting local civil society organizations.

In Bahia, neighborhood associations have lost political opportunities and they have diminished their importance and visibility. NGOs have been able to avoid governmental cooptation by allying with private, mostly international, donor agencies, but they have merely interchanged one force threatening their independence with another. Bahian NGOs, in order to fulfill the high requirements of international donors, mostly employ elite members of Brazilian society, thereby reflecting and consolidating dominant racial hierarchies.

The Normalization of Racial Hierarchies

Inequality and exclusion from political and civil rights deeply divide Brazilian society. The racialized character of exclusion becomes clear if analyzed historically. Afro-Brazilians have been blamed for the country's backwardness ever since colonial times.⁴ Racist ideologies, dressed up as positivist science, depicted Africans and Afro-Brazilians as "unworthy," potentially criminal, dangerous, and incapable of achieving "civilization." This racist ideology was articulated most strongly during the first half of the 20th century, grounded on the work of the physician and anthropologist Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906).

Racist ideology led to the creation of the Brazilian Society of Eugenics in 1918 that promoted racial cleansing and the sterilization of the "socially unfit."⁵ The constitution enacted in 1934 made eugenics a required topic of basic education, stating in article 138b, "it is the duty of the Union, the States and the Municipalities [to carry out] within the respective laws: [...] the promotion of eugenic education."⁶ According to Mitchell

⁴ So have, indeed, Brazilian indigenous people. A similar logic applies to the ways their exclusion from rights and citizenship has been constructed historically. Lilia Schwarcz (1993) has included them in her analysis of historical racism in Brazil, although her main focus is on Afro-Brazilians. Although I am aware of the extreme exclusion of indigenous people in Brazilian society I decided to focus my attention on Afro-Brazilians and not to include indigenous groups in my analysis.

⁵ Schwarcz 1993.

⁶ Quoted from Mitchell 1984:114.

(1984), “eugenics involves the control and, in some cases, elimination of certain biological types in order to achieve an ideal of physical or racial homogeneity.”⁷ From the abolition of slavery in 1888 to the end of massive state-promoted immigration in the 1940s, Brazil’s political and intellectual elites applied the scientific racism of the “Nina Rodrigues School” and the then-popular notions of Lamarckian evolutionism to actively promote the “whitening” of Brazilian society in order to improve its “racial stock.” Increasing the population of northern European origin was seen as the main factor responsible for evolutionary and civilizational progress of the nation.⁸ Biological whitening failed, however, and so the elite’s project of building a nation resembling Europe became more and more endangered.

The great appeal of whiteness, according to Lesser (1999), symbolized the elite’s desire to attract immigrants of “superior racial stock” and guided official immigration policies between 1850 and 1950. But the national project of whitening ultimately failed, as not enough northern Europeans were willing to settle in Brazil.⁹ In addition, Brazilian elites themselves had long been exposed to racial mixing, which by their own standards and

⁷ Mitchell 1984: 114.

⁸ Lesser 1999.

⁹ Lesser 1999: 7ff.

according to some European and North American visitors endangered their prospects of catching up to the civilized European ideal.

Whiteness, anything but a biological reality, was used as a symbolical indicator of civilizing potential.¹⁰ Lesser (1999) demonstrated that what it meant to be “white” shifted in Brazil between 1850 and 1950, but whiteness remained a cultural category, signifying superiority and well-deserved privilege. Brazilian elites openly discussed and compared the different degrees of whiteness of such potential immigrants as Arabs, Japanese, and Southern Europeans, associating whiteness with aptitude.¹¹ The idea of whiteness was therefore constructed and used as a form of capital, strongly associated with merit and progressive, developmental potential. But as Waters (1990) has shown for the United States, claiming to be white was not a viable option for ex-slaves, but could be achieved by Italian, Greek, Polish, and Eastern European immigrants, who in times were also stigmatized as being “nonwhite.”

Gilberto Freyre’s influential work *The Masters and the Slaves*, first published in 1933, declared Brazil a “racial democracy,” arguing for the superiority of biological hybrids

¹⁰ Harris (1993), studying race relations in the US, demonstrates how symbolical whiteness was symbolically constructed and used in the United States as a form of capital in order to justify undeserved privileges and merits.

¹¹ Lesser 1999.

over pure races. Freyre provided a welcome solution for the racially “impure” Brazilian elites, who, in the words of Nancy Stepan, “wished to be white and feared they were not.”¹² The 1930s were a time of populism and nationalism, under the extended rule of Getúlio Vargas, who was president from 1930 to 1937, dictator from 1937 to 1945, and again president from 1951 to 1954. Freyre’s (1933) book praised Brazil as a racial paradise, where a “new race” had resulted from extensive intermixing in colonial times. This new race was, according to him, better adapted to the tropics and generally combined the advantages of the founding races – white, black, and indigenous.

As Hermano Vianna (1999) shows, Freyre became a crucial actor in the project of Brazilian nation-building, as his theories offered the optics through which Brazilian elites could imagine themselves and “their” nation. Freyre’s work allowed for a strategy to incorporate Afro-Brazilians into the “imagined Brazilian community” (Benedict Anderson) instead of separating or isolating them. Freyre declared that the Afro-Brazilian influence that was so prevalent in Brazil had provided the Brazilian elites with a competitive “tropical” advantage over the overly rigid “pure” Europeans and North Americans.

¹² Stepan 1991:45.

Nevertheless, the incorporation of Afro-Brazilians into the national social “body” placed them at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and integration requested from Afro-Brazilians the complete negation of their cultural distinctiveness. Freyre transformed Afro-Brazilians, as well as the large groups of indigenous people, into nothing more than ingredients to “spice up” the European racial stock that, according to Freyre, dominated Brazil.

Freyre’s theories provided the ideological basis for achieving several goals. It served the project of nation-building under the Vargas regime, offering a founding ideology upon which the Brazilian elite could imagine itself, because it allowed those elites to cope with the historical fact of far-reaching biological mixing without abandoning European cultural values as the guiding values for themselves and the nation. It also undermined Afro-Brazilian solidarity and mobilization, as under such a system, upward social mobility had to be achieved through the assimilation of European values, manners, and looks. In other words, Brazilian society remained culturally monolithic despite its biologic diversity.

The corporatist political institutions that sustained Brazilian racial hierarchies were never restructured, which would have allowed for a reconfiguration of hierarchies and traditionally assigned places. Instead, the Brazilian military, joined by the state-elites, avoided such restructuring with a military coup in 1964, when the threat of social

revolution became imminent.¹³ Instead, during military rule (1964 to 1985), Brazilian social hierarchies were perpetuated, as great parts of the Brazilian population remained marginalized from participating in political and civil life.

Although the analyses provided by Erickson (1977) and Wiarda (1981) do not address the racial dynamics that permeate the Brazilian social body, their analysis nevertheless allows for the conclusion that those at the top of the Brazilian social and political body used whiteness as a tool to legitimate their privileges. Afro-Brazilians instead became associated with the lower positions of the Brazilian social body, and dark skin complexion became a signifier of low status, making all blacks suspects of being poor and potentially dangerous, as Bahian sociologist Antônio Sérgio Guimarães (1996) and São Paulo Anthropologist Teresa Caldeira (2000) have explained.

This perception of Afro-Brazilians is so deeply rooted in Brazilians' common sense that it has escaped scrutiny. It has become one of the ways Brazilians make sense of their everyday reality. Simpson (1993), in her study about "The Mega-Marketing of Gender, Race, and Modernity," demonstrates how in Brazil a "normalizing" discourse¹⁴

¹³ Erickson 1977.

¹⁴ As explained above, in Footnote 3, the concept of "normalization," developed by Michel Foucault (1995), refers to the elevation of whiteness to a standard against which other groups have to be measured. Selden (2000) uses a similar approach when writing about *Eugenics and the Social Construction of Merit, Race, and Disability* in the US.

continuously associates whiteness with merit and blackness with unworthiness and danger. Simpson analyzes the career of XUXA, an ex-playmate and ex-soft-porn star emerging in the 1980s and soon becoming Brazil's most famous TV star, hosting afternoon prime-time programs for children. Simpson argues that "In her celebration of whiteness, Xuxa not only taps deep and jealously guarded feelings among Brazilians about race but also asserts the validity of a nearly universal ideological construction wherein the blond female is presented as the "most prized possession of white patriarchy.""¹⁵

One of the central places where racialized inequality is reproduced is within elite and middle-class homes that typically employ racially different female domestic servants. Domestic service is a very common practice in Brazil, employing some five million people or 20% of the Brazilian female labor force in 2002. An analysis of the employer – maid relationship allows for an understanding of the mechanisms used by most Brazilian employers to de-humanize and domesticate their employees, who on average have a different ethnic background. It points to the intimate links that unite maids with employers as the latter define their identity in contrast to the former, establishing a

¹⁵ Simpson 1993: 8. Simpson's quote is from Richard Dyer 1986: *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, New York, St. Martin's Press.

dichotomy of excluded-included with clear racial dimensions that is crucial for structuring modern Brazilian society.¹⁶

Caldeira (2000) and Pinheiro (1997) have pointed out that racialized exclusion is part of the ongoing process of maintaining Brazilian nationhood, influencing state policies. According to these authors, the state-sponsored violence against the excluded gives clear evidence of how included groups use violence to maintain the racialized social order that characterizes the Brazilian status quo.

The Democratizing Potential of Civil Society

Such an analysis of Brazilian reality leads me to search for places and mechanisms that allow for an overcoming of the deeply rooted racialized hierarchies that undermine further democratic consolidation in Brazil. Civil society has been treated as one of the major societal places able to consolidate and raise the quality and sustainability of democracies (Linz and Stepan 1996, Rueschemeyer and Rueschemeyer 1998, Keane 1998, Diamond 1999, Cohen and Arato 1995, Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998). Especially the writings of German philosopher Jürgen Habermas point to civil society as the place where consensus-oriented discourse can escape the logic of control that dominates both the modern economies and state bureaucracies.

¹⁶ Kofes 2001.

For Habermas (1989), modernity has eroded the possibility of grounding morality on religion. Instead, moral agreements have to be made rationally, through open and inclusive rational discourse that allows reason to prevail. Applying this framework to the analysis of Brazilian reality leads to the claim that organizations acting within civil society should be independent from the prevalent exclusionary practices that characterize Brazilian society, the state and the economy. This independence, according to Habermas, can allow civil society to establish “ideal speech situations,” where the power imbalances that characterize the economy and the state can be questioned and scrutinized and therefore addressed and ultimately overcome so that reasonable argumentation alone prevails.¹⁷

The outcomes of such reasoning are more deliberate collective decisions. But even more importantly, such democratic participation redefines “lifeworlds,” understood as culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stocks of interpretive patterns (Habermas 1989). Such a possibility refers to civil society’s capacity to create, sustain,

¹⁷ Habermas (1989) argues that power imbalances must be “bracketed” in order to guarantee a discourse based on equality. Nancy Fraser (1997) has argued that instead of such a “bracketing” of differences, differences and power imbalances that characterize the participants in a deliberative process should instead be addressed and made explicit, so that they can be adequately recognized and addressed. As Pauline Johnson (2001) has pointed out in an article about *Feminism's Dispute with Habermas*, Habermas does indeed not advocate the exclusion of any topic from the agenda of a deliberating body, especially not the topic of power inequalities among participants. Johnson argues that Fraser’s and Benhabib’s claims of making differences explicit overlap strongly with Habermas’ own approach.

and ultimately to institutionalize and expand democratic realities, thereby altering exclusive everyday realities through the active promotion of a democratic common sense. *Subaltern counterpublics* (Fraser 1997), or *counterhegemonic public spheres* (Dawson 1994) can be created through this mechanism. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), democratic change requires the proliferation of democratic spaces, where excluded groups can empower themselves. Such a possibility rests on understanding reality as socially constructed through interaction and speech.¹⁸ The success of democratic change depends on the sufficient accumulations of “communicative power” (Arendt 1970), to overcome the current realities that are maintained by the use of power and violence. Such an understanding of reality in general and Brazilian reality of racialized exclusion in particular clearly defines the major political task for Brazilian civil society. For groups acting within Brazilian civil society to claim that they contribute to consolidating democracy, they must address and overcome racialized exclusion in their daily practices. From the available literature it becomes clear that in most places different kinds of civil society groups co-exist along with several and diverse public spheres, but that among them one tends to be hegemonic.

Feminist theorists, such as Jane Mansbridge (1990) and Nancy Fraser (1997) have pointed to the fact that in most western societies, the predominant civil society was

¹⁸ Berger and Luckmann 1966.

mostly reserved for white males, but that other, “counterhegemonic,” spheres existed parallel to dominant civil society.¹⁹ Michael Hanchard (1994a and 1994b) has shown that the same is true for Brazilian civil society, which has excluded Afro-Brazilians from participating on equal terms in the dominant public sphere. Kim Butler’s (1998) analysis of Afro-Brazilian organizing and protest against racism and exclusion after the abolition of slavery (1888) points to the importance of Afro-Brazilian cultural and political organizations functioning as counterhegemonic civil societies and alternative public spheres for excluded blacks.

In addition, civil society is constituted by a broad variety of groups acting within its framework, and different authors have been discussing civil society, but referring to different groups, such as “secondary associations” (Cohen and Rogers 1995), “political and civil associations” (Tocqueville 1988), “advocacy groups” (Gittell 1988), “NGOs” (Cerne 1988, Cohn 1995, Edwards and Hulme 1992), and others. Analyzing Brazilian civil society shows that its composition has changed over the last decades. Responding to changing opportunity structures (Tarrow 1998) that were strongly influenced by the characteristics of local and state political elites, neighborhood associations have been able

¹⁹ Jane Mansbridge has demonstrated that in the USA black churches always served as counterhegemonic civil societies for excluded Afro-Americans.

to flourish in such places as Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, and Fortaleza, where new, democratic political leaders had substituted older, traditional political strongmen.

Brazilian NGOs and Neighborhood Associations

In the state of Bahia, where I carried out my research, such a political change had not occurred yet. Instead, Bahian politics were dominated by the traditional elite associated with senator Antônio Carlos Magalhães. The Bahian state government and the municipal government of the city of Salvador, the Bahian capital, had perpetuated a policy of co-opting neighborhood associations that goes back to military rule and that was also promoted by president Sarney (1985-1989). Faced with such cooptation, Bahian neighborhood associations had to opt between alienation and independence, where independence implied forgoing all governmental policy support, for their constituencies, even to address such basic needs as education and health care.

Under such a light, it seems that the “associational revolution” that some authors, writing about Latin America, have diagnosed, in fact refers not to a spread of autonomous “new social movements,” but rather to the new political opportunities for some associations in some Brazilian states and municipalities, provided by progressive state elites. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that in Brazil, neighborhood associations and black power movements, typically associated with “new social movements” (Alvarez,

Dagnino, and Escobar 1997), had been active long before the new social movements proliferated in the 1970s and 1980s.²⁰

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), instead, are new organizational phenomena within Brazilian civil society, first appearing in the 1980s (Landim 1997). These groups emerged because of the new financial opportunities that some local governments and international donor agencies provided in the 19980s. Offering employment opportunities for mostly young professionals and being able to tailor their objectives to cater to the requisites of international donors, those groups have increased their importance and visibility in Brazilian civil society to the point where some authors hold them as the new vanguard of Latin American civil society (Fisher 1998). Because of the central roles Brazilian NGOs have played over the last 30 years, I chose to compare “new” NGOs with “older” neighborhood associations in the state of Bahia, Brazil.

In view of the variety of groups that act within civil society it becomes evident that theory needs to guide the selection of relevant variables that account for significant differences among organized groups of civil society. The relevant literature has not been able to elucidate what accounts for the different impacts of associational life on

²⁰ Kim Butler (1998) and João Reis (1986) both show that Afro-Brazilians have organized against racism and advocated for justice ever since slavery times. Abers (2000) and Avritzer (2002) have demonstrated that Brazilian neighborhood associations go back at least to the 1940s.

individuals and societies. The works of Habermas, Paulo Freire (1989) Marilyn Gittell (1980), Sheri Berman (1997), and Nancy Rosenblum (1998) point to the need to include democratic goals and democratic ways of organizing and decision-making (means) into account for the empirical assessment of civil society groups.

Freire argues that, in addition to these criteria, political action aiming at the liberation of the oppressed “must be pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the word, and, therefore, action *with* the oppressed.”²¹ He bases such a claim on the socially constructed character of reality. According to him, “democratic praxis” requires homogeneity of means and ends. Freire defines democratic praxis in the context of oppression and the need for liberation:

Just as objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of human action, so it is not transformed by chance. If [people] produce social reality (which in the “inversion of praxis” turns back upon them and conditions them), then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for [people]. Reality which becomes oppressive results in the contra-distinction of [people] as oppressors and oppressed. The latter, whose task it is to struggle for their liberation together with those who show true solidarity, must acquire a critical

²¹ Freire 1989:53.

awareness of oppression through the praxis of this struggle. One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge [people's] consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.²²

The exclusion practiced daily in Brazil calls for applying Nancy Fraser's concept of "misrecognition" in order to better understand the structural dimension of Brazilian racialized oppression. According to Fraser, misrecognition refers to a process by which a group (or its members) is

denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life – not as a consequence of a distributive inequity (such as failing to receive one's fair share of resources or 'primary goods'), but rather as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem.²³

²² Freire 1989: 36.

²³ Fraser 1998: 141.

Applying such a framework to the analysis of Brazilian civil society, I hypothesize that, for a group to have a democratizing impact on the participating individual as well as on the broader society, it must include Afro-Brazilians in its decision-making structures and organizational hierarchies. Even more, Afro-Brazilians must not only be part of formal hierarchies, they must *effectively* participate in collective decision-making. This distinction is especially important in the Brazilian case, where formally established equality has been able to persist alongside with de facto exclusion.²⁴

I chose to analyze the NGOs acting in the city of Salvador, Bahia, as my primary units of analysis. Salvador is a city of some 3 million inhabitants, 70 to 80 percent of whom are of African descent. To be able to highlight the importance of changes within the composition of Brazilian civil society, I also included two neighborhood associations into my sample, contrasting them to the 17 NGOs that I was able to research.

I found that 14 NGOs had no self-identifying Afro-Brazilians²⁵ working in higher echelons and none of these groups allowed self-identifying Afro-Brazilians to take part in

²⁴ Pereira 1999 in Kingstone.

²⁵ I used self-identification as a criterion for assessing the participation of Afro-Brazilians, because of the very widespread Brazilian tendency to “whiten” one’s ethnic background by self-declaring anything but being “black.” As the works of Brazilian race sociologist Clóvis Moura (1988 and 1989) have shown, such whitening reflects the dominant ideology that denies the relevance of race and the existence of racism in

their collective decision-making. Instead all but one NGO reproduced the widespread, normalized pattern that treats the excluded as incapable of taking decisions on their own, thereby further consolidating racialized exclusion in Brazil. Only four NGOs employed Afro-Brazilians in higher positions, but even among those four, collective decision-making did most of the time not establish “ideal speech situations” that would allow for empowering experiences and the creation of democratic spaces. Instead, in three of those four NGOs, decision-making was mostly undemocratic, concentrated on central male. Comparing organizational structures and effective collective decision-making of the examined NGOs to the two neighborhood associations, I found that the neighborhood associations were more democratic, because they allowed for more collective decision-making and more Afro-Brazilian representation. Nevertheless, NGOs have been more successful than neighborhood associations in taking advantage of the financial and political opportunities provided to Brazilian civil society since the 1980s. This has catapulted NGOs to the forefront of Brazilian civil society, but it has also diminished their political independence. The prolongation of semi-authoritarian power structures that characterize the Bahian state has limited the options of Bahian civil society and pushed counterhegemonic groups into political opposition.

Brazil. Self-identification “negro/a,” in turn, indicates political race consciousness and goes against the dominant strategy of assimilating whiteness as the only way for upward social mobility.

These findings point to the fact that to maintain a democratic praxis, civil society organizations must remain independent from the state and the economy. Furthermore, the empirical evidence suggests that NGOs are less independent than more traditional groups, such as neighborhood associations. NGOs are part of an international system sustained by donors and as such they have to cater to donor agendas, competing for scarce resources. The contemporary trend of NGO expansion, replacing more traditional forms of organizing must therefore be evaluated critically. At the same time, the pervasiveness of semi-authoritarian political leadership that characterizes the Brazilian state of Bahia has been responsible for a lack of “state-society synergy” (Tendler 1997), marginalizing oppositional groups and co-opting others. To be able to evaluate the potential of civil society in producing democratic change, it is therefore important to analyze the ways power is distributed and accumulated within the state and within civil society.

Chapter outline

In Chapter One I argue for a substantive definition of democracy. After contrasting procedural from substantive and deliberative conceptions, I argue for the need to “bring society back in” and to expand beyond mainstream political analyses in order to accurately capture the impediments for further consolidating Brazilian democracy.

Chapter Two shows how Brazilian elites have created an ideology of Afro-Brazilian inferiority and used it to maintain white supremacy. Paralleling European state-building described by Michel Foucault (1995), Brazilian elites were able to first stigmatize the

Brazilian majority as “racial others” and later, using the theories of Gilberto Freyre, to integrate them into a corporatist societal model, but perpetuating their exclusion from full citizenship.

Chapter Three focuses on the ways in which Brazilian elites were able to avoid radical restructuring of a society that was based on a racial hierarchy. It also demonstrates the highly “normalized” character of privileges associated with symbolic “whiteness” through the analysis of domestic service that is a widespread practice in Brazilian middle- and upper class households.

In Chapter Four I demonstrate why civil society can be a place to overcome deeply-rooted and normalized exclusion in Brazil. Combining the theories of Berger and Luckmann (1966), Antonio Gramsci (1999), Paulo Freire (1989) and Jürgen Habermas (1984 and 1989) I argue that the main potential of civil society under established democracies is to create and maintain democratic spaces that oppose the prevalent exclusion of broader Brazilian society.

Chapter Five provides a historical overview of Brazilian civil society, comparing the historical development of NGOs with that of black power movements and neighborhood associations. I argue that in Brazil, not social movements were “new” after the 1980s, but that some local governments provided new opportunities for some groups that had long

been part of Brazilian civil society. I show how NGOs have been able to gain greater visibility since the 1980s, responding to the financial opportunities that international donors provided, and replacing older organizations with stronger roots in popular movements. Gaining independence from potential state cooptation, NGOs are nevertheless closely linked to international agents, who also jeopardize their independence.

Chapter Six uses the work of Marilyn Gittell (1980), Nancy Rosenblum (1998), and others to demonstrate that only those groups of civil society that pursue democratic goals by using democratic means can effectively sustain democratic spaces that have the potential to become institutionalized and contribute to deepening and consolidating Brazilian democracy.

Chapter Seven presents the empirical work I have carried out with 17 NGOs and two neighborhood associations in Salvador, Brazil from June 2001 to January 2002. I compare local NGOs with local neighborhood associations for the degree of democratic praxis, expressed as pursuing democratic goals by using democratic means. In addition, I carry out an analysis of the political power as distributed in the state of Bahia, and I point to the Brazilian black power movement, having accumulated enough “communicative power” to impact broader society and the state.

The Conclusion sums up my findings about the workings of racialized exclusion in Brazil and the potential of civil society change such a situation. I point to the importance of civil society's independence from the state and the market in order to fulfill its promises and highlight the importance of considering the distribution and accumulation of power in order to evaluate the impact of Brazilian civil society.

CHAPTER 1: DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRACY, AND THE LIMITS OF MAINSTREAM POLITICAL SCIENCE

Democratic theorists have long discussed the meaning and definition of the concept "democracy." Larry Diamond (1999) distinguishes "minimalist," or procedural definitions, focusing narrowly on free elections as the main criterion to characterize a democracy from more substantive definitions that also take issues of social justice and participation into account. Substantive democratic theorists, such as Barber (1984) and Rueschemeyer (1998) stress that it is necessary to diminish the distance separating the ruled from their rulers through means of direct participation and the creation of institutions that enhance the government's accountability. A third school of democratic thought has gone beyond substantive definitions, although agreeing with its premises. Advocates of deliberative democracy focus their attention on the discursive *formation* of preferences and the importance of civil society and the public sphere as places to legitimize democratic rule.

Before discussing Brazilian realities, I first contrast these three theoretical positions. I outline some of the arguments made for substantive definitions of democracy, arguing that more than fair elections must be in place for a country to be considered democratic. Brazil provides a clear example for this, as the persistence of exclusion, racism, violence, and the violation of human rights characterize this formally democratic country. In other words, Brazil's democracy lacks quality. I conclude that even those accounts that have used a more substantive definition of democracy have not been able to explain why Brazil's democracy has not gained more quality, because they have focused their attention on the institutional weaknesses of Brazilian democracy. I therefore suggest that analysts "bring society back in," by integrating insights from sociology and race and gender theory into the study of Brazil's democracy.

Two traditions of understanding democracy

There are two traditions in the treatment of democracy. First there are "minimalist models,"²⁶ going back to Joseph Schumpeter (1942). Robert Dahl (1971) and Samuel Huntington (1993) both follow Schumpeter in broad terms. Schumpeter defined democracy as a system "for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."²⁷

²⁶ Diamond 1999: 8.

²⁷ Schumpeter 1947: 269.

These authors understand democracy as a form of government where people periodically elect their representatives. If political and civil freedoms, such as the right to vote, secret ballots, the right to run for office, and the right to campaign openly are given, political elites compete for votes, on a market-type basis. If they perform well, they probably will get reelected. If they don't, the people have the chance to substitute them. The problem with this model is its difficulty in explaining why elected elites should produce policies that favor the citizens once they are elected, rather than designing policies that serve themselves. Its strong point is that such treatment permits a more objective treatment of democracy. Democracy, in this view, is present where representatives are elected in free, public elections. Any normative or substantive criteria are left out. According to Samuel Huntington (1968), direct citizen participation is not needed nor wanted in all countries as it might jeopardize political stability. Other advocates of minimalist definitions have argued that citizen participation in democratic governance is not desirable because it might distort outcomes in favor of more influential groups (Fiorino), and because citizens are not informed enough to make wise political decisions (Hinich and Munger 1997).

Fiorina (1999) has argued that the rise of more participation in the U.S. has led to more distrust as interest groups have used the new mechanisms that participatory democracy has provided to manipulate and influence political processes in their own interest. He calls this process one of favoring "extreme voices" that are able, through media

manipulation, money donations, lobbying, corridoring, and the like, to influence politicians and the broader public. In his understanding, the broader American public has reacted by retreating from politics, disenchanted with the political manipulation that some strong and rich interest groups are asserting on the political process. The impact of citizen participation on democracy is not necessarily positive.

But procedural criteria are not the ones to define democracy. A second school of authors advocates more substantive definitions. Authors like Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Benjamin Barber (1984), and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (1998) claim that democracy is more than just a way to govern; rather, it is a way of collective decision-making. These authors depart from the procedural school by taking a normative position from the outset, partly because they belong to the “critical theory school” which holds that “objective” or “neutral” positions are not actually possible. They seek to identify a form of collective organization that promises to diminish the gap between the rulers and the ruled. Such organization necessarily includes participation, and seeks rational, deliberative argumentation in order to achieve enlightened preferences and collective decisions. Free elections are therefore not enough to define democracy, and participation, social justice, equity, governmental responsiveness, and transparency have necessarily to be taken into account. This tradition goes back to republican treatments of the “general will” (Rousseau) and the “common good” (Locke and John Stuart Mill). Following the substantive definition, democratization depends on effectively responding to the needs

and wants of all the people, including the disenfranchised that have long waited for democracy, fought, suffered, and died for it. Consolidation then depends not only on a more equal economic distribution of wealth and income, but also on the political empowerment of the weak and excluded.

Democratic Legitimacy and Deliberation

Another way to look at democratic regimes is through the lens of legitimacy. Democratic voting is problematic. Some scholars have argued that it leads to economically inferior outcomes,²⁸ and others have highlighted the inherent problem of majority rule. That is, if one agrees about the superiority of majority rule over other forms of collective decision-making in modern, complex societies, there inevitably remains the problem of what Tocqueville called "the tyranny of the majority". As Brian Barry has demonstrated in his article "Is Democracy Special?,"²⁹ structural minorities that have a different language, religion, or national identity than the majority in power and whose preferences are therefore consistently divergent from the majority, have a great risk of not being represented in majority rule systems. The liberal doctrine that guarantees individual freedom to all citizens, meaning first and foremost the absence of state coercion,

²⁸For the discussion of negative economic consequences of democracy, and problems of social choice, see, for example the books of Hinich, Melvin J. and Michael C. Munger 1997: *Analytical Politics*, and William R. Keech 1995: *Economic Politics. The costs of democracy*, Cambridge University Press.

²⁹Barry, Brian 1979: *Is Democracy Special*, in: Laslett, Peter and James Fishkin (eds.) 1979: *Philosophy, Politics, and Society*, Oxford, Blackwell: 168.

necessarily comes into conflict with the basic principle of democracy: majority rule. In cases where minorities are neglected, not represented, or oppressed by ruling majorities, then we face the logical problem of two mutually exclusive principles: democracy and liberalism, understood as a form of governance that allows all individuals to be free and equal.

This is an old problem. Several solutions out of it have been advanced. John Stuart Mill proposed a reduction of majorities from 51percent to 26percent, and elections requiring more than one step. Later, William Riker (1982) saw as the only possible solution the limitation of what democracy possibly can mean, to a model where the main function of democracy is to enable citizens to remove elected officials in periodic elections.³⁰ Another group of solutions comes out of the opposite corner: republicanism. Going back to Rousseau, political dissent is understood as an error, a misunderstanding of the *general will*. Therefore one can ignore political dissent. The utilitarian solution, another version of the republican model, declares the superiority of the collective will over the individual wills, relying on the ideal of the “greatest happiness of the greatest number.”

With John Rawls *Theory of Justice* (1971), there was a revival of political theorizing about the dichotomy of liberalism vis-à-vis democracy, which has received an even

³⁰Riker, William 1982: *Liberalism Against Populism*, San Francisco, W. H. Freeman: 181-200.

stronger impact since the "third wave" of democratic transitions of the 1980s. But Rawls' *ex-ante* commitments to justify the possibility of political liberalism and welfare state policies have restricted the scope of his critique, letting him use restrictive definitions of public reason, civil society, and deliberation.³¹ In addition, as Chantal Mouffe (1996) has pointed out, Rawls' project to justify liberal democratic regimes has led him to associate opponents of political liberalism with unreasonableness. Although his theory allows for a modern, non-religious foundation of principles of justice, Rawls stops short of providing theoretical solutions for problems of diversity and difference. Defining reasonable persons as being morally independent and willing to cooperate with other members of their society, Rawls ultimately restricts democratic legitimacy to the negotiation of *reasonable doctrines*, thereby declaring moral or political disagreement unreasonable.³²

Jürgen Habermas presented his *Theory of Communicative Action* in 1981, and Bernard Manin wrote an important article on the subject in 1987³³, offering another, third group of solutions to the problem of democratic legitimacy. According to authors like Hannah Arendt (1970) and Michael J. Sandel (1996), who are associated with republican

³¹ Seyla Benhabib (1996) discusses Rawls' theories in her contribution to the book *Democracy and Difference*, which she edited. She points to the elements of Rawls' theory that differentiate him from the deliberative models of democracy that she favors, Benhabib 1996: 74 f.

³² Rawls 1993:55.

³³ Manin, Bernard 1987: On legitimacy and political deliberation, in: *Political Theory*, V.15, N.3, Aug. 1987: 338-368.

conceptions of the common good, democratic legitimacy refers to the degree that the authority exercised over citizens results from the consent of those same citizens. These authors shifted their attention from problems of aggregation of preferences, to a more basic one: the *formation* of these preferences. For Habermas and Manin, and the many authors they have inspired, individual preferences cannot be understood as given and stable, but as influenced by economic, social, and cultural conditions. Seyla Benhabib, argues that “legitimacy in complex democratic societies must be thought to result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation of all about matters of common concern.”³⁴

A whole set of assumptions - principally advocated in economics, where not only taste is treated as a given, but is also held as being rationally ordered, “transitive,” in the economic jargon - is thereby put into question. This shift marks an orientation toward a more sociological view of basic assumptions about individuals, and their relation to society, ideology, and culture.³⁵ The main question therefore shifts from how to aggregate individual preferences so as to prevent coercion of minorities, to the question of how can processes of deliberation on both the individual and the collective level be established and lead to decisions based on those deliberations.

³⁴ Benhabib 1996: 68.

³⁵ Even in economics this critique was reflected, so that for example Herbert Simon (1983) stated that complete rationality is not achievable by human beings, and transitivity of preferences cannot be assumed.

In political theory, this shift meant looking at how persons arrive at their preferences.

Manin writes:

It is, therefore, necessary to alter radically the perspective common to both liberal theories and democratic thought: the source of legitimacy is not the predetermined will of individuals, but rather the process of its formation, that is, deliberation itself. An individual's liberty consists first of all in being able to arrive at decision by a process of research and comparison among various solutions. As political decisions are characteristically imposed on all, it seems reasonable to seek, as an essential condition for legitimacy, the deliberation of all or, more precisely, the right of all to participate in deliberation. We must, therefore, challenge the fundamental conclusion of Rousseau, Sieyès, and Rawls: a legitimate decision does not represent the will of all, but is one that results from the deliberation of all.³⁶

At once, other problems appear. How can one think of enhancing deliberative processes at the individual, and at the collective level? Jürgen Habermas' writings address exactly this point. Again, the proposals are not new, but go back to classical thinking and 19th century writings. John Stuart Mill questioned the legitimacy of secret ballots and pointed

³⁶Manin 1987:351f.

to the necessity for government and institutions to “promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves.” The first question in respect to any political institution is how much it fosters in the members of the community the various desirable qualities, moral and intellectual.³⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville saw that the loci where this deliberative competence can be cultivated are in political and civil associations.³⁸

Habermas adopted this reasoning and defined the *conditions* for collective deliberative processes to take place, laying out the philosophical ground on which “communicative action” can grow. For Habermas, the main condition for democratic learning and legitimate collective decision-making consists of maintaining institutional frames that allow for a communicative interchange of reasonable arguments, where all those potentially affected by a decision have a right to voice their point of view. He alerts us to the fact that power, tradition, and privilege easily distort this “ideal speech situation,” potentially leading away from rational and democratic decisions. Undemocratic collective decision-making for Habermas is based on such principles as self-interest, accumulation of wealth, power seeking, prestige enhancement, or the advance of individual benefits at the cost of others. The discussion on democratic agenda setting demonstrated just one aspect of this weakness, as it alerts us to the fact that some decisions are made by the

³⁷Mill [1861] 1958:25.

³⁸Alexis de Tocqueville [1835]1988: Democracy in America, New York, Harper.

people who define what will be discussed by a broader public *before* the actual democratic decision-making processes starts.³⁹

Advocates of deliberative democracy have argued about how to integrate deliberative arenas into the institutional framework of contemporary complex democracies. Whereas one way to conceive deliberative democracies is to think about deliberative spaces within the state, the more widespread argument locates deliberative processes outside the state, although without disputing the importance of deliberations within the state.⁴⁰

“Civil society” and the “public sphere” have been the two concepts introduced to locate places outside the state where deliberation can occur, critical opinions can be created and interchanged, including against the state, and states can be held accountable and brought to perform better and more responsively. Robert Putnam has made an important and widely discussed contribution to this subfield with his study on democracy in Italy (1993). Writing about civic traditions in Italy and the United States, Putnam shows how traditions of mutual trust, associability, and participation are nurtured in such apolitical groups as bird-watchers and bowling leagues, and how such traditions can enhance democratic performance, turning governments more responsive and accountable,

³⁹ Lukes 1977.

⁴⁰ A good overview of the genealogy of deliberative democracy and the discussion involved is provided by James Bohman, in his survey article “The coming of age of deliberative democracy” (1998).

ultimately leading to better economic performance.⁴¹ The concept of “social capital” became a slogan and key concept for the advocates of this train of thought. At the same time, other writers tried to define where, and how, associations can deliver the desired attributes to the democratic system, and what kinds of associations can do this best.

The promises and problems of deliberation

Four reasons in favor of the deliberative conception of democracy (as superior to both the “minimalist,” procedural, and the substantive conceptions of democracy) are commonly made. First, deliberation assures legitimacy, following the reasoning outlined by Manin. Second, deliberation leads to more reasoned decisions, as information is shared in dialogue and different perspectives are taken into account and interchanged. Third, through deliberation, individual preferences become more reasonable and ordered, as preferences cannot be thought of as given, but rather as the result of dialogue. Preferences that are the result of reasonable discourse are “more enlightened” and rational. Fourth, the publicity and reflexivity of public discourse allows for a constant re-defining and questioning of what is perceived as “good” and “right,” which is particularly important under conditions of modernity, characterized by a plurality of worldviews. Exposing one’s opinion in public also has the tendency to sort out anti-democratic arguments, as these arguments are likely to be challenged. Furthermore, deliberation promises more

⁴¹ Putnam, Robert D. 1993, 1995, 1996, 2000.

individual enlightenment. In the absence of restrictions, participants in a dialogue are permitted and encouraged to be self-critical. Echoing Manin's earlier words, Benhabib (1996) writes that "legitimacy in complex democratic societies must be thought to result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation of all about matters of common concern. Thus a public sphere of deliberation about matters of mutual concern is essential to the legitimacy of democratic institutions."⁴²

The problems of deliberative or associative forms of democracy are of two types. First there are problems concerning the conditions for deliberation to occur and prevail, as manipulation can easily destroy the framework that allows for deliberation. If people have no real power to influence decisions they will not continue participating. Eloquence of some can easily influence others. Power rooted in prestige, money, tradition or violence easily can distort democratic dialogue. Special knowledge, or even the successful claim of possessing such, opens the door for manipulation. Claims for superior esoteric or religious knowledge have the same effect. The conditions described earlier are not met any longer and deliberation ends.

Secondly, another group of problems derives from the potential that deliberative associations can work too well. Interest groups can advance their particular preferences

⁴² Benhabib 1996: 68.

against the will of a less organized majority. Under such conditions, political decisions do not represent the general will, but the special interests of some groups that are more organized and better able to influence political decisions. In other words, interest groups that defend their claims *against* others might distort democratic decisions to their own favor, as Barber and Fiorino have pointed out. As liberal authors have argued since John Locke, the basic principle of one person, one vote would be in danger of distortion if people gather in interest groups, being able to make stronger claims than single individuals. Fiorina (1999) has termed this problem one of “extreme voices.”

Feminist theorists like Iris Young (1996, 2000), Jane Mansbridge (1990), and Nancy Fraser (1997) have raised another set of problems concerning deliberative democracy. They have argued that most deliberative theorists insist on a common culture (Rawls) or a universalist conception of reasonable procedures and outcomes (Habermas) as the basis allowing for mutual understanding. They point to the fact that in many societies men talk more than women, hence effectively excluding them. They also highlight that sitting down on a table to discuss problems using reasonable arguments is in fact a culturally biased, western way to resolve collective problems. It excludes other, more emotional utterances and potentially favors those with more eloquence and formal education.

Young argues that other cultures resolve their collective problems differently, in less verbal, and differently structured ways. In addition, she points to the fact that historically

Western public spaces have been highly exclusionary, not allowing for women and non-whites. She proposes a wider definition of communicative practices, allowing for the recognition of difference and of different styles of argumentation and verbal and non-verbal participation. Young argues that “emotional and figurative expression are important tools of reasonable persuasion and judgment [and that] the privilege of allegedly dispassionate speech styles, moreover often correlates with other differences of social privilege.”⁴³

Young’s skepticism about the possibility of reaching one single, reasonable outcome through continued deliberation leads her to propose a model of “communicative democracy,” which makes weaker claims about universalist reasonable agreements. Her definition also allows treating difference as a resource and not as a problem to be “solved,” as communicative processes still have the effects described above, even if no single agreement is reached. According to Young, group differences are not absolute, but relationally situated to a given issue-area in question, and group affiliations are multiple and shifting within individuals. Under such a perspective, deliberation facilitates the understanding of the reasons why one group holds a certain position. In general, deliberative or communicative forms of democracy specify the necessary but not the

⁴³ Young 2000: 39.

sufficient conditions for democratic legitimacy and reasonable decisions, as deliberative processes can be easily distorted.

Several conditions for deliberative processes to take place without distortion and to be maintained must be met. First equality and symmetry of the participants must be assured. All must have the same chance to speak and be heard. All must have the same right to question the agenda setting. All participants must have the right to challenge the procedural rules that organize the discussion, as there can be no fixed rules that limit the agenda and exclude certain topics. All individuals that are potentially affected by a decision must be able to participate in the process of decision-making. This is what Habermas has called the “ideal speech situation.” Additional problems of feasibility also arise from the understanding that in large complex democracies not all those potentially affected by a decision can effectively participate in the making of this decision. The most convincing solution lies in the definition of civil society and the role of the state itself. Benhabib (1996) explains that deliberative models of democracy share a model of “*plurality of modes of association* in which all affected can have the right to articulate their point of view. These can range from political parties, to citizens’ initiatives, to social movements, to voluntary associations, to consciousness-raising groups, and the like.”⁴⁴ For Benhabib, deliberative processes should happen in all these different forms of

⁴⁴ Benhabib 1996:73.

associations, allowing for an “interlocking” and the creation of “networks” of spaces for deliberative reasoning. This definition comes closest to the model Cohen and Rogers (1995) have called “egalitarian pluralism,” understood as a set of institutional designs allowing for associations to influence legislative and administrative arenas. In short, if deliberation is a desirable goal, democratic institutions should provide as many deliberative spaces as possible – inside and outside of government.

But several authors have pointed to the inherent conflictual nature of governmental decision-making that works against more consensus-aimed deliberation. The solution to this problem goes back to Alexis de Tocqueville’s argument that the conflictual nature of democratic government should be counterbalanced by associations acting outside established governments, in the realm of civil society. “Neo-Tocquevillian” political theorists argue that civil society is the realm where individuals can meet to associate freely around the interest areas of their choice. Authors like Cohen and Arato (1995) argue that the state and the economy do not allow for systematic democratic discourse aimed at reaching consensus, because “the actors of political and economic society are directly involved with state power and economic production, which they seek to control and manage. They cannot afford to subordinate strategic and instrumental criteria to the

patterns of *normative and open-ended communication* characteristic of civil society.⁴⁵

Civil society, to the contrary, can be the realm of free communication and consensus finding, because civil society is the realm where people meet freely and outside their potential coercive work environments.

According to Cohen and Arato, the term 'civil society' was first introduced by Aristotle, who spoke of *politike koinonia*, referring to political society and political community. Later it was translated into the Latin *societas civilis*. These authors argue that the shift towards modern usage occurred under European absolutism. The monopolistic holder of the legitimate means of violence was understood as standing on one side and estates and corporate bodies on the other, forming the civil society. Hegel's treatment of the concept was far reaching and still influences the debate of civil society. In his *Philosophy of Rights*, he presented civil society as a realm outside the economy and the state.

Nevertheless, most theorists argue that deliberation can happen in varied places, both inside and outside the state. Within the state, it is in parliaments and debates where elected representatives should pursue rational discourse in order to reach the most enlightened decisions. But, as Arendt has argued, democratic legitimacy ultimately rests on public consent. Therefore, the public sphere is one major societal place where

⁴⁵ Cohen and Arato 1995: IX.

deliberation must happen. The public sphere is characterized by a plurality of associations, including political parties, unions, voluntary associations, neighborhood groups, recreational groups, or just spontaneous gatherings and meetings. For some authors (Walzer), the state itself is but one association among others, embedded in the broader society, although it has a more powerful and enduring position, compared to other associations.

The discussions about deliberative democracy demonstrate that democracy rests on more than just the free election of representatives. In this view, democratic legitimacy ultimately rests on the deliberative participation of the people. Although deliberative theorists have found solutions to the problem of feasibility, they also point to the social prerequisites on which deliberation, and therefore democratic legitimacy, rest. Power, threat, authority, unequal access to information, racialized and gendered patterns of formal or of subtle dominance, and unreflected traditions easily distort deliberative processes. Models of deliberative democracy offer solutions to the problems of democratic legitimacy, the representation of structural minorities, and the renewal of a society's moral grounds through communication, but they also point to the weakness of these processes and their susceptibility to internal and external threats that have the potential to distort those communicative processes.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Elster 1998; Bohman 1998.

Definitions of Democracy, and Brazilian Reality

Brazil provides clear empirical evidence that a merely procedural definition of democracy is not adequate. Declaring Brazil a consolidated democracy, like Samuel Huntington does,⁴⁷ makes the concept of democracy meaningless. Brazil is characterized by persisting child labor, human rights violations,⁴⁸ racism,⁴⁹ and exclusion of a large portion of its own society.⁵⁰ Bales (2000) has recently provided evidence for persistent child labor and indeed contemporary slavery in the north and the northeast of Brazil.⁵¹ Pereira (2000),⁵² together with Pinheiro (1997) and Caldeira (2000), have demonstrated that violence in Brazil is indeed state-sponsored. Abdias do Nascimento (2001),⁵³

⁴⁷ Huntington 1991: 229 ff. Huntington focuses strongly on the fact that the military has in fact handed over power to civilian rulers under president Collor (1990-1992).

⁴⁸ Pinheiro 1997.

⁴⁹ Hanchard 1999.

⁵⁰ Caldeira 2000.

⁵¹ Bales (2000) defines contemporary slavery, which he calls "new slavery," as "not [being] about owning people in the traditional sense of the old slavery, but about controlling them completely. People become completely disposable tools for making money." (p.4) Bales finds that although today's slavery does not involve legal ownership of human beings, the usage of the concept "slavery" is still justified as contemporary slaveholders exert total control over others, using violence to that end. The contemporary slaves, Bales finds in his empirical research, all share a situation of total dependency and total lack of individual freedom.

⁵² In Kingston and Power 2000.

⁵³ In Hamilton 2001.

Benedita da Silva (1999),⁵⁴ and Ivanir dos Santos⁵⁵ are just some of the Afro-Brazilian intellectuals who have consistently documented charges against Brazilian society and the state for exclusionary and racist practices, and these changes will be illustrated in chapter two.

Although democracy, as Huntington and Dahl understand the term, is consolidated in Brazil, it lacks an essential quality, because, in the words of T.H. Marshall (1950), it has not extended political and social rights to all its citizens. In the analysis of authors like Octávio Ianni (1987) and Carlos Vilas (1997), many Latin American democracies, including Brazil's, are controlled by elites that have captured and privatized the public domain. They behave like conquerors towards their own people. Several of the articles written and/or edited by Alvarez, Escobar, and Dagnino (1998) point to the fact that Brazilian democracy is persistent and stable in form, but hollow and meaningless in content. Authors like Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro (1997) and Teresa Caldeira (2000) have demonstrated that exclusion and violence in Brazil are intimately linked to modernity and state-building.

⁵⁴ In Hanchard 1999.

⁵⁵ In Hanchard 1999.

Brazilian democracy, in short, is stable but exclusive, as large parts of the Brazilian population are excluded from equal participation in the public domain, and elites have been able to use the public sphere for their own private benefit. In this sense, although stable, Brazilian democracy is incomplete, as the notion of citizenship, understood according to T.H. Marshall (1950) as consisting of civil, political, and social rights, does not include the majority of poor, mostly non-white, Brazilians.

Ultimately, then, the Brazilian state lacks encompassing democratic legitimacy of all Brazilians. The state-sponsored violence reported by Caldeira, Pinheiro, Pereira, and others must be understood as violence to protect one group of Brazilians against another – the included from the excluded. Hannah Arendt’s (1970) distinction between power and violence suggests that a lack of democratic legitimacy characterizes the Brazilian state. Arendt explains that if institutions lack legitimacy, they automatically lack authority and power, as “it is the people’s support that lends power to the institutions of a country.”⁵⁶ If institutions lack legitimacy, they need to be defended against the people with the use of violence, a phenomenon that Montesquieu had also described much earlier in his treatment on the spirit of the laws.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Arendt 1970:140.

⁵⁷ Montesquieu 1989 [1748]: *The Spirit of the Laws*.

Conclusion: Bringing Society Back In

Although the democratic regime in Brazil is stable and likely to endure, it is exclusive and lacks democratic legitimacy. Following Manin and Benhabib, democratic legitimacy is based on public deliberation. Public deliberation constitutes the public sphere and provides political institutions with support from the people that live under these institutions. If the public sphere is exclusive and withholds participation from significant parts of the citizenry, a democratic regime lacks democratic legitimacy and is forced to use violence in order to achieve compliance. This is case in Brazil, as the state is engaged in the exercise of violence against its own people. This points to the fact that merely procedural definitions of democracy are inadequate to capture Brazilian reality and that more substantive definitions are needed. In addition to highlighting qualitative aspects of democracies (and the lack of those), such definitions also allow for locating the places and procedures where legitimacy must be constructed. Democratic communication is the main mechanism at work that can increase democratic legitimacy.

But even those accounts of Brazilian democracy that take a more substantive approach have provided unsatisfactory explanations for the persistent lack in quality of Brazilian democracy. Authors like Diamond (1999), Linz and Stepan (1996), and Hagopian (2000) typically point to political culture, a weak party system, and problems resulting from an unstable balance between parliamentary and presidential systems as the causes for

unfinished consolidation in Brazil. The focus on political parties and institutions favored by most political scientists fails to integrate more societal factors, which are nevertheless crucial for an understanding of Brazilian democracy.

The exclusive focus on political institutions, moreover seems to confound means (institutions) with ends (social practice), for in Brazil institutional designs have not necessarily produced the desired democratic practice. Brazil has one of the most advanced constitutions in the world, but has not been able to effectively change social reality. Brazil also has, for example, among the most advanced laws to protect children, but nevertheless child labor is still widespread. Pereira (2000) has pointed to the characteristic Brazilian phenomenon of “pretending,” referring to the fact that in Brazil a big gap separates the practices of reality from the principles of law, and this also reflects the social distance between the elites, who make the law, and the people, who are subjected to it.

With this reality in mind, this dissertation proposes “to bring society back in” by focusing on societal dynamics instead of political institutions. The works of Max Weber (1972), Barrington Moore (1993), and Kenneth Erickson (1977) have proven helpful for this endeavor, but I also apply some insights from postmodern feminist theory. I particularly use the crucial insight of Nancy Fraser (1997) that inequality is rooted in two analytically separable causes, economic exploitation and cultural misrecognition. Fraser argues that

inequality has two different roots, one economic and one cultural, and that addressing these requires different strategies. I also borrow analytical frameworks from Foucault (1995), Gramsci (1999), and Paulo Freire (1989) in order to capture the phenomenon that in Brazil racialized exclusion and oppression has become accepted as “normal” (Foucault) and as part of a widely accepted “common sense” (Gramsci), that is not perceived as being problematic by most Brazilians. Freire, himself applying a Gramscian framework, has argued that a different social “praxis” has to be established in order to address and ultimately overcome deeply rooted oppression. Freire calls for a new, democratic “praxis,” referring to the need to establish societal spaces of democratic interaction that transcend the “normal” praxis of oppression and exclusion. Such a framework promises to provide a deeper understanding of Brazilian democracy and the impediments for further consolidation.

CHAPTER 2: BRAZILIAN RACIALIZED EXCLUSION: IDEOLOGY AND DISCOURSE

In this and the next chapter I seek to demonstrate how colonialism and modern global capitalism have worked together to produce a deeply divided society in Brazil. To drive home my point, I first present some basic statistical data that will help to locate the following discussion. The currently available statistical data leave no doubt about the racial dimension of exclusion in Brazil. I point to the historical developments that have led to and perpetuated the effective exclusion of Afro-Brazilians from gaining access to economic mobility. Late industrialization and state-led immigration policies marginalized Afro-Brazilians, maintaining and in fact creating their poverty in the decades that followed Brazilian abolition (1888).

With Nancy Fraser (1997) I argue that exclusion has another, cultural, dimension, which reinforces economic exploitation. To be able to demonstrate how the symbolic inferiority of Afro-Brazilians was historically constructed, I will delve into early racial science, especially the work of Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906), a Bahian physician and leading race theorist of his time. Rodrigues was one of the most influential Brazilian intellectuals to influence public policies during the first half of the twentieth century. I demonstrate how the eugenics movement spread in Brazil, incorporating the racist theories of the “Nina Rodrigues School” and how this ideology influenced state policies of “whitening” the Brazilian nation. My next step consists of showing how this “older

discourse” on race was gradually substituted in the late 1930s by the ideology of “racial democracy,” which provided the great advantage of allowing Brazilian elites to imagine themselves as “Tropical Europeans” while at the same time avoiding the building-up of race consciousness and race-related mobilization of exploited Afro-Brazilians. I conclude that this ideological move allowed Brazilian elites to deal with the historical fact of biological mixing, avoiding radical social changes. Through the creation of a hegemonic European value system, they have been able to forge a nation that is biologically mixed, without ever embracing multi-cultural societal values.

Basic Information on Brazil⁵⁸

With a total area of 8,547,403.5 square kilometers (3,300,157.42247 square miles), Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world and slightly larger than continental USA (without Alaska and Hawaii). Brazil is a Federative Republic, with 9,274 districts distributed among 4,974 municipalities, which are combined into 26 states and a Federal District. Brasilia, the capital, is the seat of government. By common convention, the states are divided into five major regions: the North, Northeast, Southeast, South, and the Central West.

⁵⁸ All statistical data from the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics – IBGE, 2001, available online at <http://www.ibge.gov.br/>.

By the end of the year 2000, Brazil had a population of some 166 million, according to the 2001 census, carried out by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE). Although 94.7 percent of the 7 to 14 year-olds were students and school attendance at this age bracket was close to the universal standard, 65 percent of all children in this age group had not completed primary school. Only one percent of the Brazilian population reached university. The annual population growth rate was 1.1 percent for the year 2000. Single mothers accounted for 16.7 percent of all families, but among the poorest population this proportion is higher: 25.7 percent in Belém and 23.2 percent in Salvador. Twelve percent of the urban housing units in Brazil were not served by public water supply. The proportion of urban housing units connected to public sewer systems was 51.1 percent, and 83.2 percent of all urban households had their garbage collected. In 1998, the country had 41.8 million households with 3.8 residents on average in each housing unit. In 2000, about two thirds of all deaths among youngsters aged 15 to 19 was due to violent causes. The Brazilian Constitution does not allow children under 14 years old to be part of the labor force. Nevertheless the employment of child labor was very high, especially in rural areas, in spite of indications of its decrease, verified in the last decade. In 1990, 27.8 percent of children between 10 to 13 years old in rural areas and 8.3 percent in urban areas were part of the labor force.

The distribution of income and wealth in Brazil is the most unequal in the world. Even according to official data (IBGE) the richest ten percent of Brazilian families earn 50

percent of the aggregated family income, and the poorest 50 percent only earn 10 percent of the aggregated family income. In 1999, some 40 to 45 percent of the Brazilian population was considered poor, where poverty was defined as having less than 84 Brazilian Reais of monthly income (less than 40 dollars) per capita in one housing unit.⁵⁹ At the same time, we learn from these statistics that the richest one percent of Brazilian families dispose of an income of more than 2,000 Brazilian Reais per capita a month.

Regional Differences

What becomes only partly evident in these aggregate statistics are the great regional differences in income, literacy, infant mortality, life expectancy, and other indicators. Brazil's North and Northeast are poor and underdeveloped. The Southeast and the South are comparatively developed, industrialized, and much richer than their northern counterparts. The latest census done by the IBGE, published in April 2001, gave new evidence for this regional difference. Whereas 27.5 percent of the Brazilians 15 years and older were illiterate in the Northeast, in the South and Southeast this rate was only 8.1 percent. "Functional illiteracy," defined as being over 15 years old with less than 4 years of instruction, was 47.8 percent in the Northeast, and 23.1 percent in the Southeast. But most significantly, the Northeast showed the highest income inequality. In some northeastern states, more than 50 percent of the families live with half a per capita

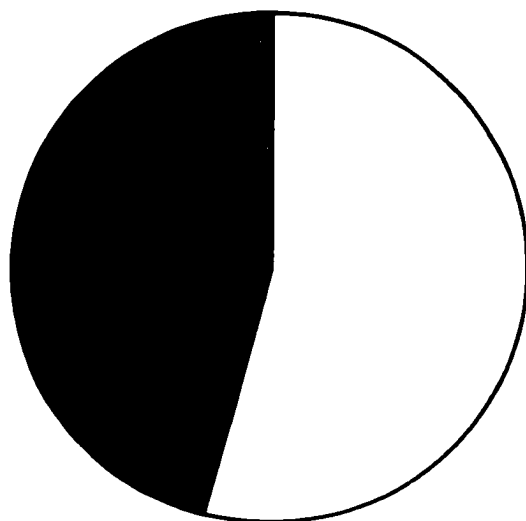
⁵⁹ This is the calculus used for the 1999 data by IBGE / PNAD presented in Henriques 2001.

minimum wage per month, meaning less than 100 Brazilian Reals, less than 40 US dollars in 2001. In the rural areas, this number was as high as 70 percent.

Racial inequalities

Regional comparisons imply racial inequalities, as the poorest regions tend to have the biggest contingent of Afro-Brazilians. But income distribution in Brazil is unequal with regard to race, independently of the region considered, and most big cities as well as rural areas of the south have enclaves of poor who are disproportionately Afro-Brazilian. Afro-Brazilians make for over 40 percent of the Brazilian population. But from historical patterns of tropical plantation systems, slavery, settlement, and European immigration, the South and Southeast are predominantly populated by Caucasian-Brazilians, the North has a strong native Brazilian populational dominance, and the Northeast is predominantly Afro-Brazilian.

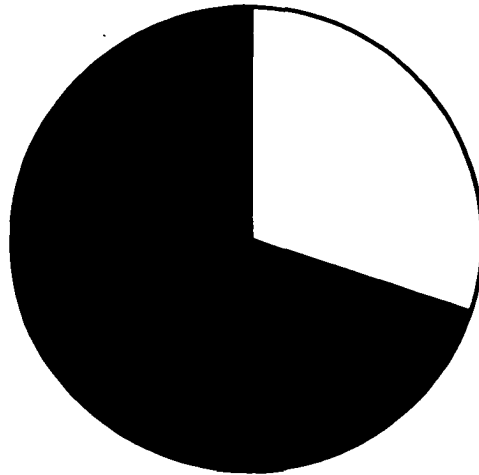
Chart 1: Population by color, Brazil, 2000⁶⁰



□ Whites 54% ■ Blacks 45% ■ Indigenous and Asian 1%

⁶⁰ This graphical illustration is elaborated using data from IBGE 2001: Síntese de Indicadores Sociais.

Chart 2: Population by color, Northeast, 2000⁶¹



□ Whites 30% ■ Blacks 70% ▣ Indigenous and Asian 0%

In general, in 2000, 12 percent of the families whose heads were “white” lived with half a minimum wage per capita, while the proportions of families headed by blacks ranged between 24.5 percent and 30.4 percent.⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Brazilian statistics differentiate Afro-Brazilians into two subgroups: *preto* (“black”) and *pardo* (“brown”). Wherever I do not explicitly follow this distinction, I have summed up the two categories under the label “black” or Afro-Brazilian.

Chart 3: Households by color with a monthly income of more than 5 minimum wages, Brazil, 1999⁶³



In 1999, more than 14 percent of white Brazilian families had a monthly per capita income above five minimum wages, but only some 3 percent of black families. In the same year, the average monthly per capita earnings of Caucasian Brazilians was 845.6

⁶³ IBGE, 2001.

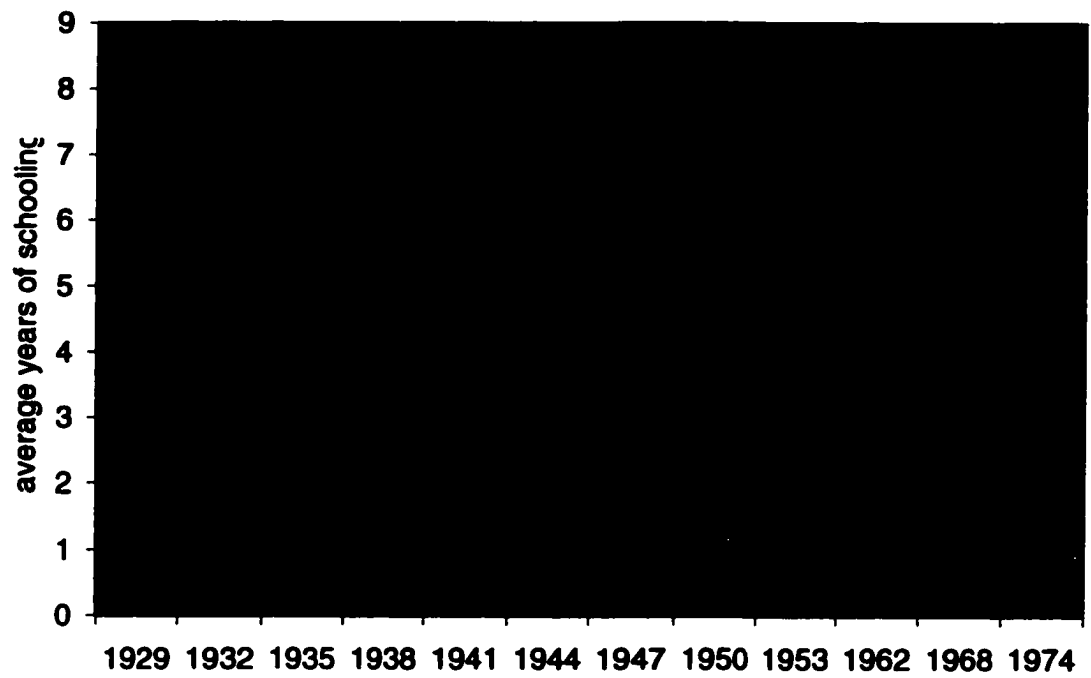
Brazilian Reais. Both *pretos* and *pardos* earned less than half that much - *pretos* 409.21 Brazilian Reais, and *pardos* 394.11 Brazilian Reais.⁶⁴

Racial inequality affects almost all branches of Brazilian society. It is very evident when comparing educational levels, as in 2000, that white Brazilians adults⁶⁵ had on average 7.5 years of education, but black Brazilian adults had spent on average 5.1 years in school. Of adult blacks, 22.6 percent were illiterate in 2000, 20.7 percent of *pardos*, and 8.4 percent of whites. Functional illiteracy rates followed a similar pattern, affecting some 40 percent of Afro-Brazilian adults, and some 22 percent of Caucasian-Brazilians over the age of 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ It is a Brazilian convention to count all individuals above the age of 15 to reach this number, because obligatory schools attendance ends with age 15.

Chart 4: Average years of schooling by race⁶⁶



⁶⁶ Henriques 2001: 27. The data refer to age cohorts.

As chart 4 illustrates, educational levels have been raised over the past decades, affecting all Brazilians, but whites have been able to maintain the same relative distance to blacks, allowing them to maintain their strategic advantage.

The Historical Roots of Exclusion

Brazil is a society that grew rich exploiting African slave labor until 1888, longer than any other country in the western world. Brazil, and particularly the state of Bahia, where I carried out my research, were deeply influenced by African slavery. Sugar cane was introduced in 1535. The climate of the Northeast was very favorable and sugar was in high demand in Europe. Salvador, the capital of Bahia, became Brazil's first capital and colonial center. Its prosperity was entirely based on the exploitation of sugarcane on plantations. The Portuguese colonizers initially tried to enslave native Brazilians, but their familiarity with the terrain made their enslavement an expensive endeavor. By 1550 the colonizers brought the first African slaves. The Portuguese had acquired experience with sugarcane plantations and African slave labor in their previous colonial experiences and, although indigenous Brazilians continued to be enslaved, African human capital soon became the main source for Portugal's richness.

The Brazilian historian and politician Luis Viana Filho (1908-1990) grouped the African slaves reaching Bahia by cycles. According to him, in the 16th century, most slaves reaching Brazil came from West Africa. These were traded at the Portuguese fortresses

along the Slave and Gold Coasts (today's Ghana, Benin, and Nigeria), mostly in the fortress of São Jorge da Mina (in today's Ghana) and the fortress of Whydah (in today's Benin). From the beginning of the 17th to the end of the 18th century, most slaves captured and shipped to Brazil came from the Portuguese colonies in Africa's "Costa" and "Contra-Costa" (today's Angola and Mozambique). Bantu-speaking people were the vast majority of African slaves brought to Brazil.⁶⁷ Bahia experienced a special situation because of its late but intensive sugar boom starting around 1796, triggered by the dropout of Haiti as one of the major producers of sugar for the world, and favorable market conditions for sugar in Europe. Between that date and 1850, the official end of slave trading to Brazil, great numbers of slaves from West Africa, mostly Yorubas, were shipped to Bahia.

After the Portuguese Empire moved to Rio in 1805, and declared independence in 1822, Brazil no longer had to obey trade restrictions formerly imposed on the colony by the crown. Instead of investing in new technology by now available (engine-run presses and mills), the Bahian sugar producers increased the importation of African slaves, changing the composition of Bahian ethnic and racial groups. In the first half of the 19th century West African slaves were sold cheaper than ever, also due to African regional conflicts

⁶⁷ Exact numbers are missing as Rui Barbosa, the first finance minister (sic.) of the newly founded republic, burned all the documents about slavery, in an act of forceful "forgetting."

that were further nurtured by interfering colonial powers. The supply of West African slaves, mostly prisoners of the regional wars, increased and met the increased demand in Bahia.

From the mid 1790s to 1850 Bahia became a West African enclave, and the total number of blacks in the city of Salvador rose to as high as 80 percent.⁶⁸ Bahian white colonial society stood on thin ice. Below it was a volcano, constantly breaking out in revolts and tentative revolutions.⁶⁹ When Brazil finally released the remaining slaves into “freedom” in 1888, Bahian prosperity had long ended. Brazil’s economic center had moved first to Rio, then to São Paulo, and slavery went into its second, informal phase.

By 1888, Bahia had fallen into economic depression. Its traditional elites had failed to make the shift from the traditional plantation economy to industrialization, a shift made in southern Brazil. The society that slavery and sugar cane plantations had produced made Bahia a kind of museum piece, conserving a pre-modern slave-holding society firmly controlled by a backward and decadent white oligarchy.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Reis 1986, Verger 1987, and Viana 1988.

⁶⁹ The Brazilian Historian João José Reis (Reis 1986) has written an excellent book analyzing the Bahian slave revolts between 1807 and 1835, and Pierre Verger has carefully documented 9 major revolts in the same time period in his work “Flux e Reflux” (Verger 1968).

⁷⁰ In this respect it is also interesting to consider that starting around 1800, slave-holding society became so decadent that some slave owners could not afford to maintain the slaves they owned. A new category,

As the national economy shifted emphasis from sugar to coffee and later to industrial production, Bahia was not able to create jobs for the newly freed slaves.⁷¹ During the last years of slavery and the first year after its abolition, several ships of Africans went back to their motherland.⁷² The ones that didn't leave had to face a society offering no employment opportunities whatsoever. The inertia of Bahian development lasted until the 1950s, as Bahian society as a whole remained stuck in the 19th century.⁷³ As a result, European and North American visitors of the 1940s and 50s marveled at a city they perceive as "magic."⁷⁴

Bahia preserved a deeply traditional society, strongly rooted in its baroque religious life, perpetuating oligarchic slave-society hierarchies into the 20th century. The vast majority

called "Escravo de Ganho" emerged in response, referring to slaves that had to live on their own and deliver a certain amount of money to their owners, on a weekly or monthly basis. This allowed for more clandestine space where control and surveillance could be avoided. The great number of free blacks and Africans living in Salvador reflected in the foundation of the first established Candomblés (Yoruba religious centers) of the city around 1830. A group of Islamic Yorubas was able to establish Koranic schools in the city, preparing a revolt that almost turned Bahia into a Muslim state in 1835.

⁷¹ Kim Butler (1998) describes the post-abolition decades of Brazil, comparing the situation of Bahia with the one in São Paulo.

⁷² Verger 1988.

⁷³ Guimarães 1987.

⁷⁴ The romanticizing descriptions of Pierre Verger and Donald Pierson are very elucidating in this respect. Even Brazilian intellectuals seemingly could not refrain from romanticizing about this time. Antônio Risério (1988) writes about a Bahia "when it still had 365 churches and not 365 hotels." Pierson (1945) marveled at how the "sun breaks through the palm trees and banana leaves into the clean little huts of the Bahian poor."

of blacks remained in deep poverty. Only the late industrialization starting in the 1940s opened very limited job opportunities for Afro-Bahians for the first time. In the 1960s the Brazilian state, controlled after 1964 by a military regime that was influenced by modernization theory, created a highly centralized administration that tried to promote the industrialization of the poor and “underdeveloped” Northeast. A petro-industrial “pole” was created in the 60s, followed in the 70s by the “Petro-Chemical industry complex” of Camaçari, within the metropolitan area of Salvador. For over 20 years, Camaçari was one of the most important places in Bahia where blacks could find a regular job offering some employment benefits.

But as Carlos Hasenbalg (1979, 1983, 1988, 1999) has convincingly demonstrated, racial discrimination grew even worse where industrialization effectively occurred, as in São Paulo. Against the older argument advanced by Florestan Fernandes (1978), who theorized that with the expansion of capitalism racist discrimination would disappear, Hasenbalg shows how it actually grew in importance. The context for understanding his argument lies in the state-led immigration policy of the second half of the 19th century, designed explicitly to gradually whiten the Brazilian “racial stock.”⁷⁵ The millions of Europeans flocking into Brazil were able to experience a social mobility denied to Afro-Brazilians. Where industrialization created jobs, as in São Paulo, they were reserved for

⁷⁵ Lesser, 1999.

white immigrants. Afro-Brazilians had only two options. To become self-employed in the informal market or to try to make it into the scarce regular jobs, where they had to face restrictions of access and upward mobility, holding them in the lowest positions.

Until today, racism has been able to limit Afro-Brazilian upward mobility within the industry and the service sector. In 2002, Afro-Brazilians were still extremely underrepresented in modern, relatively high paying Brazilian companies and overrepresented in relatively low-paid sectors and in positions with low prestige.⁷⁶ Studies of the 1990s show that the Bahian informal market was responsible for some 40 percent of the economically active population.⁷⁷ The informal market consists of jobs offering no job security, no stable income, no contracts, and no benefits. The Brazilian convention of counting the people working without contracts as “employed” serves the purpose of holding official unemployment rates low, at some 12 percent in 2002. Adding the 40 percent Bahians that are active in the informal market to the 12 percent unemployed provides a more adequate picture of reality. In fact, about half of the Bahian adult population holds no regular job. This is, not surprisingly, about the same number of

⁷⁶ See Bairros, 1987, 1992.

⁷⁷ The restrictions of mobility within industry have been proven by several studies, for example Castro and Guimarães 1993. The importance and characteristic of the informal market is also demonstrated by Castro (1992). Luiza Bairros (1987) has written a masters thesis (later published) about “Sins in the Racial Paradise. The Blacks in the Bahian Labor Force.” The same author has also published an article, together with Vanda Sá Barreto and Nadya Castro (1992) about “Blacks and Whites in a labor market in change.”

people living in squatted areas, in improvised, irregular houses. And it is, again to no surprise, the proportion of “*pretos*” in Bahian society.⁷⁸

Ideological Justifications for White Privilege

The Older Discourse: Eugenics and the Creation of Biological and Cultural Difference to Justify White Supremacy

Nancy Stepan (1991) points out that in 1918 Brazil established the first Eugenics society in Latin America, ten years after the first of these societies was created in London. With the taking of power by Getúlio Vargas in 1930, nation-building under the slogan “order and progress” became again the aim of the Brazilian elites, relegating the problems of the masses of poor Brazilians to issues of security and public safety.⁷⁹ In the early decades of the 20th century, when eugenics was discussed by Brazilian intellectual elites, politicians, and doctors, child labor was common and widespread, welfare policies were unknown, and the majority of the poor population was nonwhite and illiterate. In retrospect it seems as if the violence used to hold Afro-Brazilians at the bottom had been so effective that they posed no serious threat to the maintenance of the system.

⁷⁸ Brazilian and Bahian data on race varies greatly, because of the tendency to pass for white when asked by a data collector. This tendency is so widely practiced and recognized that it led to a massive movement not to “allow one’s color to pass for white” in the national census of 1990. It is broadly accepted that between 45 and 50 percent of Brazilians are not white. In Bahia, this number is 70 to 80 percent. There, some 40 to 50 percent of the non-whites must be considered dark complexion, in the American nomenclature, “preto” in the Brazilian jargon. About the same amount is “light-skin black”, in Brazil officially referred to as “pardos,” meaning “brown.”

⁷⁹ Schneider 1991: 106 ff.

This changed as poor European immigrants, who came into the country already having had experiences with organizing and political activism, joined the ranks of poor Afro-Brazilians. The discussions about the “worthiness” of different immigrant groups and even the question of whether some of them were “racially as inferior as” Afro-Brazilians⁸⁰ points to the fact that racism was extended to include other potentially dangerous groups. But the responses to these threats came quick and were efficient. The first national strike organized by workers in the city of São Paulo in 1917 triggered the first formal call for eugenics, by medical doctors by the end of the same year. Nancy Stepan explains that

Traditionally, the educated, mainly white, elite feared violence and danger from blacks and mulattos, whom they portrayed as lazy, undisciplined, sickly, drunk, and in a constant state of vagabondage. To these fears were now added new ones about disorder and violence by foreign-born factory workers, many of whom were expelled from the country on charges of being anarchists bent on overthrowing the social order.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Some of these discussions are analyzed by Jeffrey Lesser (1999).

⁸¹ Stepan 1991: 39.

Influenced by the racist ideology, dressed up as “positive science” at the beginning of the 20th century, Brazilian elites were caught in a difficult dilemma. Scientists from Europe and the US had long argued that racial mixing would lead to “racially inferior stock,” and they explained that Brazilian backwardness was due to a lack of racial stock suited for civilizational progress. Thomas Skidmore (1976) portrayed the influence of such European intellectuals as Gobineau, who had spent some time in Rio de Janeiro as representative of the French government and described Brazilians as being “ugly” and “degenerated” because of their long history of racial mixing. The British historian Thomas Buckle seemed to have had a similar influence on the Brazilian elites. Just like Gobineau, he attributed Brazilian backwardness to “negro inferiority” and “mulatto degeneration” which had led the country into “tropical decay.” US social scientists of the time shared such racially biased evaluations of the prospects of progress of a society with such a large non-white population. Nancy Stepan is able to put the concern of the Brazilian elites of the time into an eloquent formula: “They [the educated classes of Latin America] wished to be white and feared they were not.”⁸²

This association of whiteness with being civilized and blackness with being incapable of civilization goes back to racial ideologies of the 19th century, originating in Europe and the United States. These ideas reached Brazil at a time when Brazilian elites were

⁸² Stepan 1991:45.

worrying about the country's prospects for becoming a civilized nation. Brazilian intellectual elites absorbed racist ideology abroad and molded it into something that would fit their own needs at the time. As Nancy Stepan points out, this process was not just a "copying" of European racist ideology, but a reinterpretation and adaptation to fit the Latin American context. A lot of intellectuals, politicians, and especially physicians publicly deliberated about issues of race and civilization during the Old Republic until the 1930s. I will focus on Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, because he was one of the most influential "scientists" of his time and his work is representative of the broader discussion. He laid the theoretical foundations of an ideology claiming that one only earned citizenship by "being civilized," a notion perpetuated into our time, as I will argue below. To be able to clearly understand this ideology, I translate below some parts of Rodrigues' book *Os Africanos no Brasil* – "The Africans in Brazil," first published in 1905.

Writes Raimundo Nina Rodrigues:

In fact it is not the social inferiority of the negroes that is being discussed here. Nobody has ever taken the time to contest it. And what would it matter to contest the obvious. But there is a dispute between those who declare them inert because of the organic constitution of their race, which is definitive and irreparable, and those who think of it as transitory and curable. For the first, the organic constitution of the negro, molded by the physical and moral habitat where he

developed, does not allow for an adaptation to the civilization of the superior races, products of a different physical and cultural environment. This would be in fact an organic and morphological incapacity. For some authors, and Keane defends that explanation, it is the precocity of the ossification of the cranial sutures that obstructs the development of the brain, which is responsible for such a consequence. And the irreparable permanence of this vice is attested in the revealed incapacity of the negroes, during all historical times, not only to assimilate the civilizations of the different peoples they had contact with, but also to create their own culture.⁸³

Further:

The allegation that the white race, the most cultured of the sections of the human race, lived in no less precarious conditions of backwardness and barbarism; the fact that a lot of negro tribes have already reached levels very close to those of whites at the beginning of historical times; even more, the belief that the most cultured negro tribes are repeating, in Africa, the phase of medieval political organization of the modern European nations (Beranger Feraud), does not justify the hopes that the negroes can inherit the European civilization, and even less, that they can achieve social maturity when living with cultured peoples. What the impartial study of the negro people shows is that within them there are degrees,

⁸³ Rodrigues, Raimundo Nina 1988 [1905]: 262.

there is a kind of hierarchical scale of culture and development. They get better and fall back; they are capable of a future civilization. But it is impossible to say if this civilization must necessarily be the one of the white race, as a neutral examination of the facts shows that the acquisition of the European civilization by the negroes is extremely weak. And confronting the necessity to become civilized quickly or to capitulate in the competitive struggle that the white race promotes, the incapacity and the feebleness to progress of the negroes come together in practice. The extraordinary advances of the European civilization have given whites the dominion of the world, their marvelous industrial applications have overcome distance and time. It is impossible to concede to negroes, as to weak and retarded peoples in general, the leisure and time that they would need for their very slow and remote acquisition of their social emancipation.⁸⁴

And finally:

What is important for Brazil to determine is how much of its inferiority comes from the difficulties of its negro population to civilize themselves and if this inferiority can be compensated through racial mixture, which is the natural

⁸⁴ Ibid: 263ff.

*process through which the negroes are integrating themselves into the Brazilian race to increase the big mass of its colored population.*⁸⁵

Rodrigues goes on to analyze the capacity of African peoples for civilizational advance, quoting several European “specialists,” who found that Africans would need centuries to overcome their culture, which had degenerated into indolence and sensual pleasure. After having “demonstrated” the difficulties that Africans face on the process of their civilization, he considers the different influences to which the Africans brought to the Americas were exposed. Another European “scientist” whose credentials and full name is not given (referred to simply as “Mandarini”), but who is “frankly favorable to negroes” is quoted:

*Given that the negro in America has advanced a lot externally, given that he has assimilated the forms of civil life, nevertheless, at the bottom of his heart, he still is a child; and that he has distanced himself only very little from the infantile stage of humanity in which his African co-brothers find themselves. Of those wrote Stanley in the Times: To lead them and live amongst them, it is necessary that we resolve decidedly to consider them like children, (...)*⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid: 264.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Rodrigues 1988: 267.

Further down, Rodrigues quotes another foreign authority in the field, Morselli (no further specifications), who questioned if “American negroes” really belong to the same race as whites, Homo Sapiens, that is. Says Morselli:

The most humanist of the abolitionists can never cancel the biological differences amongst men. Are they not of such a nature and intensity that they have led some of the most competent naturalists, like Linneu (sic.), Fred Muller, and Maeckel, to admit that the so-called human races are all different species, biologically distinct of the species Homo? ... Especially the negro is inferior to the white, starting with the cephalic mass that weights less, and the masticatory apparatus that has animal-like character, up to the ability to abstract that is so weak and poor with him. In whatever social condition he might be, the negro is condemned by his own morphology and physiology and can never become equal to the white.⁸⁷

The next step in Rodrigues’ argument is to demonstrate that the Africans brought to Brazil were not all from the “worst stock,” but that some of them were not even “real negroes” but “Hamits” from northern Africa, who are, according to him, not only of lighter complexion, but actually descendents from Europeans, which is demonstrated by

⁸⁷ Quoted in Rodrigues 1988: 268.

their capacity to have produced such high cultures as Egyptian and Abyssinian. This argument offers Rodrigues two advantages. First it shows that certain, lighter skinned Africans are capable of some degree of civilizational advance, comparable to the mulatto, and secondly he argues that it explains the exceptional achievements of some few Afro-Brazilians, as such exceptionalism can be readily explained through their European descent.

Once the inferiority of Africans and Afro-Brazilians was “proven,” the next step consisted in designing policies that would avoid the proliferation of this “inferior racial stock” and its degenerative influence, through racial mixing, on the “superior white stock.” This was important, as Brazilian elites feared that they themselves might be condemned to backwardness, as racial mixing had been already a widespread reality, and the elites were not exempt from it.⁸⁸

The way to allow the “scientific findings” of Nina Rodrigues and others to influence public policies was by bundling sanitation and hygiene policies with racist theories. In his chapter on “the psychological survival of criminality of the Brazilian negro” Rodrigues argued that “the negro” has a genetic tendency towards criminality, just like other

⁸⁸ It is worth noting that Nina Rodrigues himself was reported to be a mulatto. This gives his very intense effort to prove the superiority of whites a somewhat schizophrenic touch.

“inferior races,” but to a higher degree. Rodrigues presented the “proof” of an “inherent criminality” of blacks by drawing parallels between accounts of brutality in Africa, witnessed and described by European observers, and similar brutalities carried out by Afro-Brazilians. The explanation Rodrigues finds is that “tribal people do not recognize individual guilt when committing crimes to peoples from other tribes.”⁸⁹

These examples show that Rodrigues tries hard to demonstrate that Afro-Brazilians and Africans are unfit for civilizational advance. However flawed his arguments seem today, at the time his theories were presented as advanced modern science, giving them a status of truth in a nation that was trying to become civilized and modern at all costs. Using “scientific” methods such as anthropometry, authors like Rodrigues were able to dress their racist statements in a neutral and scientific rope. Nancy Stepan explains the relevance and impact of these theories, arguing that “Nevertheless, if Latin Americans were still small contributors to science by world standards, the history of eugenics in the region must be seen as part of a generalized endorsement of science, as a sign of cultural modernity, and as a means by which the various countries of Latin America could emerge as powerful actors on the world scene.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Stepan 1991:40.

Raimundo Nina Rodrigues was the first Brazilian to study race, in a time when in Salvador, Bahia, his place of action, he could still find Africans living in the city. He was also a physician, which points to the fact that questions of race were treated in the field of sanitation, hygiene, and crime. But Rodrigues was not just any physician analyzing racial stocks and the problems they posed for the prospects of Brazilian progress. He was the founder of what was then perceived as the new and scientific anthropology in Brazil in the 1890s. He received a medical diploma from the Bahian Medical school in 1888 and became an adjunct professor in the same year. In 1891 he was transferred to the department of “Hygiene and Medical Law” and was made distinguished professor on that occasion. By the 1890s he was, in the evaluation of Lilia Schwarcz, “the most renowned professional working in this area.” Rodrigues was the founder and chief ideologist of the “Nina Rodrigues School” and one of the most influential and widely discussed theorists and public intellectuals in the first three decades of the 20th century.

The “scientific methods” that Rodrigues and others had absorbed from Europe and North America and adapted to national contexts provided the theoretical and ideological grounds for the institutionalization of eugenics in Brazil in the 1920s and 30s. The São Paulo Eugenics Society was founded in 1918. In 1919, one of the central figures to organize this society, Renato Kehl, moved to Rio de Janeiro, and so did the center of the Eugenics movement. In 1922, the psychiatrist Gustavo Reidel founded the “New League of Mental Hygiene” in Rio. Eugenics in Brazil became established as a sub-discipline of

medicine, and it blamed crime, alcoholism, deformity, laziness, and the like on racial degeneration. The ideology of eugenics was also part of the discussion about immigration. Several politicians and respected intellectuals argued for whites-only immigration, to improve the Brazilian racial stock, and thereby increase its chances to catch up with the “first world” and become civilized.⁹¹ In 1929 Brazilian proponents of eugenics organized the “First Brazilian Eugenics Congress,” held in Rio. When Getúlio Vargas took power in 1930 and started to create the modern Brazilian state, Kehl seized the political opportunity of the moment and created the “Central Brazilian Commission of Eugenics.” This commission was able to promote eugenics nationally. The link bridging racist theory with sanitation and public policy was brought to a short formula by the vice president of the São Paulo Eugenics Society, who articulated a forceful definition of the relationship among hygiene, sanitation, race, progress, and civilization. He explained first that “To sanitize is to eugenize” and went on to say that “Sanitation-Eugenics is Order and Progress.”⁹²

The 1930s in Brazil were a time of nationalism and of defining national identity. In the 1929 Eugenics Congress, some physicians had already argued for the sterilization of unfit

⁹¹ The book by Jeffrey Lester (1999) focuses especially on immigration politics and the “struggle for national identity” in Brazil.

⁹² Quoted in Stepan 1991: 90. “Order and Progress” is written on the Brazilian flag. After becoming a republic in 1889, this theme reflected the wish of Brazilian elites and the military to modernize the country, lifting it up to European standards.

elements, and some physicians had already carried out sterilizations on women “diagnosed as exhibiting sexual derangements and perversity syndrome.”⁹³ The Constitution of 1934 explicitly addressed eugenics and made “eugenic education” a state responsibility.

The purpose of this excursion into the politics of early race theory and the politics of eugenics is to demonstrate how and in what social place the Afro-Brazilian population was portrayed and imagined by Brazil’s elites. My argument is that Brazilian society was never restructured in a way that would effectively change the inferior position of Afro-Brazilians. Rather, the negative stigma with which Afro-Brazilians were marked in the early 1900s was extended to other groups perceived as equally “not worthy” for the societal and political Brazilian body. This group was invented as posing a threat to the maintenance of the social order.

Tracing back the origins of contemporary citizenship in advanced western societies to the 17th century, Foucault (1995) shows that an ongoing process of curtailing people’s individual and collective freedoms accompanied European state-building. He labeled the mechanism through which citizens were subjected to state control “disciplinary power.” In *Discipline and Punish*, he writes

⁹³ Quoted in Stepan, 1999: 113.

The art of punishing, in the regime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. (...) It refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal (...). The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes.⁹⁴

Foucault demonstrates that the modern penalty system originated in the normalizing judgments that early anthropology and medicine had provided. A highly ritualized

⁹⁴ Foucault 1995: 182f.

“normalizing gaze” is at the core of the “scientific” classification of individuals into “normal” and “deviant.” Foucault finds that

(...) In all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected.⁹⁵

The transition from European feudal societies, where social differences were clearly marked, to modern societies, where traditional boundaries marking privilege were being gradually eroded, triggered the need of the elites to recur to new mechanisms to establish and maintain their privilege and superiority. Foucault shows how the artificial establishment of “normality” was able to secure privilege based on classifying the poor and excluded as deviant, sick, feeble-minded, and the like. The creation of “normality” was backed up and executed by powerful and at times violent means of institutionalized “disciplinary power.” Schools, prisons, and psychiatric clinics, but also legal codes, have integrated the normalizing classifications that medicine and anthropology provided. Foucault concluded that the power of normalization establishes a rank system where

⁹⁵ Foucault 1995: 184.

different degrees of conformity are hierarchically ordered and invested with the “natural privilege” of being normal.

The discussion of Raimundo Nina Rodrigues and scientific racism in Brazil points to the parallels of the state-building efforts of Brazilian elites to the European development described by Foucault. But Brazilian elites changed their strategy of inventing the symbolic bonds to forge the nation in the 1930s, diverging from European and North American models. This new strategy used the work of Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1900 –1987), especially his theories of “racial democracy” and “tropicalism,” in order to maintain hegemonic power despite of and against the threats of cultural diversity.

The newer discourse: Gilberto Freyre’s racial democracy and the denial of cultural recognition

Until the 1940s, African cultural manifestations were outlawed, and public drumming and practicing of African religion forbidden in Brazil.⁹⁶ “Whitening” became the official state policy of the late 19th century, triggering massive, state-led European immigration.⁹⁷ Following the racial theories of the time, the advance of civilization was attributed to the available “racial stock.” Afro-Brazilians, after having forcefully been brought to Brazil

⁹⁶ Braga 1995: 13.

⁹⁷ Lesser 1999: 4.

without any participation in designing or even carrying out Brazilian state policies, were now blamed for the “backwardness” of the country. Brazilian statesmen and public persons such as jurist and literary critic Sílvio Romero (1851-1914) and director the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, João Batista Lacerda (1846-1915) openly discussed how to “improve the Brazilian race” with the promotion of white immigration. Eugenics became the official position of the Brazilian state in the late 1800s. After 1890, the Bahian school of criminal justice, under the leadership of Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, became one of the main vehicles for the dissemination of a racist ideology that saw the “negro” as the cause of Brazilian backwardness and warned against the results of racial mixing.⁹⁸

The ideology of whitening predominated in the discourses and actions of the Brazilian state and its elites at least until the late 1940s, when Gilberto Freyre added a new twist to the discussion.⁹⁹ In his theory of “racial democracy,” first published 1933 in his book *The Masters and the Slaves*, Freyre provided the new ideological foundation on which Brazilian intellectual and state elites could construct “order and progress” as whitening had clearly failed. Freyre argued that “the Brazilian” is a new, tropical race, best adapted to the tropical climate. According to Freyre, Brazilians combined the best characteristics

⁹⁸ Nancy Stepan 1991 and Lilia Schwarcz 1999.

⁹⁹ See Thomas Skidmore (1988), Carl Degler (1986), and Lilia Schwarcz 1999.

of the three founding races – white, black, and Indio. He traced this new race back to the special malleability and benevolence of the Portuguese colonizers. In his analysis, the Portuguese colonizing enterprise was smoother and gentler than the British or Spanish because the Portuguese had been exposed to African influence in their home country even before they started to colonize Brazil. They had also experienced racial mixing with blacks in their motherland and other colonies earlier and in greater numbers than any other European colonizing nation. And last but not least, the Portuguese had to populate a country as huge as Brazil and all their other colonies in Africa and Asia, with a population of little more than one million inhabitants at the time. In Freyre's retrospective, the way the Portuguese, mostly male, colonizers resolved the problem of effective occupation of the Brazilian soil with so few people was through mixing with native Brazilian and African slave women.

Freyre greatly romanticizes the nature of these sexual encounters, describing the “mutual attraction” that supposedly characterized these relationships. In fact reports about the early colonial times tell the story of European males running wild and fathering hundreds of mixed children in Brazil. This activity, far from the constraints of any authority, bothered the Catholic missionaries so much that they complained to the king.¹⁰⁰ Freyre,

¹⁰⁰ Schwartz 1988: 125.

who totally ignores inequalities of power in his account, was able to create a new ideology.

Indeed the ideology of “tropicalism” and “racial democracy” in the 1940s gradually became the official story of how Brazil imagined itself. This favoring of biological miscegenation, which was a historical fact, was held against older “theories” that declared the mulatto as lacking the positive characteristics of either the black or the white races. A literary and cultural movement of “tropicalism” was born around Freyre, finding in popular culture the inspiration for elite literary work and not-so-elite music. Tropicalism helped to deal with the undeniable: the persistence of Afro-Brazilians in Brazilian society.¹⁰¹

Hermano Vianna (1999) shows how Freyre’s theory ascended from a very restricted reception by artists and intellectuals in Rio de Janeiro into a dominating ideology backed by the state. Using Gramsci, Mannheim, and Anderson as theoretical frames, Vianna highlights the role of intellectual elites (intelligentsia) in the formation of “imagined communities” (Andersen). Tracing back the race discussion to the 1800s, he shows how the Brazilian state embraced the idea of miscegenation and transformed it into a national

¹⁰¹ Hellwig (1992) edited a book about travel stories of some Afro-Americans who in the early- and mid-1900s visited Brazil. Their stories give clear evidence of how Brazilian society was willing to tolerate the “negro on the right way” – meaning the mulatto. Whereas light-skin African-Americans describe how open Brazilian society was, people of darker complexion complained about racism even worse than in the US.

project. This ideological device helped to include blacks into an imagined community but on unequal terms. Brazilian race relations, Vianna argues, are therefore very different from US race relations, in that in Brazil Afro-Brazilian cultural expressions have been made national – without acknowledging or accepting their genuine character. Brazilian culture is therefore highly “anthropophagic” (in the words of Brazilian modernist Oswald de Andrade), in that it “eats” alien cultural symbols to make them its own. Samba as national music came from the poor and black, but was promoted by the elites. Although Vianna is aware of existing inequalities and racism, he accepts the Brazilian project of amalgamation and inclusiveness. He traces cultural practice back to concrete historical agents, mostly black carioca samba masters that came in touch with white elites, frequented their salons, and traveled to Europe, and to intellectual elites that were educated in Europe or the US.¹⁰²

Conclusion: The Maintenance of Cultural Hegemony

The ideology sustained by Nina Rodrigues and his school led into the national acceptance of eugenics as a doctrine to understand and ultimately direct the creation of a “healthy” political and social body. Gilberto Freyre did not attack this basic assumption, as he himself tried hard to differentiate between the more and the less “civilized” racial stocks

¹⁰² Gilberto Freyre himself was educated in the United States. He was a student of Franz Boas at Columbia University.

Brazil received from different parts of Africa. At the same times as blackness was construed as being inferior, whiteness was construed as its opposite and counterpart, as an unproblematic and “normal” state of merit and privilege. Freyre’s project must then be understood more in terms of the very basic fear that plagued and plagues the “white” Brazilian elites, which is that they are not “really white,” meaning they are stigmatized with a shadow of potential incapacity for civilizational advance. Freyre’s theory of the mulatto society and racial democracy helped the elites to understand themselves as being capable of civilization, although they might not be as white as Europeans and North Americans. Biological miscegenation, in other words, did not condemn them to eternal backwardness, and that was Freyre’s most important message to the Brazilian elites. Although biological miscegenation was a historical fact, cultural recognition of nonwhites was sternly avoided and multiculturalism was never embraced in Brazil.¹⁰³ This also explains the great popularity of and receptiveness to Freyre’s theory in elite circles, described by Vianna (1999), particularly at a time where the reception of books was very reduced to a still very small circle of literates.

Gilberto Freyre did not address the majority of black and mixed peoples. Overall literacy rates were about 20 percent in the 1930s, excluding the majority of Brazilians from

¹⁰³ This is the same conclusion reached by Ricardo Benzaquem de Araujo (1993), whose revisionist study of Gilberto Freyre’s work has become a classic. The argument that Freyre in fact conflated race and culture was first advocated by Luiz Costa Lima (1989). For a discussion of this topic see Jesse Souza 2000.

literary reception. But his theory did not offer a new and positive ideology for them in the same way it did for the elites. The only way left open for Afro-Brazilians in Freyre's theory is to gradually blend into society without threatening the position of the dominant "white" population within the Brazilian corporatist power structure. Freyre's work, then, accomplished two things. It shifted the strategy for maintaining elite privilege from the discourse of "racial difference" to one of biological sameness, produced by biological miscegenation and racial intermixing. This way of imagining the Brazilian community allowed for the integration of non-whites into the social body, although on unequal terms. For the elites, this meant the absorption of exotic elements, which led to a tropical society that is ultimately superior to its North American and European counterparts, because it is better adapted to the tropics. In addition, the integration of exotic elements provided Brazilian elites a way to imagine themselves as having a critical edge over the rigid northerners, because miscegenation had provided them with more malleability and shrewdness. For the excluded, Freyre's theory pointed to biological mixing and cultural assimilation as the only way to achieve upward social mobility. Freyre's theoretical conflation of biological with cultural miscegenation served as a powerful tool to obscure the fact that for Afro-Brazilians, biological amalgamation required cultural assimilation. Freyre was able to create an ideology that guided Brazilian elites on their way to create a nation that was biologically mixed, without having to embrace multiculturalism.

CHAPTER 3: RACIALIZED EXCLUSION AND PREVAILING CORPORATIST HIERARCHIES

In this chapter I seek to demonstrate how the ideological construction of white privilege in Brazil that I have described in Chapter Two has produced a highly racialized system of exclusion, similar, but ultimately different from that in other countries with diverse populations. I use the work of Mahmood Mamdani (1996) to show that in Brazil, paralleling South Africa, the right to have political rights became associated with the notion of "being civilized," which by definition excluded nonwhites. The next step consists in demonstrating that once Afro-Brazilians were included into the Brazilian social body their inferior position was never radically altered. I use the analyses of

Kenneth Erickson (1977) and Barrington Moore (1966) in order to point to the corporatist character of the institutions that structure Brazilian society, and to the need for a deep restructuring that would open the way for further democratization.

Applying the analytical framework of Nancy Fraser (1997), I argue that Afro-Brazilians are not only economically exploited, but also culturally “misrecognized.” This misrecognition challenges their role as equal and full citizens because it questions their very humanity. To illustrate the working of racialized exclusion and the ways it is anchored into Brazilian everyday reality, I analyze domestic service, because that is one of the central places where racialized and gendered misrecognition is reproduced daily and thereby “normalized” and anchored into Brazilian common sense. I conclude that Brazilian exclusion is not a surviving pre-modern vestige in contemporary Brazilian society, but that it is intimately related and indeed functionally linked to the modern life-conditions of included Brazilians, who benefit from it economically and culturally.

The Contemporary Discussion about Racialized Exclusion in Brazil: Determining How Brazilian Racism Works

Much has been written about racism in Brazil. Research on race as a cause for discrimination was first carried out systematically in the 1950s by Roger Bastide, Thales de Azevedo, Donald Pierson, and Marvin Harris in a UNESCO financed study about race-relations in Brazil. Racist discrimination has been studied and widely proven in

studies of the late 1970s and 1980s by such authors as Carlos Hasenbalg (1979, 1983, 1988) and Nelson do Vale Silva (1988, 1990). It is by now hard to deny that race is a relevant factor in producing exclusion in Brazil. The more intriguing question is *how* it works.

Anthony Marx (1998) compared race in Brazil, the United States, and South Africa, concluding that race was used in all three countries to create nationhood. The most threatening conflicts that hindered nation building had to be pacified. In South Africa this was the conflict between Dutch Afrikaners and British colonialists. After the Boer war (October 1899 to May 1902) between Afrikaners and the British, segregationist Afrikaners had to be appeased and compromises had to be rendered in order for South Africa not to be split. To cope with the racist values of most Afrikaners, most of whom would only remain within a state that clearly recognized their racial privilege and set them apart from the majority of blacks, the British institutionalized racism in order to mitigate the Afrikaners' dissent. According to Marx, the same logic applied for the United States. After the civil war, the system of legally enforced discrimination known as "Jim Crow" was established to hold the South in the Union. As blacks were a minority, they were not a threat to nation building, but they served as a scapegoat. Brazil, by contrast, never had official segregation, Marx argues, because, white leadership and unity was never divided or split. Blacks never had access to economic or political power, so no official segregation needed to be enhanced. Brazilian white elites were always able to

hold blacks down on the social ladder, through discrimination, the ideology of eugenics and whitening, and the image of racial democracy that made it difficult to build black group consciousness. Instead individual mobility was encouraged through whitening and the emergence of racial solidarity was further curtailed through the myth of “mulatto mobility.”

It is important to keep Marx’s focus on nation-building in mind to be able to grasp the complexity of Brazilian race-relations. Another important insight comes from Michael Hanchard (1994a). He shows how in Brazil blacks are associated with atavistic, uncivilized stereotypes, such as being loud and sexually overactive. Along with these stereotypes are commonly held assumptions about unstable black families and laziness.¹⁰⁴ According to Hanchard, this stereotyping must be understood as an ideological justification of exclusion and discrimination that has at its basis the maintenance of privilege – economic and social. The author shows that blacks were and are excluded from high societal positions, clubs, highly paid jobs, and high ranking governmental and military positions where whites actively and aggressively defend their privileges – by making use of negative stereotypes.

¹⁰⁴ For example in the important study of Florestan Fernandes (1978). Fernandes, in what now seems like a naïve and simplified Marxism, assumed that once Brazil would be fully industrialized, ethnic differences would give way to class distinctions. He attributed the persistent poverty and marginalization of blacks in São Paulo to cultural deprivation, resulting from slavery.

Hanchard also finds that one of the worst results of racism is the internalization of these negative stereotypes by the excluded themselves. According to Hanchard, blacks in Brazil have assimilated white stereotypes. The media and western consumer patterns help to reinforce this internalization. Hanchard finds that all Brazilian TV stars such as *Xuxa* and *Angélica* are white, blond, and have blue eyes.¹⁰⁵ Even if the presence of “normal” blacks in Brazilian soap operas has increased in recent years, the overall picture is maintained and reinforced, as “normal blacks” are mostly nannies, unemployed, dancers, musicians, thieves, or lovers.¹⁰⁶ In Hanchard’s view, deeply rooted racist practices have produced a society where Afro-Brazilians have internalized racism to a point where they deny their common characteristics and destinies. Hanchard concludes that as a result of systematic discrimination under the veil of “racial democracy,” most Afro-Brazilians define themselves in such terms as *brown, mixed, moreno, mulatto, coffee with milk, color of ants*, which thereby prevents the development of overarching group solidarity.

But as Kim Butler (1998) and João José Reis (1986) have shown, Hanchard underestimates the massive struggles Afro-Brazilians have actually fought against discrimination, and he also underestimates the effects of extreme poverty and constant

¹⁰⁵ A finding confirmed and more deeply analyzed by Simpson (1993) for one of the most important and influencing TV stars in Brazilian TV history, *Xuxa*, who’s programs cater children.

¹⁰⁶ In 2001, the Brazilian movie director Joel Zito has released a documentary, entitled “Denying Brazil,” which analyses the absence of Afro-Brazilians in Brazilian TV and the prevalent racial stereotyping of blacks in Brazilian TV.

violence to control Afro-Brazilians, undermining the opportunities for open political protest. Robert Stam (1997) shows how the lives of Afro-descendants in both Brazil and the US are entwined by their common history, and how the two societies created apparently similar, but, ultimately, different responses to the presence of Afro descendants. According to Stam, whereas in the USA white society created a form of racism focusing on separateness and ultimately leading to the paranoid fear of whites towards blacks, Brazil has produced a much more inclusionary form of racism. Here whites are much more intimate with blacks, exercising a paternalistic pressure on them to remain in their pre-described inferior social positions. Accordingly, “docile blacks” are represented in Brazilian cinema as the stereotype preferred and promoted by whites.¹⁰⁷

Parallels To The Bifurcated South African State: Linking “Having Civil Rights” To “Being Civilized”

Mahmood Mamdani (1996) has shown how in Apartheid South Africa blacks were denied civil rights, as white elites divided South African citizenry into one white, urban, civilized group for whom civil rights applied, and another group of “natives,” further divided into “tribes” and subject to customary law. This practice, going back to British colonial rule, explicitly recognized customary law practiced by African ethnic groups. Following the premise of “indirect rule,” the British created a system that divided black

¹⁰⁷ Araujo 2000 and Simpson 1993.

Africans, bound them into tribal customary law, and excluded them from civil and political rights reserved only for urban whites.

According to Mamdani, the British Model of Indirect Rule, created by Lord Lugard, was the dominant model of colonial rule in Africa between the 1850's and the end of colonialism. Indirect Rule meant investing local chiefs with colonial administrative, executive, and judicial power under the regime of customary or tribal law, thereby excluding rural inhabitants from citizenship. By strengthening cultural and ethnic differences among African peoples in each colony, British rule avoided a joint struggle for citizen rights. In order to implant such a system in South Africa, the British used a strategy that Mamdani called "decentralized despotism." This meant first to weaken local and cultural resistance through warfare, next to divide South Africans into white citizens and native tribal members, and third to further divide native Africans into ethnic and tribal groups, strengthening the cultural differences. The discourse to justify separation in South Africa was quite elaborate. Mamdani quotes a part of a speech given in 1929 at Oxford by South Africa's then Prime Minister, General Jan Smuts:

If Africa has to be redeemed, so as to make her own contribution to the world, then we shall have to proceed on different lines and evolve a policy which will not force her

institutions into an alien European mold, but will preserve her unity with her own past and build her future progress and civilization on specifically African foundations.¹⁰⁸

Legally enforced “apartheid,” the Dutch term for separateness, later became South Africa’s state policy to insure white privilege masked under the euphemism of “separate development.”¹⁰⁹ In Mamdani’s words, “the way to stabilize racial domination (territorial segregation) was to ground it in a politically enforced system of ethnic pluralism (institutional segregation), so that everyone, victims no less than beneficiaries, may appear as minorities.”¹¹⁰ In colonial times, indirect rule meant investing local chiefs with more administrative, executive and judicial power than they ever had before, as local chiefs were invested with local administrative functions, representing the colonial power. Through the recognition of local customary law, rural habitants were excluded from the civil law code that applied to white and urban inhabitants. British indirect rule created a system that invested traditional local chiefs with more power than they ever had, enforcing a system of “local despotism.” At the same time, it classified citizens into “tribal people,” subject to the customary laws given and executed by local chiefdoms, and “citizens” – falling under British civil law code. Tribal people, because their customs were explicitly recognized, were therefore excluded from the civil rights that applied to

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Mamdani 1996: 5.

¹⁰⁹ Paralleling US federal policy as manifest in the “separate but equal” clause enacted by the US Supreme Court in 1896.

¹¹⁰ Ibid: 6.

white, mostly urban inhabitants of the South African State. For Mamdani, the division of South African peoples into “civilized” and “tribal,” where only the civilized were recognized to have individual civil and political rights, led to the phenomenon that “civil society was understood as civilized society.”¹¹¹

Analyzing Brazilian history comparatively, it becomes clear that a similar link between “having rights” and “being civilized” was historically established. This was achieved not through the adoption of legal segregation and a “bifurcated state” (Mamdani), but rather through the de facto perpetuation of the exclusion of ex-slaves and their descendents. Whereas in South Africa exclusion was operationalized through the enforcement first of biological and later of cultural “difference,” in Brazil the denial of difference and the forceful blending-in into a Europeanized mainstream culture produced very similar outcomes. The exclusionary practices described above point to the fact that Brazilian elites were able to establish racist exclusion without presenting to the excluded a clear target for political resistance. Furthermore, by linking “having rights” to “being civilized” Brazilian practice denies the excluded the very status of being human. As a result, as Paulo Freire (1989) has argued, the struggle of the oppressed in Brazil is a struggle to regain and assert their very humanity.

¹¹¹ Mamdani 1996: 14.

The Perpetuation of Exclusion in Brazil from the early 1900s until now

In trying to combine the insights provided by the historical accounts of Kim Butler (1998) and George Reid Andrews (1991) with the older political analyses provided by Erickson (1977) and Wiarda (1981), I seek to demonstrate that Afro-Brazilians faced a post-abolition society that did not offer any paths to social mobility. Instead, deeply rooted traditions of patronage and an overall corporatist state elite was able to integrate Afro-Brazilians on the elite's own terms – without affecting their privileged power position and without endangering the economic basis of the Brazilian economy.

Brazilian society, as Erickson explains, was structured by the elites as if it were an organic body, each group fulfilling a functional contribution to the working of the whole. Since colonial times, Brazilian elites imagined themselves as the heads of this body and the slaves as the arms and legs. This corporatist way of organizing the society was not abandoned after the end of slavery. Erickson shows how notions of corporatism fully developed into modern corporatist structures after 1930. Erickson follows the paths of this corporatist structuring from its origins in the 1930s to the military regime that took power in 1964. In his analysis, the main reason the state elites took power in 1930 was that they sought to foster economic modernization. They recognized the need to “foster class harmony” through the maintenance of “as much of their country’s traditional culture

and social structure as possible.”¹¹² Although Erickson does not include race or gender in his analysis, recent theoretical work on race, gender, and class¹¹³ allows for the conclusion that Brazilian social hierarchies have been deeply influenced by the interlocking of race, gender, and class ever since slavery. The maintenance of harmonious class structures, analyzed by Erickson, was therefore connected to the maintenance of racialized and gendered societal hierarchies.

This meant, as Erickson and others have demonstrated in detail, to control and limit upward social mobility of the lower strata of society, restricting it to the minimum necessary to serve the needs of elite-guided industrialization and urbanization.¹¹⁴ Although between 1946 and 1964 suffrage was broadened and direct elections for the legislature and executive branches were introduced at national, state, and local levels, state elites were able to control class-based protest through corporatist mechanisms.¹¹⁵ Both Hagopian (2000) and Stepan (1989) have argued that in the early 1960s Brazilian

¹¹² Ibid: 180.

¹¹³ Especially the works of Sandra Harding (1993, 1991), Paul Gilroy (2000), Judith Butler (1998), and Nancy Fraser (1997, 1998) have pointed to the interlocking of race, gender, and class.

¹¹⁴ Such an understanding points to the importance of political institutions, power structures, and the influence of state elites who effectively designed institutions to avoid social change. This goes against more sociological explanations à la Lipset (1993) who argue that social change triggered by industrialization would inevitably expand the middle classes who would inevitably have a positive impact on the consolidation of democracy.

¹¹⁵ Erickson 1977.

elites became threatened by the mobilization of peasant leagues, the electoral advance of the populist Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), the mobilization of leftist and communist parties, labor unions and movements, and the progressive organizations of the Catholic Church. In addition, the President who came to power in 1961, João Goulart, seemed unable to control all the potentially explosive forces produced by expanding industrialization and urbanization. Traditional state elites and the military perceived the threat of unleashed social forces aiming at their potential destruction, and so they claimed they had no option but to take over the state in order to hold back such potentially radical changes. Celso Furtado (1965) has shown that the industrial elite that grew and gained power in and around the developing metropolises of the South and South East, mostly Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, joined the older land-based aristocracy to oppose the changes.

This coalition of the new industrial elites with the rural aristocracy had long dominated oligarchic political power structures, resembling the structural impediments that work together against democracy that Barrington Moore (1966) described. Moore's comparative historical analysis found that where a land-bound aristocracy unites with new industrial elites to control the state, bourgeois or proletarian revolutions are unlikely to destroy the existing power structures. Such a system is more likely to develop into an authoritarian regime. Erickson and Furtado show that in Brazil the potentially antagonistic Brazilian elites created and nurtured by industrialization did not challenge

the position of the land-bound traditional power holders, but rather they united with the latter to avoid radical political and social change. Thus they took over the state in 1964, thereby consolidating an inegalitarian societal and political order, preserving elite positions, and extracting surplus out of labor exploitation.

The failure to broaden suffrage sheds some light on this perpetuation of social exclusion. In 1930, only 5.7 percent of the Brazilian population had the right to vote. By 1960, only 18.1 percent had been included into the political body.¹¹⁶ Voting was not entirely prohibited during military rule, although severely curtailed for those Brazilians that were enfranchised before 1985. But in order to understand the racial dynamics of political exclusion through disenfranchisement, it is more important to consider that Brazilian franchise was only extended to include illiterates in 1985. In 1987 the illiteracy rate among nonwhites was 36.3 percent, two times as high as the rate for whites.¹¹⁷

In the first years of the 1960s, leftist movements found a political opportunity provided by the policies of then-president João Goulart. They posed a real threat to the corporatist structure of Brazilian society, so much so that a civil-military coalition carried out a coup to prevent a fundamental restructuring of Brazilian society. Applying the analysis of

¹¹⁶ See Peterson 1962 and Mettenheim 1995.

¹¹⁷ Hasenbalg and Silva 1999.

Barrington Moore suggests that this historical moment to break up the traditional corporatist structure was lost. Instead, the elites were able to avoid this change, imposing restrictions on democratic participation, and consolidating a society that had made the political, economic, and cultural exclusion of its own majority a longstanding reality. Scientific racism was able to project Brazilian nonwhites to the bottom of society and keep them there, using techniques that made them exotics in their own land. The race-theory of Gilberto Freyre helped to incorporate those “exotics” into the Brazilian societal body at the very bottom. Both theories together became consolidated into Brazilian mainstream thought, becoming “common sense.” Contemporary descriptions of exclusion and racism still use the same images of the “dangerous classes,” as being “unworthy” and “incapable,”¹¹⁸ justifying the oppression of Afro-Brazilians and others that are equally associated with a “civilizational deficit.” The ideology of this deficit has been “naturalized” and was able to make it into the 21st century.

Contemporary Exclusion

Defining the concept of exclusion, Paulo Singer (1997), in a paper done for the International Labor Organization (ILO), points to the fact that exclusion refers to individuals and groups that are marginalized from the benefits of broader society. He also highlights the malfunctioning of society’s institutions, which fail to integrate the

¹¹⁸ Caldeira, 2000.

marginalized and thus lead to “the breakdown of social cohesion and the fragmentation of social relations.”¹¹⁹ He identifies exclusion along the lines of poverty, color, gender, region, lack of education, and through the labor market. Up to 65 percent of the inhabitants of such major urban centers like São Paulo, live in informal settlements, oftentimes not possessing what can be called a “regular home.” Janice Perlman (1976) studied people’s attitudes and political engagement in the *favelas* (slums) of Rio de Janeiro. She concluded:

It is my contention that the favela residents are not economically and politically marginal, but are exploited and repressed; that they are not socially and culturally marginal, but stigmatized and excluded from a closed social system. Rather than being passively marginal in terms of their own attitudes and behavior, they are being actively marginalized by the system and [...] public policy.¹²⁰

This is a similar conclusion to the one Joan Nelson¹²¹ reached some years later, also focusing on poor urban dwellers in Latin America. Caldeira, in a recent work (2000), also demonstrates how favela-dwellers are transformed by the state into “the dangerous

¹¹⁹ Singer 1997:2.

¹²⁰ Perlman 1976: 195.

¹²¹ Joan Nelson 1979.

classes.” As such, they are not only stigmatized, but also consigned to fall under the auspices of the police as the agency of the state to take care of them. The police become the arm with which Brazilian society disciplines the excluded and thereby perpetuates their exclusion. Pointing to the racialized character of exclusion in Brazil, Bahian sociologist Antônio Sérgio Guimarães explains:

People are considered suspect based on their color (...) color here is only a signifier of social origin, in other words, an attributed status, thus all blacks are suspect.¹²²

Teresa Caldeira¹²³ shows how violence in Brazil has to be understood in a structural way, not as a form of “incomplete modernity,” as Bourdieu would have it, but rather as a specific repertoire of state elites and the middle classes to incriminate “the other.” The others in Brazil as elsewhere, she shows, are the poor and the black. They are perceived as morally deviant and dangerous. Caldeira also shows how the very widespread middle-class discourse about security (and the lack thereof) provides the ideological grounding for the constitution of the exclusionary social and physical environments in a city like

¹²² Guimarães, Antonio Sergio 1996 quoted in: Twine 1998:81.

¹²³ Teresa Caldeira 2000.

São Paulo. Urban spaces have been abandoned and public spaces have been privatized and put under control and surveillance.¹²⁴

In Caldeira's analysis, impunity for rich and influential law-breakers, police violence, and the resulting lack of credibility in the state as the exclusive and just exerciser of violence has led into a vicious circle. Private security agencies defend the rich against the poor, public spaces are abandoned, and democracy has lost its very spaces of reproduction. In addition, according to Caldeira, Brazilian elites maintain a tradition and institutions that keep them above the law, the middle classes withdraw from public spaces and are building their own prison cells of protection, and the poor are left for the police to discipline and control. The poor are constantly disrespected, mistreated, and tortured – by the group that should protect them – the police. As a result, public spaces, where peoples of different economic and social backgrounds can anonymously meet, are not even created by city planners. Instead closed condominiums predominate in most urban

¹²⁴ The Independent New York based NGO *Human Rights Watch*, in its 2001 worldwide assessment of human rights violations, has written about police violence in Brazil:
“Police violence continued to stand out as Brazil's major human rights problem in other contexts as well. In São Paulo state, police killings of civilians surged from 525 in 1998 to 664 in 1999, the highest total since 1992, when police killed 111 inmates in a massacre at Carandiru prison. This violent trend intensified over the first six months of 2000, as police in the nation's most populous state killed 489 civilians, an increase of 77.2 percent over the comparable 1999 figure. A study released in July by the police ombudsman shed light on these shockingly high figures. Analyzing the autopsy reports of 222 persons killed by police gunfire in 1999-one-third of the victims of fatal police actions-it reported that 51 percent had been shot in the back and 23 percent had been shot five or more times. The findings suggested that many had been summarily executed, and not killed as a result of legitimate use of lethal force in shootouts, as authorities routinely reported. More than half of the victims had no prior criminal record.”

centers, because they offer protection. Everything outside becomes potentially threatening and dangerous. Favelas become the Wild West for the police who hold a world-record in the killing of “suspects.”¹²⁵

Constructing Inclusion through the Maintenance of Exclusion

Norbert Elias (1978) has shown how the exercise of power in everyday relationships constitutes and reinforces the separation of social groups. Analyzing changes of manners in European medieval societies, he found the driving force behind such changes to be the constant striving for social distinction. Upper classes constantly invent new table and eating manners that set them apart from aspiring lower classes. Social practice constitutes social hierarchy through the exercise of power, as the constitution of distinction must be understood as a practice to justify and consolidate privilege. Combining this insight with Max Weber’s study of domination (Weber 1972) and applying it to the study of the normalization of exclusion in Brazil, it follows that the practice of exclusion helps to establish and justify privilege for those who exclude. It was Hegel’s early insight that the excluded are intimately linked to their excluders, as the *exclusion* of one group constitutes the *inclusion* of those excluding them. In the following I therefore recognize

¹²⁵ According to a 2001 report by the respected Rio-based *Institute for Study of Religion* (ISER), the number of crime suspects killed in encounters with Rio police more than doubled from 1993 to 1995, and grew again to reach about 400 deaths in 1996. In addition, this study reveals a clear racial bias in police killings. The figures in the report, from January 1993 to July 1996, demonstrate that among those killed by police in Rio de Janeiro, 70,2% were Black or *Pardo* (Brown-skinned), while whites accounted for only 29.8% of the total, in a city which is roughly divided between whites and non-whites.

that the “excluded” and the “included” are two opposing but mutually constitutive elements of Brazilian reality.

One of the central places where contemporary exclusion and inclusion are reproduced daily in Brazil is within middle-class households. In Brazil, the employment of maids is a widespread social practice.¹²⁶ It is considered “normal” for Brazilian middle-class households to employ domestic servants. The gendered and racialized character of the extremely unequal relationship between employer and maid has led several social scientists to analyze it. Although such works on Brazil are rare, and studies of the particular situation of Bahia do not exist, the similarities of the employer-maid relationship across different regions and even countries that share histories of colonization and slavery justifies the use of findings from other regions and countries.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ The Augst 2002 edition of the renowned Brazilian daily newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* was dedicated to domestic workers. Based on the work of its own research institute (*Datafolha*), the *Folha* finds that 21%, or 5 million, of all employed females work in the domestic service sector, making it the most important female employment sector in Brazil. Of these, 37% are *pardas* and 24% *pretas*.

¹²⁷ The list of available literature analyzing the power-dimensions of the employer-maid relationship includes Barbosa, Fernando Cordeiro 2000; Chaney, Elsa M. and Mary Garcia Castro (eds.) 1989; Chang, Grace 2000; Chin, Christine 1998; Coelho, Maria Claudia 2001: *Sobre agradecimentos e desgostos. Trocas materiais, relações hierárquicas e sentimentos*, in: Velho, Gilberto and Karina Kuschnir (eds.) 2001; Duarte, Adriano Luiz 1992; Gill, Lesley 1994; Gregson, Nicky and Michelle Lowe 1994; Kofes, Suely 1994: *Entre nós mulheres, elas as patroas e elas as empregadas*, in: Arantes, Antônio Augusto (ed.) 1994; Kofes, Suely 2001; Motta, Alda Britto da 1992; Preuss, Miriam Raja Gabaglia 1990; Rezende, Claudia Barcellos 2001: *Entre mundos. Sobre amizade, igualdade e diferença*, in: Velho, Gilberto and Karina Kuschnir (eds.) 2001; Rollins, Judith 1985; Santos-Stubbe, Chirly dos 1998; Sheriff, Robin E. 1997; Teles, Leda 1998; and Vicira, Celma Rosa 1987.

Writing about domestic service in the United States and focusing especially on Caribbean maids, Rollins (1985) traced the origins of domestic work back to domestic slavery. Comparing several countries in historical analysis, she points to the fact that the industrial revolution led to a pull and push effect, pushing the rural poor into industrializing cities where a new middle-class emerged, able to afford domestic servants. In 19th century Britain and France, for example, the number of middle-class households employing servants increased tremendously, to the point where one contemporary British writer observed that “middle class life can scarcely be conceived without the servants.”¹²⁸ Having a domestic servant helped to establish prestige, imitating aristocratic lifestyles, but it was also functional for women’s liberation in late 19th century and early 20th century Europe. After the industrial revolution, domestic service was almost exclusively carried out by women. Rollins explains that “Servants were hired to supplement or take over what were considered the wives’ responsibilities (...).”¹²⁹

The parallels to the Brazilian reality are striking. Here, high rates of urban unemployment, nurtured by rural migration and industrialization, allowed for an expansion of urban middle-classes starting in the 1940s. Taking advantage of the huge numbers of unemployed, domestic labor in middle and upper class households expanded

¹²⁸ Quoted in Rollins 1985: 31.

¹²⁹ Rollins 1985: 33.

to become the most important female employment activity. Describing the work-relationship and the rituals created within it, Rollins points to the extreme inequalities that characterize this job, along with its typical vulnerability produced by a lack of co-workers, total dependency on the employer, and the highly personalistic character of this work. As domestic work is treated as having very low prestige, employers try even harder to distance themselves from the servant, using several symbolic mechanisms to stress this distance. Several of the authors that I discuss below point to the upholding of the invention of racial inferiority as one of the most salient strategies to maintain the distance between employer and maid.

Kofes (2001), studying the relationship between domestic servants and their employers in São Paulo, calls attention to the vocabulary in use in this sphere, where the employee is commonly referred to as the *doméstica* (domestic) and the employer as *patroa* (patron). In her ethnographic material Kofes shows how being a domestic in a Brazilian household implies being constantly “domesticated,” stereotyped, and abused.

In her description of contemporary Brazilian everyday life practices, Twine (1997) confirms these findings. She finds that Brazilian servants are treated as children even if they are adults. Twine finds that such infantilization often goes along with the creation of paternalistic dependencies, as maids are oftentimes not even paid the minimum wage of

less than 80 US dollars per month, but are instead offered a bedroom, food, and other material compensation.

Gill (1994) points to the power structures that characterize the servant-employer relationship. Studying Bolivian female domestic workers, she concludes that “domestic service is rooted in inequality, and its most enduring feature is that servants are drawn from groups considered inferior by those in power.”¹³⁰ Paralleling Rollins’ findings, Gill points to the fact that it is mostly female employers who exploit female servants, justifying their behavior through the invention of the “inferiority” and racial otherness of the exploited. Gill also highlights the extreme vulnerability of female domestics, especially the ones that live-in, as they are extremely dependent on their employers. According to Gill, sexual abuse is frequent and is part of the way upper- and middle-class women, who typically define themselves as “white,” construct their own identities, setting them apart from the “low moral standards” of the racialized other. Gill finds that male employers’ predatory behavior and abuse towards servants is oftentimes tolerated or ignored, as long as such relations do not lead to entitlements for the servants.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Gill 1994: 141.

¹³¹ Gill 1994: 146f.

Focusing on the situation of domestic workers in Latin America, Chaney and Castro (1989) find similarities among the several countries they have included in their book. In general, they state that no less than 20% of the female work force in Latin America and the Caribbean work as maids. They also find that wherever it is practiced, domestic employment is an undervalued and depreciated activity. Most of the time, maids migrate to their workplaces, coming from the countryside or from other regions or countries. They also find that in Latin America most maids have a different ethnic background than their employers, being considered “inferior” by those. Most maids work alone, furthering their vulnerability and enhancing the chances of falling victim to physical and emotional abuse. The authors conclude that “(...) domestic workers in most countries remain among the most oppressed and neglected sector of the working class.”¹³²

Even in countries like the United States, where maids find more support structures and a more effectively working legal system compared to most Latin American countries, Colen (in Chaney and Castro 1989) finds US employers using similar techniques to dehumanize their maids. These include not allowing them to share the same table and the same food, nor the same bathrooms, toilets, or even seats. In addition, most employers address their maids by the first name or refer to them as “the girl,” even if they are grown

¹³² Chaney and Castro 1989:4.

up adults.¹³³ All these techniques contribute to widen the gap between the employer and the employed, based on a constant and systematic infantilization and ultimately dehumanization of the domestic worker.

Although analyses taking the maid's perspective into account are rare, the autobiography of a Peruvian domestic worker and activist – Adelinda Diaz Uriarte provides some elucidating insights.¹³⁴ Uriarte describes the techniques her employers used to hold her in a slavery-like dependency. Starting out as a child and cut-off from potential support structures, her situation resembled the ones described by Bales (2000) in his analysis of contemporary slavery, the way Bales (2000) has defined it.¹³⁵ Her total isolation, together with the creation of absolute dependency and the constant physical and emotional abuse fall nothing short of the situation African slaves had to endure in Brazilian colonial times.¹³⁶ Very similar stories are told by Brazilian domestics in the September 2002

¹³³ Colen 1989:180f.

¹³⁴ In Chaney and Castro 1989.

¹³⁵ See Bales' definition in Chapter One.

¹³⁶ Several descriptions of Brazilian slavery are available, such as Antonil, Andre Joao 1976 [1649]; Freyre, Gilberto 1990a; Gorender, Jacob 1988; Ramos, Arthur 1934 and 1979; Reis, Joao Jose 1986; Rodrigues, Nina 1988; Schwartz, Stuart B. 1988; Verger, Pierre 1992, 1981, and 1987; and Viana, Luis Filho 1988, amongst others. The descriptions these authors provide about colonial slavery very much resemble the characterizations of contemporary serfdom in Brazil.

edition of the UN feminist journal *Maria Maria*, dedicated to domestic workers.¹³⁷

Almost all of the interviewed domestics tell stories of isolation and abuse.

Assessing the importance and magnitude of domestic employment in Rio de Janeiro, Pereira (in Chaney and Castro 1989) finds that over half of Rio's domestic workers earn from nothing to one-half of a minimum wage and that 79.5 percent work longer than the legally regulated 40 hours per week.¹³⁸

Sheriff (1997) provides an account of narratives about race and racism in Rio de Janeiro. She carried out her research in the beginning of the 1990s in a Rio favela (*Morro do Sangue Bom*). During several years of research in the neighborhood she did not encounter one single woman who had not worked as a maid in a middle class home during some period in her life. Sheriff explains that "a girl may begin her first full-time job at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Many of the women I knew had spent at least a part of their adolescence as "live-in" maids, i.e. they lived with their employer families and went home only on weekends or Sundays."¹³⁹ Characterizing the maid's work, Sheriff writes: "One is constantly subject to surveillance, negative judgments and emotional isolation.

¹³⁷ Available online at http://www.undp.org.br/unifem/mariamaria/ano4_n4/sumario4.html

¹³⁸ Data from 1980.

¹³⁹ Sheriff 1997:215.

One's social life is severely curtailed; male visitors are very rarely welcome in the employer's home."¹⁴⁰

Sheriff's interviewees, who are mostly Afro-Brazilian favela dwellers, relate several racist everyday practices. One informant, who works as a maid in the home of a French lady tells her that her employer is not racist, because she "even drinks from the same glass."¹⁴¹ Statements like these point to the high degree to which exclusion and oppression have been internalized by the oppressed. Talking about a middle-class apartment building, another informant explains that the building has two separate entrances, one for the white middle-class dweller, and one for the mostly black service personnel. She says that "there are two doors and they don't let negroes go through the one in front."¹⁴² The same informant also explains that "if you are black (*pretinho*) you have to go up in the service elevator, but if you're white like you, they let you go the other way. It's like that almost everywhere."¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Ibid: 215.

¹⁴¹ Ibid: 220.

¹⁴² Ibid: 221.

¹⁴³ Ibid: 221.

Several of Sheriff's informants gave evidence of the prevalence of racial stereotyping, referring to blacks as being dirty and smelling bad. One informant, herself a maid, explained that white middle-class families preferred lighter skin maids, especially for childcare. Dark complexion blacks could only find cleaning and cooking jobs.¹⁴⁴ Sheriff writes that several of her informants found that their white middle-class patrons feared racial contamination and "pollution" from contact with their black maids.

In Rio de Janeiro, as in any other Brazilian city, almost all high-rise apartment buildings have two separate entrances and domestics have to use the service elevator, even if they are in street cloths. Sheriff finds that "nearly all of the older and larger middle-class apartments and houses in Rio have very small rooms with a tiny bathroom attached, usually located next to the kitchen."¹⁴⁵ In Sheriff's evaluation, having these small maid rooms "is still considered a standard appurtenance in middle-class dwellings."¹⁴⁶

An illustration of this fact is provided by contemporary advertisements in Brazilian newspapers, offering middle, and upper-class apartments for rent and sale. Even in São Paulo, which is considered Brazil's most modern city, all apartments offered have rooms for the domestic servant. As the law requires certain minimal conditions for the servant's

¹⁴⁴ Ibid: 226.

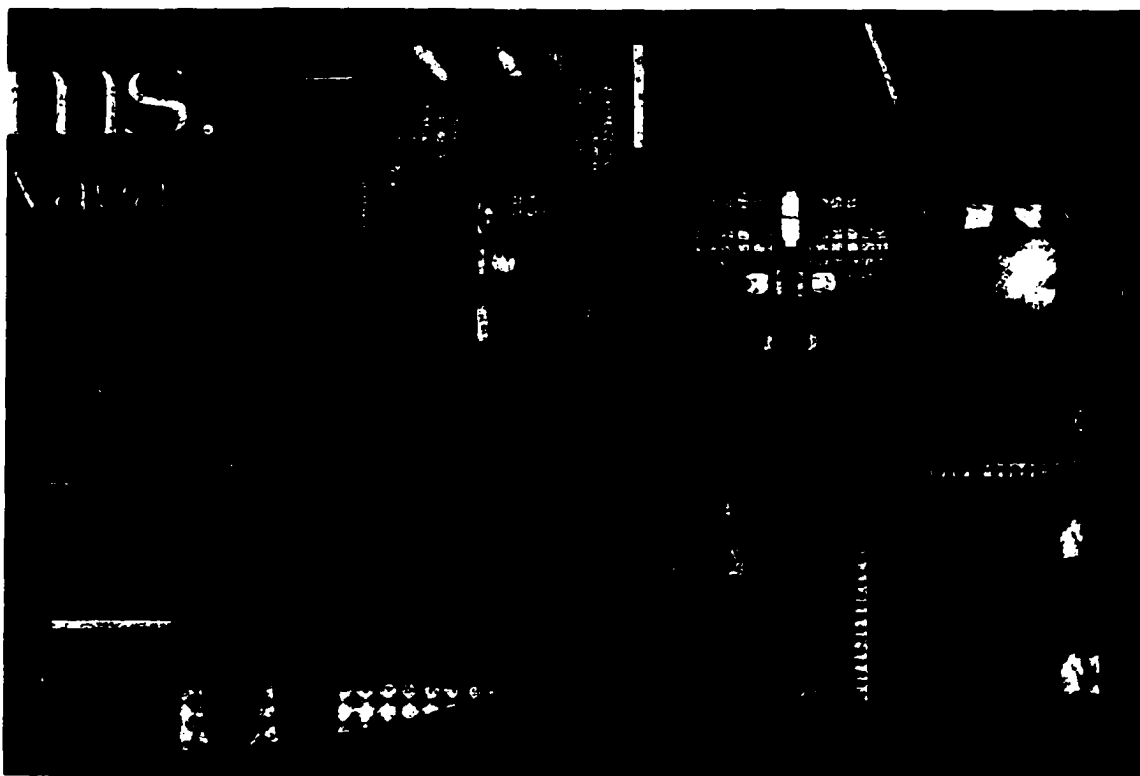
¹⁴⁵ Ibid: 223.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid: 223.

room, contemporary apartments circumvent these requirements by referring to the maid's room as a "locker" (*depósito*). Most servant rooms are just big enough for a small bed, not offering ventilation or natural light. In addition, the invisibility of the domestic worker is furthered by strategic design that links the servant's room to the kitchen and the washing room, but keeps it distant from rooms where the patrons socialize. Bigger apartments, for richer people, typically have separate servant entrees, but even smaller, middle-class apartments find some room for the maid. This points to the fact that having a servant is no elite-privilege, but instead a widespread practice of the middle classes.

I reproduced randomly selected examples of apartments for sale, offered in one of Brazil's major newspapers, the "Folha de São Paulo" to illustrate my findings. All examples are apartments for sale, offered in the year 2002. Although they vary in size, they all share the characteristic of having servant rooms and bathrooms. I added a comment about each of the four examples below each reproduction.

Example 1

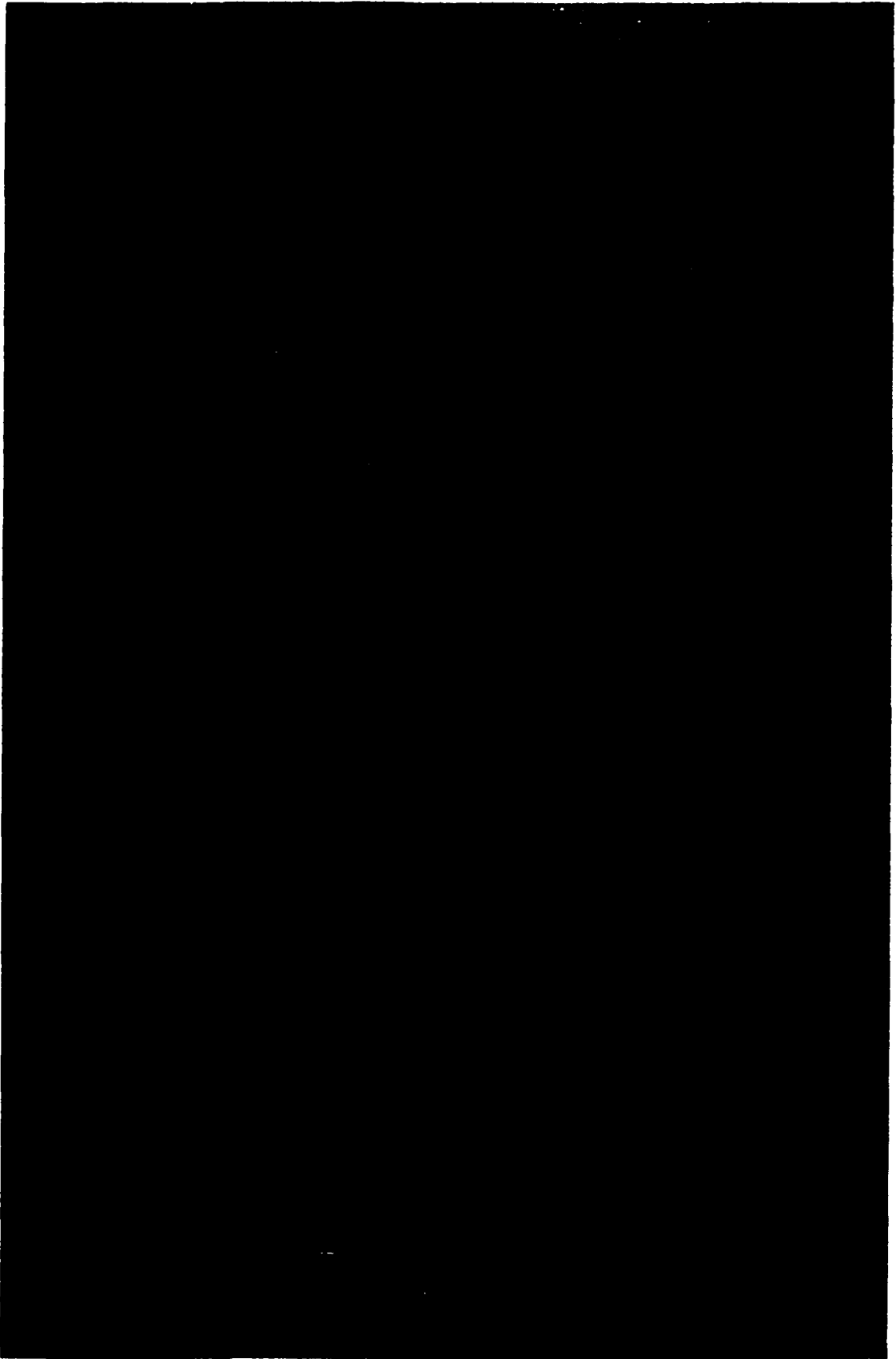


(source: Folha de São Paulo, 08/03/02, page B14)

Comment: This is an advertisement for an apartment for sale in São Paulo. The room in the upper central area is labeled “Dep.” referring to Portuguese *depósito* – “deposit” or “locker.” Nevertheless, a bed is already designed into this room, suggesting that it is in fact for the maid. Both size and lack of ventilation (there is no window) make it unlawful to use it as a servant-room. It is interesting that the servant-room is smaller than the bathrooms for the house owners, and is more or less the size of the elevator. This is a good example of a middle-class, relatively small apartment. Although small, there is an

extra bath for the maid, which is only 1.01 meter (3.3 feet) wide. The area of activity of the domestic servant is clearly demarcated, which points to her ideal status of being invisible and her symbolic confinement to certain areas of the apartment.

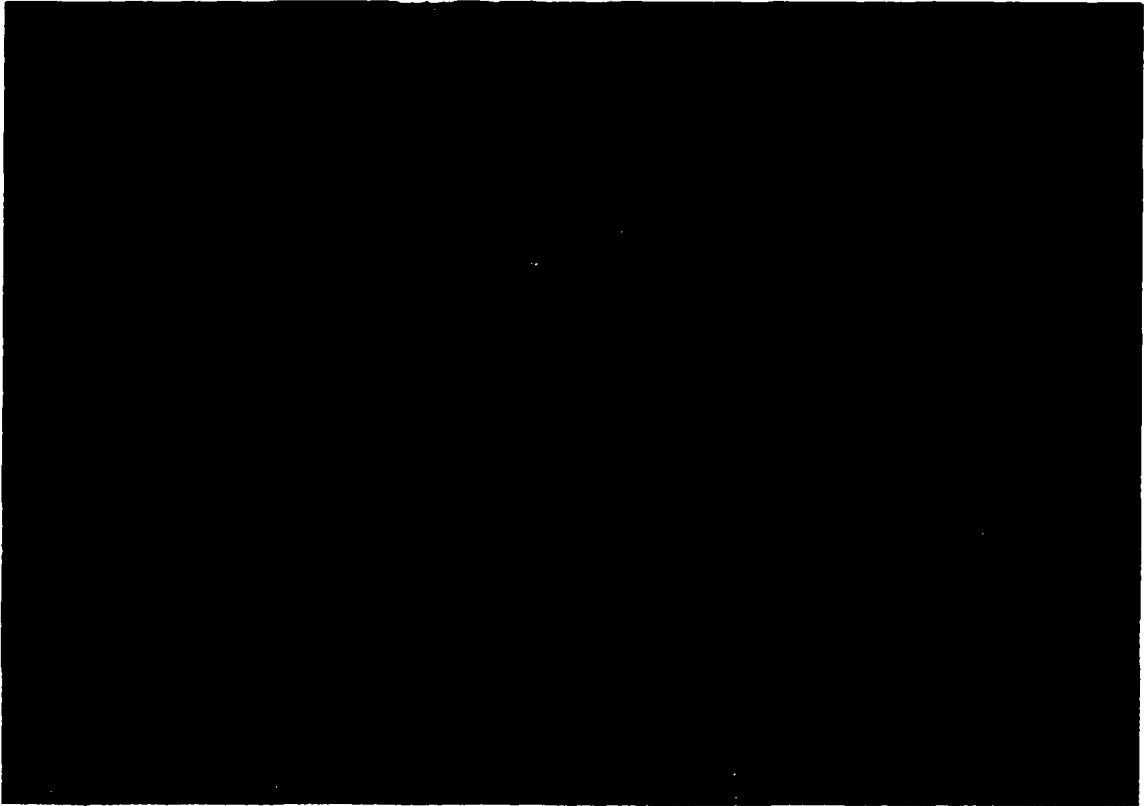
Example 2



(source: Folha de São Paulo, 03/23/02, page A19)

Comment: This is an example of an apartment for sale in São Paulo. The room of the maid, although again labeled “deposit” is set apart even more drastically from the core of the space. Although the apartment is overall bigger, the size of the servant-room is the same as in example 1.

Example 3



(source: Folha de São Paulo, 04/13/02, page A7)

Comment: This apartment for sale in São Paulo also has a separate service elevator. The physical and symbolic separation of the spheres of the maid and the owners is also clearly stressed by the use of different colors. Although this is also a large apartment (238 square meters / 2,562 square foot), the servant room is also unlawfully small with only 2 meters by 1.6 meters (6.6 feet by 5.25 feet), or 3.2 square meters (35 square feet). The maid's

living area (dormitory and bathroom) is with 5.04 square meters (54.25 square foot) slightly smaller than the closet in the “master suite.”

The reproductions above serve to illustrate the findings by Sheriff, Twine, and others. All authors agree that the employer-domestic servant relationship is structured through race, as most employers are white, and most maids are black. They also find that maids have to represent themselves through extreme postures of submission in order to fulfill the role-expectation of their employers. Sheriff finds that “nearly all of the work-related scenarios they described depicted [...] overt forms of racism.”¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, she finds that “many women tend to describe these hierarchical relationships – the rough edges of which are often smoothed by intimacy or the presumption of intimacy – as a “natural” part of their taken-for-granted world.”¹⁴⁸

Sheriff concludes her chapter about racism on the asphalt (referring to racism experienced by favela dweller in middle-class neighborhoods) pointing to the normalized character of racism in Brazil: “In describing the racialized nature of many everyday encounters, in framing such encounters as examples of boundary-maintaining incidents that occur “all the time,” and in accounting for racism in the language of a structured and

¹⁴⁷ Ibid: 229.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid: 227.

structuring hegemony, my informants reveal what is “embaixo do pano” or under the concealing fabric of dominant narrative of race (and silence about racism) in Brazil.¹⁴⁹

The available analyses of domestic service in Brazil allow for several conclusions. First it is no exaggeration to compare the precariousness of the social condition of a maid to that of a bonded feudal servant or even to that of a slave. This is especially the case in Brazil, where until 1888 (and sometimes longer, in remote areas) included Brazilians had domestic slaves (*mucamas*) to serve them in their homes.¹⁵⁰ Kofes points to the continuity that links domestic slavery to domestic service, further contributing to the negative stigma of this activity.¹⁵¹ The magnitude and economic importance of this work transforms it into a typical everyday practice, anchoring it into Brazilian common sense. Domestic service is typically urban and employs a great number of females that have migrated from rural areas. Poverty and high illiteracy that particularly affect Afro-Brazilians leave many excluded with only very few options. Without finding other employment opportunities and confronting the fact that regular unskilled work is paid with one minimum salary, but not offering free alimentation and the possibility to live-in,

¹⁴⁹ Ibid: 251.

¹⁵⁰ Gilberto Freyre has described the special situation of domestic slaves in his book entitled *The Mansions and the Shanties: the making of modern Brazil*, New York: Alfred. A. Knopf (1963). This is the North American edition of the 1936 Brazilian original entitled *Sobrados e mucambos: decadência do patriarcado rural e desenvolvimento do urbano*.

¹⁵¹ Kofes 2001:21.

excluded women are pushed into domestic service. Brazilian middle and upper class homes are one of the major places where the dichotomies of excluded / included and inferior / superior are continuously recreated and institutionalized.

With its specific racialized dimension, domestic servitude is an important part of most Brazilians' everyday realities and it is the place where the children of the included learn and are socialized into the knowledge of how to distinguish and treat "inferior" people. The systematic infantilization and dehumanization of Afro-Brazilian adult women in white middle class households must be seen as a crucial process that perpetuates the institutionalization and normalization of the "inferiority" of the racialized other. The docility of the maid, resulting from extreme patriarchal dependency and precarious status provides the counterpart to this dichotomy, resulting in the typical image of the benevolent black nanny who raises the children of white middle class parents.

Some authors have stressed the capitalist dimensions of exploiting domestic labor, pointing to the fact that poverty, high unemployment, and illiteracy contribute to the maintenance of exploitation of domestic workers. Salvador, Bahia has one of the highest unemployment rates of any Brazilian city, one of the highest poverty rates, and one of the highest illiteracy-rates, restricting even more the options available to the excluded. It becomes clear that the proclaimed "cordiality" of Brazilian race relations is based on the forced docility of the oppressed. Employing some 5 million females in 2002, domestic

service keeps growing in Brazil.¹⁵² This growth indicates that domestic service in Brazil is not pre-modern and linked to “traditional societies.” The modern high-tech apartments for sale offered in contemporary Brazilian newspapers also point to the fact that domestic service is intimately linked to modernity and capitalist development in Brazil. The literature on domestic work stresses how middle-class female liberation and incorporation into the labor-market in Brazil is based on the availability of cheap domestic service. Middle and upper class included women employ maids that stay at home taking care of the house and the baby, while they follow their professional careers.

In Brazil, structural inequality is therefore intimately linked to modernity, allowing one part of human kind to climb up to the heights of enlightenment on the backs of others that are condemned to remain in the dark. Paralleling South Africa under apartheid, access to civil and political rights has been reserved for those arbitrarily judged “civilized.” Furthermore, the exclusion from full citizenship extends into civil society itself, as exclusion has worked in all social spaces – inside family homes, inside the state, in the economy, and most importantly in civil society. The image of civil society that results from this account is one of a contested terrain, where representation and recognition are disputed and where exclusion has withheld parts of the Brazilian society from

¹⁵² Interview with Hildete Pereira de Melo, professor of economy at the Universidade Federal Fluminense, printed in *Maria Maria*, year 4, N. 4, 2002.

participation. For civil society to be the ground for a struggle for rights, civil society must first embrace those whose rights are systematically denied. The discussions of this and the previous chapter rather point to fact that Brazilian civil society remains exclusive, as large parts of Afro-Brazilians are still treated as second-class citizens.

Kabengele Munanga, a recognized scholar of Brazilian race relations and professor of Anthropology at the University of São Paulo (USP), concluded that

The analysis of the discursive production of the Brazilian elite from the end of the 19th century to the middle of this one [20th century] gives evidence that a model of universalistic racism was being developed. It is characterized by the attempt to assimilate the members of ethnic-racial groups differentiated in “racial” and cultural terms into the ethnic dominant segment of society. This model supposes the absolute negation of difference, in other words, a negative evaluation of any difference and it ultimately suggests an implicit ideal of homogeneity that should be achieved through miscegenation and cultural assimilation. The biological as well as the cultural miscegenation would lead, amongst other things, to the destruction of ethnic and racial identity of the dominated groups, in other words, to ethnocide.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Munanga 1999: 110, my translation.

Teresa Caldeira (2000) gives us an idea of how much state-led violence is required even today to sustain the Brazilian system of extreme inequality. Included groups violently uphold a reality, defending their own “normality” and withholding this status from the excluded. Excluded groups, as a result, become “the others” and their exploitation is ideologically justified through the invention of their ineptitude. This logic seems to go so deep that it even excludes those “others” from being human and being civilized. Caldeira concludes that “in general, the people I interviewed think that children, adolescents, and women are not totally rational (or not always rational), in the same way that the poor and, obviously, criminals are not. Towards such people the use of violence is necessary.”¹⁵⁴

This contemporary rhetoric resembles shockingly the one used 100 years before to justify violence against “uncivilized” or even “uncivilizable” groups. The mechanism at work point to the ways how “normal” Brazilians gain privilege in making themselves the standard against which the others have to be measured, creating all the psychological abysses that American psychology has described.¹⁵⁵ The often proclaimed “cordiality” that supposedly characterizes societal and race relations in Brazil must then rather be understood as the result of extreme cultural hegemony and normalization of oppression.

¹⁵⁴ Caldeira 2000: 365.

¹⁵⁵ Described, for example in Michelle Fine et. al. 1997.

As the discussion of Gilberto Freyre has shown, contemporary Afro-Brazilians are not allowed to be different at the same time that they are treated as inferiors and as “others.” Darcy Ribeiro (1922-97), one of Brazil’s most influential contemporary intellectuals and political figures, dedicated his life and intellectual career elaborating on the doctrine of this all-embracing Brazilian sameness.¹⁵⁶ In contemporary Brazil, this forced sameness translates into a vehement color-blindness, which serves to justify persistent exclusion of Afro-Brazilians from upward social mobility, e.g., through “color-blind” admission tests to public universities that end up keeping excluded groups out of higher education. It also serves to deny the necessity for diversified curricula in the educational system and for public discussion of group rights and affirmative action policies – as Europe is the reference for “all of us.”¹⁵⁷

In Brazilian common sense, a person who openly recognizes race as a relevant factor is considered a racist, for looking at something that should not exist. This way of imagining

¹⁵⁶ Darcy Ribeiro, a progressive intellectual of the left, wrote more than ten books, most of them dedicated to the defense of the thesis that all Brazilians, no matter what ethnic or cultural background they have, share the common and all-embracing sameness of being “Brazilian.”

¹⁵⁷ This state of affairs is being challenged for the first time in Brazilian history while I am writing this dissertation, as since 2001 affirmative action is entering public discussion and several universities and public organizations have adopted affirmative action policies for the first time ever. Brazil’s participation in the conference against racism and xenophobia, held in September 2001 in Durban, South Africa, influenced the beginning of these recent developments, as the Brazilian delegation agreed to enact affirmative action policies for public universities, even though the minister of education argued against such a policy.

the Brazilian community as a “Tropical Europe” has also led to the study of Afro-Brazilians together with indigenous people and similar “exotic others” in the field of anthropology. Even in Bahia, where some 70 to 80 percent of the population is Afro-Brazilian, social scientists study “Anthropology of the Negro.” No “Anthropology of the White Man” exists, nor would that be conceivable. In this extreme case, a minority was able to establish itself as the norm and to force a minority status on the black majority. It is hard to overstate the power and the structural violence that lie behind the successful defense of such a claim. Only the everyday violence practiced by the state against the “dangerous classes” allows a glimpse at this reality.¹⁵⁸ Salvador, a city of some 3 million inhabitants, has a homicide rate of three violent deaths every day and 12 on weekends. In Rio de Janeiro the military has taken over the slum areas several times – “to maintain

¹⁵⁸ The 2002 report of Amnesty International on Brazil states that “The use of torture and ill-treatment remained widespread and systematic throughout the criminal justice system, at point of arrest, in police stations and prisons as well as in juvenile detention centres. In several states, large-scale rioting occurred in prisons and juvenile detention centres, primarily as a result of chronic problems in the penal system and cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions. Police officers and “death squads” linked to the security forces were responsible for numerous killings of civilians, including children, in circumstances suggesting that they were extrajudicial executions. Land reform activists, environmentalists and indigenous peoples in rural areas were killed or assaulted by military police or gunmen hired by local landowners. Human rights defenders continued to be threatened and attacked. Important trials of human rights violators took place. However, most of those responsible for human rights abuses continued to benefit from impunity.” Amnesty International also shows that in the year 2001, in São Paulo, the police ombudsman’s office received reports of 481 police killings over the whole year. In the state of Bahia, the State Human Rights Commission reported that “death squads” largely made up of off-duty police had killed 159 people in the city of Salvador in the first seven months of the year. According to a report elaborated by the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Archdiocese of Salvador, Bahia, together with the “Association of Lawyers of Rural Workers on average 3 homicides were committed every day and 12 on every weekend in 1998 in the Metropolitan area of Salvador. The same report states that between 1996 and 1997 paramilitary groups, integrated by members of the military policy and/or civilians, killed some 300 people in the Metropolitan area of Salvador. In addition, regular police action led to another 238 killings during that year.

order.” The tight and violent grip that a “white” minority was able to put on the throat of its own majority becomes the norm and loses its violent obviousness.

Conclusion: Deeply rooted and violently normalized exclusion in Brazil

In the Chapters Two and Three I have demonstrated that excluded groups in Brazil suffer from exclusion that is analytically distinguishable into being class-related, as poverty causes exclusion, and status-related, as Afro-Brazilians also suffer from cultural “misrecognition.” Brazilian excluded groups are poor in a society where income and wealth are highly concentrated in just a few hands. Economic exploitation and resulting deprivation have been widely described and recognized as one of the main characteristics of Brazilian society. At the same time, the racialized character of exclusion is best explained by the use of Nancy Fraser’s concept of “misrecognition,” which refers

*(...) to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life – not as a consequence of a distributive inequity (such as failing to receive one’s fair share of resources or ‘primary goods’), but rather as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem.*¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Fraser 1998: 141.

Fraser (1997) has argued that inequality is rooted in a lack of recognition and a lack of economic distribution, where the two mechanisms reinforce each other, but have distinguishable causes. Although economic inequality also results in the stigmatization of the poor, Fraser argues that this stigmatization is not the cause for their poverty. Lack of recognition, on the contrary, expressed in the form of cultural domination and racialized and gendered oppression, is a cause of injustice that persists even when economic equality is achieved.

Fraser's analytical framework helps to understand the deeply rooted, racialized, and normalized character of exclusion in Brazil. I have demonstrated that Brazilian exclusion is more than just a matter of the distribution of goods and opportunities. Afro-Brazilians also suffer from cultural misrecognition that questions their very humanity and citizenship.

CHAPTER 4: CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY: SPECIFYING THE CAUSAL LINK

This chapter lays out the theoretical grounds for the argument that civil society can be a starting place for the creation of a just Brazilian society, because it can offer political and economic opportunities for the historically oppressed and for their recognition as full and capable citizens. Many authors who have used the concept of civil society assume an automatic or necessary causal relationship to democracy.¹⁶⁰ But the relationship between civil society and democracy is not at all clear. Some recent accounts have pointed to the potentially negative effects on democracy of “strong ties” (Granovetter 1973:1373f), “extreme voices” (Fiorino 1999), or anti- democratic social capital (Nancy Rosenblum 1998 and Sheri Berman 1997a).

In this chapter I will elaborate the causal relations that link civil society to democracy, using the works of Gramsci and Berger and Luckmann (1966), and others. I conclude that civil society has the potential to create and institutionalize a democratic “praxis,” where excluded groups can exercise their citizenship and be recognized as equal peers in social interaction and collective decision-making. This is, I argue, civil society’s main democratizing potential in formally established democracies. In order to drive home this point, I will elaborate on the idea that democratic praxis, as used by Paulo Freire (1989),

¹⁶⁰ Especially Putnam and other “Neo-Tocquevilleans.”

can be one central strategy to overcome exclusion. I use the work of Berger and Luckmann to point to the “socially constructed” character of reality that opens the theoretical possibility to locate the starting point, as well as the necessary scope, of social change. I use the works of Gramsci and Habermas to demonstrate the democratic potential of civil society and why it can be a place for democratic change.

Everyday Reality and Common Sense

I have demonstrated above that injustice is deeply rooted in Brazilian’s everyday realities. It is part of what Gramsci (1999) called “common sense” and Habermas prefers to call “lifeworld.” Gramsci explains that common sense is characterized by uncritically taken-for-granted beliefs that reflect dominant interests and that thus serve to maintain hegemonic control. As such this common sense escapes critical analysis, as it is taken for granted and is in fact helpful in “making sense” out of everyday life. Stuart Hall (1979) has explained this phenomenon with greater detail, explaining that

What passes for ‘common sense’ in our society – the residue of absolutely basic and commonly-agreed, consensual wisdoms – helps us to classify [...] the world in simple but meaningful terms. Precisely, common sense does not require reasoning, argument, logic, thought: it is spontaneously available, thoroughly recognizable, widely shared. It feels, indeed, as if it has always been there, the sedimented, bedrock wisdom of ‘the race,’ a form of ‘natural’ wisdom, the content

of which has changed hardly at all with time. However, common sense does have a content and a history. (...) It is precisely its 'spontaneous' quality, its transparency, its 'naturalness,' its refusal to be made to examine the premises on which it is founded, its resistance to change or to correction, its effect of instant recognition, and the closed circle in which it moves which makes common sense, at one at the same time, 'spontaneous,' ideological and unconscious.¹⁶¹

Pointing to the injustices that hide behind the veil of normality and common sense, Hall also describes their functionality for maintaining an oppressive order. Once normalized, oppression is no longer visible and is therefore difficult to change. Gramsci has called attention to this dimension of oppressive everyday reality that works in the interest of the oppressors. He coined the label “cultural hegemony” to account for this reality. Cultural hegemony refers to the ability of those societal fractions that benefit from an unjust order to elevate it into “the reality” for all the people sharing one system of reference. Current orders and widely accepted “ways how things are” disguise their historically constructed character and the powerful interests that have brought this order into being. Applied to the analysis of Brazilian reality, cultural hegemony was won and is still maintained by the elites through the use of the ideology of Afro-Brazilian civilizational inferiority,

¹⁶¹ Hall 1979: 325.

combined with the ideology of racial democracy. Combined, these two ideologies have forged a common sense and a normality that has been able to obstruct change.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that individuals have access to different realities, but that the most salient and most present reality is that of everyday life. This is the reality that is shared with fellow individuals and continuously re-constructed through social interaction. It is the reality that most people perceive simply as “reality,” implying that it is “normal.” These authors have shown how this reality is in fact a construct of people sharing a “lifeworld,” which refers to sharing the same everyday reality and interpreting it as meaningful and ordered.

Based on the assumption that human beings *create* their world rather than that they are determined by it, Berger and Luckmann argue that humans must order their world and make sense out of it, as human nature does bind them to a closed world. Rather, the world of human beings is open and has to be created, reproduced, and learned. But making sense out of the world is not a process that each newborn individual has to start from the scratch all over again. Instead we are born into a world which has been ordered and structured before us, by those who have preceded us. Nevertheless, the openness and complexity of the world leaves us with an immense number of possibilities of how to understand and interpret it, and, most important, how to reproduce or to change it.

To be able to deal with such complexity, humans reduce the infinite available possibilities by creating patterns. These patterns, if they prove successful or helpful, become sedimented into what is then perceived as an unproblematic everyday reality. Institutions therefore are patterned ways of doing things. They become “the way to do things” if they have proven successful and if they are supported by power. Berger and Luckmann called the consolidation of institutions into everyday reality “reification.” These authors have also pointed to the fact that once an institution becomes reified, it tends to persist. Ways of doing things become traditions and are hard to change.

But not all possible realities or structures become reified, but principally the ones that are supported by power. Powerful interests are responsible for creating and perpetuating institutions and realities that reflect and serve their own interests. Realities are not neutral outcomes of the free interplay of social actions, of agents in a power vacuum. Powerful interests are responsible for promoting and sustaining one possible reality over another.

The gendered and racialized oppression that characterizes Brazilian reality must be constantly and violently supported and sustained so that it can defend its claim of remaining “the way things are done.” As the state is one of the most powerful holders of power and violence (Max Weber) and is indeed strongly influenced by elite interests (Poulantzas 1968, Miliband 1969), it becomes clear why the Brazilian state has been

accused of actively participating in the oppression of its own peoples.¹⁶² The Brazilian state defends the interests of included Brazilians *against* the interests of the excluded, as Caldeira (2000) and Pinheiro (1997) have pointed out.¹⁶³ The systematic exploitation of women, children, wives, indigenous people and Afro descendents all were persistent Brazilian institutions, difficult to change as they are perceived as “normal,” “the way things always were,” “tradition,” or just “right.” As reifications reflect back onto individuals and order their lives, institutions develop into roles and identities and become consolidated and reified within individuals, who construct their identities around role expectations. Once a patterned way of doing things has become institutionalized and elevated into common sense, it not only structures behavior, but also thinking and the perception of reality, limiting otherwise available options. As the discussion about racialized exclusion in Brazil has shown, perceiving racialized others and thinking about them as being “inferior,” and their oppression and subordination as “normal,” is deeply anchored in Brazilian reality. As such it oftentimes escapes scrutiny, especially by those that share those lifeworlds.

Recognizing that any reality is a social construct provides the theoretical ground that opens the door to understanding and analyzing how individuals are connected to their

¹⁶² By Caldeira 2000, Pinheiro 1997, Hanchard 1999, and others.

¹⁶³ Foucault described the powerful and violent ways governments have tried to discipline people and turn them docile and obedient. He has labeled this power “governmentality.”

societies. It allows locating the places where change must necessarily start: with agents. And it provides for the possibility of evaluating the necessary scope of change, because it shows that change must not stop at the individual level, but needs to become institutionalized in order to affect the broader society. Institutionalization can lead to reification and once this is achieved, it has the potential to go full circle and reflect back on individuals, as reification translates into internalization of a new normality. Wendt (1999) points out that not individuals, but collectives, constitute “social kinds,” and he also points to the fact that individually held ideas can develop into collective ideas that then constitute a reality, which reflects back on the constituting individuals. If the human condition is such that people have to learn and be socialized into societal structures, then individual learning and socialization are the necessary, although not sufficient, starting points for change.

Democratic Praxis

The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997) has integrated this understanding of normalized oppression into his own writings on education for liberation. Oppression, in Paulo Freire’s words, echoing those of Frantz Fanon, has denied the oppressed their very humanity. As a result, the reaction against this oppression must recognize and address this denial. Groups that claim to advance the interests of the excluded must empower excluded groups and individuals in such a way that they can re-gain their humanity. This can only be done by working *with* them, and not just *for* them, breaking with Brazil’s

institutionalized and normalized exclusion that has always denied the poor, black, and similar exotic “others” the right to integrate head-positions of the political body. Thought of as legs, arms, and hands, they were always denied the right to determine for themselves what is best for them. For Freire (1989), only through the conquest of “head positions” can the perpetuation of this type of exclusion be ultimately changed, so that the oppressed can regain their humanity. The strategy that Freire points to is one of “revolutionary praxis.”

Freire’s use of the concept “praxis” is rooted in Marxist tradition, especially the writings of Antonio Gramsci.¹⁶⁴ According to Gramsci (1999), an oppressive reality, anchored in the way people define their common sense can only be overcome through revolutionary praxis. Such praxis unites theoretical and critical reflections with practical action and is aimed at challenging the status quo. This is done by questioning the common sense and working towards a new and just reality. Praxis also relates to the way Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have defined change. They argue that a progressive leftist strategy means to “deepen and expand [liberal-democratic ideology] in the direction of a radical and plural

¹⁶⁴ In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx (1846) had accused Feuerbach for not grasping the significance of “practical-critical” activity. In thesis three he explains that “circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself.”¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, “the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally only understood as *revolutionary practice* [revolutionäre Praxis, in the German original].

democracy.”¹⁶⁵ Instead of focusing exclusively on the proletariat as the main agent for change, on the expansion of the state as the *Deus-ex-machina* for all social perils, on the economy as the principle engine for solving social problems, and on revolution as the sole way to achieve change, these authors argue that change results instead from “the multiplication of political spaces and the preventing of the concentration of power in one point.”¹⁶⁶ In other words, the gradual expansion of democratic spaces, where power is not organized hierarchically but is diluted formally and procedurally, bears the potential for a “truly democratic transformation of society.”¹⁶⁷

The Nature of Civil Society

According to Habermas (1989), civil society is a sphere separate from the state and from the economy. It is not the arena of market relations and not that of control. As a result it has the potential to be the host of critical public discourse aimed at communication and understanding instead of buying and selling. Feminist theorists such as Fraser (1997) and Mansbridge (1990) have noted that civil society is also the realm where inequalities of power and domination are played out. Instead of treating civil society as only being the sphere of communication and agreement, therefore, it seems more fruitful to understand it

¹⁶⁵ Laclau and Mouffe 1985:176.

¹⁶⁶ Laclau and Mouffe 1985:178.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

as a sphere of conflict and contestation that also bears the potential to host dialogue and understanding, making the assessment of its actual function an empirical matter. But as civil society offers the *potential* to host uncoerced and free communication, it can be the arena for democratic collective decision-making. As such, civil society can be the sphere where new, democratic, realities can be created through democratic interaction and dialogue. In other words, it can be the place for the creation, proliferation, and institutionalization of democratic praxis.

Accordingly, the description of civil society offered by Michael Walzer (1995) comes closest to its ambivalent nature. He describes it as “The realm of fragmentation and struggle but also of concrete and authentic solidarities.”¹⁶⁸ Walzer’s understanding of civil society captures its multi-faceted character, but he also understands it as a place where people can freely associate and communicate with one another, “forming and reforming groups of all sorts.”¹⁶⁹

Such a definition recognizes the conflictual nature of civil society, but does not make conflict the constitutive logic of it. Furthermore, such a wide definition leaves it to empirical assessment if in fact civil society is contributing to democracy or not. In

¹⁶⁸ Walzer 1995:162.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Habermas' work, civil society is intimately linked to the reproduction of democratic everyday realities and the lifeworld. He defines the lifeworld as "represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns."¹⁷⁰ The lifeworld is not one subsystem amongst others, but rather the broader horizon in which all the other systems are embedded. Sharing a lifeworld is the necessary condition for individuals to understand each other and create social realities through meaningful communication. But, according to Habermas, as modernity has triggered the differentiation of society into different subsystems that follow their own constitutive logics, free and uncoerced communication is only possible systematically within civil society, understood in the Hegelian sense as the sphere potentially independent from both the state and the economy. Both the economy and the state as subsystems reproduce themselves through specific media – money and power respectively. The reproduction of the shared lifeworlds within these systems follows instrumental rationality and consequently free and uncoerced discourse is not possible consistently, as those systems require and assert their constitutive logics onto the participating members.

Discourse in these subsystems cannot systematically follow reason, and within them it is not the better argument that wins, but rather the argument that is most instrumental in achieving more money or more power. Both these systems are also hierarchically

¹⁷⁰ Habermas 1998: 22.

structured, so that equality does not apply. Only within civil society therefore can free and uncoerced discourse occur, potentially unaffected by power, money, hierarchy, or tradition. It is within this realm that communication can lead to the creation of solidarity, and democratic lifeworlds can be produced and reproduced.

The Democratic Potential of Civil Society: the Habermasian Utopia

Once the full extent of racialized exclusion in Brazil is recognized, the question arises of how possibly to overcome it. Although many authors have used the argument that a free and lively civil society is able to consolidate existing democracies,¹⁷¹ most do not make clear why and under what conditions civil society can deliver on these promises. The most helpful analysis of the democratic potential of civil society is carried out by Jürgen Habermas. For him, the process of entering into dialogue and discursively agreeing on moral statements has the advantage of allowing for a democratic, anti-authoritarian, and critically self-reflective way to find mutually acceptable agreements, which is the only way of finding moral agreement under conditions of modernity.¹⁷² He finds that neither

¹⁷¹ E.g. Linz and Stepan 1996: 7.

¹⁷² His *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1989) has been evaluated as an effort to carry on the older project of the Enlightenment.¹⁷² Habermas' starting assessment of reality is taken from Max Weber (1922). Weber followed the older Enlightenment tradition of German idealism (Kant), arguing that the process of development consists of the expansion of reason and the gradual rationalization of the world. Compared to the traditional positive assessment of this continuous movement, Weber showed that modernity fosters only one kind of rationality – "Zweckrationalität", a purposive, calculating kind of rationality (later called "instrumental rationality" by Max Horkheimer). As a result, in Weber's opinion, the spread of instrumental rationality has not led to more justice, based on a more reasonable organization of society, but rather it has eroded the unifying moral grounds that were once grounded in a divine order. He labeled this trend the

the economy nor the state can host such “ideal speech situations” because the aim of dialogue within these two societal subsystems is coordination, not understanding. Within these arenas, instrumental rationality must prevail.

Civil society is the only place where potentially free and uncoerced dialogue can take place systematically, constantly renewing the moral bases of human social interaction. Habermas also shows that communicative action works not only through the decisions made in ideal speech situations. Very importantly, communicative action constantly renews and actualizes the “lifeworld” – defined by him as a “context-forming horizon of social action, the implicitly known, taken-for-granted background of our everyday reality, [a] culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns.”¹⁷³

“disenchantment of the world.” Weber thought that the rationalization of societies has not brought more freedom and justice, but instead has led western societies into a new form of domination, executed by an impersonal, extremely rationally organized, bureaucracy. For Weber, the future is an inevitable “iron cage.” Habermas criticizes Weber’s pessimism by elaborating on the possibility of an ongoing rationalization which escapes the iron cage. For him, different kinds of rationalization co-exist, depending on the inner logics of the societal subsystems where they occur. Building on Hegel’s (2000) distinction of civil society, state, and economy and Talcott Parsons’ systems theory (1968) he argues that the state and the economy foster the spread of instrumental rationality, but that civil society has the potential to host free and uncoerced “communicative action.” He justifies this possibility using the works of Durkheim (1953) and George Herbert Mead (1974). From Durkheim he takes the concept of “collective consciousness,” expressed through different kinds of solidarities. Using Mead, he argues that modernity has led to a “linguistification” of the sacred roots of morality. In the *Theory of Communicative Action* he agrees with Durkheim that rationalization has eroded the sacred bases of morality. Using Mead’s work on identity formation, he argues that the only possible substitute for a divine grounding of moral standards is to democratically and discursively agree on a binding morality, based on a dialogue of all those potentially affected by any decision (the so-called “ideal speech situation”). Habermas argues that this is possible, as language per se is based on understanding each other.

¹⁷³ Habermas 1989, Vol. II: 124.

Applied to the Brazilian case, Habermas' approach leads to the diagnosis that racialized exclusion has been anchored deeply in people's lifeworlds, as they perceive white privilege and black exclusion as "normal." This, in turn, sets the standard for the task of Brazilian civil society. Groups acting within the realm of civil society have to create inclusive, critical, self-reflective ideal-speech situations, and be particularly sensitive to the question of racialized exclusion if they want to overcome Brazilian exclusion. The strong emphasis Habermas places on procedures also suggests that for racialized exclusion to be ultimately overcome, different everyday realities and race-conscious, just, and equal lifeworlds have to be established in the course of collective decision-making. As both the economy and the state are dominated by instrumental rationalities aiming at control, rather than understanding, democratic realities can only be constructed and consolidated systematically within civil society.

Instrumental rationality undermines not only democratic lifeworlds, but also it erodes the bases of both the economy and the state, as those subsystems require a minimal social web of trust, trust which is being undermined by profit maximizing and calculating instrumental rationality.¹⁷⁴ Granovetter (1985) has shown that the economy has a tendency to undermine its own basis, by eroding the social connectedness and trust

¹⁷⁴ Granovetter and Sen make a similar argument, see Granovetter 1985, Sen 1977.

needed for people to engage in mutual economic interactions. The kind of discourse that sustains and constitutes the economy is self-interested and instrumental. It does not bear the potential for reflexive and critical discourse. Instrumental rationality is ill suited to hold a society together, because it doesn't produce solidarity, but erodes it.¹⁷⁵ Especially with the expansion of deregulated capitalism, Habermas sees the danger of the logic of the economy, namely instrumental rationality, penetrating other societal spheres – both the state and civil society. For him, this “colonization” of the lifeworld by instrumental rationality aiming at the maximization of individual profit is a danger that has to be avoided in order for democracy to endure.

Institutionalization of Democratic Praxis

Applying these insights to the concrete situation of racialized exclusion that characterizes Brazilian reality shows that organized groups within civil society have the potential to constitute democratic realities, conquering exclusive spaces for those who had previously been excluded. Excluded non or second-class citizens can create lifeworlds within their group that work against prevailing institutions of normalized exclusion. Doing so, groups acting within civil society can constitute democratic spaces that work against a hegemonic society and an exclusive civil society, constituting what Fraser has called *subaltern counterpublics* (Fraser 1997), or *black counterpublics*, in the words of Michael

¹⁷⁵ This goes back to Max Weber and was picked up by Habermas later

Dawson (1994). To gain voice and the status of being a full citizen whose opinion is respected in a group is an experience that empowers the individual, enables excluded groups to regain their humanity, and bears the potential to reshape and democratize broader society. This experience can have two impacts: it empowers participating individuals beyond the limits of the one group where this empowerment is produced; and it also empowers whole groups and bears the potential to influence the ways reality is defined and upheld in the entire society. The successful redefinition of what is “normal” and “right” depends on how strongly supported or opposed this alternative reality is by power. But even if a complete society-wide transformation of a racist and exclusionary reality into a just reality is utopian and will not be achieved at once, these steps towards deliberative democracy seem the most theoretically plausible.

The democratic potential of civil society therefore lies in the capacity of actors within it to create and maintain democratic realities through democratic social interaction and discourse. This can have an empowering impact on individuals, and, if, as Laclau and Mouffe observed, enough groups that define reality differently find enough power, they become able to expand and defend their reality through gradual institutionalization. The core mechanism at work is discursive interaction. Under conditions of modernity, civil society bears the potential (but not the guarantee) to provide for spaces of uncoerced discourse where traditions, institutions, and sedimented realities can be questioned, discussed, and, potentially, changed. Habermas has defined the conditions that must be

met for communicative action to prevail. He has called it the “ideal speech situation” where rational discourse is not distorted by power, wealth, tradition, or authority. He has labeled such a process “communicative action.”¹⁷⁶

The bridge that links change at the individual level to changes in the broader society and the state is one of institutionalization. In *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas (1998b) argues that

*The success of deliberative politics depends not on a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication, as well as on the interplay of institutionalized deliberative processes with informally developed public opinions.*¹⁷⁷

As pointed out above, social realities are institutionalized and endure because powerful interests support the status quo. Proponents of social change therefore need powerful support in order to transform prevailing realities. Habermas approaches this issue by introducing a concept of power taken from Hannah Arendt. Instead of understanding

¹⁷⁶ Habermas has laid out his main theory in the “Theory of Communicative Action,” (1981) but has ever since worked on the same topic. Innumerable interpretations and secondary literature on Habermas is also available. I find Cohen and Arato (1995) most helpful.

¹⁷⁷ Habermas 1998b: 298.

power as the ability to influence the action of others (Max Weber), Arendt had defined power as “the potential of a common will formed in noncoercive communication.”¹⁷⁸

Arendt’s distinction between illegitimate coercive violence and democratic power is helpful to distinguish the different phenomena commonly subsumed under the concept of “power.” For her, “communicative power” results from social movements and democratic will-formation.¹⁷⁹ This allows for the analytical differentiation between the mobilization of citizens’ communicative freedom for the formulation of political beliefs from other forms of power and violence that are less democratic. Communicative power has the potential to expand and influence other societal spheres, including the state. For both Habermas and Arendt, the medium through which communicative power translates into state power is the legal system, as communicative processes taking place within the public sphere provide the basis for the legitimacy of law.

Ideally this process can lead to a change of system-wide logic. If racialized exclusion is the main structuring logic of the current system, civil society has the potential and the task to construct a democratic and inclusive reality expanding and structuring the whole

¹⁷⁸ Habermas 1998b: 147. Habermas wrote an article about Arendt’s concept of power, entitled “Hannah Arendt: On the concept of power,” in: Habermas 1985: *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, Cambridge. He uses several of her writings (*The Human Condition*, *On Revolution*, and *On Violence*) to demonstrate her concept of power, called “communicative power.”

¹⁷⁹ Arendt, 1970.

system. Michael Walzer has summed up the relationship of democracy to civil society: “Only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society; only a democratic civil society can sustain a democratic state.”¹⁸⁰ “Realists” and rational choice theorists such as Przeworski (1999), Hinich and Munger (1997), and Keech (1995), have traditionally argued that deliberative models of democracy have a weakness, because they do not provide enough protection against anti-democratic outcomes. Instead, these theorists include power and rent-seeking into their models and look for ways to protect the common good against these threats. But these critiques fail to recognize or discuss the ways individual preferences and interests are constructed, for they take them as a priori givens. Hence they simply use a mechanistic model of “radical individualism,” where individuals are reduced to rational profit maximizers and not treated as being embedded in any kind of society. One of the major weaknesses of such undersocialized theories¹⁸¹ that are unable to explain why individual hold certain preferences, how they achieve them, and how they can change over time, is their inability to explain change.¹⁸² At the same time, non-participation, distrust, and self-interest also construct realities, but nasty ones, as Wendt (1999) has demonstrated in the field of international relations. There is no

¹⁸⁰ Walzer, 1995:170.

¹⁸¹ A term used by Granovetter (1985).

¹⁸² For rational choice this was done in several articles edited by Friedman 1996 in *The Rational Choice Controversy* and by both constructivists and Neoliberalists in International relations theory.

legitimate way to ignore social embeddedness and the social construction of realities, because social interaction is intrinsically meaningful.

Conclusion: Socially Constructed Realities and the Possibility of Change

Understanding the world as a social construct provides for a logical possibility of change and locates its agents and arenas within civil society. It also accounts for the weakness of democratic discourse. Indeed, historical evidence makes it clear how often democratic discourse succumbs to egoism, self-interest, rent-seeking and the will to accumulate power. But this does not invalidate the theory. It rather alerts us to the fact that democracy stands on thin ice and that it is important to be very critical when analyzing the places where democracy can renew itself.

In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate that the exercise and experience of democratic, uncoerced discourse empowers the participants. This empowerment has the potential to become reified, that is institutionalized, beyond the limits of the group in question. Constructing democratic spaces through democratic dialogue creates “alternative realities” where participants develop into full and equal participants, thereby exercising the skills of citizenship, if only in a small, semi-public group. But the reification of such a reality necessarily socializes participants and becomes part of their lifeworlds and therefore of their everyday realities and the ways they understand and reproduce the world in terms of their common sense. As such, the experience of empowerment has the potential to radiate into other, similar groups and into broader society. Democratic praxis

has the potential to transform victims of oppression and misrecognition into active citizens, as it allows them to empower themselves and thereby to re-establish their humanity and citizenship. This process has a chance to become institutionalized and consolidated if enough communicative power is accumulated to influence broader society and the state. Groups acting within Brazilian civil society have to follow such a democratic praxis and accumulate enough communicative, democratic, power to expand and to proliferate democratic spaces. In the chapters below I therefore analyze groups of organized civil society in Bahia, Brazil's "blackest" state, with the greatest number of Afro-Brazilians. I focus on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as the most visible actors of contemporary Brazilian civil society, comparing them to more traditional neighborhood associations, as the groups that are being gradually replaced by NGOs.

CHAPTER 5: NEW AND OLD SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN BRAZIL

The criteria developed in Chapter Four set very clear standards for how civil society must look and act in order to generate democratic change. To assess the potential of Brazilian civil society to contribute to democratic change, one must discern whether groups acting within civil society are creating and sustaining counter-hegemonic, or alternative-democratic realities. Accepting the strategy of “praxis,” it follows that no alternative realities can be created “for” somebody else, but that democratic praxis necessarily has to be a process of democratic participation of and by the misrecognized and excluded groups within Brazil’s civil society organizations.

Different influences impact on the composition and character of civil society. In this chapter, I examine the external influences relevant to the analysis of Brazilian civil society. Instead of focusing on the novelty of “new social movements” themselves, their “new repertoires” of action (Eckstein 1989), and their “new” focus on identity and difference (Melucci 1996, Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998, Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994), I argue that most Brazilian social movements, understood as a phenomenon of sustained collective action, are indeed not new at all, but have long traditions. Applying Sidney Tarrow’s (1998) framework of “political opportunity structures,” I find that since the 1970s in certain Brazilian states and municipalities, some social movements encountered new political opportunities that different branches of the Brazilian state and international donor agencies provided for some local civil society

organizations. I use the example of Brazilian black power movements and that of neighborhood associations to show that these groups are not a novelty, but have indeed been long active, advocating and organizing for social justice and democracy.

According to Abers (2000) Avritzer (2002), and the earlier writings of Moises (1982), Brazilian neighborhood associations have been active in Brazil at least since the 1940s, and Kim Butler (1998) and João José Reis (1986) have shown that contemporary Brazilian black power movements have their roots in colonial times. Because political opportunities are limited or constrained in states and municipalities that are dominated by traditional, conservative and authoritarian political machines, and because international donor agencies have provided new financial opportunities, professionally staffed and efficiently operating “Non Governmental Organizations” (NGOs) have been able to become in some places the “vanguard” of civil society (Fisher 1998).

I argue, therefore, that what is indeed a novelty in Brazilian civil society is the spread of groups self-classifying NGO and not that of “new” social movements. I argue further that the true novelty in Brazil has been a change in state roles, especially at the local level, producing new opportunity structures (Tarrow 1998) for some civil society groups in some places. Examples of this development are provided by Abers (2000), Avritzer (2002), and Tandler (1997), who describe innovate state-civil society cooperation in Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, Fortaleza, and other cities where traditional political

leaders have been replaced by new, democratic political forces. The “associational revolution” diagnosed by Salamon and Anheier (1997) therefore refers to NGOs rather than to social movements and neighborhood associations.

But not all Brazilian states and municipalities have changed traditional, center-right, and repressive strongman/machine politics for new, innovative, open, and democratic politics that provided new opportunities for local civil society organizations. In Bahia, where I carried out my research, local and state politics are still dominated by traditional, strong political “caciques,” as will be discussed later. In such places, state cooptation of civil society prevails and has narrowed the choices for civil society organizations. Some Bahian NGOs have been able to bypass state cooptation by tapping into international financial sources. Although receiving funding from international donors has allowed some NGOs to avoid state cooptation, Tvedt (1998) and others have demonstrated that international donors also pose threats to the independence of local civil society organizations, as they too pursue their own agendas, making strategic use of local NGOs.

NGOs on the Rise: The Emergence of New Forms of Civic Organizing

Salamon and Anheier (1997) find six events that had a significant impact on the proliferation of non-profit organizations and NGOs worldwide since the 1970s. These are, the crisis of the welfare state; the development crisis, leading to new developmental strategies, with more emphasis on participation by NGOs and local groups; the ecological

crisis triggering self-help action by citizens that do not want to wait for governmental action; the crisis of socialism; the revolution of communications of the 1970s and 1980s combined with a significant increase in worldwide educational and literacy levels; and finally the economic crisis of the 1980s that was preceded by two decades of global growth leading to material improvement and a numerical rise of urban middle classes in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. According to these authors, the frustration provoked by the economic crisis of the 1980s drove especially these classes into action.

These same authors show that in 1996 the nonprofit sector was employing 11.8 million workers in the seven developed countries included in their sample (U.S., U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Japan). In addition, some 4.7 million full-time working volunteers were active in this sector, in the sample countries. With an annual operating expenditure of US \$ 604.3 billion, they accounted for an average of 4.5 percent of their respective GNPs. Their main activities fell in the fields of education and research, health, social services, and culture and recreation. On average, forty-seven percent of their revenues came from fees and sales, 43 percent from governmental support, and 10 percent from private donations.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Salamon and Anheier 1996: xvii-xx.

The number of organized groups acting within civil society and calling themselves “NGOs” has exploded over the last 20 years all over Latin America. According to Salamon and Anheier (1997) more than 5,000 non-profit organizations and NGOs existed in Brazil in 1996, where even the term “NGO” was unknown some 20 years before. Adulis (1998) has registered 800 NGOs in the Amazon region alone. Salamon and Anheier (1994) have spoken of an “associational revolution” that started all over the world in the 1980s. Although it is not entirely clear what qualifies as an “NGO” and what differentiates NGOs from other, apparently similar, groups of civil society, the “structural-operational definition” used by Salamon and Anheier (1996) in order to define the nonprofit sector worldwide, provides a first criterion. These authors rely on Karl Deutsch’s criteria of *economy, significance, and explanatory or predictive powers*¹⁸⁴ for the selection of the best definition. According to the *structural-operational definition*, NGOs fall into a sector that is

1. Organized, i.e., institutionalized to some extent;
2. Private, i.e., institutionally separate from government;
3. Non-profit distributing, i.e., they do not return any profits generated to their owners or directors;
4. Self-governing, i.e., capable of autonomously controlling their own activities;

¹⁸⁴ Karl Deutsch 1963.

5. Voluntary, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation, either in the actual conduct of the agency's activities or in the management of its affairs. ¹⁸⁵

The types of entities embraced within the nonprofit sector, according to the structural-operational definition, are organizations acting in the fields of culture and recreation; education and research; health; social service; environment; development and housing; law, advocacy, and politics; philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion; international; religion; business and professional associations, and trade unions.

According to Landim (1997), groups calling themselves "NGOs" emerged in Brazil in the 1980s. Landim finds that the post-1985 years saw a boom of civil associations that grew up under the military regime and were therefore clearly in opposition to the state. These groups frequently shunned business and governmental support, and looked for support from international nongovernmental sources.¹⁸⁶ Landim also argues that "NGOs form a distinct category in the Brazilian nonprofit universe, mingling Christianity and Marxism, militancy and professionalism. They were born in the seventies, with strong influence of Marxist and Christian ideologies. During the eighties they passed through a diversification of conceptions, themes, and activities, which range from popular

¹⁸⁵ Salamon 1997: 33f.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid: 332.

movements to AIDS-related projects, to environmental protection, and to problems concerning women, ethnic minorities, street children, etc.”¹⁸⁷ For Landim, in the Brazilian context, the designation “NGO” indicates a commitment to civil society, social movements, and social transformation.¹⁸⁸ Fernandes and Carneiro (1995) list 1,010 registered NGOs in Brazil in 1994,¹⁸⁹ whereas Landim, based on more detailed and

¹⁸⁷ Ibid: 332.

¹⁸⁸ According to the research carried out by Landim (1997), Fernandes and Carneiro (1995), and others, the Brazilian nonprofit sector can be classified as consisting of nonprofit organizations, associations, philanthropic or charitable organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and foundations. Brazilian nonprofits organizations are legally recognized in Article 16 of Brazilian Civil Code (Law no. 3107, January 1, 1916. The old Brazilian civil code has recently been replaced by a new one, which will be effective by 2003). Brazil has a Roman law tradition where the civil code distinguishes among legal corporations according to the following categories: internal public law corporations (Federal, Federated States, Municipal, Federal District, and Autarchies); external public law corporations (e.g. embassies); and private law corporations. All nonprofits fall under the last category. Landim explains that any nonprofit organization can apply to be recognized as a public-interest entity by the state, but the state decides to which groups it will grant the label of “serving the public-interest.” (Landim 1997: 334) To be approved by the state, an organization must have existed for several years and demonstrated that its work serves the common interest. State approvals for “serving the common interest” are given at the municipal, state, and federal level, and lead to tax exemptions. All nonprofit organizations can apply for tax exemptions, if they meet the criteria established under articles 126 and 130 of the tax code. These are organizations that qualify as educational and social welfare institutions; societies and foundations of a philanthropic, beneficent, charitable, scientific, cultural, instructive, literary, recreational, or sports-related nature; associations; and trade unions.

The conditions that must be met in order for an organization to be recognized as “producing public goods,” as stated in article 130 of the income tax regulations and amplified in June 1990 by the Ministry of Justice, include the non-remuneration of directors; non-distribution of profits of any type whatsoever; application of all funds for maintenance and development of the organization’s objectives; maintenance of full accounts of revenues and expenses, and respecting conventions that ensure accuracy; and provision of information required by law to tax assessors or to collect withheld income tax (Landim 1997: 334f). In Brazil, “association” designates an organization based on contracts freely established among individuals to exercise common activities or defend common interests. It is virtually synonymous with nonprofit organization. Article 5 of the current constitution guarantees total freedom of association for licit purposes. Creation of associations does not depend on governmental authorization, and the governmental is barred from interfering with their activities, personnel, or finances.

¹⁸⁹ Fernandes and Carneiro 1995: 26.

extensive research, counted 5,000 Brazilian NGOs in 1997.¹⁹⁰ These authors provide no clear definition of what an “NGO” is, although Landim argues that “NGO is not a juridical term. It has connotations which are quite political; these do not, however, suggest that it is linked with any particular political ideology.”¹⁹¹

A total of some 200,000 non-profit organizations were registered in the Brazilian Federal Treasury in 2001, classified as dedicated to leisure, sports, and scientific, religious, and social assistance. Worker associations and trade unions were included, although they accounted for only 4.4 percent of the total.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ In Salamon 1997.

¹⁹¹ Landim 1997: 339.

¹⁹² Salamon 1997:40. Lester Salamon (1997), together with several collaborators, has mapped the field of non-profit organizations in several countries in a project called the *Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, which started to research the nonprofit sectors of 13 countries in 1990. Several publications resulted and provide a solid ground for the mapping of non-profit organizations in the world, including Brazil. Discussing the origins of this sector, Salamon (1994) types these organizations as originating from *below*, from *outside*, or from *above*. Starting from *below* refers to cases where people have taken matters into their own hands, as governmental provision was absent, incomplete, or unsatisfactory. Salamon writes about such cases: “The most basic force is that of ordinary people who decide to take matters into their own hands and organize to improve their conditions, or seek basic rights.” (Salamon 1994: 112) Originating from *outside* refers to pressure from churches, western private voluntary organizations, and official aid agencies that directly create groups, or that have a significant influence in their creation. Creation from *above* refers to national governments that downsize by privatizing former state functions. Several authors taking part in the Johns Hopkins research project also addressed the “myths” clouding the understanding of the functioning of this sector. Comparing data from several countries, Salamon concludes that the first is the myth of “pure virtue,” (Salamon 1994: 118) i.e. the assumption that the nonprofit sector is entirely virtuous. He argues that, although often originating in moralist, Christian, or other normative backgrounds, organizations of this sector, as they grow in scale and complexity, become vulnerable to all the limitations that afflict other bureaucratic institutions, such as unresponsiveness, cumbersomeness, and routinization. Carvalho (1995), for example, identifies the risk of bureaucratization as the most dangerous one for NGOs. The next myth addressed is the myth of voluntarism. Salamon shows that not all groups referred to as “voluntary” actually work exclusively with non-paid volunteers. In addition, they point to the fact that

In their study of Brazilian organized civil society, Fernandes and Carneiro (1995) characterize NGOs as “supercitizens,” because they see them as small and private, lacking representational character, but acting as if they were large and public. A survey done during the first national assembly of Brazilian NGOs, held in Rio de Janeiro in August 1991, where the directors of 102 NGOs were present, showed the following distribution of NGO activities: 40 percent of the present NGOs worked in the area of “advisory service”; 13.7 percent in research and documentation; 12.6 percent in popular education; 10.5 percent in technical consultancy; 10.5 percent in leadership training; in addition to other activities with smaller percentages. For these authors, Brazilian NGOs work as intermediate organizations, supporting broader social movements. They also demonstrated that the average educational level of NGO members was very high (with 85 percent of the leaders holding college diplomas and 39 percent graduate degrees), which was well above the Brazilian adult average. In 1991, 68 percent of the present NGOs had an annual budget of less than US \$500,000 and 85 percent had fewer than 35 staff members (55 percent even fewer than 10). It is also of interest to learn that 42 percent of the 102 NGOs did not work with any volunteers - clearly diverging in this aspect from other countries with more volunteer-based associations.¹⁹³

cooperative relations between governments and the third sector are more characteristic than antagonistic relations. Finally, he argues that the myth of “immaculate conception,” (Salamon 1994: 121) which refers to the notion that nonprofit organizations are essentially new in most parts of the world, hides the fact that the roots of nonprofit organizations can be traced back to the middle ages.

¹⁹³ Fernandes and Carneiro 1995: 28.

The different treatments of NGOs allow for two conclusions: First it becomes evident that attempts to define a-priori what an “NGO” is are not satisfying. Paralleling the treatment of civil society in Chapter 4, an assessment of what an NGO actually achieves is best left to empirical assessment. Theoretical, a-priori judgments of their nature and function risk to be biased and unilateral, easily influenced by the ideological positions of the researcher. But the different treatments about NGOs in Brazil and elsewhere help to elucidate the very novelty of this type of civil society organization, emerging first in the 1970s. The available literature also points to the main characteristics that appear to set NGOs apart from other civil society organizations, especially from social movements. According to the available literature, it appears that NGOs operate more professionally than traditional civil society organizations, such as social movements and neighborhood associations. This is due to the fact that NGOs employ above average numbers of highly trained experts. In addition, Brazilian NGOs appear to be less mass-based than older social movements and neighborhood associations, and therefore less representative of their targeted groups.

Social Movements and Neighborhood Associations: Old Repertoires?

Sidney Tarrow (1998) has argued that social movements are a form of “contentious collective action,”¹⁹⁴ which he defined as the collective action of people who “lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities.”¹⁹⁵ Tarrow’s approach of “political opportunity structures” helps to explain the increased number and importance of some social movements in some places of Brazil since the 1970s. For Tarrow, social movement politics are politics of contention, where marginalized groups demand more participation, democracy, wealth, services, and welfare wherever they are able to mobilize. Following his approach, successful mobilization depends on the ability to bridge cleavages and build social networks among such groups, and he found that states must ultimately provide, or at least not close off, the political opportunities to mobilize. Once this opportunity is given, movements have a tendency to create an “inner momentum” that permits their survival beyond the initial window of opportunity. Tarrow concludes that

Whatever the source of contentious claims, it is political opportunities and constraints that translate them into action. They produce social movements by

¹⁹⁴ Tarrow 1998: 3.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

*accessing known and flexible repertoires of contention; by developing collective action frames and collective identities; and by building mobilizing structures around social networks and organizations. While the opportunities and constraints in their environments give challengers incentives to mobilize, it is their cultural, organizational, and practical resources that are the foundations for social movements.*¹⁹⁶

According to Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998) and others, “new social movements” emerged and spread all over Latin America and Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s. These authors echoed the finding of Johnston and Klandermans (1995), Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield (1994), Melucci (1996), and McAdam (1994) who had studied “new social movements” in other regions and countries. The novelty of these movements, they argue, lay in their critique of their own society’s values and goals. Those new movements often stressed solidarity, ecology, and libertarian values and challenged mainstream economic growth theories. These authors have argued that the organizational structures of these new social movements emphasize horizontally diluted decision-making and non-bureaucratic organizational forms. Dalton (1990) found new social movements overall decentralized, open, and democratic.¹⁹⁷ Reflecting an academic trend that had focused too

¹⁹⁶ Tarrow 1998: 141.

¹⁹⁷ Dalton, 1990: 11.

narrowly on questions of resource mobilization, none of the “new social movement theorists” adequately addressed the causes that enabled these new movements to spread.

Most European and Latin American authors associated with the “new social movements” approach have put an almost exclusive phenomenological emphasis on their treatment of civil society organizations. Doing so, they found and stressed newness without further analyzing underlying continuities on the one side and changing opportunity structures for civil society organizations on the other, caused by changing state roles and a growing impact of international markets and donor agencies on state policy making after the end of Brazilian market protectionism in the 1980s. For most of these authors, Brazilian NGOs are part of a wave of new Latin American social movements. The research of Landim (1997), Fernandes (1995) and others points to the fact that NGOs are relatively new actors within Brazilian civil society, originating in the 1970s and 1980s, contrasting more traditional organizations, such as political parties, labor unions, social movements, and neighborhood associations. But as Landim has pointed out, Brazilian NGOs mostly employed people that had previously been active in similar groups contesting prevalent power relations.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Landim 1997: 339 f.

The search for phenomenological novelty therefore obscures the continuities and changes of the causes that have produced different manifestations and organizational forms within Brazilian civil society. This becomes even more evident if other civil society organizations, equally subsumed under the category “new social movements” are taken into account. The cases of the Brazilian Black Power Movement and of that of neighborhood associations are particularly enlightening in this regard.

Kim Butler (1998) has demonstrated that the Brazilian Black Power Movement has its roots in colonial times. Butler and Reis (1986) have both demonstrated that Afro-Brazilians have organized and fought for their freedom ever since slavery, creating different kinds of organizations and applying different kinds of strategies, depending on the opportunities they found. According to Butler, the industrialized context in São Paulo triggered a more political response to exclusion on the side of the excluded Afro-Brazilians in the post-abolitionist time period of 1888 to 1930, whereas the barely industrialized context of poor Bahia led to Afro-Brazilian organizing in the cultural realm. Butler shows how the Afro-Brazilian candomblé religion that is widely practiced in Bahia, along with other cultural activities, such as Carnival, functioned as spaces of resistance for the local black population.¹⁹⁹ Butler concluded that the nature of the

¹⁹⁹ Butler 1998: 206.

exclusion determined the forms of protest against it. For her, “as in São Paulo, activism in Salvador was a direct response to discrimination.”²⁰⁰

The continuous struggle of Brazilian black power movements has been able to gradually insert the voices of the excluded into national public discourse. In 2001, the issue of racism had become a more accepted public discourse, reaching the Brazilian state. Public statements by the President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the year 2001 and the participation of Brazil in the Conference Against Racism, held in 2001 in Durban, South Africa, provided examples for how far the communicative power accumulated by the Brazilian black power movement has been able to spread. In fact, the Brazilian black power movement has been able to challenge the hegemonic doctrine that Brazil is a racial paradise.²⁰¹ This recognition has created the possibility of discussing issues of affirmative

²⁰⁰ Butler 1998: 209. This argument resembles the finding of Mahmood Mamdani (1996), when analyzing the anti-apartheid protests in South Africa. Mamdani argued that “the form of rule shaped the form of revolt against it.” Butler and Mamdani, instead of finding new social movements in the places of their research, point to long traditions of resistance and activism that have changed over time, responding to the changing patterns of opportunities and restrictions imposed on them by the states in which they were embedded.

²⁰¹ Several articles in Hanchard 1999 tell the story of the Brazilian black power movement. Hanchard (1994) has also written a book about the black power movement of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, covering the time-period from 1945 to 1988. Lélia Gonzales has discussed the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU) in her contribution to the book edited by Pierre-Michel Fontaine (1991). George Reid Andrews (1991) has included a history of the São Paulo black power movement into his analysis of Brazilian race relations, and Kim Butler (1998) has compared Afro-Brazilian Post Abolition organizing in São Paulo and Salvador.

action and group rights.²⁰² Since the mid-1990s, the broader Brazilian public has discussed this possibility for the first time ever, which points to the importance of the communicative capital that Brazilian black power movements have accumulated over the last decades.

Paralleling the history of Brazilian black power movements, neighborhood associations have been part of the Brazilian political scene ever since 1940. Abers (2000), who analyzed the participatory budgeting process of the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, and Avritzer (2002), who studied Brazilian neighborhood associations in the cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Belo Horizonte, both emphasize that neighborhood associations started to appear in Brazilian cities in the 1940s. According to Abers (1998 and 2000), the first Brazilian neighborhood associations of the 1940s were called “Societies of Neighborhood Friends” (SABs).²⁰³

²⁰² The Minister of Education, Paulo Renato Souza, has addressed the topic of affirmative action in a public letter, where he argues against the position of the Brazilian delegation to the Anti-Racism conference in Durban. This letter, published in the *Folha de São Paulo* on August, 30, 2001 (p.A3), gives evidence that issues of race and affirmative action are no longer taboo in Brazilian public discussions and that the communicative power generated by the Brazilian Black Power movement has already impacted the Brazilian state. In 2002, the Ministry of Agriculture and several Federal and State Universities have adopted affirmative action policies in their admissions. On January 24, 2002, *Folha de São Paulo* published an article about racism in the Brazilian industry (p. B 10), entitled “Brazilian Company is white and male.” Articles like these have appeared since the mid 1990s in several major Brazilian newspapers and journals, such as *Veja*, *Isto É*, and *Folha de São Paulo*. See also Benedito, Vera Lúcia, forthcoming.

²⁰³ Abers 2000: 30.

Abers and Avritzer point to the increase of the number of Brazilian neighborhood associations in the 1970s and 1980s, in response to the growing public discontent with the repressive policies of the military regime, then in power. Abers argues that “after 1974, however, when the regime increased its efforts to mobilize electoral support at the local level, neighborhood activists gained confidence. New social policies and diminished repression suggested that civic organizing would be rewarded. At the same time, the economic situation worsened, with high inflation and a slowdown of growth rates. Under these conditions, civil society was reactivated on a variety of fronts.”²⁰⁴ Avritzer (2002) found that in São Paulo the number of neighborhood associations grew from 288 in the time period from 1940 to 2,553 in 1990, in Belo Horizonte, from 120 to 1,597, and in Rio de Janeiro from 188 to 2,498. In all three cities the strongest growth occurred during the 1970s.²⁰⁵

Abers (2000) further demonstrated that the importance of neighborhood associations in the city of Porto Alegre grew ever since the Brazilian workers party (PT) was able to gain control of this municipality in 1989.²⁰⁶ The PT government that took power in Porto Alegre in 1989 enacted a process of “participatory budgeting,” involving the already

²⁰⁴ Abers 2000: 30f.

²⁰⁵ Avritzer 2002: 84.

²⁰⁶ Abers 2000: 34.

existing neighborhood associations into a complex process of citywide collective decision-making about how to spend the municipal budget. Abers demonstrated that the opportunities that the new municipal government had provided for local civil society resulted in its growth and in an increased role of neighborhood associations as intermediaries between citizens and local governments. This was possible, according to Abers, because participation proved to bear tangible results within a relatively short time-frame of two to three years, and because the municipal government was consistent in its approach, fulfilling its promises when many cynical observers expected it to abandon them after election.²⁰⁷

Keck (1992) has shown that the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) is indeed organically linked to social movements, as it grew out of Brazilian labor unions when they were continuously reasserting themselves against more than a decade of repression and exclusion during the dictatorship. Similarly, Roberts (1998) has argued that the proximity of the Brazilian Workers Party to civil society organizations is responsible for a “blurring of distinction between the party and its constituent social organizations.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Abers 2000: 61.

²⁰⁸ Roberts 1998: 75.

The comparison of Brazilian neighborhood associations and black power movements, on the one hand, and NGOs, on the other, allows for the conclusion that indeed what has changed over time in Brazil, as Tarrow's theoretical framework would lead us to expect, are the opportunities and limitations imposed by the state on power-contending groups. The analyses of authors like Landim (1997) and Fernandes and Carneiro (1995) show that NGOs emerged massively in Brazil after the process of redemocratization was completed in 1985, whereas black power movements and neighborhood associations existed long before that date. At the same time, analyzing the accounts about neighborhood associations and state-civil society synergy provided by Tandler (1997), Abers (2000), and Avritzer (2002) leads to the conclusion that neighborhood associations increased their roles vis-à-vis local governments in such places as Porto Alegre, Fortaleza, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte.

All the places studied by these authors had experienced a change in local political power structures, creating a different incentive structure for civil society activists. In all these cities and states, traditional, clientelistic strongmen politics had been replaced or at least challenged by new, more democratic, political forces associated with the Brazilian Workers Party or other, non-traditional, political parties and candidates. But this replacement of traditional "cacique" politics has not occurred everywhere in Brazil. In the state of Bahia, where I carried out my research, traditional political leadership still prevails. There, the municipal and state governments have not been willing to delegate

power and resources to civil society organizations, and thus no “state-society synergy” (Tendler 1997, Evans 1996, Erickson 2001) has resulted. Instead, civil society organizations have been forced to choose between cooptation and extreme opposition, perpetuating the traditional split between “combative” and “clientelist” civil society that Abers (2000) detected.²⁰⁹

NGOs, emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, were able to circumvent this logic of having to choose between cooptation and opposition, because they were able to tap into financial resources provided by international donors. This possibility increased their independence from clientelistic local states, but it exposed them to the equally threatening influence of international donor agencies. To better understand why NGOs emerged so massively and why they became such visible and central actors in Brazil, and what costs the alliance to international donors involved, it is important to analyze the changing international climate in which Brazilian civil society is embedded.

International Influence on Brazilian Civil Society: Countering Communism

The period from 1945, the end of Vargas’ authoritarian regime, to 1964, when a civil-military coalition took over the state, saw a flourishing of oppositional and independent social movements. During that time many Brazilian church based organizations received

²⁰⁹ Abers 2000: 29f.

financial assistance from North American development agencies to counter the growing influence of Marxist groups in Brazil.²¹⁰ Thomas Skidmore (1969) explains in his appendix on “The United States Role in João Goulart’s Fall” that by early 1964, the United States government had become worried about the possibilities of a “sharp leftist turn” in Brazil. According to Skidmore, the then American ambassador to Brazil, Lincoln Gordon, believed that Goulart was on the verge of attempting a Peronist solution for the mounting political and economic problems.

Although the United States did not direct the military conspiracy that toppled president Goulart in early April of 1964, the United States government used a range of policies strategically to generate dissatisfaction with and opposition to the Brazilian government. According to Erickson and Peppe (1976), the US government used “training and exchange programs for labor leaders, military officers, politicians, businessmen, and others [in order to] indoctrinate(...) the participants against “communism.”²¹¹ Skidmore demonstrated that the United States government in the early 1960s was wary of President Goulart’s close relations with radical labor and the left and skeptical of his commitment to carry out economic reform (most importantly measures to counteract rising inflation

²¹⁰ Skidmore 1988: 37-39.

²¹¹ Erickson and Peppe 1976:29.

rates), so it decided in mid-1963 to withhold any direct assistance to the Brazilian federal government.²¹²

The United States continued, however, to provide aid to states governed by opponents of Goulart, thereby communicating its sympathies to potential coup-plotters. Relations with the United States quickly improved, once the military had deposed the President, replacing him with General Castelo Branco. The military regime's orthodox economic strategy, named the *Campos-Bulhões Plan*, after its two main drafters, and its outspoken anti-communist policy that restricted the freedom of association, won the sympathy of the US administration.²¹³ The United States reaffirmed its support for the dictatorship five years later. President Nixon, taking office in January 1969, created a commission to evaluate US-Latin-American relations and to suggest guidelines for US foreign policy objectives towards the region. Chaired by Nelson Rockefeller, a prominent Republican politician with long experience in Latin America, the commission visited Brazil in June 1969 and concluded that US AID should continue to support the authoritarian regime in Brazil, because "Communist subversion is a reality today with alarming potential."²¹⁴

²¹² Skidmore 1969: 324.

²¹³ Skidmore 1988: 37-39.

²¹⁴ Quoted in Skidmore 1988: 104.

The Brazilian military took power in 1964 because they claimed that Goulart and the left were plotting to overthrow the social and economic order and establishing a “trade union republic.”²¹⁵ Under the military regime unions and social associations were put under state control.²¹⁶ They removed the leaders of the most powerful and most militant trade unions, tightened existing corporatist controls over the unions, and drafted new regulations to prevent radicals or persons with political experience from running for union office.²¹⁷ Using a network of security agents that ultimately numbered a quarter of a million, they monitored the unions and most social associations.²¹⁸

According to Meyer (1999), international influence on Brazilian civil society started in the 1950s. Indeed, US President Truman proposed a ‘Point Four’ program “to tie together the government and private programs in the field of foreign aid.”²¹⁹ As a result, most US NGOs became critically linked and associated with US foreign policy, which became particularly clear during the Vietnam and Korean wars. The US government asked its allies in 1962 to give support to voluntary or private organizations “in order to widen and

²¹⁵ Skidmore 1988: 15ff.

²¹⁶ Landim in Salamon and Anheier 1997: 330.

²¹⁷ Erickson 1977: 157-158.

²¹⁸ Erickson 1981: 152-152.

²¹⁹ Quoted in Tvedt 1998: 48.

deepen the support for official development aid in the donor countries.”²²⁰ As a result, most donor-country NGOs started to receive most of their resources from the state. USAID activity therefore promoted US interests in Latin America, supporting private donor agencies and using them to carry out their foreign policy objectives in Brazil.

After the Cuban revolution, the United States intensified its foreign policy efforts in the region, using USAID as one of its main agencies. As Meyer (1999) puts it, “U.S. funding for the region ballooned during the decade of the 1960s. In real terms funding to Latin America in 1964 was more than nine times the 1955 level, and never again has it returned to those levels (...).”²²¹ In the trade union sector, for example, the North American Institute For Free Labor Development (AIFLD) claimed that by 1973 nearly 30,000 union activists had taken its courses.²²²

In general such international interference meant that foreign donors, such as USAID, started to create financial opportunities for organized groups of civil society in the 1960s. The military coup of 1964 dampened the growth of these groups. Although international financial aid still flowed, the receiving organizations did not encounter the political opportunities to expand in number and influence. The democratization of the 1980s

²²⁰ Ibid: 49.

²²¹ Meyer, 1999: 28.

²²² Erickson 1977:169.

finally provided the political opportunities for Brazilian civil society to spread. But in order to ensure institutional survival in times of budgetary restraint and increased exposure of the Brazilian market to international competition, only those groups that were able to cater to the agendas of international donors and that were administratively and professionally skillful enough to meet the high standards of the international donors were able to benefit from new international opportunities to raise funds, thereby circumventing the logic of restricted national economic resources.

In 1961, after the Cuban revolution, President Kennedy launched the “Alliance for Progress” program, consisting of a ten-year, US \$20 billion development package for Latin America.²²³ USAID again became an important organization for the execution of US foreign policy in Latin America under Reagan (1981).²²⁴ Funding rose again and so did the number NGOs all over Central and South America. USAID had already played a crucial role in supporting military regimes and promoting population control and sterilization in Brazil.²²⁵ The Reagan administration expanded its efforts to control leftist and oppositional movements all over Latin America, channeling money to those groups that fit its ideological, anti-communist ideology.

²²³ Meyer 1999:27f.

²²⁴ Meyer 1999: 30.

²²⁵ Alvarez 1998 in Escobar and Alvarez: 314.

Brazilian NGOs receive funding from a variety of sources. The relatively high yearly budget of some groups of my sample (up to 1.5 million US dollars per year) and the broad variety of funding agencies supporting them, point to the need for a professional fundraising approach. Indeed, one of the biggest NGOs of my sample received funding from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Welfare, Federal and State programs providing fiscal incentives for private donors, State Secretary of Social Action (SETRAS), Municipal Secretary of Work and Social Development (SETRADS), C&A Foundation, Ayrton Senna Foundation, Ecumenical Coordination of Services (CESE), Abrinq Foundation, UNICEF, Terra Nuova Foundation, Bahian Electricity provider (COELBA), Bank of Boston Foundation, and European Community.²²⁶

To be able to cater to their donors, the receiving groups must be highly professional and specialized in terms of their financial accountability, the grade of institutionalization, their fundraising mechanisms, and their efficiency and effectiveness at achieving their goals. The fund-raising process starts with applying for a grant, as most international funding agents require applicants to fill out complicated forms, sometimes including socio-economic background data and other statistical information not readily accessible

²²⁶ This information is public and can be found in the ABONG website.

to non-professionals. Petras (1997) has shown that, in order to qualify for funding, NGOs must have a functional organization and legal basis, and the donor must approve proposed actions. External funding therefore requires adequate organizational structures to be able to receive funding and administer them according to the high standards of most donors. External funding leads to competition for scarce financial resources, which in turn favors professionalization, as more efficient and better prepared groups are more likely to fulfill the requirements necessary to receive funding.

The high requirements of international donors therefore provides an opportunity for young, relatively highly-educated professionals to create groups where they could articulate their oppositional political agendas and find employment opportunities in scarce labor markets.²²⁷ At the same time, as Roberts (1998) argued, the economic restructuring taking place after the 1984 debt crisis, when labor rights all over Latin America were weakened and job “flexibility” strengthened, diminished the opportunities for the construction of workplace solidarities and further constrained the effectiveness of unionizing. The great variety of NGOs that proliferated in the 1980s provided new opportunities that also served states under pressure to cut back their spending, as state responsibilities could be shifted over to NGOs with much lower operating costs.²²⁸ Meyer (1999) has noted that the discourse of efficiency, promoted by NGOs in order to attract

²²⁷ Edelman 1999.

²²⁸ Meyer 1999: 48.

funds, served the government to justify contracting out to private groups the provision of public goods.²²⁹

Tvedt (1998) analyzed developmental NGOs, combining theories from political economy, especially theories of rational choice, public goods, and transaction costs. He found that political economy approaches à la Brown and Korten (1991), who argue that NGOs exist because the state or the market cannot supply a certain good, are misleading. According to Tvedt, economic reasoning leads such authors to argue that some goods are better produced by NGOs, because they can provide them with lower transaction costs. But Tvedt showed that NGOs in the countries he observed (Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia) had been created as a response to financial opportunities created by donors – both governments and international financing NGOs. He thus emphasizes the strategic character of most NGOs, i.e., that they thrive if they serve the strategic goals of donor governments and their institutional partners or agents, such as the World Bank.

Understanding the 1980s Proliferation of Brazilian Civil Society Organizations

From the accounts provided by Escobar and Alvarez (1992), Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998), and others, it seems that independent and oppositional civil society

²²⁹ Meyer 1999: 49f.

gained strength all over Latin America, and especially in Brazil, at the end of the 1980s, as military regimes all over the continent were tumbling. Alvarez and Escobar even diagnosed the upcoming of a new model of Latin-American democracy, characterized by direct participation of individuals and secondary groups.²³⁰ According to these authors, the new civil society organizations were different from older secondary associations, such as unions and political parties, because they were based on the concept of different identities. According to most of the articles that Escobar, Alvarez, and Dagnino (1997) assembled and the evaluation given earlier by Alves (1985), blacks, indigenous, women, gays, and ecologists have found in “new social movements” a new way of inserting their concerns and differences into the political process. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s this seemed very promising.²³¹

For these Latin American authors, a participative model of democracy, deeper and qualitatively different from both liberal democratic models and from party-state Marxist socialism, was surging in Latin America, and the global South was taking a head start in innovative social praxis. The aim of such theorizing was to break a legacy of post-colonialism still prevalent in Latin-American society and social science. Inspired by European theorists such as Alberto Melucci, culture and identity were declared the new

²³⁰ Escobar and Alvarez 1992: 327.

²³¹ Alves 1994: 152.

battlefields for citizenship, participation, and “the right to have rights.”²³² According to some, a Latin American model of democracy was arising – “better” than anything the old European models had to offer.²³³

But such positive, democratizing development has not occurred to same extent in all places of Latin America, or even within different Brazilian states and municipalities. Especially in the Brazilian Northeast, traditional strongmen, sometimes referred as “caciques,” have been able to perpetuate semi-authoritarian leadership styles. João Carlos Gomes (2001) and Celina Souza (1996) have shown that traditional political leaders, such as Bahian senator Antônio Carlos Magalhães, have even been able to further expand their political power after 1988, when the new constitution further decentralized the Brazilian federation, shifting more power to the states. Backed by increased state power, northeastern traditional political leaders have also been able to expand their influence to the national level, as Hagopian (2000) and Celina Souza (1996) have pointed out.

Accordingly, what NGOs, neighborhood associations, and social movements can do greatly varies from one place to another. The problem of understanding what accounts for the difference among the groups of civil society can therefore not be explained a-priori

²³² Dagnino 1998: 48.

²³³ E.g. Erickson 2001.

and per definition or by focusing exclusively on the emergence of new organizational forms.²³⁴ Indeed, different authors have made very different, and at times conflicting, claims about civil society and NGOs, further complicating the assessment of the roles of these organizations and making clear the need for case studies on them.

Some authors from the left have claimed that NGOs are mostly professional groups that abandoned the cause of the more authentic grassroots organizations, to implement development projects on behalf of government and international development agencies.²³⁵ For them, NGOs function as “development brokers” between grassroots organizations and financial donors. Even more radical leftist theorists have seen in NGOs the executive arm of western imperialism, co-opted by capitalism, and obscuring the necessity for class struggle.²³⁶ Authors such as David Rieff (1999), associated with the dogmatic left, typically point to the US National Rifle Association and similar interest groups and use these examples to support their argument.²³⁷ Petras (1997), applying a similar tactic, argued that most NGOs are functional in advancing neoliberal state

²³⁴ A point stressed by Markovitz 1998 and 1999.

²³⁵ Arellano-Lopez, 1994: 556.

²³⁶ Petras 1997.

²³⁷ Rieff 1999: 12.

agendas. But he too only considered one spectrum of groups - the ones that fitted best his theoretical argument.

Authors with liberal convictions and “development strategists” on the other hand, apply the same strategy of “making reality fit their theoretical frameworks.” They frequently use the term *NGO* closely to what Salamon has called *the myth of pure virtue*.²³⁸ Michael Edwards (1992, 1999), for example, tried to demonstrate the positive role of NGOs in advancing developmental goals, but only included positive examples into his samples. At the same time authors like Salamon and Anheier have spent great amounts of time and resources mapping the nonprofit sector worldwide, producing a variety of categorizations and definitions, but they have remained on the level of taxonomy and have not explained what accounts for the differences among civil society groups. Their work remains descriptive and does not contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of these groups on participating individuals, or on the societies where they act – the topic of greater concern to the present study.

Conclusion: New Opportunities Provided By States and International Donors

From the accounts of Abers (2000), Avritzer (2002), and Tandler (1997) it becomes clear that in certain places, Brazilian local and state governments have provided local civil

²³⁸ Most contributions in Reilly 1995; Cernea 1988; Edwards 1992; Riddel 1995; Segarra 1997; Putnam 1993, 1995, and 1996 fall under this category.

society organizations with opportunities to expand their role as brokers, mediating between citizens' demands and governments. This phenomenon has been praised by some (especially Escobar, Alvarez, and Dagnino 1992 and 1997) as a regional phenomenon, involving all of Latin America. The more skeptical accounts of Celina Souza (1996), Vilas (1997), Kingstone (1999), and Hagopian (2000) nevertheless point to the limits of this democratizing development. Not all Brazilian municipalities have seen a change of political leadership, from the traditional-clientelistic and authoritarian to the modern-democratic. Especially in the Northeast, traditional elites have been able to perpetuate their power positions. Instead of a universal, nationwide surge of "new social movements," Brazil therefore saw a spread of new opportunities provided only by certain innovative municipalities and states. Declaring some social movements and neighborhood associations a novelty, moreover, obscures the fact that their struggle for justice and equality has deep roots in Brazilian history.

In addition, there is a clear cost involved in taking advantage of new political and financial opportunities provided by local states and international donors, as the study of Brazilian NGOs has shown. Petras (1997) has pointed to the risk that NGOs might become more and more professional, having to compete for funding, which potentially has two negative results: to channel funds away from more traditional and less professional groups of civil society, and to undermine civil society networking, as each group has to compete against the other in a scarce market. Meyer (1999) argued that

NGOs make use of political and funding opportunities and use the entrepreneurial capacities of better educated, mostly young, professionals to produce public goods that are undersupplied by most Latin American governments.

The sweeping assumptions about new social movements, NGOs, grassroots organizations, and the nonprofit sector in general have not been helpful to better understand what the specific contributions of civil society are. These contributions are dependent, I argue from a political opportunity perspective, on the political context in which these organizations are embedded, and on the political and financial opportunities that states or private, national and international agents provide. Different organizations respond differently to the opportunities and the limitations that are imposed on them.

But even if assumptions about civil society are historically and institutionally contextualized, no theory seems currently available that allows for a critical assessment of how these external influences interact with the differences that characterize the broad variety of civil society groups in terms of their more or less democratic or exclusionary practices. As I have shown in Chapter Four, civil society organizations that want to live up to the claim of contributing to further democratization must have a democratic praxis that promotes and facilitates the active exercise of citizen roles by the historically excluded and misrecognized groups. In the following chapter, I therefore shift my focus from the political and economic opportunities and restrictions that weigh on Brazilian

civil society to the differences that characterize civil society organizations in terms of their internal structures and procedures.

CHAPTER 6: ASSESSING CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS: DEMOCRATIC MEANS AND ENDS

Although many authors have written about civil society, most of them write as if the component units of civil society have a uniform political impact. That is, they do not specify which groups within civil society contribute to further democratization, and which ones do not, and how and why they do or do not. Analyses have focused on the impacts of civil society on democracy, the economy, or society,²³⁹ or on the internal differences among the groups themselves and the different impacts of participation on participating individuals.²⁴⁰ Not enough emphasis has been put on what accounts for the differences amongst the groups – both in terms of their aims and strategies and in terms of the ways they pursue these aims. In other words, what is missing is a theory that allows for the comparative analysis of what accounts for difference among the broad variety of groups that are active within civil society, and of how these differences influence a group's impact on democracy. In this chapter, I propose a conceptual framework that allows for a critical assessment of the diversity among civil society groups and the different ways they relate to the broader political system.

²³⁹ Most typically this is the case for the work of Robert Putnam (1993, 2000).

²⁴⁰ This is especially the case for approaches within the “new social movement” literature and their strong focus on identity, e.g. Melucci, 1996.

I first review some of the available literature on this subject, pointing to the developments, achievements, and shortcomings of the currently available literature on civil society and its relation to democracy. I will outline an academic tradition going back to Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), finding in Robert Putnam one of its major contemporary advocates. Scrutinizing Putnam's concept of "social capital" in light of recent available literature on the subject makes clear that this concept obscures the differences that distinguishes groups, based on their different goals and the degree to which they employ democratic means to pursue them. First, it seems that the Tocquevillian approach of distinguishing civil from political groups is more promising than Putnam's treatment of conflating different groups under one single category. Secondly, from Habermas (1998), Gittel (1980), and Rosenblum (1998) it becomes clear that an organization's internal characteristics are important to consider, in particular the degree to which organizational structures and collective decision-makings are democratic.

Following the argument advanced above, it becomes clear that the assessment of the democratic contribution of a group is an empirical, rather than a theoretical matter. At the same time, theories must guide our attention and direct it to the relevant variables. The available literature points to the fact that to be democratic, a group must pursue democratic ends using democratic means. Accordingly, two sets of variables are relevant for the assessment of the democratic potential of groups acting within the realm of civil

society. First the degree to which a group follows democratic procedures, expressed through its institutional design and the ways collective decision-making occurs in actual practice. Second, it is important to pay attention to the aims different groups pursue, distinguishing between more or less democratic aims. I finish this chapter arguing that only those groups that pursue democratic ends through democratic means can contribute to consolidating democracy.

The Roots of the Discussion: Alexis de Tocqueville

Several authors have argued that a vigorous civil society contributes to the working of democracy. This approach to democratic theory has been labeled “Neo-Tocquevillian,” because most of its main insights go back to *Democracy in America*, written by the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) after he had traveled for one year in the United States, in 1830 and 1831. I will therefore begin the discussion of some of the relevant literature in civil society with Alexis de Tocqueville’s work *Democracy in America*.²⁴¹

Thinking about the contributions that associations play in democracies, Tocqueville distinguishes three different functions. For him, associations first provide a podium for minorities to articulate their viewpoints and to bring them into public discussion by

²⁴¹ I used the 1988 edition, translated by George Lawrence and edited by J.P. Mayer.

making use of gatherings, formal organizations, and political, social, and cultural associations. He stresses the importance of the press for the dissemination and circulation of topics and ideas advocated by minorities, as the press brings these issues to the attention of the broader public. Second, Tocqueville finds that associations have an important educational effect on the citizens. By becoming engaged in low-level political and civil issues, the people *learn* how to participate, and a political culture of participation and interest is created and maintained. For Tocqueville, this is the most important guarantee against tyranny, as it works against the danger of people retreating into individualism and ultimately egoism, which, according to Tocqueville, is inherently stimulated by democracy. Third, continued public participation, perceived as making rather small individual sacrifices in favor of the public, motivated more by self-interest properly understood than pure altruism, creates a net of mutual obligations and dependencies, counterbalancing the tendency of democracies to produce disconnectedness between its citizens.²⁴² Putting these three aspects under one common topic, Tocqueville shows that they together are responsible for creating democratic values and mores (*moeurs*).²⁴³ The importance of democratic *moeurs* lies in the necessity that democratic citizens keep alive a democratic spirit.

²⁴² Tocqueville defines “self-interest properly understood in chapter 8 of the second volume of *Democracy in America*: “The doctrine of self-interest properly understood does not inspire great sacrifices, but every day it prompts some small ones; by itself it cannot make a man virtuous, but its discipline shapes a lot of orderly, temperate, moderate, careful, and self-controlled citizens.” (Tocqueville 1988: 527)

²⁴³ Tocqueville 1988: 506f.

Tocqueville makes an explicit distinction between civil and political associations. In his opinion, political associations are more important. They provide “big freedoms.” But he thinks that the regular execution of small freedoms, like the opportunity to attend gatherings and public discussions of sometimes “ridiculous” things are the mechanisms that foster a constant habit of public and democratic discussion. It is their educational character that gives the civic organizations their importance, because they create a political culture of participation. At the same time, this is not enough for Tocqueville. The freedom to discuss minor issues, in civil associations, would be hollow and empty, if not sustained by the freedom to discuss important issues in political associations. But the *knowledge* needed to discuss important issues is acquired in the common discussion of less important issues.²⁴⁴ Tocqueville writes “When citizens have the faculty and habit of associating for everything, they will freely associate for little purpose as well as for great. But if they are only allowed to associate for trivial purposes, they will have neither the will nor the power to do so.”²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ *Democracy in America*, volume 2, Chapter 7: “Relationships between civil and political associations.”

²⁴⁵ Tocqueville 1988: 523.

Civil Society and Social Capital that help “Making Democracy Work”²⁴⁶

Robert Putnam and his co-authors have contributed to the field with now two books and several articles on the importance of “social capital” for democracy and economic development. Writing on Italy (1993), Putnam argues that social capital is the main causal variable to explain better democratic performance of some regional governments in northern Italy compared to others in the south. In his later book on the United States (2000), he claims that participation in American civil society associations has declined since the 1960s, threatening American democracy.

Putnam defines social capital as referring to “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action.”²⁴⁷ For Putnam, social capital is created in associations, such as neighborhood groups, birdwatchers, bowling leagues, movements, unions, and the like. This is Putnam’s adoption of Tocqueville’s basic insight. In his 1993 treatment of the concept, he does not further distinguish between these different groups and even dropped Tocqueville’s earlier distinction between political and civil associations. For Tocqueville, it made a difference if people meet to bowl or if they come together to discuss political issues. Tocqueville considered the latter to have more influence on the quality and

²⁴⁶ This is the Title of Putnam’s 1993 book on Italy.

²⁴⁷ Putnam 1993:167.

stability of a democracy. Putnam blurred this distinction, integrating both types of associations into his concept of social capital.

In the 1993 book, Putnam and his co-authors show that people living in regions with “civic traditions” have on average more trust in each other and in government, read the newspaper more regularly, are less cynical about politics, and contribute more to their communities. In uncivic regions, to the contrary, generalized climate of distrust brings people to try to get the most advantage out of any situation, ignoring long-term results, and to cheat as they expect all the others to cheat too. For Putnam, “citizenship in a civic community is marked, first of all, by active participation in public affairs.”²⁴⁸ In addition, he argues that “civic virtue” refers to “a steady recognition and pursuit of the public good at the expense of all pure individual and private ends.”²⁴⁹ Putnam finds that both systems can sustain themselves over time. After statistically testing what might account for better economic performance and democratic responsiveness of some, mostly northern, Italian regional governments, he found that these regions had a tradition of power sharing reaching back to the 13th century. According to Putnam, these “civic traditions” have

²⁴⁸ Putnam 1993: 87.

²⁴⁹ Putnam 1993: 88.

produced social capital, which is the main cause for better governance and better economic performance of the regions in question.²⁵⁰

Putnam (1993) quotes Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (1965),²⁵¹ and Michael Walzer (1980)²⁵² as having introduced the concept of social capital. Indeed, this concept seems to go back to the 19th century (Portes and Landolt 1996). Putnam's use of the concept can be traced back directly to Pierre Bourdieu and his general theory, brought forward in his book *La Distinction: Critique Social du Jugment* (1979). To the economic capital as explained by Marx, Bourdieu adds two other types of capital, namely social and cultural. For Bourdieu cultural capital is rooted in family tradition, where past accumulation and investment in education influence an individual's positioning in the societal space. This is manifest in types of *habitus*, which are patterns of taste and consumption.²⁵³ Social capital, in turn, is understood in terms of interpersonal connectedness, that is inherited and reinforced by economic capital. Against post-materialist analysts, Bourdieu maintains economic capital as an important variable to constitute the social space. For

²⁵⁰ Putnam 1993: 124.

²⁵¹ Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba 1965.

²⁵² Michael Walzer 1980.

²⁵³For a deeper discussion see: Bourdieu 1992: 143.

him, the positioning in social space happens through the accumulation of all three types of capital.²⁵⁴

Another author to use the concept before Putnam is James S. Coleman (1988).²⁵⁵ Coleman defined social capital as a resource resulting from social relationships that accumulate at the individual and the group level. Coleman defines social capital by its function, that is, that it facilitates action within a social structure. Coleman does not link this kind of capital to democracy in the way Putnam does. He rather understands it as a resource available to individuals, which they accumulated through prior social interaction. This resource accumulates and is enduring, so that it can be applied to achieve other goals than the one that was targeted when this capital was acquired. Such a treatment remains neutral with respect to the goals that can be achieved with accumulated social capital. Coleman's definition is grounded in an economist-functionalist reasoning, where accumulated social capital can reduce the transaction costs of social interaction.

Claims about Civil Society

Authors such as Keane (1998), Edwards (1992, 1997, 1999), and Linz and Stepan (1996) have adopted Tocqueville's and Putnam's framework and argued for the positive impact

²⁵⁴Bourdieu 1992: 212.

²⁵⁵James Coleman 1988: 95-120.

that civil society has on the performance and responsiveness of democratic regimes. Edwards and Hulme (1992) have argued that civil society, and indeed NGOs, are the main agents responsible for “making a difference” in the developing world. Edwards has repeated this doctrine in several publications thereafter (1996, 1999). Sonia Alvarez and Pablo Escobar in 1992 edited an important contribution that led to the better understanding of civil society in Latin America.

Following the positive assessment of civil society and its relationship to democracy advocated by other authors, Alvarez and Escobar conclude with a list of tasks that they attribute to civil society in general, and to social movements in particular. For them, the principal task of Latin American social movements is to democratize authoritarian social relations. Also, they argue that social movements mediate between communities and party systems, enhancing the quality of democracies as they force political parties to recognize them as legitimate interlocutors. In sum, these authors argue that social movements present a strategy of “transformation from below,” giving a voice to the poor and historically excluded. Doing so, social movements challenge dominant power structures and associated hegemonic discourses.

In their conclusion, Alvarez and Escobar argue that

We must also pay closer attention to the democratizing impact of the symbolic challenge to dominant discourses on politics and development posed by some

contemporary movements. (...) The symbolic reach of movements, in other words, often exceeds their social reach or measurable policy impact. The symbolic challenge posed by social movements has sometimes pushed other political and social actors, especially institutional actors such as parties, to reformulate their political programs and recast their discourses about seemingly consensual concepts such as democracy and citizenship.²⁵⁶

This focus on discourse reflects the incorporation of the work of Antonio Gramsci into the discussion. Gramsci (1999) showed that civil society could be a place for the organization and mobilization of the masses against capitalist elites. But Gramsci also explains that at the same time civil society reflects the interests of the dominant class, alienating the masses.

For Gramsci, alienation happens in the cultural sphere, but protest and revolution can also start in this sphere through the struggle against alienation and the organization for social change. Instead of a frontal attack on the capitalist state, Gramsci envisioned a “war of position” where workers could organize at their workplaces and promote a revolutionary counterculture. He also stressed the role of intellectuals in leading such a movement.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Escobar and Alvarez 1992: 327f.

²⁵⁷ Gramsci 1999: 333.

Such a theoretical reformulation opens the door for a shift of the anti-capitalist struggle from the economic basis to the superstructure – implying that change could start now and workers didn't have to wait until the system is overthrown and private property prohibited. Under such a perspective civil society can be the place where revolutionary organization can happen and where people can mobilize against a persistent order. Civil society then is not only a reflection of the capitalist mode of production, but has a degree of independence and autonomy from the state.

This incorporation of Gramscian notions of fighting against exclusions that are anchored in a society's common sense have brought several authors writing about Latin America to broaden their analysis of civil society and social movements. Evelina Dagnino, for example, writing about Brazilian social movements, argues that social movements in Latin America have advanced the very concept of democracy and created new democratic societal places for the previously excluded. In doing so, social movements are redefining the notion of citizenship as they expand accessibility to rights to groups that were previously excluded from full citizenship.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Dagnino 1998:47f.

Specifying the Concepts: Different Civil Societies and Different Kinds of Social Capital

Alvarez, Escobar, and Dagnino (1998) argue that civil society in Latin America has been the only available domain for contestation of dominant and hegemonic discourses, although, compared to their 1992 work, they have grown less optimistic that the impacts of civil society on democracy will necessarily be positive. Instead of assuming a positive role of civil society by definition, they now highlight the conflictual nature of Latin America's civil society. In their introduction, they acknowledge that "civil society itself is not one homogeneous happy family or "global village" but is also a terrain of struggle mined by sometimes undemocratic power relations and the enduring problems of racism, hetero/sexism, environmental destruction, and other forms of exclusion."²⁵⁹

They also differentiate among groups within civil society and argue that NGOs have had mixed influence, as many are linked to foreign donor agencies that influence their agendas. Lins-Ribeiro, in his contribution to the work, argues that "NGOs can indeed be an effective fragmented, de-centered, political subject in a postmodern world, but the cost

²⁵⁹ Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998:17.

of flexibility, pragmatism, and fragmentation may well be reformism - their capability to promote radical change may weaken."²⁶⁰

Alvarez and Schild (1998), in their contribution to the same book, advance the discussion further, distinguishing among different types of NGOs, labeling them "Neo," or "Para" NGOs. Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar are aware that civil society can be used as a forum to advance the interest of some individuals and groups over others, distorting democratic outcomes. In addition, these authors question the rigidity of the state – civil society division, arguing that sometimes those divisions are blurred, especially when groups receive support from the state and become quasi-state service deliverers. In a similar strain, Brysk (2000) points to the need to scrutinize civil society and assess the differences among the huge number of groups that act within this realm, noting that "a strong civil society (...) may not necessarily be a democratic one."²⁶¹

This discussion points to the fact that different civil societies co-exist even in one geographical place. Similarly, different kinds of social capital have emerged in recent discussions. Although Putnam does not elaborate further on what accounts for the different kinds, it seems that for him their distinctiveness is due to who participates, and

²⁶⁰ Lins Ribeiro in Alvarez, Escobar and Dagnino 1998: 336.

²⁶¹ Brysk 2000:151.

how different groups relate to their institutional and political environment. In his latest book, Putnam recognizes that some groups might not be open to all those potentially affected by their decisions, but still contribute to democracy. This points to the fact that Putnam has acknowledged the possibility of different kinds of social capital in the book he wrote seven years after his first major work. Dwelling on Ross Gittel and Vidal (1998), he argues for a distinction between *bridging* and *bonding* social capital. Bridging social capital refers to the older embracing concept of networks and trust that link individuals and groups. But now Putnam adds “bonding social capital” and argues that “Some forms of social capital are, by choice or necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. Examples of bonding social capital include ethnic fraternal organizations, church-based women’s reading groups, and fashionable country clubs.”²⁶²

The growing skepticism about the a-priori positive correlation between democracy and civil society has led to a more critical assessment of the different groups that populate the universe of civil society. Dietrich Rueschemeyer (1998) has advanced this discussion by specifying the relationship between what he called the “self-organization of society” and democratic rule. He first argues that deliberation in civil society and direct citizen participation in democratic governance has the potential to mobilize marginalized groups,

²⁶² Putnam 2000: 22.

to build and sustain networks, to enhance organizational skills, to produce deliberated preferences and thereby to further reason and rationality, to build up trust, and overall, to hold states more accountable.²⁶³ But Rueschemeyer is also aware of the limitations of civil society. He argues that social participation is likely to be less supportive of democratic politics if it is apolitical in character, that the scale of social participation may be too limited to link consciousness formation to politics, that the scale of associations in which people participate may be too limited to affect regional or national political decision-making, that associations and organizations with an internal structure that emphasizes hierarchy and subordination may be inimical to democratic rule, and that some interests advanced by civil society groups may be at odds with democracy. And he is specific about the conditions under which civil society can have a democratizing influence. Rueschemeyer (1998) also stresses the role of the state as a guarantor for a free civil society, therefore making state autonomy a prerequisite of democracy and a democratic civil society.

Another group of authors, expanding on the distinction between civil and political associations made by Tocqueville, has tried to create different categories of groups. Stolle and Rochon (1998), for example, have argued that there are two types of social capital, one enhancing trust among members of one association, and another, which they call “

²⁶³ Rueschemeyer 1998: 9ff.

public social capital,” defining it as “generalized interpersonal trust and tolerance and cooperation towards citizens in general.” Based on this distinction, they find seven types of associations in Sweden, Germany, and the United States, using their divergent goals and activities as the main criterion to constitute their difference. According to these authors, associations differ from one another because they are dedicated principally to activities serving political, economic, or group rights’ interests, or to cultural, community, private, or social-leisure ends.

Miszlivetz and Jensen (1998, in Rueschemeyer, Rueschemeyer, and Wittrock), based on their research in Hungarian civil society, have distinguished among “quasi NGOs” (QUANGOs), “donor-driven ones” (DONGOs), “money-making organizations” (MONGOs), Mafia-led NGOs (MANGOs), and “fake nongovernmental organizations (FANGOs).²⁶⁴ Using a similar approach, Warren (2001) has called attention to “distinctions that make a difference.”²⁶⁵ Although he is able to point to some criteria that he judges important for distinguishing associations from each other, such as the degree of voluntary work involved, the relationship to the surrounding system, and the “goods or

²⁶⁴ Miszlivetz and Jensen 1998:93.

²⁶⁵ Warren 2001:94ff.

purposes” of an association, his approach suffers from a lack of theory that justifies why these and no other criteria are relevant.²⁶⁶

With the exception of the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, comparing earlier with more recent contributions it becomes obvious that the discussion about civil society has advanced as most authors have become aware that different kinds of groups effectively have different impacts on participating individuals and the democracies where they are embedded. A positive relationship linking civil society to democracy cannot be assumed a-priori. But at this point it does not seem clear what accounts for the difference between those groups that contribute to democracy, and those that don't. Although the discussions triggered by the re-introduction of social capital have been fruitful in allowing for the assessment of the relationship between civil society and democracy, the concept has shown to have two major weaknesses. Focusing exclusively on the outcomes and impacts of associations and civil society on democracy, it has obscured the importance of paying attention to the inner dynamics of associations. At the same time, and related to this shortcoming, social capital approaches have obscured the differences that distinguish among the broad variety of groups acting within civil society.

²⁶⁶ This problem is aggravated because Warren argues within a very narrow rational choice frame, not allowing him to consider less tangible factors.

Determining the Relevant Variables that Account for Difference Among Civil Society Organizations

Some authors have been able to elaborate criteria that allow for an empirical assessment of the difference of groups acting within civil societies. Marilyn Gittell (1980) pointed early to the necessity of paying attention to the inner characteristics and democratic procedures of associations. She argued that the way groups organize internally has important impacts on their democratizing influence on participants and the broader society. In her empirical study, she points to the fact that groups can have different patterns of leadership, different types of membership, and that they can pursue different strategies when relating to their environment. Researching US civil society groups advocating educational reform in the 1960s, Gittell found that groups with the most horizontally diluted organization structures are the ones that have most democratic potential. Researching 16 community organizations from Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles, Gittell found an emphasis on “service and advisory strategies”²⁶⁷ in lower-income communities. At the same time, calling attention to the importance of external influences on civil society organization, she shows that “those organizations which hope to survive, even if they began as advocacy organizations, must seek some form of external support; a condition which ultimately appears to result in their abandonment of

²⁶⁷ Gittell 1980: 85.

the advocacy role.”²⁶⁸ When discussing internal democracy, Gittell finds that “professional and imposed leadership cannot be easily adjusted to an emphasis on internal democracy. It is more concerned with maintaining the organization for its own sake and eschews the importance of membership, as a priority goal of the organization.”²⁶⁹

These findings point to the payoffs that exist between the need to pursue goal-oriented strategies in a professional and efficient fashion, and internal democracy. In general, Gittell points to the fact that the strategy of an organization affects the internal structure of the organization in terms of the ways membership and leadership are organized and structured.

Sheri Berman (1997) has demonstrated that the Weimar Republic collapsed because of a weak party system that was not able to channel the conflicting demands of a very vibrant civil society. She argues that the anti-democratic social movement of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) was able to organize and take over political power and that the state was too weak to hinder this. She show that historically, Germany had a very strong civil society, constituted by numerous associations, clubs, leagues, and the like, similar to the very

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Gittell 1980: 48.

civic north of Italy where Putnam found long traditions of civiness. Berman shows for the years of 1833 to 1933 that Germany had one of the densest nets of civic groups in the world, and Salamon and Anheier (1997) show that this is still the case in contemporary Germany. But in both Germany and northern Italy dense civil societies did not prevent fascism. To the contrary fascism was able to use and build on the existing nets of civic associations, facilitating its dissemination and speeding the victory of fascist movements.²⁷⁰ Under such a perspective, it is more likely that a constituency with strong civic tradition bears more anti-democratic potential than a constituency with weak civic traditions, which might lead to the counterintuitive hypothesis that social capital can also open the way for fascism.

Although authors like Berman, Fiorina, and Skocpol (1999) have used these and similar arguments to demonstrate that not civil society but the state is the most important guarantor of democracy, they do not assess the democratic quality of the different civil societies and social capital in question. Berman's account of pre-1933 civil society in Germany points to the overall anti-democratic character of the German civil society at that time, which was deeply influenced by militarism. Although Berman points to the "associational fetishism or mania" (for the German *Vereinsmeierei*) of Germany, she fails to capture the widespread anti-democratic content that had characterized German clubs

²⁷⁰ Fiorina makes this point in Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999.

and associations ever since the early 19th century. This is especially true for most political associations after the German's restoration until the WW I period. The anti-authoritarian and strongly militarized character that predominated German associational life was famously described by Heinrich Mann in *Der Untertan* (meaning "The Subject," but translated "Man of Straw" in the American edition) which made special reference to German fraternities, called "Burschenschaften," as breeding places of conformism, discipline, and anti-democratic mobilization. These and similar youth groups could easily be transformed into organizational cells of the national socialist movement, favored by their strong focus on discipline and obedience. This analysis points to the possibility of associations to create a kind of social capital that is anti-democratic in its content and quality, contributing to the spread of anti-democratic values, and ultimately functional to consolidating authoritarian social relations.

Nancy Rosenblum (1998), in her study of US voluntary associations, has indicated the broad variety of groups acting within this sphere. Focusing on the impact participation has on the participating individuals, Rosenblum finds that even those groups that follow democratic procedures do not necessarily produce democratic outcomes. According to her research, para-military groups can have a very horizontally diluted, and therefore democratic decision-making structure. Rosenblum (1998) therefore finds that "after all, many radical political groups viewed as ideologically subversive are organizationally similar to the general run of political associations and parties; they may even be internally

democratic.”²⁷¹ In addition, Rosenblum argues that participation in groups does not necessarily reflect back on the participating individual, as motivations to participate vary strongly and different experiences resonate differently in different individuals. Implied in such an understanding is also the fact that groups might be organized very exclusively and hierarchically, but still be very efficient in producing democratic outcomes. Rosenblum has also shown that for some individuals, it can be an empowering experience to participate in a hate group. Such a group might also be democratically organized, with horizontally diluted decision-making structures, where leadership is not concentrated on one person, allowing for the establishment of democratic collective decision-making that resemble the “ideal speech situation” described by Habermas (1989).

Conclusion: Means, Ends, and Praxis

Several conclusions follow from the discussion above. First, it becomes obvious that there is a need to distinguish among groups that act within the realm of civil society. It has by now been broadly accepted that different groups advance different goals. The distinction made between bridging and bonding social capital points to the need to also distinguish different strategies that democratic groups can ideally pursue. Secondly, in addition to focusing on aims and strategies, it also seems important to analyze the internal structure, or the means a group applies in order to advance its goals. This is important for

²⁷¹ Rosenblum 1998: 243.

evaluating the democratic quality that characterizes a given group. As the German and Northern Italian cases show, in the same way that democracies can be shallow and weak, formally democratic civil society organizations can be lacking democratic quality and content, or even be hostile to democracy.

Berman's discussion of German pre-1933 associational life suggests just that. Although strong networks were built, individuals did not have democratic learning experiences, and robust democratic realities, able to withstand the populist lures of fascism, were not institutionalized. Instead, the dense German civic networks were left intact and they became neatly integrated into the organizational structure of the German Nazi Party.

A third, complicating factor that requests consideration springs out of the necessity to assess the quality of representation of a given group. As the discussion about democratic praxis has shown, no democratic change can be achieved *for* someone else. Democratic praxis requires not only democratic procedures of decision-making and the horizontal dilution of authority, but also participation of those groups that have been historically excluded, misrecognized, and marginalized. This is especially the case for Brazil, as I have demonstrated in the chapters above.

The notion of democratic praxis also points to another important classification. The process of having dialogues across cultural and social differences must be considered as

more than a democratic means to reach a policy decision. If democracy is understood as a way of collective decision-making, then it is also an important democratic end in its own right. Although deeply rooted and highly normalized exclusion justifies bonding as a strategy for excluded groups to raise their collective voice and gain visibility in a public sphere, ultimately bridging must be more than a strategy, but an end in itself, and therefore superior to bonding in terms of its democratic quality. Bystydzienski and Schacht (2001) have pointed to the need for dialogue in order to forge alliances among marginalized groups. Such dialogue must surpass oftentimes essentialized identities, where cultural, ethnic, or gender group differences are taken to be absolute and accounting for the impossibility to reach mutual understanding.

Habermas advances the same democratic superiority of dialogue across differences over the creation of absolute and insurmountable difference that ultimately forecloses mutual understanding. In a similar tone, both Nancy Fraser and Judith Butler have argued for the radical deconstruction of identities, pointing to the fact that identities are not fixed, given, or immutable.²⁷² They highlight the fact that individuals have complex identities, composed of different socialized others. In the words of Schrift (2000), “the prison of

²⁷² Nancy Fraser 1997, 1998 and Judith Butler 1998.

identity is no less oppressive when it is imposed from without by the majority on the minority than when it is self-imposed (...)"²⁷³

This discussion allows for an empirical assessment of groups acting within civil society. Applied to the sample of Bahian NGOs, this theoretical frame calls for the analysis of at least two dimensions of any group in question. First, it is important to assess the aims and goals any given group pursues. Tocqueville's distinction between civil and political activities calls attention to the political or apolitical character of the activities envisioned by a group. This criterion alerts us to the problem of conflating such leisure-oriented groups as bowling leagues with much more politicized groups that meet in order to advance political goals. Rosenblum's account of US associational life also reminds us of the broad variety of groups that are active within this realm, encompassing everything from hate groups, highly institutionalized nonprofit intermediaries, long-standing faith-based organizations, and spontaneous neighborhood assemblies. They are all part of civil society, and excluding certain groups from empirical scrutiny by definition and focusing one's research on just those groups that fit the purpose has not proven helpful, as my discussion in Chapter Five has demonstrated.

²⁷³ Schiff 2000: 154.

Second, it is important to assess the democratic content or quality of any given group. This refers to both the representation of historically excluded groups in any given association and the degree of democratic decision-making per se. In other words, a group cannot claim to advance democracy if it doesn't have a democratic praxis, which refers to the effective participation of historically excluded groups in collective decision-making and as members of higher authority echelons within a group, and to the democratic quality of the decision-making process per se. The Habermasian utopia of an "ideal speech situation" can serve as an ideal standard against which empirical praxis can be measured and compared.

Prepared with these theoretical insights, I will proceed, in the following chapter, to analyze Bahian NGOs.

CHAPTER 7: CIVIL SOCIETY IN BAHIA: INDEPENDENCE BETWEEN STATE POWER AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS

In this chapter, I analyze NGOs and Neighborhood Associations of the city of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. The conceptual discussions developed in the preceding chapters have guided my inquiry to focus on degrees of internal democracy and of the active participation of misrecognized groups in the organizations of my sample, constituting a group's "praxis." Democratic praxis requires that those groups of Brazilian society that have been denied the right to participate as peers in social interactions, become equal partners within Brazilian civil society organizations. The historical development of Brazilian civil society, outlined in Chapter Five, has also led me to compare different types of organizations that are active in Bahian civil society. During my research, I found that the most visible groups within Bahian civil society were organizations referring to themselves as "NGOS" and "Neighborhood Associations." In addition, literature review pointed to the rising importance of NGOs within Brazilian and indeed Latin-American civil society.²⁷⁴ Bahian neighborhood associations, on the other side, appear to be pushed into the background by the traditional political leadership that dominates the Bahian state and the municipality of Salvador. At the same time, neighborhood associations seem to

²⁷⁴ Especially Meyer 1999.

follow older “repertoires” of political activism.²⁷⁵ This constellation led me to analyze and compare Bahian NGOs with neighborhood associations.

After explaining the methodology used during my research in Brazil, I proceed to assess the democratic praxis of the seventeen NGOs and of the two neighborhood associations of my sample. I also discuss the political and institutional contexts in which Bahian civil society is embedded in order to point to the external variables that interfere in structuring it. The empirical evidence suggested that the traditional, center-right, power holders that dominate Bahian politics have reduced the political options for Bahian civil society. This finding, in turn, points to why it is important for civil society organizations to maintain independence from the state and from international donors in order to pursue advocacy roles and in order to establish and maintain a democratic praxis.

Method

I assessed the participation of misrecognized groups within civil society organizations analyzing the effective participation of Afro-Brazilians in collective decision-making processes as they occur routinely. In addition, I assessed the institutional designs that characterize each group in order to find out the degree to which representatives of excluded groups are part of the decision-making body. I also analyzed the way collective

²⁷⁵ Eckstein 1989:11.

decisions were made routinely, measuring it against the “ideal speech situation” of ideal democratic decision-making.

As over 70 percent of the population of Salvador is Afro-Brazilian (*preto* and *pardo*), for groups acting within Bahian civil society to be representative of the population they should approximately reflect this proportion in their active staff and membership. In fact, racial exclusion has denied Afro-Brazilians access to higher-ranking societal positions, so democratic praxis would require that Afro-Brazilians be part of the higher echelons and decision-making bodies of such groups. Because racism has worked to destroy race consciousness, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, this representation has to be of Afro-Brazilians that self-declare “negro,” thereby making a political statement about their racial identity and consciousness.²⁷⁶

The Sample

The discussion in Chapter Five has shown that NGOs have assumed central positions in Brazilian civil society. Their “vanguard” character points to the fact that NGOs have been replacing other, more traditional, forms of organizing. The analysis of NGOs therefore allows for an evaluation of the changes that are occurring within contemporary Brazilian

²⁷⁶ Race affiliation refers not to a biological or somatic reality, but to a conscious, political association to a social group. In Salvador, somatic “whites” are almost non-existent. As a result, self-declaring “negro” is a feasible option for at least 70 percent of the population of Salvador.

civil society and it points to future trends. To put this analysis in context, I decided to also include examples of more traditional organizational types, namely neighborhood associations, because the neighborhood associations have long been the dominant form of organized contestation in Brazil. As neighborhood associations are being superceded by NGOs, contrasting those two organizational types allows for an evaluation of the consequences of such a shift.

I chose the city of Salvador, Bahia, as the main site of my empirical research, for two reasons. Bahian race relations and racial distribution provided the first and more important rationale behind my choice. At least 70 percent of the 3 million inhabitants of the city of Salvador are non-white. Accordingly, Bahian civil society should ideally reflect this proportion in their active memberships. Secondly, I was already familiar with several Bahian NGOs before I started this study. From 1995 to 1998 I lived and worked in Salvador, Bahia, as an NGO consultant. This facilitated my research, as I already knew most of the groups and was also known to them.

From June 2001 to January 2002, I was able to conduct systematic research in the city of Salvador, Bahia, for this dissertation.²⁷⁷ From my previous work experience and the contacts I had sustained since that time, I was familiar with some 12 NGOs that are active

²⁷⁷ I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Barbara Souza, who collected data for me.

in Salvador. The Brazilian National Association of NGOs – ABONG -- provided another list of groups, some of which I had not known previously. Not all Bahian NGOs were registered with ABONG, but together with the groups I knew from previous work and the groups I found while conducting research, I identified a total of 29 groups that called themselves NGOs and were headquartered and active in the state of Bahia. Of this total of 29 Bahian NGOs, 12 groups were active in cities other than Salvador, or in rural areas, or else they refused access for research purposes, or were temporarily inactive during my field-time, leaving me with a sample of 17 active NGOs in Salvador.²⁷⁸

Table I - ABONG Associates, Bahia, 2001: 21 groups²⁷⁹

	Associação Nacional de Instituições Sem Fins Lucrativos
1	CEADE - Centro Ecumênico de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento / <i>Ecumenical Center for the Support of Development</i>
2	CECUP - Centro de Educação e Cultura Popular / <i>Center for Popular and Cultural Education</i>
3	CESE - Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço / <i>Ecumenical Coordination of Services</i>
4	CJP-SALVADOR - Comissão de Justiça e Paz de Salvador / <i>Commission for Justice and Peace of the Archdiocese of Salvador</i>
5	CRIA - Centro de Referência Integral de Adolescentes / <i>Center of Integral Reference for Youth</i>
6	GAMBA - Grupo Ambientalista da Bahia / <i>Environmental Group of Bahia</i>
7	GRUPO OLODUM - Grupo Cultural Olodum / <i>Olodum Cultural Group</i>
8	LICEU - Liceu de Artes e Ofícios da Bahia / <i>Lyceum of Arts and Crafts of Bahia</i>

²⁷⁸ Although Landim (1997) has estimated a total of 5000 Brazilian NGOs and Adulis (1998) registered 800 in the Amazon region alone, only a total of 251 NGOs were associated nation wide with ABONG in 2002. Bahia has a relatively small contingent of associated NGOs, totaling 21 associates, if compared to other states with similar populations. Pernambuco, a neighboring state to the north of similar population, has 30 ABONG associates, the state of Rio de Janeiro has 54 associates, and the state of São Paulo has 47. The wide gap separating total numbers of NGOs from the number of registered NGOs with ABONG is due to the fact that ABONG membership requires the payment of a annual membership fee of 0.15% of the previous year's budget, a consolidated and publicly recognized continuity of action over at least 2 years, and the regular provision of documents certifying legal status, objectives, activity-plans, and other documents. ABONG associates, therefore, are the most effectively institutionalized NGOs.

²⁷⁹ Available online at <http://www.abong.org.br>.

9	PROJETO AXÉ - Centro Projeto Axé de Defesa e Proteção à Criança e ao Adolescente / <i>Axe Center for the Defense and Protection of Children and Adolescents</i>
	<i>not providing access or located and active in other Bahian cities or rural areas at the time of my research. 42 groups.</i>
1	CEAS-BA - Centro de Estudos e Ação Social / <i>Center for Social Studies and Action</i>
2	MOC - Movimento de Organização Comunitária / <i>Movement of Community Organizing</i>
3	ONDA AZUL - Fundação Onda Azul / <i>Blue Wave Foundation</i>
4	IJASF - Instituto José Américo Silva Fontes / <i>José Américo Silva Fontes Institute</i>
5	GAPA-BA - Grupo de Apoio à Prevenção à Aids da Bahia / <i>AIDS Support and Prevention Group of Bahia</i>
6	GARRA - Grupo de Apoio e de Resistência Rural e Ambiental / <i>Rural and Environmental Support and Resistance Group</i>
7	GRUPO GERMEN - Grupo de Recomposição Ambiental / <i>Group of Environmental Rearrangement</i>
8	FUNDIFRAN - Fundação de Desenvolvimento Integrado do São Francisco / <i>Foundation for the Integrated Development of the Sao Francisco River</i>
9	AATR-BA - Associação de Advogados de Trabalhadores Rurais no Estado da Bahia / <i>Association of Lawyers for Rural Workers of the Bahian State</i>
10	PROJETO IBEJI - Projeto Ibeji / <i>Ibeji Project</i>
11	SASOP - Serviço de Assessoria a Organizações Populares Rurais / <i>Assistance Service for Rural Popular Organizations</i>
12	VIDA BRASIL-BA - Valorização do Indivíduo e Desenvolvimento Ativo - Brasil! / <i>Valorization of the Individual and of Active Development - Brazil!</i>

Table II - NGOs active and accessible in Salvador at the time of my research but not associated with ABONG: 8 groups

	<i>not providing access or located and active in other Bahian cities or rural areas at the time of my research. 42 groups.</i>
1	CEDECA - Centro de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente da Bahia / <i>Bahian Center for the Defense of the Child and the Adolescent</i>
2	CIPÓ - Comunicação Interativa / <i>Interactive Communication</i>
3	DIDA - Escola de Música / <i>Dida Music School</i>
4	Grupo Cultural Bagunção / <i>Bagunção Cultural Group</i>
5	Movimento Pela Paz Valter Hufnagel / <i>Peace Movement Valter Hufnagel</i>
6	MIAC - Movimento de Intercambio Artístico Cultural / <i>Movement for the Artistic and Cultural</i>

	<i>Interchange</i>
7	Ilê Aiyê
8	PRACATUM

Categorizations and Thresholds

Several methodological difficulties arose and had to be addressed during the course of this project. The major one was the classification of who counts as “black” in a society where almost everyone has some degree of African ancestry and where whiteness is a very volatile attribute. From a biological standpoint, everybody is mixed to some degree, and racial “purity” has never existed (Gilroy 2000). In addition, in Bahia, there are virtually no somatic “whites.” Instead, as I have demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three, whiteness is a symbolical construct to justify privilege, lacking biological ground. Claims to white status, in other words, are claims to possess a form of capital that provides access and privilege. As such it is a highly desired good that cultural hegemony has made unproblematic and normal. In addition, cultural hegemony has alienated the Brazilian masses to the point where association with blackness or even self-identification as being black has traditionally being rare. As Clóvis Moura (1988), the Brazilian sociologist of race, has demonstrated in his analysis of the census of 1980, when Brazilians were asked to self-classify their race, a total of 136 classifications emerged, ranging from “acastanhado” (nut-like) to “vermelho” (red), including 15 subdivisions of “moreno/a” (brown).

The Brazilian Black Power Movement, especially the MNU (Movimento Negro Unificado) has put strong emphasis on raising the population's race-consciousness. A campaign was launched by activists of the MNU in the late 1980s especially to address the under-representation of Afro-Brazilians in demographic statistics that resulted from symbolic whitening. They used the slogan "*Não deixe sua cor passar em branco,*" which had the clever double meaning of "*Don't leave your color blank,*" and "*Don't let your color pass for white.*" This campaign aimed at convincing Afro-Brazilians to self-classify as black ("negro/a"). Self-classifying "negro/a" has become a political statement indicating race-consciousness. In addition, this and other campaigns, such as the "Black is Beautiful" movement, using slogans such as *100% Negro*, and *Proud to be Black*, has led race-conscious Afro-Brazilians not only to self-classify "negro," but also to speak openly about race issues, whereas average Brazilians typically deny their African descent and avoid race-related topics.²⁸⁰ Under the traditional perspective, recognizing and talking about race is "racist." Self declaring "negro/a" and openly discussing race is therefore an indicator for counterhegemonic race-consciousness. Accordingly, self-identifying "negro/a" is a political option open to almost all Bahians. By the same token, not self-identifying "negro/a" implies denying one's African descent for at least 70 percent of the population of Salvador, which is the percentage of "Afro-Brazilians" given

²⁸⁰ France Winddance Twine (1997) has documented the common tendency to avoid race issues in her ethnographic work carried out in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

by the National Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE), as it signifies engaging in symbolic whitening.

I asked all active NGO members in higher decision-making positions about their color and their race. Because of the ways race issues have been framed in the Brazilian discourse, the only relatively unambiguous indicator of self-association with the group of misrecognized Afro-Brazilians is self-identification on this question as “*negra/o*” and “*preto/a*.” According to Moura (1988) and Munanga (1999), other classifications, such as “white,” “*morena/o*,” “*mulata/o*,” and all the other categories that Moura has identified, indicate a tendency of symbolic whitening. In order to facilitate the reading and interpretation of my data, I have therefore bundled together all terms used to associate with symbolic whitening and labeled them “white.”

Less complicated was the problem of deciding what counts for an NGO. The most practical way to address this problem was to follow self-designation. In addition, I included those groups that were members of the national umbrella organizations of Brazilian NGOs, ABONG, although some of its associates use other labels. In selecting neighborhood associations, I looked for “ideal typical” examples, where the most important characteristics of neighborhood associations, such as being located in an urban *favela*, and being active in a broad variety of activities could therefore be observed. To select the two neighborhood associations for my sample, I followed indications provided

by CECUP, a local NGO, dedicated to popular education and an umbrella organization for Bahian community schools.

To evaluate democratic praxis, I analyzed how power and authority were distributed within a group, both in terms of institutional design, and in terms of routine collective decision-making. To operationalize the concept of democratic collective decision-making, I set a threshold where at least three active members of a given group had to deliberate regularly in order to make decisions that are relevant for the whole group. To determine “regularity,” I set a standard where collective decision-making must occur at least once a month.

I established a threshold of 50 percent to determine black representation in decision-making positions. In other words, if 50 percent or more of those individuals that were entitled to participate in collective decision-makings were self-declaring “negra/o,” I categorized the group as “representing blacks in positions allowing for participation in routine collective decision-making.” Another important criterion for assessing the democratic praxis of a group consisted of comparing the targeted population and the mission statements of a group with the characteristics of the group of individuals that routinely deliberated and made collective decisions. Ideal democratic praxis requires that targeted population and executing population be identical, or at least overlap.

I put strong emphasis on everyday praxis and daily routines of decision-making. I used participant observation and informal interviews to detect if important decisions were in fact made by a single person, by a core group, or collectively. Through this, I determined whether routine decision-making approximated ideal speech situations. Democratic praxis requires that targeted populations be actively involved in routine collective decision-making processes. In order to assess democratic praxis I inquired about the targeted population of each group and determined if a group acted *with* or *for* its targeted population.

To identify a group's effective goals and aims, I used the same methodology of participant observation and informal interviewing, complemented by the analysis of available documents about the objectives and declared aims of a given group. To this end, I gained access to the data set of the ABONG headquarters, located in São Paulo. Visiting ABONG in November 2001, I was able to look through the files and projects of all the 236 associates. Fifty of them had provided ABONG with outlines of their project aims and goals, and some had also made available descriptions of their methodology and focus groups. ABONG also holds a copy of the founding documents of all the associated organizations and allowed me access to these files.²⁸¹ In addition, the ABONG website

²⁸¹ Special thanks go to Sérgio Haddad, president of ABONG, for his kind support.

provides information on most of the groups I researched, including statements about their goals, objectives, and missions.

The theoretical framework outlined above does not allow for an assessment of the general efficiency or external impact of a group. It is restricted to analyzing the contribution of these groups in addressing and overcoming highly normalized racialized exclusion in Brazil and thereby, I argue, their contribution to the consolidation of Brazilian democracy. In other words, a group can be a very efficient service provider, or be instrumental in advancing highly desirable goals, such as environmental protection or progressive AIDS policies, but if such a group scores low in its democratic means, ends, and praxis, it perpetuates racialized exclusion rather than deepening of Brazilian democracy. Although I first present the groups of my sample by name and characteristics in order to allow for a critical assessment of the reliability of my findings, I have omitted names when analyzing their democratic praxis.

Findings

Bahian NGOs

My findings confirm the empirical work of Landim (1997) and the theoretical approach of Tarrow (1998). First, in the years starting with the presidency of Ernesto Geisel (1974), Brazil's military regime entered in a phase often referred to as "abertura" / "opening." The restrictions on freedom of expression and association imposed on

Brazilian society after 1964 gradually gave way to the beginning of Brazil's long transition to democracy. The first Bahian NGOs, just like Brazilian NGOs in general, were founded in the 1970s. Those NGOs founded in the 1970s reflect the restricted political opportunities of those years. They were rather directly linked to the Catholic Church, which granted them some degree of protection against arbitrary military action, or they were created as "carnival and recreational clubs," a designation that disguised their political nature. Nevertheless, those groups founded as carnival blocs all pursued clear political goals.

At the same time, as Alves (1985) has pointed out, "the application of coercion to a particular target has tended to generate support from previously inactive groups and thereby actually to increase the overall strength of the opposition."²⁸² Most leaders of Bahian NGOs had a personal history of struggle and activism against an oppressive military regime. They were, as Landim has argued, mostly members of the middle classes that had experienced the impact of a coercive government and had started organizing against the widespread abuse of human rights, torture, and the "disappearance" of oppositional political leaders. Roughly one third of Bahian NGOs was created in the 1980s. Those groups already encountered a more permissive political climate, especially after 1985. In addition, the 1968-generation had by then grown up and changed its

²⁸² Alves 1985:252.

strategy from more radical and contentious oppositional activities to more professional and constructive approaches, which also allowed earning income from one's political activity. In the 1980s the first environmental groups were founded in Bahia, reflecting a global arising of environmental awareness.

Democratic Brazil, with a new constitution to protect civil and political rights, accordingly saw another wave of NGO-creations. In the 1990s Bahian civil society activists created Afro-Centric groups, focusing on race-related discrimination. Race was a forbidden subject under the military regime and continued to meet strong resistance from powerful national interest groups interested in avoiding a potentially subversive race-solidarity. In the 1990s, enduring black power activism met with financial opportunities, mostly from international foundations, and this led to the creation of NGOs that tried to advance race-specific agendas. At the same time, in the 1990s, Bahian NGOs emerged that were dedicated to democratizing access to the media and that were responding to the very specific situation of Bahia, where music and carnival had developed into some of the biggest industries of the state. Several NGOs emerged that prepared poor youth for the new job opportunities in the growing music, entertainment, and tourist industries. Another type of NGO emerged in the 1990s, responding to the growing number of abandoned children living in the streets of the city. Several new NGOs started in the 1990s to offer daycare services for Bahian street kids.

Increased possibilities from international donors to channel financial resources directly to local NGOs, beginning in the 1970s, also contributed to the proliferation of Bahian NGOs in that time period. But whereas in the in 1970s and 1980s it did not require much technical know-how in order to receive foreign funding, most foreign donors changed their donating strategies in the 1990s. My interviewees made clear that NGOs receiving money from foreign donors and national funding agencies alike now had to operate professionally in order to receive funding, which involved a transparent and efficient administration of the received money, able to justify spending. The need to administer and spend the received money efficiently and the requirement to be accountable to the donors must be seen as one of the most important reasons to work with paid staff instead of volunteers. Whereas all earlier NGOs of my sample started out working exclusively with volunteers, they all started to pay staff members for their professional activities in the late 1980s. All those groups created in the late 1980s and in the 1990s already started out working with paid staff. At the time of my research, all 17 NGOs worked almost exclusively with full-time and part-time paid staff. Although some groups worked with some volunteers, the volunteers' presence and participation was not continuous and they were not part of the group that made collective decisions.

The professional character of NGOs was further reinforced by the mechanisms at work in the Bahian and indeed Brazilian "NGO market" on which NGOs compete for contracts. This was especially true for contracts with different government branches. Reading

through some project proposals formulated by Bahian NGOs and analyzing the ways the Brazilian government interacted with them, it became clear that an image of “lean efficiency” was created by NGOs, seeking to establish a comparative advantage against traditional, profit making companies. Since the 1980s, the Brazilian government has further stimulated this tendency of transforming voluntary NGOs into professional non-profit companies by privatizing some of its activities and shifting over to NGOs some of the responsibilities that were previously carried out by the state. Bahian NGOs at the time of my research, just like many Brazilian NGOs elsewhere, were carrying out highly complex tasks of public interest, such as providing for pre-school and basic education and job training for the excluded, sanitation and urbanization work in degraded neighborhoods, and the like. Because they lacked a complex bureaucratic structure and employed comparatively few professionals, NGOs were able to perform public tasks at much lower costs than state administrations.

Thought about from this angle, this tendency points to the ways international pressure to reduce public spending so that Brazil would be able to honor its foreign debt has translated into a need to downsize the Brazilian state apparatus but make it more efficient at the same time. Faced with such a dilemma, the Brazilian state has opted for the

devolution of some state responsibilities to private, non-profit making NGOs.²⁸³ Although this strategy allows for a reduction of public spending and a much cheaper provision of public goods by NGOs, empirical evidence also points to some problematic aspects of this strategy.

First, NGOs came to perform an “escape valve”- function, ultimately allowing state bureaucracies not to engage in structural reform, for it could maintain its inefficient but politically important clientelistic practices while using NGOs “to get the job done.” Revenues keep being spent inefficiently within the Bahian state bureaucracy, where corruption and clientelism blossoms, and NGOs have taken over some state responsibilities without having the necessary institutional strength to guarantee continued service. Secondly, NGOs, by taking over such highly complex tasks as health care provision, education, and job training, are forced to become more and more professional, competing against each other in a scarce funding market, which ultimately undermines their ability to cooperate and build networks that represent broader society and especially the needs of excluded groups.

²⁸³ This is an explicit strategy and a declared goal of the Brazilian state reform, starting in 1996, that was planned and executed first under minister Bresser Pereira.

Third, I found that most funding agencies, both national and international, were unwilling to provide NGOs with grant support for operating expenses, eroding their capacity to provide well-planned and well-administered services. Because donor agencies have to be accountable to their own constituencies who provide them with funds, they much prefer funding highly visible activities than appear innovative to those funders, rather than providing NGOs with the necessary institutional support that would enable them to carry out essential routine activities. This perverse logic demands that NGOs have a professional organization that enables transparent and efficient administrating of funds, but forces NGOs to do so without receiving the necessary money to do so. All NGO leaders complained about the difficulties of paying telephone bills and employing administrative staff, as most donor agencies were unwilling to pay for these “unattractive” expenses. As a result, NGOs were caught between two systems, each one primarily concerned with its own dynamics and survival: state bureaucracies that used NGOs to remedy its own budgetary crisis while maintaining apparent legitimacy, and international donors more responsive to their own constituencies than to the institutional needs of executing NGOs. In addition, by not providing routine institutional support, donor agencies failed to provide NGOs with grant funds to pay social insurance and pension contributions for their staff members. NGO employees in most groups I observed were not protected against illness, job-loss, and had no access to other basic constitutional rights of Brazilian workers.

All NGOs of my sample shared similar organizational structures, where a general assembly, meeting once or sometimes twice a year, elected a board of directors. The directors, who in most cases held honorary positions, sometimes included local notables. Overall, directors had very little influence on the everyday activities of the NGOs I studied. Most groups had an executive director, hired by the board of directors, to effectively manage the group's activities. Executive directors had different names, such as "president," "superintendent," or "manager," but they were always the ones that in the structural hierarchy followed below the board of directors, which in turn was legitimized by elections in the mostly yearly general assembly. Executive coordination was in most cases carried out by a single person, but some groups had a more horizontally diluted organizational structure, where different coordinators were responsible for their specific fields of activity, and they formed a council of coordinators. The people employed in these positions are earned above average wages, if compared to Brazilian realities. They were all highly qualified and trained professionals, resembling in almost every aspect CEOs of profit-making companies.

When inquiring about the representation and active participation of self-identifying Afro-Brazilians as staff-members of Bahian NGOs, I found that out of the total of 17 NGOs, only four groups, less than one fourth, had a participation of at least 50 percent race-conscious Afro-Brazilians in their decision-making positions. In other words, the majority of Bahian NGOs did not provide self-declaring Afro-Brazilians the opportunity

to participate significantly. Instead of counteracting the prevalent phenomenon of racialized exclusion and marginalization of misrecognized groups they have rather reproduced it.

Analyzing those four groups where self-identifying Afro-Brazilians participated in decision-making positions showed that three of these groups were historically linked to the Brazilian Black Power movement. In these three, active membership was exclusively Afro-Brazilian. The other group was an NGO created in the 1990s, with no direct historical links to prior Brazilian social movements, directed by a foreign white male. This finding is interesting, because it demonstrates that the prevalent exclusionary practices of included Brazilians, as I have described them in Chapters Two and Three, are being reproduced within most NGOs. Most Bahian NGOs I observed were run exclusively by included Brazilians who preferred to distance themselves symbolically from excluded and misrecognized groups by avoiding association with blackness. The only way Afro-Brazilians could participate in those groups was by denying their blackness and “passing” for white, using the traditional artifacts of self-declaring anything but “negro.” Only one group, directed by a European male, allowed self-identifying Afro-Brazilians to participate significantly side by side with Caucasian-Brazilians. The other three groups where blacks played significant roles were exclusively Afro-Brazilian. Analyzing their history it became clear that all three groups were founded

in response to the exclusionary practices of dominating Brazilians, not allowing blacks to participate.

But my theoretical framework points to the necessity of representation beyond mere presence in any given organization, in order to assess its democraticness. Democratic praxis, understood in the ways Paulo Freire has defined it, requires that misrecognized groups participate as full and equal members in the decision-making processes of an organization. Only where such participation has become part of everyday routines can empowerment of excluded and misrecognized peoples' result, able to create and sustain counterhegemonic, inclusive realities that can expand and become reified. Of my total universe of 17 Bahian NGOs, only four were candidates for this further scrutiny, as the other 13 were exclusively staffed with self-declaring "non-blacks," not even coming close to the critical 50percent threshold I have established.

Analyzing those four NGOs that did employ blacks, I found that only one group created and maintained daily routines that came close to an ideal speech situation. In this group, weekly meetings were held to evaluate the activities of the past week and to plan the activities of the coming week, allowing for collective deliberation. In these weekly meetings, the boundaries separating benefactors from beneficiaries that characterized the prevalent exclusionary praxis of broader Brazilian society were blurred. Once a week, all participants came together to evaluate the work of the past week and to plan the activities

of the coming week. Although some members of the groups had assumed leadership functions, efforts were made to distribute work equally among all members. This was also the only group where monthly payments of leaders almost equaled the payments of any other participant. Voluntary participation was equally high. Most importantly, this was the only group where the targeted population – poor, Afro-Brazilian youth – had an active say in the course of action taken by this group, overcoming the prevalent dominating practice of working *for*, but never *with* excluded groups. Otherwise misrecognized individuals did find a voice in this group and they had an opportunity to exercise their citizenship rights. During the weekly meetings, democratic speech situations were created and sustained that transcended the exclusionary practices of broader society. This group actively reified a democratic reality that empowered the participants.

Asking what differentiated this group from others, I found that the group was entirely managed and maintained by local youth. The group received less than average external funding (in 2001 the group had received some 100,000 Brazilian Reais / 50,000 US dollars from both national and international donors), and voluntary participation was very important. The founder and all participating members were local residents. Interviewing the founder of the group, himself a young local resident, I found that he was the only NGO leader of my sample who had stepped back from his post as executive coordinator in order to open way for other participants.

Inquiring further about his motives, it became clear that his primary motivation was not staying in office in order to guarantee regular income. All other NGOs of my sample paid their executive directors relatively high wages of above 2,000 Reais per month, an amount that less than 10 percent of Brazilians earned in 2002. This fact points to the colonization of NGO lifeworlds by economic logics, as described by Habermas (1989). Especially in Salvador, where official unemployment rates stood at 12% at the time of my research, but where about 40% of the economically active population was active in the informal sector, did not benefit from basic securities and protections of the labor code, and earned salaries below the minimum wage, the importance of protecting one's job in an NGO becomes apparent. Economic scarcity and self-interested protection of one's job therefore work against the consolidation of a democratic praxis within an NGO as the logic of solidarity tends to be replaced by a logic of instrumental rationality aiming at defending personal economic advantages.

Analyzing the other three NGOs where self-declaring Afro-Brazilians participated I found that most important decisions were made by one or two central authorities, which in these cases were all men. None of these groups allowed a broader collective to participate in deliberations and none included them into effective decision-making. In none of these groups was information distributed equally, and power and money were concentrated in very few hands.

As my framework suggested, it is not enough to analyze the internal democratic qualities of any group in question in order to determine its effective contribution to consolidating democracy. It is also important to consider the kind of relationship a group establishes to its environment, for Nancy Rosenblum (1998) has shown that it is possible for a democratic group to advance anti-democratic goals.

When analyzing the Bahian NGOs of my sample, I found that none of them pursued anti-democratic goals. The mission statements and declarations of all 17 NGOs declared as one of their main goals “education for social justice.” Four NGOs originated in the cultural and artistic activities of the Bahian carnival and had close links to the national Black Power movement. Three NGOs were institutionally linked to different Christian churches. Two of those were working as funding agencies for other local groups. One NGO was dedicated to environmental protection, and one to communication and media. A total of nine groups offered professional training courses for poor, marginalized youth in theater, construction, carpentry, the handling of computers, and musical education. Of these, musical education, especially percussion, was the most frequent. Six Bahian NGOs offered musical education as a means to “raise self-esteem” of poor black youth and as training for job opportunities in the local employment market. One group worked for HIV / AIDS prevention. Although some NGOs favored service provision over advocacy,

almost all groups declared that they were advocating for social justice, citizenship, and against exclusion.

This shows that Bahian NGOs, at least those that self-identify as such and that are recognized by broader society as NGOs, all pursue democratic goals. I found no hate groups, or organizations advancing narrow self-interested goals referring to themselves as NGOs. This is important as it goes against the argument claiming that “NGO” is a vague term that could be used to label all kinds of groups, including hate groups and profit-making organizations. Because tax-exemption is not easily achieved by Brazilian NGOs, for a group has to comply with the municipal, state, and federal legislation requiring it to serve the public interest and to submit its compliance to official scrutiny, very few “false” NGOs (or “FANGOS” in the terminology of Mischlitz and Jensen (1998, in Rueschemeyer, Rueschemeyer, and Wittrock) exist in Brazil, and none in the state of Bahia.

Table III - Sample of Bahian NGOs, acting in the city of Salvador in 2001²⁸⁴

		Official Statements / Objectives /	Targeted	Annual	Financial
		Organization	Population	Budget	Support
				2001	
1	CEADE - Centro Ecumenico de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento / Ecumenical Center for the Support of Development	Founded in 1983, responding to the need of providing financial credit to developmental projects, preferably to those of scarce resources and without access to official credit institutions (public or private). Dedicated to provision of financial credit to segments of the popular economy and Christian Churches, by means of making available technical and financial resources, seeking to promote socio-economic justice.	Cooperatives, Associations, and small-scale entrepreneurs.	R\$ 600,000 To R\$ 1,000,000	International aid organizations and other financial sources (not specified).
2	CBCUP - Centro de Educação e Cultura Popular / Center for Popular and Cultural Education	Dedicated to Education, Popular Organization, Popular Participation; Justice and promotion of Rights. Founded in March 1982 by a group of liberal professionals interested in working for education and culture, mobilization, and community organization of the low-income population that lives in the periphery of Salvador and the cities of the rural area of the Bahian state. The group has extended its work to include other states of Brazil over the last years.	Children; Popular organizations and social movements; teachers.	R\$ 100,000 To R\$ 300,000	International Donors (88%); Brazilian private companies, and Foundations (4%); Federal Governmental Agencies (8%).
3	CEDECA, Bahia - Centro de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente da Bahia / Bahian Center for the Defense of the Child and the Adolescent	Juridical and Psychological attendance for adolescent victims of sexual abuse and violence. Bahian branch of a national organization.	Abused adolescents in Salvador.	Unknown.	International Donors.
4	CESE - Coordenadoria Ecumenical de Serviços / Ecumenical Coordination of Services	CESE is a philanthropic entity composed by Christian churches. It is a lending institution founded in 1973, dedicated to provide financial resources for groups dedicated to land reform; popular organization and participation; justice and the promotion of rights.	Popular organizations; social movements; rural workers and their unions; women, Afro-Brazilians, Indigenous people.	R\$ 3,000,000 To R\$ 5,000,000	International aid organizations; Multi- and Bilateral agencies; Contributions of associates; others.
5	Cipo - Comunicação Interativa / Interactive Communication	Created in 1999 to educate children and adolescents in the use of communication media.	Children and adolescents of Salvador, ranging from 5 to 21 years.	R\$ 900,000	International donor agencies, Federal, state, and municipal agencies, Brazilian private companies and foundations, National and International Banks.

²⁸⁴ I translated and abridged the information of NGOs associated with ABONG, available online at <http://www.abong.org.br>. Information on NGOs not associated with ABONG is from my fieldwork.

²⁸⁵ I have translated and abridged the official statements given by the groups themselves.

²⁸⁶ In 2001, 2 Brazilian Reais were worth roughly 1 US Dollar.

6	Comissão de Justiça e Paz da Arquidiocese de Salvador / Commission for Justice and Peace of the Archdiocese of Salvador	Founded in 1982, responding to the demands presented to the Archdiocese about the violation of Human Rights. Dedicated to education; agrarian questions; racial discrimination; and the creation of work and income.	Squatters; Unions; Individuals in risk situations (homeless or under threat).	R\$ 100,000 To R\$ 300,000	International aid agencies
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		Origem / Endowment / Objectives / Activities	Beneficiários / Beneficiaries	Recursos / Resources	Fuentes / Sources
7	CRIA- Centro de Referência Integral para a Adolescência / Center of Integral Reference for Youth	Founded in 1994. CRIA originated in a fellowship provided by Mac Arthur Foundation to Maria Eugênia Milet, the acting general coordinator. This fellowship was used to create a Center of Performing Arts for the youth. The proposal was then extended to become a center of reference for adolescents, using theater as the main vehicle for the education for citizenship.	Children and adolescents, popular organizations; social movements; students.	R\$ 600,000 To R\$ 1,000,000	Brazilian private companies and foundations (49,2%); International aid agencies (34,4%); Service provision (6,2%); Federal government agencies (10,1%); State government agencies (0,1%); Municipal agencies (no specification provided)
8	Dida Escola de Música / Dida Music School	Music school for poor Afro-Brazilian girls. Education and investing in the self-esteem of Afro-Brazilian girls.	Poor, Afro-Brazilian girls and adolescents.	Unknown.	Unknown.
9	Grupo Ambientalista da Bahia - Gambá / Environmental Group of Bahia	Founded in 1982 to address environmental issues. Activities include education for sustainable development, environmental soundness, and the strengthening of other NGOs and social movements.	Popular organizations, social movements, general population, and other NGOs.	R\$ 600,000 To R\$ 1,000,000	International agencies (5%); Federal agencies (13%); State agencies (4%); others (78%).
10	Grupo Cultural Olodum / Olodum Cultural Group	Founded in 1979 to as an Afro-Brazilian carnival bloc. Since 1984 Olodum has extended its activities to include the education of poor Afro-Brazilian youth through professional training in music, dance, and theater.	Poor, Afro-Brazilian children and adolescents.	Unknown.	Own sales, federal, state, and municipal agencies, Brazilian private companies and banks, international donors.
11	Grupo Cultural Bagunço / Bagunço Cultural Group	Created in 1991 by a local adolescent of the Alagados neighborhood. Its mission is to work with local youth, promoting their rights through cultural activities and educational seminars.	Local poor youth of the Alagados neighborhood.	R\$ 50,000 To R\$ 100,000	International aid agencies and state governmental agencies.
12	Liceu de Artes e Ofícios da Bahia / Lyceum of Arts and Crafts of Bahia	Created in 1872 by local artisans to promote their own professional training. Today it offers technical training courses for local poor youth in construction, carpentry, and printing.	250 poor youth, students of Bahian public schools.	Unknown.	Self-sustaining.
13	Movimento pela Paz Valter Hufnagel / Peace Movement Valter Hufnagel	To combat violence at all levels of society.	Children and adolescents in risk situations, studying in Bahian public schools.	Unknown.	Unknown.
14	Movimento de Intercambio Artístico Cultural (MIAC) / Movement for the Artistic and Cultural Interchange	Umbrella organization dedicated to the promotion and training for art, education, health, and human rights.	Children and adolescents, educators, and community organizations.	Unknown.	International donors, Brazilian private companies and foundations, international foundations.

15	Bê Aiyê	Founded in 1974 as a carnival bloc reserved for Afro-Brazilians. In 1988, this group extended its activities to offer music and primary formal education.	Poor Afro-Brazilian youth.	Unknown.	International donor agencies, Federal, state, and municipal agencies, Brazilian private companies and foundations, National and International Banks.
16	PRACATUM	Founded in November 1995 to provide educational services and housing for the poor inhabitants of the Candear neighborhood.	Inhabitants of Candear neighborhood; poor youth of the city of Salvador.	Unknown.	International donor agencies, Federal, state, and municipal agencies, Brazilian private companies and foundations, National and International Banks.
17	Projeto Axé	Created in 1991 to educate children of poor families, especially those children living in the street. Areas of activity: education, health, art and culture, justice and promotion of rights, social assistance, STD/AIDS prevention.	Street children of the city of Salvador.	R\$ 3,000,000 To R\$ 5,000,000	International donor agencies; Federal agencies (17%); State agencies (58%).

Table IV - Participation of Afro-Brazilians and Democratic Praxis in Bahian NGOs

		Participation in routine collective decision-making	
Democratic Representation and Democratic Praxis: 1 group.	A	Weekly meetings of youth leaders from all neighborhood groups.	
Democratic Representation but no Democratic Praxis: 3 groups.	B	Weekly meetings among the coordinators of the three groups.	President. Afro-Brazilian male, self-declaring "negro."
	C	Weekly meetings among the coordinators of the three groups.	President. Afro-Brazilian male, self-declaring "negro."
	D	Weekly meetings among the coordinators of the three groups.	President. White male.
No Democratic Representation and no	E	Monthly meetings among the three coordinators. One white male, two Afro-Brazilian males, self-classifying "white."	Two "superintendents" and one "leader," all white males.

287 I have omitted names and shuffled the order.

288 This category does not include annual board meetings, but refers to institutionalized and routine decision-making. Collective decision-making is given where three or more people regularly meet to deliberate about actions that affect the group. I highlighted those groups where Afro-Brazilians, self-declaring "negro/a," made for at least 50 percent of the participants in institutionalized collective decision-making.

Democratic Praxis: 13 groups.	F	Weekly meetings of all 14 involved managers and educators, including two Afro-Brazilian females, self-declaring "negras."	Executive director. White female.
	G	Weekly meetings of the five managers. Four white females; one Afro-Brazilian female, self-classifying "negra."	General manager. White female.
	H	Bi-weekly meetings of the six coordinators and one executive secretary. Two members self-classify "negro/a."	Executive coordinator. White female.
	I	No regular meetings for collective decision-making.	Executive manager. White female.
	J	No regular meetings for collective decision-making.	General director. White male.
	K	Weekly meetings of the three managers. All three are white females.	Executive Secretary. White female.
	L	Bi-weekly meetings among the two Afro-Brazilian coordinators.	General manager. Afro-Brazilian male, self-declaring "negro."
	M	Monthly board meetings only.	General secretary. White female.
	N	Monthly meetings of technical managers, coordinators, and technicians. No self-declaring "negros" participate.	Three executive coordinators, two white males, one white female.
	O	Meetings of the two managers every two weeks. Both self-declaring "negro/a."	Administrative manager. Black male self-declaring "negro."
	P	Board meetings every three months.	Executive manager. White female.
	Q	No regular meetings for collective decision-making.	Founder, director, and general manager. Afro-Brazilian male, self-declaring "negro."

Bahian Neighborhood Associations: Between Independence and Cooptation²⁸⁹

In order to highlight the importance of my findings about Bahian NGOs, as well as the changes of the composition within Brazilian civil society that they symbolize, I compare them to Bahian neighborhood associations, for these represent more traditional forms of civic organizing, as I have argued in Chapter Five. To be able to assess democratic praxis, it is important first to describe the historical development and the political context of Bahian neighborhood associations.

²⁸⁹ Some of my findings in this chapter will also appear in the research report on democracy and educational reform carried out by the Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center, City University of New York, The Graduate Center, directed by Prof. Marilyn Gitell.

The two neighborhood associations of my sample were located in the periphery of the city of Salvador, in an area known as “Alagados,” which refers a bay area at the outskirts of the of the city of Salvador, where people have constructed houses over the water, standing on wooden stilts and interconnected with improvised wooden bridges. Both associations had a history of more than twenty years of community work in their neighborhoods, and both have achieved several goals. They have created elementary schools, kindergartens, and health centers to attend the local population of excluded, poor, Afro-Brazilians. Both associations also routinely organized events for parents and their children, leisure activities, computer training courses, and other professional training courses, aiming to increase the employability of the local population.

Demographic pressure resulting from rural migration to the city of Salvador pushed migrants to construct wooden huts over the water, as suitable dry land for squatting became scarce.²⁹⁰ Since 1948, when the first huts were built in the bay area know as *Tainheiros*, the number of people living under the most precarious conditions in this region had grown to some 100,000 by 2001.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Gordilho-Souza 1997.

²⁹¹ According to local informants.

At the time of my visits, local residents had filled up parts of the bay with construction debris and garbage. The Bahian state government was also responsible for land filling parts of the bay, implanting basic infrastructure and relocating inhabitants to more suitable (and sometimes very distant) regions. Governmental interference meant “clearance” for a lot of inhabitants, and therefore popular movements organized to defend their spaces and to confront the government that was trying to relocate them to newly constructed social housing projects far removed from Alagados.

Nevertheless, in 2001, most areas were still occupied, precarious, and unhealthy, and extremely underprovided by state services. Crime rates were high and basic services, like schooling, healthcare facilities, and leisure areas were scarce. Although most main roads were paved, almost all side roads remained unpaved. According to local residents, electricity often broke down, and drinking-water supply was not available to all households. Dengue fever incidences were high, and most areas did not have sewage systems. Both neighborhood associations had played strong advocacy roles for the inhabitants of the neighborhoods where they were located. Both associations were created in the 1980s, one with the help of a Protestant minister and his wife. Both associations advocated for schooling and health care, as those services were not available to the local inhabitants.

The inhabitants of the two researched neighborhoods organized in response to neglect and threat from the state: neglect, as basic infrastructure was not provided, and threat, as the state threatened to remove them. The local media often portrayed the Alagados neighborhoods as “dangerous places,” and as potential hiding places for criminals. Several younger inhabitants told me that they would lie when asked where they live, because they were ashamed. This is due to the fact that Alagados is stigmatized as a place where “marginals” live, which in Brazilian Portuguese bears a connotation of “criminals.”

The president of the Bahian branch of the Brazilian Federation of Neighborhood Associations (FAB) explained the history of Brazilian neighborhood associations:

The neighborhood association is implemented out of objective necessities. A neighborhood that has good health delivery, good schools, leisure facilities, and the like does not create an association normally. So they emerge basically in the neighborhoods that lack public services. (...) These neighborhoods had no asphalt, no public transportation, no medical post, no schools or bad schools, no leisure area, nothing – these are the objective questions that led to the creation of associations. Today we have some middle class neighborhoods, like Campo Grande, which is a neighborhood of the middle class, and Barra, that have an association, but this is a much more recent thing. Traditionally, associations are

created in peripheral neighborhoods, some of them recently established, characterized by all the typical necessities, from lacking pavements, to the inexistence of a simple school, even a rudimentary one.

So this is what gave rise to the neighborhood association in the years of the 1920s and 30s. To get an idea, in '64 (...) Salvador already had a federation of neighborhood associations; there was already a self-conscious movement. We have some associations that are more than 50 years old (...) until 1964, when there was a cut, with the implementation of the dictatorship. So there was a decline starting in 1964 and only in the 80s did the movement start to re-appear. (...)²⁹²

The members of the two associations I researched confirmed this general statement about the origins of neighborhood associations and grassroots activism in Salvador given by the president of their umbrella organization. One participant explained her own life history, shedding light on the reasons of her participation:

All this area was water, all the way from Calçada [neighborhood] to here. We lived in here, in huts over the water. My father worked for Petrobrás, so he had a

²⁹² Interview conducted on 09/06/01.

better life. He improved our lives, he was a sailor. So we moved to the part of the neighborhood where the water doesn't come in the house when it rains. Because before that, that's how it was. If it wasn't the seawater coming in, it was the rain. So I never accepted this, and although now I might have improved my life a little bit, I have not changed. I started studying in better schools. I participated in the student representation, my ideology was different. I did not agree with a lot of things. So at age 13, I started to participate in the social movement itself (...) Here at [name of the neighborhood associations has been omitted], we've had a lot of struggles, the struggle for a movie theater, the struggle for quality of life – not only quality of housing, because I don't think housing is enough. A lot of people have a house, but they don't have a good life. I think we have a right to leisure, to health, to everything. And through this I kept transforming myself, transforming because I thought one thing when I was a teenager and another today. When I was young I thought that everybody has equal rights and that the government should provide for them without anybody asking (...). Every year I go there and vote for them but I don't tell them what I need. If I trade my vote for bricks, for a can of milk, for a little bit of butter, for 10 Reais, I end up becoming vulnerable.²⁹³

²⁹³ Interview carried out on 9/24/2001.

Their activity has led the participants in these associations to become politicized. Most participants belonged to or actively supported a leftist political party. Most actively participating women also belong to several national movements, most saliently the black power movement and the National Movement of Black Women. Reflecting reasoning like that of the interviewee just quoted, one group deliberately chose not to sign any agreement with the government, fearing cooptation by it. One of the major activities of all Bahian neighborhood associations was schooling. Neighborhood associations have typically created "community schools" that were sustained by local *favela*-residents, offering primary and kindergarten education for the children of the neighborhood.²⁹⁴

According to the president of the Bahian branch of the Federation of Brazilian Neighborhood Associations (FAB), almost all poor neighborhoods in Salvador have at

²⁹⁴ The first documented Brazilian community schools go back to the 1940s. They sprang out of a National Education Campaign and were designed to help poor children into middle schools (LaBelle and Verhine 1981). During the 1970s, the popular movement for education grew and by the end of the decade, the state began to recognize the movement. Since then, community schools have been recognized by the state and are eligible for financial support, although to a more limited degree than state schools. Community schools, in turn, have been generally reluctant to cooperate too intensively with the state, as they fear state interference and cooptation. Today, some fifty community schools are active in the city of Salvador. Community schools are defined as small schools growing out of popular movements, situated in poor neighborhoods. All Community schools are institutionally embedded in and maintained by neighborhood associations, some receiving state funds, others not. Most authors writing on these schools agree that they originated in the 1970s in different places of the urban Northeast, out of concrete necessity and the experience of neglect fostered by exclusion. Therefore community schools are vehicles of the popular struggle for education and social justice, creating educational opportunities for a population that is left unattended by the state (Campos 1982, 1985 and 1992; Gohn 1985, 1991; Lazarotto 1990; Rosa 1999; Serpa 1990; and Sposito 1983, 1984 and 1993).

least one neighborhood association, some even more than one, because “there are groups that diverge and they end up creating another association.”²⁹⁵

Democratic Praxis

Both neighborhood associations worked almost entirely with volunteers. Although the associations employed schoolteachers and health professionals, their salaries ranged well below the salaries of public school teachers,²⁹⁶ and, when interviewed, most employed participants in associations stressed the voluntary character of their work. One participant in the local community health center that was created and sustained by the neighborhood association informed me that she was earning 160 Brazilian Reais (some 80 US dollars at the time) every month for her part time job. In an interview, she explained: “With 160 Reais you can’t do anything. I only pay my water and electricity bills with it. I do it because the association gave me that opportunity. I am an assisting nurse (*auxiliar de enfermagem*) and I came here as a volunteer. I worked for one year without earning anything, because I wanted to do it.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Interview conducted on 09/06/01.

²⁹⁶ During my research, full time public school teachers in the municipal and the state system earned a total of some 700 Brazilian Reais per month (some 400 US dollars at the time), and they also received social insurance benefits, whereas fulltime teachers in the researched community schools earned on average less than 300 Brazilian Reais, doing the same job.

²⁹⁷ Interview conducted on 09/24/01.

This statement of an “assisting nurse,” who is not qualified to write prescriptions or treat serious illnesses and who works part time in the health center of the association, is typical. It points to the costs of remaining in opposition to the government, especially the state and municipal branches that are dominated by center-right coalitions of traditional machine politicians. This neighborhood association was able to build a community health center, with the support and active help of the local residents, using a common strategy known as “mutirão.” In a mutirão, local residents are called to help constructing a house.²⁹⁸ But because no “synergy” exists between this neighborhood association and the local and the state governments, the building is almost empty and has not been endowed with any medical equipment. Even worse, no physicians attend the center, because the associations could not afford them and the government has not integrated the center into the public health system (SUS). During my visits, a group of German dentists, flying in once a month from Germany and staying for one week in the locality, were the only qualified medical professionals attending this center.

Both neighborhood associations of my sample had members of excluded groups in central decision-making positions. They both had self-declaring blacks participating effectively in decision-making, although the degree of democratic praxis varied between

²⁹⁸ Mutirões are mostly done on Sundays; volunteering neighbors and friends come together to build a house step by step, receiving free food and beer from the benefited resident.

them. Both groups were located in poor Afro-Brazilian neighborhoods, and the demographic composition of these associations resembled the overall characteristics of their communities, pointing to an overlap of the targeted population with the executing population that characterizes democratic praxis. Further scrutiny showed that one neighborhood association differed from the other because in one group, effective decision-making power was more concentrated in the hands of one person, a white middle-class female. This group was also the one receiving more external funding.

The importance of a democratic praxis as a form of empowerment of excluded groups and for the raising of their political consciousness became evident in the statement of one active participant in one of the neighborhood associations of my sample. When asked where her political, race, and gender consciousness came from, she said: "I think I learned it in my practice, working here for the association and for the school."²⁹⁹

Navigating between Alienation and Cooptation

In historical perspective, democratization allowed for cooperation between the state and civil society in several Brazilian states and municipalities, most prominently in Porto Alegre and Fortaleza, as Abers (2000) and Tandler (1997) have shown respectively. Both authors demonstrate that the synergy resulting from state-society cooperation is

²⁹⁹ Interview conducted 09/24/01.

dependent on the political openness of the dominant political power holders. Hagopian (2000) has argued that one of the major challenges to consolidating Brazilian democracy is posed by the legacy and strong influence of traditional political forces, especially in the Northeast. Bahia provides an example of a lack of political openness of the municipal and state governments and their unwillingness to cooperate with local civil society organizations. Bahian state and local politics are strongly influenced by traditional strongmen, especially senator Antônio Carlos Magalhães. This ex-governor, ex-minister, ex-mayor, co-owner of some of the major construction firms, owner of the largest Bahian TV channel (*TV Bahia*), and one of the major daily newspapers (*Correio da Bahia*), has not left much room for maneuver for Bahian civil society. As Bahian researchers Celina Souza (1997) and João Carlos Gomes (2001) have demonstrated, Antônio Carlos Magalhães expanded and ultimately consolidated his political influence through political clientelism and control of the media. While acting as Minister of Communications of President Sarney, he conceded several favors to Roberto Marinho, owner of the largest and most influential national TV station – *Rede Globo*.³⁰⁰ Magalhães turned to represent Rede Globo on the state level through gaining the concession for TV Bahia, owned by him. Rede Globo captures some 80 percent of the Brazilian audience. All Bahian high

³⁰⁰ Souza 1997: 120 and Gomes 2001: 336. This change of favors evoked strong public reaction at the time, resulting in several newspaper articles. The deal made by Magalhães involved pushing the Japanese multinational company NEC out of the national TV business and replacing it with Roberto Marinho's *Rede Globo*. NEC's Brazilian representative Mario Garnero wrote a book about this episode, entitled *Jogo Duro – Hard Game*.

schools created after 2000, some of the major city highways, some new public squares and even the newly amplified airport carry the name of Antônio Carlos Magalhães, or one of his family members. Gilberto Dimenstein, one of the most respected Brazilian journalists, labeled Antônio Carlos Magalhães “one of the finest symbols of the Brazilian oligarchy”³⁰¹

The carrot and stick policy of Antônio Carlos Magalhães and the perpetuation of a highly personalized leadership style perpetuated hierarchical societal structures of dependency and tutelage in Bahia more than in any other Brazilian state,³⁰² forcing Bahian civil society to opt between cooptation and opposition. Senator Antônio Carlos Magalhães and his Bahian team have demonstrated more than once that they do not tolerate opposition. Magalhães has been able to project an image of absolute power, based on fear and the constant projection of his omnipotence through the different media he controls. When asked about who the government is, one interviewee said: “Who government is? – ACM (short for Antônio Carlos Magalhães). It’s the person that ACM supports.”³⁰³

³⁰¹ Folha de São Paulo, March 23, 1994, quoted in Gomes 2001: 730.

³⁰² Gomes 2001.

³⁰³ Interview conducted 09/24/01.

Tendler (1997) has shown that democratic change in the Northeastern state of Ceará was initiated by the election of Tasso Jereissati for governor in 1987. According to Tendler, it was due to the breaking of traditional, clientelistic traditions at the state government level, initiated by the “young turk”³⁰⁴ Jereissati and carried on by his successor, Ciro Gomes, which explains the democratizing changes towards “good government” in this state. Tendler argues that the strategic alliances among different state branches and local civil society organizations that this new, non-traditional, government initiated, were the main causes for democratic change in Ceará.³⁰⁵

As my interview with the president of the Federation of Brazilian Neighborhood Associations (FAB) has shown, cooptation of those associations goes back to the 1980s, when then-president José Sarney (1985 to 1989), himself a member of the traditional Northeastern Brazilian political elite from Maranhão State, used neighborhood associations to distribute milk and food baskets. The politics of cooptation, control, and coercion towards popular movements that president Sarney started on the federal level endured in 2001 in the state of Bahia. Reflecting this situation, the two community schools researched received federal support to provide for free lunches, but have not been able to receive state or municipal support without giving up their autonomy.

³⁰⁴ Tendler 1997: 155.

³⁰⁵ Tendler 1997: 157.

The president of FAB explains how such clientelistic policies can co-opt contentious social movement organizations and transform them into compliant civil society organizations:

The community movement in all Brazil confronted a severe crisis after the government of president Sarney, because Sarney instituted a social program that consisted in distributing milk, right? And food baskets. And the government of Sarney chose the neighborhood associations to distribute the milk and the food baskets. So what happened? The associations that were created to advocate and struggle for the improvement of their neighborhood, for the creation of medical centers were there were none, for the construction of schools, leisure areas, and security – this role was relegated to a second level, because the need of the communities was so great that they had to go for the immediate goals. So what did they want? What did they chose as first priority? To get the milk voucher. Every family wanted to receive a milk voucher, which was good for 30 liters of milk per month, and every family wanted the food basket. So this suddenly became the main aim of the association. The activist struggle, the fight for better living conditions became secondary.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ Interview conducted on 09/06/01.

Antônio Carlos Magalhães and the traditional political elites associated with him have perpetuated clientelistic state roles in the state of Bahia. The policy of co-opting Brazilian neighborhood associations that was initiated by the Brazilian military and prolonged under President Sarney, still guided the policies of the political elites in power in 2001, dominating Bahian state and municipal governments.

As a result of the perpetuation of semi-authoritarian politics at the state and municipal level, Bahian neighborhood associations are left with only two options. They can remain in opposition to the state, which ultimately condemns them to be bypassed by the several state and municipal programs and their financial transfers, or they can cooperate with the state, which curtails their political independence.

Political power structures at the municipal and state level have strangled the political opportunities for Bahian neighborhood associations. In addition, Bahian neighborhood associations have not been able to take advantage of the financial opportunities that international donors provided. The same informant explained that

What stands out are those neighborhood associations of the left, at least they appear more, because they fight more and they present themselves more. The others that are close to the government don't have advocacy roles. (...) They don't go to the media to denounce the malpractices of the government. (...) The

ones in opposition to the government appear more because they are the ones organizing protests and demonstrations and closing streets.³⁰⁷

Conclusion: Power, External Influencing and Independence

The picture that emerges from the comparative analysis of NGOs and neighborhood associations in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, points to the strong influence that municipal and state power-relations have in structuring the field of Bahian civil society. The discussion of neighborhood associations shows that the dominant center-right coalitions in power at the municipal and state levels have perpetuated the policies of co-opting civil society organizations that the military regime initiated and that president Sarney continued. The dominance of traditional leadership styles, with their emphasis on the personal characteristics of political representatives and political loyalty, have forced organizations of civil society to opt between alienation and opposition. The costs of both are clear. If an association remains in opposition, it stays cut off from state and municipal support systems and has to rely on voluntary work in order to attend to such basic needs as primary schooling and health care provision. If an association opts for signing agreements with the government, it risks losing its critical advocacy role.

³⁰⁷ Interview conducted 09/06/01.

NGOs have been able to circumvent this state control by tapping into another source to guarantee their institutional survival and continued work: international donors. To be able to do so, however, NGOs have to have a highly qualified staff, able to raise funds and to execute approved projects according to the guidelines negotiated with the donors. But as Tvedt (1998) and others have highlighted, receiving funds from international donors also has a price, a fact that is confirmed by my own findings. In order to be able to receive funding from international donors, NGOs mostly employ privileged members of their society, thereby reproducing the structural inequalities and the racialized exclusion that characterize Brazilian reality. If the ways racial hierarchies have been reproduced and “normalized” in Brazilian society are the main obstacles to further democratization in Brazil, as I argue, then the reproduction of these racial hierarchies within NGOs does not serve, and may harm the advance and deepening of democracy, despite the achievement of the desirable goals they pursue.

Overall, these findings show how hard it is for civil society organizations to maintain independence from both the state and international donors as they seek to pursue advocacy roles and to establish and expand a democratic praxis. Almost all Brazilian NGOs have the struggle to expand citizenship written into their founding documents and the analysis of NGO documents, especially the mission statements written into their action plans, clearly points to the fact that Brazilian NGOs intend to contribute to the expansion of citizen rights for excluded and marginalized groups. Of NGOs of my

sample declared the struggle for citizenship and social justice as their main objective, although some effectively pursued more immediate goals that were only indirectly linked to this general objective. Although NGOs have been able to maintain more independence from the state, the necessity to efficiently deliver services and to compete for international funding has exposed their independence to a new threat, resulting from their connection to the (international) market of private donors.

My findings therefore confirm Habermas' evaluation of the threats posed by the by the logics of power and money that dominate the economy and the state, "colonizing" the free and democratic lifeworlds that civil society has the potential to create and sustain. These findings point to the fact that civil society's independence from the state and the economy is indeed crucial for its ability to contribute to democratic consolidation in Brazil. If the groups acting within civil society become "colonized" by the logics that dominate the market or the state, they risk losing their democratizing potential. Paralleling the findings of Gittel (1980) I find that the maintenance of internal structures of democratic decision-making, which includes the possibility of being oppositional to the government, requires independence and autonomy from states and international donors, and other powerful institutions, such as churches.

The empirical evidence suggests that NGOs have been able to break through the dependency that the Brazilian state has imposed on neighborhood associations in some

federal states and municipalities. But by linking to international donor agencies, NGOs have merely interchanged one potentially coercing force with another. Tvedt's (1998) analysis of what he calls "a new type of international social system"³⁰⁸ points to the influence of strategic interests that international donors pursue, using local NGOs as executing units for their own agendas. The example of the one internally democratic NGO nevertheless warns against overly deterministic assumptions about the impossibility of maintaining independence and a democratic praxis while receiving state and international donor funds. Nevertheless, in most cases, both the state and international donors have curtailed the independence of Bahian neighborhood associations and NGOs and they threaten the possibility of creating and sustaining democratic realities that empower excluded groups by promoting their active citizenship.

Traditional political elites that predominate state and municipal politics in Bahia have forced neighborhood associations to choose between maintaining their independence or to become co-opted. Those groups that have remained in opposition to the state had to pay a high price for their independence, having to fear for their institutional survival and the continuity of their work, facing extreme economic scarcity. NGOs, because of their need to respond to the high standards of international donors, reflect and reproduce the racialized exclusion of Brazilian society, where included members think and act *for*, but

³⁰⁸ Tvedt 1998: 4.

never *with* the excluded. Such praxis tends to confirm racial hierarchies and contributes to a further consolidation, rather than a change, of the traditional roles, where whiteness justifies and capacity, and blackness ineptitude. The contemporary trend of NGO expansion, replacing more traditional forms of organizing must therefore be evaluated critically.

CONCLUSION: CIVIL SOCIETY'S DEMOCARTIC PRAXIS BETWEEN OPPORTUNITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Brazilian society has produced a version of modernity that is based on the structural inequality and systematic exploitation of half of its own population. Exclusion is deeply anchored in Brazilian everyday realities and has become a widely accepted normality, contributing to the ways in which Brazilians analyze and understand their reality. Such a common sense constitutes the lives of both the excluded and the included. Far from being “normal,” racialized exclusion is instead violently maintained every day. The violence used to uphold the status quo has become the new normality in contemporary Brazil, determining and restricting the lives of both the excluded and included.

Contemporary racialized exclusion in Brazil was first systematically constructed by racist science in the early 20th century. According to then-prominent race specialist Raimundo Nina Rodrigues and his school, Africans and Afro-Brazilians were unable to achieve higher levels of civilizational progress.³⁰⁹ But as Nancy Stepan (1991) has demonstrated, Brazilian elites themselves were not clearly “white” in the eyes of visiting Europeans and North Americans, which made them doubt about their own ability to “catch-up” with

³⁰⁹ Rodrigues 1988: 262ff.

the rich and developed nations of the world. In other words, Brazilian elites feared that their own racial “impurity” might become an obstacle on the way to their own progress.

Gilberto Freyre (1933) provided the solution for this dilemma, declaring Brazil a “mulatto society” and arguing that a new, tropical, Brazilian race had emerged out of the original ethnic groups, better adapted to the tropics than any other. Instead of making racial inferiority responsible for cultural, political, and economic backwardness, his ideology offered a possibility to envision civilizational progress despite the elite’s own history of racial mixing. His was, then, an ideological project designed for a biologically mixed Brazilian elite that saw its claim to power endangered by a racist science that had condemned the racially mixed to eternal backwardness and Freyre’s theory of “racial democracy” provided the necessary ideology for Brazilian elites to argue for their cultural, political, and economic potential.

Applying this ideology enabled Brazilian elites to establish a cultural hegemony despite of the society’s and their own biological diversity.³¹⁰ Claiming symbolical, cultural “whiteness” despite obvious ethnic diversity allowed for the defense of social and economic privileges, and “whiteness” became a highly aspired good and a form of property. On the individual level, whitening became an individual strategy to achieve

³¹⁰ Hanchard 1994.

upward social mobility.³¹¹ In a moment of nation building, Freyre's theories of "Tropicalism" and "Racial Democracy" served the purpose of forging national identity and his theories became the official version of Brazilian race relations and Brazilian self-understanding, strategically applied by the Brazilian state elites of the 1930s. The nationalist project carried out by president Getúlio Vargas since 1930 used Freyre's doctrines and the recognition of cultural difference of Afro-Brazilians became a subversive act, explicitly forbidden under the military rule that followed the Vargas era.³¹² According to this ideology, Afro-Brazilians were forced to assimilate into the ideal of a mulatto society, leaving behind any traces of African cultural values and any cultural distinctiveness if they aspired to upward mobility.

As Erickson (1977) and Wiarda (1981) have shown, Brazilian elites have been able to perpetuate a corporatist structure of society, reserving for themselves the high, head-positions, and containing the working classes in inferior positions. Although these authors do not analyze the racial hierarchies that are implied in such a social order, their findings about the working of corporatist social institutions constraining class mobility, nevertheless allow for the conclusion that the Brazilian corporatist order also uses racial hierarchies for its maintenance. The implicit knowledge of these hierarchies have

³¹¹ Harris 1993.

³¹² Mitchell 1984:121.

penetrated everyday knowledge and found expression in such typical popular sayings as “*cada macaco no seu galho*,” and “*cada qual no seu lugar*,” which both translate as “every one in his/her own place.”

The everyday, structural, violence necessary to uphold such a racist and exclusionary reality becomes evident if statistics about violence are consulted. According to research carried out for the Brazilian national newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, in 2001, every 35 hours one inhabitant of the city of São Paulo was hijacked, making to a total number of 209 hijackings in 2001.³¹³ In 1997, a total of 7,000 people were killed in the city of Rio de Janeiro.³¹⁴ Brazil is one of the most violent countries on earth and the state’s executive branch is heavily involved in human rights violations and the excessive use of force against the excluded.³¹⁵ Teresa Caldeira (2000) has shown that the state involvement in Brazil’s violence points to the state’s role as a defender of included and privileged Brazilians against those Brazilians that are excluded. This state involvement further marginalizes the excluded, transforming them into stereotyped groups that threaten the established order.³¹⁶ Blackness, as Guimarães (1996) has argued, serves as a signifier for

³¹³ *Folha de São Paulo*, November 11, 2001: C1.

³¹⁴ *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1999: 20.

³¹⁵ As I have explained in Chapter 3, especially in Footnotes 125, 126, and 159.

³¹⁶ Perlman 1976.

belonging to the excluded, and all blacks are suspicious of being potentially dangerous and threatening.

One of the most important places where the distinction between included and excluded is reproduced is within Brazilian middle and upper class homes. The analysis of the widespread practice of domestic service allows for the better understanding of how racialized exclusion in Brazil has become accepted as the norm. Domestic servants are systematically exploited and mistreated by their mostly female employers, who further use the presence of maids to define and contrast their own identities. The analyses of domestic service, carried out by Kofes (2001) and Sheriff (1997), point to the centrality of race as an exclusionary mechanism used by Brazilian female employers to exploit and mistreat their domestic maids.

Employing some 20% of the Brazilian female labor force in 2001, domestic service is one of the central places where racial stereotypes are reproduced and where poor, predominantly Afro-Brazilian, females are “domesticated” into a “cordial” docility and forced to conform to the negative racial stereotypes that are held by their “superior” employers.³¹⁷ The result of Brazilian racialized exclusion and cultural hegemony has been the systematic “misrecognition” of Afro-Brazilians, along the lines described by

³¹⁷ Kofes 2001: 138.

Nancy Fraser (1997). Paralleling the findings of Michael Hanchard (1994), Fraser argues that misrecognition occurs if one is denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and if one is judged unworthy of respect or esteem.³¹⁸

To become democratic in any meaningful sense, Brazilian society has to promote its excluded groups, to recognize them as equals, and to permit them to participate as equals. Although this must happen in all social spaces, especially at the workplace and in the educational system, Brazilian civil society has a special task to fulfill, because civil society bears the potential to host communicative action that is able to renew the basic solidarity that unites people. Habermas (1984 and 1989) has demonstrated that only within civil society can democratic realities be created and sustained, altering a current common sense and changing available lifeworld references. This does not foreclose the possibility that democratic discourse can also take place in other societal spaces. But Habermas (1989) has shown that the workplace and the state are not constituted around communicative action. Their inner logic is based on control. Within these spheres, instrumental reasoning must ultimately dominate, leading to the perils of modernity that Max Weber had diagnosed much earlier.

³¹⁸ Fraser 1998: 141.

The possibility of establishing communicative action, which can expand democratic realities through the accumulation of “communicative power” (Arendt 1970), points to the model of deliberative democracy as best suited for deepening Brazilian democracy. Deliberative democracy refers to the integration of public reasoning, hosted in civil society, into collective decision-making at the society and the state level. According to most proponents, it requires equality and respect of all participants.³¹⁹ Habermas’ theorizing on the subject is less a diagnosis of the status quo of any society, but rather a utopia that points to the possible contributions that deliberative processes can make to the deepening of democracy. The central mechanism at work is the promotion of the rights of deliberating participants, if they interact as equal peers.

In order to critically evaluate the potential of civil society to promote equality and justice, it becomes necessary to develop theoretical criteria that allow for the sorting out of relevant causal relations and variables. Habermas (1999), Iris Young (2000), and Sheila Benhabib (1996) have offered analytical tools to evaluate civil society for its democratic potential and effective democratic contribution, but they have not elaborated the analytical tools that allow for a critical, comparative assessment of specific groups.

³¹⁹ Bohman 1998: 401.

The recent literature nevertheless allows for the conclusion that civil society is not automatically or necessarily linked to democracy. Instead, civil society is constituted by several, at times competing, public spheres, where one tends to be hegemonic, reflecting the interests of dominant groups. Civil society is also a place where the struggles and conflict that characterize the broader society are reflected and reproduced. Finally, civil society has been exclusive, not allowing certain groups to participate in it. Similar insights apply to the concept of social capital, advocated by Robert Putnam (1993, 2000). Social capital is not necessarily functional for democratic governance. Sheri Berman (1997a) has shown that existing networks and systems of mutual trust can also work against democracy.

Although several authors have suggested theoretical frameworks that link civil society to democracy, the mechanisms by which civil society organizations could contribute to democratic deepening and consolidation are not entirely clear. Habermas (1998b) seems to suggest that what matters is not the characteristic of any one group, but the characteristic of the much broader public sphere where the voices of civil society meet. From his writings it seems that as long as diverse voices are audible in the public sphere, democratic deliberation will lead to democratic and reasonable decisions on a higher level. Iris Young (1990, 2000) only criticizes this approach in so far as she argues that the voices reaching the public sphere cannot be thought of as just individual voices but that group voices have to be recognized. In addition, she explains that the way that different

actors express themselves vary, and that Habermas has in fact a liberal, western, bias, not recognizing the gendered and racialized ways that western males have traditionally dominated deliberations in public spheres.

The available theoretical literature on social movements and NGOs falls equally short of providing a convincing rationale for accepting the categorizations they offer to distinguish those groups that contribute to democratization from those that do not. Although there is a broad agreement that not all groups acting within civil society are the same, no pervasive theory has been offered that would allow capturing their differences.

Nancy Rosenblum's (1998) work on "Membership and Morals" in American associational life provides an entrance point for further reasoning, as she brings the insights of Habermas and Young down to the group level. Rosenblum points to the variety of groups within the field of civil society and the very different things these groups actually do, but also the different ways in which they do them. She alerts us to the overestimation of the importance of participation and membership on individual values and she points out that different people learn different things participating in the *same* group, depending on personal histories, motivations, and other factors that result in a difference of resonance and significance.

Marilyn Gittell (1980) has demonstrated that the ways civil society groups distribute power internally are in fact dependent on the kinds of relationships they have to the outside world, especially to the state. The work of Sheri Berman (1997a) on the collapse of the Weimar republic and the successful cooptation of existing civil society networks by the Nazi regime, as well as the critical notes of Morris Fiorina (1999) on the potentially anti-democratic character and impact of certain nonprofit groups in the United States, point to internal democratic quality and goal orientation as the two main causal variables that determine and specify the democratic impact of a civil society organization on democracy. In this study, I have called these criteria for evaluating an organized group of civil society “means and ends,” as both these criteria allow for a determination of the “democratic praxis” of a given group. Democratic praxis requires that those groups and individuals that have been historically excluded from participating in social interaction as equal peers become active agents.

“Democratic praxis” is therefore an important concept for this discussion, because it combines criteria of internal, procedural, democracy with criteria that allow evaluating the quality of the democratic processes that characterize a civil society group. Paulo Freire (1989), the Brazilian pedagogue, has explained that for a democratic praxis able to overcome oppression it must be pedagogical action *with* the oppressed, not just *for* them. Only when those groups that benefit for the exclusion of others join the oppressed and allow them to become truly equals can democratic realities be created and sustained that

are able to expand and ultimately change a prevalent common sense of normalized racial exclusion.

Such an understanding of social change rests on the insight of reality as socially constructed by meaningful social interaction. Berger and Luckmann (1966) have outlined a theory that finds the possibility for change at the individual level, but they also insisted that change must transcend individuals to become effective. According to these authors, change must become institutionalized and must be elevated to a higher ontological and epistemological level in order to take root. In Brazil, a dominant common sense marked by reified racist exclusion must be questioned and challenged, and replaced by democratic realities.

According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), a democratic transformation requires “the multiplication of political spaces and the prevention of the concentration of power in one point”³²⁰ Applied to the struggle for democracy and equality in Brazil this implies that the number of democratic civil society groups, where democratic realities are sustained and reproduced, must expand so that a hegemonic common sense can ultimately be replaced by democratic reality. Habermas (1998b), using the concept of communicative power that Hannah Arendt (1970) introduced earlier, defined the conditions for the expansion of

³²⁰ Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 178.

democratic, counterhegemonic spaces. According to him, it is through “mobilizing citizen’s communicative freedom for the formation of political beliefs”³²¹ that a democratically achieved common will can be created upon which legitimate state power ultimately must rest. The concept of communicative power also alludes to the necessary scope that democratic change must achieve through the gradual expansion of counterhegemonic democratic spaces. Its success ultimately depends on the ability to influence the state.

A democratic civil society is dependent on a democratic state to protect its independence. It is ultimately the state that has to be impacted by the gradual expansion of democratic spaces. As long as the state remains unaffected by the expansion of democratic spaces, civil society is forced to remain in opposition to it and the potential for democratic governance is reduced.

In the empirical chapters of this dissertation I have demonstrated that Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have assumed central positions within broader Brazilian civil society. Although some authors have argued that Latin America saw the spread of “new social movements,” I rather contend that social movements and neighborhood associations are not new, but instead have been part of Brazilian civil society for a long

³²¹ Habermas 1998b: 147.

time. Kim Butler (1998) and João José Reis (1986) have demonstrated that Afro-Brazilians have mobilized against racist exclusion ever since colonial times, and the accounts about Brazilian neighborhood associations provided by Abers (2000) and Avritzer (2002) show that neighborhood associations already existed in the 1940s. The analyses of these two authors, pointing to the increased role that neighborhood associations have played vis-à-vis municipal governments in cities like Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, also allow for the conclusion that this new, democratic, interaction among local governments and civil society was in fact dependent on new, nontraditional political elites that came to power in these places. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the work of Judith Tandler (1997), who analyses democratic change in the state of Ceará.

The state of Bahia is still dominated by a traditional political elite, associated with senator Antônio Carlos Magalhães. This traditional elite has perpetuated a clientelistic leadership style, marked by its effort to co-opt independent local civil society organizations. Bahian neighborhood associations have been forced to give up their critical activist roles, or to remain in strong opposition to the government, which often implies severe economic scarcity. NGOs, in turn have been able to bypass such coercive state policy by shifting the source of resources from states to international donors. But, as Terje Tvedt (1998) has shown, receiving funding from international donors also implies restricting one's independence, as donor agencies try to pursue their own agendas, using

local NGOs as executing branches. Furthermore, as Petras (1997) has highlighted, in order to qualify for international aid, civil society organizations have to communicate on the high, international standards that most international donors demand. In addition, depending on international funding brings local NGOs to compete against each other, potentially destroying civic networks and exposing NGOs to market logics. Worst of all, the need to qualify for international funding requires the employment of highly qualified personnel, which bears the risk of reproducing the very same exclusionary practices that hinder further democratic deepening.

Applying the criteria of means, ends, and praxis in order to evaluate their democratizing potential, I have found that most NGOs of my sample reproduce racialized exclusion in their midst instead of counteracting it. In the daily routines and collective decision-makings of most NGOs of my sample, Afro-Brazilians were mostly relegated to inferior positions and were not allowed to participate as full and equal members, even when they were the target population for the services that these NGOs provided. Only in very few cases were democratic and counterhegemonic spaces created and sustained, able to expand and influence society and the state.

Contrasting NGOs with more traditional neighborhood associations I found that the neighborhood associations of my sample had a more democratic praxis. But at the same time, and applying the theoretical framework of Sidney Tarrow (1998), political

opportunities for these groups have diminished, as coercive strongmen politics in Bahia have not been replaced by a new, democratic leadership.

These findings point to the importance of including the nature of the dominant power structures into the analysis of local civil society organizations. State-society synergy has not happened everywhere in Brazil, nor have “new social movements” been able to challenge dominant political elites. Bahia provides an example for the limitations that the state is able to impose on local civil society. Secondly, my findings point to how important it is for civil society organizations to maintain political and financial independence from both states and international donors in order to be able to create and extend democratic and counterhegemonic realities.

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