Rights & Democracy

International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development

# Democratic Development 1990-2000: An Overview

## April 1, 2002

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### INTRODUCTION

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**Printed version:**
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Democracy promotion has been with us since the mid-1980s, shortly after the strength of the new wave of democratic transitions was felt world-wide. Beginning in the early 1990s, it became a major focus of analytical research and international aid. Ten years seems to be an appropriate unit of time to merit a review of approaches and results, especially when that time-span closes at the outset of a new millennium. Additionally, Rights & Democracy (International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development) opened its doors in 1990. This paper is an attempt to review the changes in the field since that time, to identify what we might learn from the collective experience as well as from a more in-depth assessment of our own past.

The paper is divided into five parts: the first presents a general overview of the trends in the field; the second highlights emerging issues; the third deals with our assessment of the work of Rights & Democracy itself. The fourth section attempts to identify potential lessons and new approaches. Finally, the conclusion proposes a strategic focus based on the findings of this overview. In the first three parts, we pay special attention to identifying changes, short-comings, new needs and emerging approaches, all with a view to discovering lessons to be learned from this extremely complex reality.

This assessment is informed by a literature review; (1) interviews with Rights & Democracy staff, Canadian academics and other experts knowledgeable in the field of democracy and who have accompanied the evolution of Rights & Democracy over time; and field consultations in six countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Burma, Thailand, Guatemala, Peru) in late 2000.

Thanks are due to those many people who put so much time and thought into discussing this review, and particularly my colleagues in the democratic development programme at Rights & Democracy: Akouété Akakpo-Vidah, Madeleine Desnoyers, Geneviève Lessard, Micheline Lévesque and Stéphanie Rousseau, and to Andrés Pérez and Robert Miller, who gave thoughtful comments on the ideas presented here.

### I. THE DEMOCRACY BUSINESS: CONTEXT, CONCEPTS, ACTORS, TRENDS OVER THE DECADE

The period from the mid-1980s to 2000 has seen a major "wave" of democratic transitions in the South and in the former Soviet Union. (2) A sort of euphoria enveloped all of us in the wake of that wave – the actors, the analysts, the policy-makers, the funders alike. Although the actors directly involved in transitions and those institutions dedicated to supporting them from the outside were aware that democratization would not be solely a question of elections, we were ill-prepared for the multiplicity of obstacles that arose in the course of the evolution of new democracies. Transitions that never seem to really be completed, formal democracies that do not really deliver the full range of rights to their citizens, truncated public spheres, elected executives with little accountability, rampant corruption, public disillusionment, ineffective political parties. such complexities were compounded by the emergence and intensification of new factors in the international environment, particularly as concerns the impact of globalization on building democratic institutions.

### 1.1 THE EXPONENTIAL EXPANSION OF PLAYERS INVOLVED SINCE 1990

Until the late 1980s and even into the 1990s, rights, governance and democracy were seen as extremely sensitive areas, and most Western government agencies refused to have anything to do with them. In various countries, publicly-funded independent institutions were created to do so. But barely had they begun to develop their programmes when the Cold War came suddenly to an end and "hr-gg-dd" (human rights – good governance -democratic development) became legitimate fields for official initiatives as well. The expansion of involvement in democracy promotion in the 1990s has been exponential, in terms of the players, the issues and the amounts of money involved.

As concerns the players, the field has become considerably more dense. In the established democracies the "players" are principally funders: public and private foundations, governments, multilaterals, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, etc. In the new democracies themselves, the players are principally the pro-democracy movements and the various levels of government (both administration and parliaments). In both North and South, the variety, number and dynamism of the players involved continues to increase even now.

The strength of the trend towards democracy promotion has revealed a major bias on two levels, however. The first concerns the dominant assumptions about what constitutes democracy, how it is generated and how it can be promoted. The second, related issue, concerns how those assumptions are translated into concrete initiatives.

On the first bias, despite the variety of actors, there is an overwhelming tendency amongst funders to adopt a naïve and uncritical approach to existing models of liberal democracy. The problem here is two-fold: aside from assuming that liberal democracy is the only workable model of democracy (that assumption is supported by a large number of analysts, but not all), funders implicitly assume that specific institutions and processes of specific liberal democracies in the North can—and should—be transposed to the South.

The second issue is that, as one programmer from a bilateral agency expressed, "Democracy has moved from being a forbidden fruit to being a technical issue". The bureaucratic funding approach, based on the sorts of assumptions mentioned above, is to narrow the processes involved into concrete "manageables", in an attempt to simplify extremely complex and poorly understood phenomena in the hopes of achieving demonstrable – and, increasingly, "measurable" - results. *Thus, the major characteristic of the shift towards democracy-building in the 1990s is that, although it has become a legitimate area for bilateral and multilateral involvement, democracy itself is depoliticized in the approaches of major funders.* This depoliticization is manifested, for example, in the reluctance to recognize democracy as a system of contained conflict, rather than consensus.

Trends in the way democracy-support institutions understand the field in which they intervene and the methods they use to do so have changed over time, attempting to integrate new perceptions and questions as programmes evolve. Changes do take place, but they are not always made explicit, and therefore may be underestimated in some of the affirmations made here, and may also be under-theorized. In very broad strokes, a noticeable trend has developed from early work around elections, electoral institutions and political parties, towards concentration on the creation and reform of government institutions, and more recently on civil society (including media, NGOs, trade unions) as a key actor in the democratization process (Carothers 1997). Quigley (1996a) indicates that early efforts were characterized by attempts to infuse Western technical expertise into non-Western situations, and the ensuing failure was followed by a turn to the grassroots as a panacea alternative, seen in the neo-liberal view as an alternative to the State. Moreover, in many cases NGOs are treated rather naively as coterminous with civil society **(3)** (Newberg & Carothers 1996). However, with the multiplication of actors in the field on the one hand, and the growing awareness of the complexity of the processes involved on the other, there has been a proliferation of approaches and priority issues for official donors and private foundations.

The small amount of published material concerning the question of results of democracy-support programming confirms the perception gleaned from interviews with programmers: very little substantive data has been generated to identify clear results of the programmes implemented. This is due to various factors. Some maintain that democracy-support institutions simply presume that their programmes are having a positive impact and don't dedicate effort to evaluation (Offe & Schmitter 1998), others point to the fact that the assumptions orienting programming are over-simplistic, formulaic and depoliticized (Carothers 1997). Carothers thus intimates that democracy support programming has been far from effective. He notes as major problems the reference to overly-specific models, the failure to consider issues of power, the lack of effective response to blocked transitions, and the absence of attention to economic factors.

While all of these critiques are applicable in many cases, it is as difficult to affirm that programmes have had no impact as it is to demonstrate what impact they have had. Here, other factors also contribute to the difficulty in identifying results. These are principally related to the complex nature of the democratization process itself. *If any conclusion can be drawn from the experience of the past 10 years, it is that democratization is neither a linear process nor one that occurs in the same manner in different contexts.* An enormous number of actors and historical and contextual factors influence the process of building democratic institutions and a democratic culture in a given country. We are dealing with a process, not a product and indeed, with a lengthy process. Visible results in the overall process cannot be achieved over a time-span of one, three or even ten years. Most external democracy support programmes are centred on events (as a mechanism for stimulating change) or on strengthening key actors or institutions. There has rarely been a thorough examination of the validity of the original assumptions regarding the role of the specific entry point for programmes in the overall development of the democratization process. In any case, barring major perversion of the actor in question

(corruption, authoritarian options, etc.), a substantial time span will be necessary in order to assess the level of success of the hypothesis. The variety of factors involved defies any prescriptive approach and demands a highly contextual one in each case.

Not only do we know little about the impact of democracy programming over the past ten years, but nowhere does there exist an overview of the funders and amounts involved, and their areas of expertise and geographic concentration (on US democracy support, see: Forsythe & Reiffer, 2000). Inter-institutional rivalry – between institutions of similar nature but also between official donors and NGOs (Rawkins & Bergeron 1994) – creates a situation where there is little effort to collectively create an environment for mutual learning and coordination. **(4)**

## 1.2 TRENDS IN THE FIELD

In terms of the process of democratization since 1990, it is clear that the situation on the ground has changed enormously. A much greater number of countries are now formal democracies. In the Americas, with the exception of Cuba, all countries are now formal democracies. In Southeast Asia, several regimes are new democracies. In Africa as well, formal democratization has taken place in a number of countries, although in many cases it is plagued by violent conflict. The apparent rapidity of the democratization process lulled many, especially on the international scene, into thinking that the issue was well on the way to being resolved.

With a few years' experience now behind some of the new democracies, unexpected trends are emerging and sounding a "wake-up call". Experience in Latin America, for example, has shown that progress towards electoral democracy is not linear, and that many democratic institutions are fragile. Moreover, the quality of democracy is now becoming an issue for concern. Accountability, socio-economic injustice, rising criminality and citizen insecurity in new democracies are the new frontier for democratization.

Although we speak of democratization in general terms, it is important to understand the differences from one situation to another. Within each major region, there are a variety of historical and social contexts which clearly affect the process of democratic change. In Africa, a major difference in the type of transition occurred between French-speaking and English-speaking countries. In the former (for example, Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin), "national conferences" took place bringing together all the major social actors in a country to negotiate the parametres of democratization. In the latter countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe), authoritarian regimes tended to liberalize (but many retained power) under the pressure of the mobilizations of the urban-based pro-democracy movements. In Asia, the dynamism of the countries of Southeast Asia contrasts with the relative immobilism of the North (China, Japan) and the South (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan). In the Southeast, a large number of recent transitions have take place, but with the relative exceptions of Thailand and the Philippines, they remain fragmentary and fragile. In the Americas, the English-speaking countries have for the most part maintained democratic institutions since independence, whereas in the Spanish-speaking countries transitions from military rule date in many cases from the 1980s.

Although to date no good methods for capturing the results of democracy promotion activities have been invented, we can make a few generalizations about the dynamics of democratic development. They are so general in fact as to appear self-evident to some. They are perhaps not so clear though to actors bursting onto the democratic stage for the first time and involved in the thick of a transition.

*Democracy is by nature uncertain*. The rules and outcomes will continue to be uncertain after the transition as well. The same players will not win all the battles. Democracy is not so much about winning the battles, as about delimiting the legitimate space within which those battles may take place. What is and is not at stake. What can be done or undone by successive elected governments, and what is (more or less) permanently inscribed as a (relatively) untouchable value for all society. In itself, of course, that is a battle as well. But when we say we have a democracy, it is that the specific space agreed upon in a society for waging those battles corresponds to a certain number of parametres that have come to be known as democratic and around which a general societal consensus has been built over time and is respected by all the players.

*Political space and the margin for manoeuvre of the different individual and institutional actors is relatively elastic*. It is often more elastic in situations of transition than it is later in the process, when alliances have narrowed and sedimented. But the elasticity depends -to a certain extent, at least - on the agency **(5)** of the pro-democracy movements involved in the transition, and their willingness and ability to continue to invest political space, even in the face of important odds.

*Participation in a democratic system on the longer term involves the entry of new actors into the game*, especially those who have been previously radically excluded, such as women and indigenous peoples. Civil society actors often consider that their own demands are the essence of democracy, and do not examine how they might support the entry of new actors onto the scene.

Policy and struggles over policy are important, but it is not the only element necessary for ensuring a democratic system and society. *Democratic institutions are essential for the development of democracy*. Civil society has a role to play in the development of institutions which is often overlooked. It is not necessarily a question of huge investments to create a bureaucracy or build a ministry. Rather, it concerns ensuring an institutional culture of accountability and democratic participation. This is akin to the institutionalization of the "rule of law". Often taken to be a set of institutions and a corpus of laws, the rule of law is better understood as a culture of legality **(6)**, a society where citizens and institutions have integrated rule-based conduct as a basic element of their values and functioning.

This is but an impressionistic synthesis of some of the common characteristics of different democratic transitions. The following section examines the changes occurring in our understanding of the concepts and approaches used in democratic development.

## 1.3 EVOLVING CONCEPTS

Thinking about democracy and what constitutes it has been particularly prolific in the past ten years. Much of it takes place in academic spheres and has little impact on the actual workings of democracy promotion. **(7)** Clearly, however, the numerous "surprises" in the lives of new democracies have inspired attempts to adjust definitions and develop concepts that reflect those concrete evolutions.

### *What is Democracy?*

A central conceptual issue regards the characteristics of democracy. What are its core elements and what is the relationship amongst them? Although many characteristics are mentioned in passing in the democratization literature, few authors have attempted to synthesize its fundamental characteristics. Some (e.g.: Fraser 1995) mention civilian control of the military, certainly a central issue for countries emerging from military authoritarianism. Others stress the rule of law and an independent judiciary, a vibrant civil society, free and fair elections. Becker (1999) rightly points out that the emergence and character of the democratic institutions in a given society is the outcome of conflict and collaboration among social forces. Linz and Stephan (1996) opt for a minimalist definition, stating that a democratic system requires a State, elections and democratic governance. Each of these three elements could subsume many specific characteristics and processes, but the minimalist approach begs the question of whether there are or not certain institutions, actors and processes that are more central to democracy than others.

Forsythe and Reiffer (2000: 990) offer a generic definition that would be seen by many pro-democracy movements as intensely informed by the US experience. They distinguish between liberal democracies which "are those genuinely elected governments that combine the right of political participation with the protection of other human rights", whereas "social democracies are liberal democracies that interpret fundamental human rights to include economic and social rights."

Guillermo O'Donnell has recently (1999) proposed a framework for defining democracy and understanding its transformations that avoids the pitfall of the "shopping list" approach by identifying constitutive elements and the relationship between them. At the same time, O'Donnell introduces the dynamics of agency, context-sensitivity and uncertainty (or non-linearity). In sum, O'Donnell argues that there are two types of components of democracy: on the one hand, free and fair elections (and all the institutional paraphernalia that they require), and, on the other hand, a series of primary political rights, which stand in a causal relationship to elections. These rights may include freedom of association, expression, information, movement, and others – but: the specific group of rights cannot be standardized; it must be "inductively established" in each specific case. That is to say, it depends on the context – historic and social - of each country. The process of democratization is one in which power-holders are progressively obliged – however reluctantly or contradictorily – through the agency of contending social and political forces, to institutionalize political rights. Seen from this perspective, the history of democracy can be understood as "the history of the reluctant acceptance of the institutional wager". The ruling elite thus reluctantly circumscribes – partially or completely – its own authoritarianism (or is replaced by actors more amenable to doing so).

Furthermore, O'Donnell describes the process by which there has historically occurred a mutual constitution of rights and of the individual rights bearer within the liberal system, which by this very process, became a liberal democratic system. Thus, " by this process of expanding assignment of subjective rights, the ground was prepared for the extension of concepts, legislation, jurisprudence, and ideologies originating in civil citizenship to political citizenship" (p. 27). To simplify, citizens use existing rights to expand the political sphere and to develop new rights – thus, the legal backing and enactment of agency (in O'Donnell's words) are a central element of contemporary democracy. In fact, however, in many new democracies, the legal texture of civil rights (across territory and across social class) is irregular. O'Donnell mentions what might be considered the *social texture of rights* (p. 37), implying that the actual quality of a right can differ according to the social and historical experience of a society. Furthermore, "political citizenship may be implanted in the midst of very little, or highly skewed, civil citizenship (*see below: uncivil democracies*), not to say anything of welfare rights" (33). In this case, agency is negatively affected (for example, by fear or destitution), and in this sense the ineffectiveness of civil citizenship eventually undermines and saps political citizenship for large sectors of the population, and in particular the marginalized (38). Yet, it remains true that agency is stimulated by the development of a public sphere, the basis of which is "the universalistic assignment of political freedoms and the inclusive wager" (40).

O'Donnell maintains that democracy is characterized by four aspects unique to it: "1. Fair and institutionalized elections; 2. An inclusive and universalistic wager, 3. A legal system that enacts and backs the range of democratic rights and freedoms; and 4. All powers are subject to the authority of other powers."

Thus, O'Donnell presents us with a vision of a democratic system which is based on a small number of fundamental characteristics. These elements are expanded, developed, *textured*, by the present and historical agency of individual and collective actors. "The undecidability of political freedoms, the always possible extension or retraction of civil and welfare rights, and – at bottom, encompassing them all – the issue of the options that enable agency, are the very field on which, under democracy, political competition has been and forever will continue being played" (40). This approach will inform the understanding of democracy that underlies the proposal for strategic focus that I will outline in the final section of this paper.

### *Transition and Consolidation*

The key concept informing approaches to democracy promotion at the outset was the pair transition/consolidation. There was deemed to be a point at which a system moved from transition to irrevocable consolidation, although the exact definition of what constituted that point varied from one author to another.

The actual experience of new democracies has belied the simplicity of the two categories and of the linear shift from the first to the second. As Carothers has recently written, “reality is no longer conforming to the model” (2002:6). The issue has now become a field of questions rather than a set of clear-cut concepts. Some authors question the definitions of the two concepts, some try to problematize the deceptively simple notion of the shift, others deem that there are not only two possible stages and that the relationship amongst the stages is not a linear one.

Definitions of transition are various. They include minimalist ones like Fraser’s (1995:42) that constitutional negotiations take place and that a new government is selected under the new rules; or that of Offe and Schmitter (1998), that transition is a stage that follows liberalization and that is characterized by high uncertainty and struggle over the rules of the game. Bakary (2000), analysing Africa, agrees with this assessment, and adds that in the transition stage power is still often in the hands of an authoritarian group (often the military). Bitar (2001:64) considers that the transition period has as its fundamental objective to implant the rule of law, and the necessary rights (freedom of expression, “human rights” **(8)** and institutions (judiciary, electoral systems) to allow for future economic and social policies to be clearly the fruit of the will of the people.

Consolidation, by contrast, is a stage of "bounded uncertainty" (Offe and Schmitter 1998) - the field of the possible is still broad, but more strictly defined. Linz and Stephan (1996) affirm that consolidation requires five conditions: civil society, political society, rule of law, functional bureaucracy and institutionalized economic society. O’Donnell (1996) attacks this conception as formalistic, indicating that "unconsolidated" democracies are also institutionalized, but differently. Informal institutions of particularism (like clientelism and corruption) often continue to exist inside the formal institutions of democracy. Thus, implies O’Donnell, there emerge electoral democracies with very uneven institutionalization of liberal rights. (In this sense, he prefigures some of the analyses on "uncivil democracies" developed later) **(9)**. Schedler (1998b:102) however, considers that consolidation has never been clearly conceptualized, and that the term is now applied to all new democracies, which reduces its “classificatory utility” to nearly nothing. He argues for a “return to the concept’s original concern with democratic survival”. Beyond that, the processes of « democratic completion » (1998a), deepening and organizing (or institution-building) all contain a series of open-ended and non-linear transformations. Agreeing with Whitehead’s affirmation that “Democracy precludes closure regarding its own identity”, Schedler concludes that “any fixed meaning we may attach to the concepts of democratic quality and democratic deepening, and any consensus we may reach about them, can only be ‘temporary equilibria’ open to future revision” (1998b:104).

Contesting the notion of a necessary shift from transition to consolidation, articles by Offe and Schmitter (1998) and Huber, Rueschmeyer and Stephens (1997:330) both State that many formal democracies never achieve full consolidation. In an article analyzing two third wave "success stories" - South Korea and Taiwan - Chu, Diamond and Shin (2001:123) affirm that neither is consolidated and that "the indefinite persistence of a formal democracy is not the same as democratic consolidation," which requires "broad and deep legitimation". **(10)** Huber, Rueschmeyer and Stephens underline that certain aspects of the civil society-State dynamic facilitate transition while undermining the prospects for consolidation. Garreton (1994) makes a similar point, affirming that demands for human rights contribute to contesting the authoritarian enclave and initiating transition; however, human rights, as absolute values, can later become an obstacle to consolidating a democratic system, which is a relative concept in that it requires fluidity and compromise.

In another vein, Eisenstadt (2001:4) also questions the division between transition and consolidation, proposing rather the notion of *protracted* versus *pacted* transitions. His definition of protracted transitions as "continuous and prolonged struggles over the formal institutional playing field" is helpful for understanding many concrete cases in Latin America and Africa that have come to be known as well as "blocked transitions".

## II. THE NEW CHALLENGES

There are undeniably a growing number of “new democracies” in the world - although some of them are now not so “new” anymore, and some of them are now into their second democratic transition. Despite this overwhelming phenomenon, we are certain of very little in terms of what makes them tick, what they are or should be about. And even as the successive “democratic waves” unfold, new issues for democracy and democratic transitions are constantly emerging. Four are particularly relevant from a strategic perspective, and I will briefly problematize each.

### 2.1 QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

The central issue – that of the quality of democracy – is discussed by people in democracy movements and in some academic circles but is not yet well reflected in publications. The concern with the quality of democracy is a perspective that questions the value of the notion of “consolidation” in favour of an analysis based on the substantive aspects of democratic societies. Clearly, we have seen that certain regimes with electoral institutions can last a long time without ever addressing problems of accountability, citizen participation,

inequality, etc. To label them "consolidated" because they have lasted a certain number of years is meaningless (P. Oxhorn: interview, Jan. 2001).

Perez (1992) also questions the transition/consolidation paradigm, arguing that elections and other democratic institutions presuppose the existence of a prior social consensus which constitutes the fabric within which the procedures (including the economic system and democratic institutions themselves) will work. The consensus is an historical process which is the basis of the legitimacy of the system. Attempts to implant specific institutions imported from another context are not neutral in such a situation. "When you use the technology of democracy in a divided society all you do is legalize those divisions" (A. Perez: interview, Oct. 2000). In other words, the underlying social consensus itself must be altered or developed in order to ensure that democratic institutions do not simply reproduce the dynamic of exclusion of the preceding regime.

*Such a vision would imply constructing democracy "from the outside in" – that is, developing a social consensus which the excluded, the marginalized have had a voice in constituting* . Established democracies may still be grappling with the redefinition of the meaning of *citizenship* (Thede 2000), but on the basis of a social consensus **(11)** that has developed and evolved over hundreds of years, although some of its terms are still evolving. The challenge for new democracies is mind-boggling, given the fact that a very large number of such systems have been constituted on the basis of a principle of exclusion. *The social consensus underlying them explicitly excludes the majority of the population: the poor, women, indigenous peoples, the "other" however we define them.* The feeble nature of the historical consensus, compounded by the multiplicity of demands for inclusion, create a huge challenge for constructing democracy, perhaps an even greater one than older democracies ever faced.

The challenges of inclusion are not simply quantitative ones, for example, of expanding the democratic system to regions and social classes that for reasons having to do principally with questions of resource availability do not have access to the system. They are qualitative challenges as well, raised on the basis of what transformations of the nature of democratic institutions are necessary in order to enable full participation of women, or of societies in which the division between the individual and the collective, between private and public, is conceived of differently than in the Western tradition.

There are obviously no easy answers to these challenges. But they do unanimously suggest a strategic approach for addressing the issue of inclusion: that of "opening up the playing field, incorporating the traditionally disenfranchised" (L. Macdonald: interview, February 2001). This means, at a minimum, ensuring that civil society can "fulfil the role that democracy allows for in participation in social citizenship (demanding accountability, presenting alternatives)" (P. Oxhorn: interview). But the viability of such an approach depends upon continually revisiting in a critical manner the process of developing horizontal and vertical linkages by civil society. That is: strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to work together horizontally, and – on the vertical level – the capacity of the disenfranchised to speak and influence (A. Perez, interview). Funding is a delicate operation in such a context and it can easily undermine fragile linkages.

Moreover, redefining democracy from the point of view of societies or social groups organized on principles different from those of liberal individualism requires an ability to discriminate between, on the one hand, universal values of human dignity - which have sources in all societies – and, on the other hand, "universalist" institutions which are often simply transpositions of specific forms of Western liberal values incorporated as institutions.

## 2.2 Globalization: Democratic Deficit and Accountability, New Actors and Spaces

Rarely in discussions of democratization is the issue of globalization addressed. Its relationship to democratic development is under-theorized. This is at least partially due to the complex, changing and nebulous nature of globalization itself. In the words of David Held (2002:3): "Globalization is not an end state, or a single thing, any more than is democracy or industrialization. These are processes, involving changing relations of human affairs"

Can we identify globalization's impacts specifically as regards new democracies? We know that even in established democracies globalization is leading to the development and aggravation of a democratic deficit, characterized amongst other things by the erosion of legislative oversight of policy decisions at the national level. Governments of the industrialized countries have agreed to cede broad areas of social and economic policy-making to international institutions (such as the World Trade Organization – WTO). The ensuing constraints on economic and social programmes have not been matched by similar agreements to create supranational mechanisms that would enforce existing international human rights instruments (in all their dimensions) or similarly broadly applied criteria for rule of law, etc. **(12)** In fact, governments agreed at the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 that their primary responsibility is the protection and promotion of human rights. Therefore, it is their duty to ensure that any other agreement into which they enter be consistent with the obligations of the international human rights instruments.

Three types of issues regarding the relationship between democratization and globalization appear particularly relevant to this discussion. The first concerns the impact of globalization on democratic institutions at the national level. The second relates to the emerging global public sphere. Finally, it concerns the phenomenon of the identities of emerging political actors simultaneously at the national and global levels.

*The National Sphere.* Even in established democracies, economic globalization is creating an *internal* democratic deficit. What, then, is

its impact in new democracies? What are the structural constraints on new democracies imposed through this delegating upwards and out of the national realm? Given the historic democratic deficit on the internal level in most (if not all) new democracies, how does this externally-determined democratic deficit interact with the existing one? Does it impose limits, for example, on the scope of the political and social project that a new or restructured democratic polity can develop?

Undoubtedly, the increasing pace and intensity of globalization today circumscribes the political, public and institutional spheres at the national level not only in the scope of their policy-making, but also in numerous ways that shape the very nature of the political actors and that are rooted as well in earlier phases of the history of globalization (colonialism, for example). There have been few recent attempts at theorization on how transnational forces shape those spheres as dependent and, in turn, how that dependent relationship influences the very nature of the actors (the State and civil society, principally) and institutions that emerge within them and the dynamic that develops between them. We cannot simply assume that the political spheres and actors conform to a logic similar to that experienced in established democracies. **(13)** But what, precisely, that means for new democracies is not conceptually clear. Does it mean, perhaps, that the truncated democracies we have observed in this survey are the *necessary* outcome of the interaction of national and transnational forces in all cases? Or, rather, that we must expect historically specific outcomes in each case, rather than assume the existence of similar actors and processes?

Some analysts (see for example, Macdonald 2000:55) argue that accentuated social exclusion results from the constraints engendered by globalization on economic and social programmes in new democracies. Further, it is the established democracies themselves that are producing social exclusion in developing countries through the constraints they impose on the development models of dependent States (through structural adjustment, IFI conditionalities, etc.). **(14)** This, in turn, augments apathy (declining political participation, even in established democracies) and even citizen insecurity (due to increased delinquency and crime) and erodes rather than strengthens the public sphere. A vicious downward spiral emerges characterized by weak institutions, lack of confidence in public institutions, weakness of the public sphere, recourse to individualism and violence.

The social capital which is necessary to underpin democratic institutions (it might also be conceived of as the stuff of a democratic culture), deteriorates (or never develops) under such pressures. Lagos (2001:144), writing on Latin America, concludes a report on a public opinion survey of several countries as follows:

*Low and declining levels of interpersonal trust thus constitute an important barrier to the accumulation of social capital and the development of civil society that could provide crucial foundations for the stabilization, deepening, and consolidation of troubled, dissatisfied, cynical democracies The most fundamental challenge for Latin American democracy in the years ahead is how, amid the fragmenting pressures of globalization and economic liberalization, to generate social trust and to widen and reconstruct networks of social capital.*
The situation is not specific to Latin America: similar phenomena are noted elsewhere.

*An Emerging Global Public Sphere* . But globalization presents opportunities, not only draw-backs. The former have been perhaps less thoroughly examined than the latter, as they are emerging phenomena, not simply an erosion of existing institutions. They include the emergence of new political spaces and actors (international NGOs, a civil society voice in international inter-government fora, autonomous spaces for the development of multi-dimensional alternative visions like the World Social Forum); a trend toward refusing State sovereignty and the logic of non-intervention as impediments to ensuring international oversight of crimes against humanity or humanitarian disaster. The issue of democratic institutions of global governance as a necessary step to protect the increasingly threatened global commons is now firmly on the agenda of social movements and many governments. “This requires State-building, and public management capacity at the level of individual States, and at the level of supranational regions, and at the level of the global economy. We need to make the multilevel polity that is emerging work” (Held 2002:13). The separation between the national political sphere and the global may be less stringent than indicated above, however, given the increasing permeability of the spaces - even if at the moment that contact occurs principally through the greater physical mobility and political interconnection of the actors (as opposed to institutions).

*Globalization and its Discontents.* Social fragmentation, as many theorists of new identity movements have surmised, has led to a movement away from the public sphere and away from the development of a notion of the common good. It has stimulated a trend towards affinity on the basis of identity: gender, ethnic, religious Not all identity movements create a centrifugal dynamic: some attempt rather to strengthen the public sphere and to increase its inclusiveness and recognition of diversity. These efforts are directed towards the redefinition of the notion of citizenship and the development of a more inclusive identity as citizens.

Other identity-based movements, on the contrary, turn to fundamentalism and pre-ordained certainty as a response to the encroachment of the Western cultural modes and values which have generated the present form of globalization. The tragic events of September 11 and the reaction to them are raising new issues for the future of all democracies, both from the inside (the curbs on civil rights, for example), and from the fundamentalist threat itself. The qualitatively different nature of this threat is outlined by Anthony Giddens (quoted by Villalobos 2001), who writes that "fundamentalism is a negation of dialogue in a world whose peace and continuity depend on it." Villalobos continues by underlining the fact that fundamentalist extremism (including that which finds expression in Western democracies) has now revealed itself as a major threat to human coexistence itself.

A manifestation perhaps as well of the ambiguous effects of globalization is the debate it has provoked amongst activists over the

nature and value of human rights. (It is not clear why an equivalent debate has not really emerged over democracy.) On the one hand, some argue that globalization increases the relevance of human rights in non-Western cultures (e.g.: Ibhawoh 2000), at the same time underlining that it is essential that the constitutional framework of rights in non-Western countries recognize and be sensitive to local cultural imperatives and internal conflicts over meaning and power within "traditional" cultures – which themselves must be seen as evolving, non-static. The opposing view maintains that civil and political rights, with the individual as their locus, are hostage to, as well as a product of, neoliberal ideology (e.g.: Evan 2000: 415), and that they promote the interests of capital to the detriment of the interests of the poor. "Human rights therefore offers support for the egoistic individual, withdrawn into private interests and separated from community" (430). This is illustrative of an important trend within the movement critical of economic globalization, often sceptical of institutions and which does not recognize human rights as a continuing terrain of struggle. It is true that established democracies are violating the civil rights of their citizens when they protest massively against globalization (Davos, Quebec City and Genoa are clear examples). But the conclusion that institutions are simply not to be trusted is a dangerous one. The critique of globalization is generating new perspectives on the weaknesses of democratic institutions and processes, both in new democracies and in established ones. If such criticisms are adequately addressed, they could lead to deepening of democracy in the North as well as the South. It will not be a self-evident process, whatever the promoters of globalization as a panacea may say. The danger is always there that the political counterpart of neoliberal economic globalization may not be liberal democracy but simply *order* **(15)** – and that increasing exclusion will continue to develop in the North as well as the South.

In short, democratic development cannot be addressed as if the national sphere were a discrete unit. But that is precisely what the major institutions involved in democracy promotion are doing. A perspective informed by a critique of globalization indicates that evolving unequal power relations between the national and transnational levels has produced specific forms of political spaces and actors that do not evolve according to a pattern inspired by the established democracies. It also shows that political actors and institutions evolve simultaneously in the national and the global spheres (although not necessarily to an equal extent). Finally, it points to the fact that not only national, but global processes can generate new social actors, whose simultaneous transnational and national actions can produce important and unexpected effects in the political spheres at both levels.

## 2.3 UNCIVIL DEMOCRACIES

Many "actually existing new democracies" over the past decade have revealed themselves to fall short of the expectations they originally raised. In fact, many have developed the political institutions of formal democracy, while at the same time continuing to ignore or violate not only social, economic and cultural rights of citizens, but also their civil rights. **(16)** This has led some authors to begin to problematize the relationship between democracy and rule of law (Holston 1998, O'Donnell 1999, Oxhorn 2001). At the outset, it was implicitly assumed that democratic political institutions would be created and rule of law would follow. This has not been the case. On the contrary, the majority of new democracies become "stuck" somewhere in this supposedly linear process. "What is often thought of as an uneasy, precarious middle ground between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship is actually the most common political condition today of countries in the developing world and the post-communist world" (Carothers 2002:18).

We have seen the emergence of "uncivil democracies" in many countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Holston (1998:3&13), who coined the term **(17)**, describes uncivil democracies in the following way:

Uncivil electoral democracies share certain significant features of citizenship: their institutions of law and justice undergo delegitimization; violent crime and police abuse escalate; the poor and the ethnically other are criminalized, dehumanized, and attacked; civility and civil protection in public space decline; people abandon the public to retreat behind private security; and illegal measures of control receive massive popular support An uncivil democracy is therefore, an electoral democracy in which citizens suffer systematic violence by public and private forces of organized coercion that act with the confidence of impunity. It features an elected government, functioning political institutions, a democratic constitution, and even a formal rule of law, along with widespread police violence, corruption, vigilantism, ineffective civil rights, and a discredited judiciary.

Vilas (1997), Youngers (2000), Ngondi-Houghton & Wanjala (1999), Ghai (2001:22) and Oxhorn (2001) all insist on the idea that not only civil rights are called into question here and violated by newly democratic States, but that all rights aside, in general, from political ones tend to be violently ignored by the State and its agents. Vilas argues that such processes are manifestations (as can be seen in many Latin American cases) of increasing social inequality. This inequality in turn eventually undermines the agency of citizens and leads to retreat – still in conditions of formal democracy – to authoritarian modes of governance.

O'Donnell formulates the problem in terms of the possible contradictory relation between political and civil citizenship (or rule of law), implying a dynamic relationship between the two, summarized in the notion that rights and the individual rights-carrier (citizen) are mutually constituting. Political rights and elections, according to O'Donnell, create an embryonic public sphere which nurtures agency – an agency which is the key factor in expansion/protection of rights, I would add. However, enduring conditions of fear and destitution can undermine agency. Therefore, the expansion of political rights is working in an opposite manner from the denial of other rights, and the outcome is not necessarily pre-ordained. Moreover, many authors agree that no democracy is/will be in this sense ever fully consolidated. The struggle for full citizenship is on-going and, moreover, its terms are continually changing as new subjects emerge (Thede 2000).

### 2.4 BLOCKED OR PROTRACTED TRANSITIONS

Early approaches to democratic transition assumed a fairly smooth and linear process. International actors, in particular, considered that it would be essentially a question of institution-building: once free and fair elections had been held, the political will would exist to reform/create the major institutions of a democratic regime – justice system, military and security forces, parliament, tax system, etc. However, it soon became clear that some regimes were moving very slowly towards such reforms, particularly in situations where the former regime had maintained control of the State apparatus after free elections (Kenya, Tanzania, Peru, Mexico, Malaysia, Singapore). Some were using the apparatus to ensure that further reforms not take place. The refusal by international actors to consider issues of power in their paradigm of democratic transition meant that they were unable to understand the depth of the problem, much less react to it (Carothers 1997).

Eisenstadt (2001:4) describes such situations as "protracted transitions": that is, "continuous and prolonged struggles over the formal institutional playing field". This concept he contrasts with that of "pacted transitions", where the rules of the game are negotiated amongst the various parties and then applied (although this may not happen so easily in actual practice). In protracted transitions, there is a very real danger that "when the authoritarians manage to co-opt or repress at least part of the opposition, weakening forces arrayed against them, they may perpetuate their reigns for decades" (p. 8). Sandbrook (1996) adds the fact that opposition forces have also been decimated through the application of structural adjustment programmes (massive lay-offs in the public sector, de-unionization, etc.), thus contributing to blocked transitions.

Some protracted transitions, of course, may not be blocked: opposition forces may be creatively organizing even while an authoritarian regime maintains power. We have seen in Mexico and Peru recently how rapidly a transition can take place once the regime has been forced to abdicate power, if the opposition forces have been able to construct broad civil alliances and share key aspects of a political agenda for the change-over. Carothers nonetheless makes the unsettling assertion that "the most common political patterns to date among the 'transitional countries' include elements of democracy but should be understood as alternative directions, not way stations to liberal democracy" (2002:14).

## III. THE EXPERIENCE OF RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Rights & Democracy (International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development) is a non-partisan organization with an international mandate. It was created by Canada's Parliament in 1988 to encourage and support the universal values of human rights and the promotion of democratic institutions and practices around the world. It celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2000, having officially opened its doors in October 1990. Rights & Democracy works with individuals, organizations and governments in Canada and abroad to promote the human and democratic rights defined in the United Nations' International Bill of Human Rights. Although its mandate is wide-ranging, Rights & Democracy currently focuses on four themes: democratic development, women's human rights, globalization and human rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples.

Over the ten-year period from 1991 to 2000, Rights & Democracy disbursed $8.6 million CDN in 337 democratic development projects in close to 50 countries. During that period, only four countries and regions had concentrated grant totals of over $500,000 CDN. These were Burma, Guatemala and Peru, and the regional programme for Africa. Projects were carried out in eight sub-categories (strengthening civil society; development of policy alternatives; popular participation; rule of law; peacebuilding; elections; development of democratic institutions; culture of dialogue – in descending order of grant amounts). In fact, over 50% of the grants were allocated within the first two major categories (see Spuches 2000).

### 3.1 HONING THE FOCUS, 1990-2000

The early days of the work of Right & Democracy were characterized by an exploratory approach, centred mainly in Latin America and working on human rights, always attempting to support emerging issues in the field. Key initiatives here were the substantial work and resources put into women's human rights and human rights education projects. At the outset, all programmes were structured on a regional basis.

In 1993, Rights & Democracy decided to focus its work in 13 core countries. **(18)** At the same time, it developed a tool for systematizing its work and making explicit the link between the two fundamental aspects of its official mandate: human rights and democratic development. The "democratic development framework" (Gillies 1993) proposed a definition of democracy as being the realization of the entire family of human rights. It set out a series of categories that would serve as the basis for an analysis of the state of democratic development in any given country, be it a new democracy or an established one. This framework was the methodology for a series of studies to be carried out in each of the countries where Rights & Democracy intervened. The results of the studies would then constitute the strategic logic for implementing a programme in the country. The methodology was subsequently modified somewhat **(19)** to make it more participatory and to focus on the process itself as a product (Thede et al. 1996). A total of seven democratic development studies have been published to date: Kenya (Gillies & Mutua 1993), Thailand (Taylor & Muntarbhorn 1994), El Salvador (Torres Rivas & Gonzalez Suarez 1994), Tanzania (Halfani & Nzomo 1995), Guatemala (Palencia & Holiday 1996), Peru (Ciurlizza & Acosta 1997) and Pakistan (Hilani 1998). A study was initiated in Rwanda but never materialized. An eighth study is presently underway in Mexico. **(20)** Moreover, the approach outlined in the framework has inspired input by Rights & Democracy to

international discussions on indicators for human rights (Thede 2000, 2001). It is presently being applied with a regional perspective in an analysis of issues for democratic development in North Africa and the Middle East (Antonius 2002).

The approach linking human rights and democracy is consistently received by activists in the field as a ground-breaking contribution to work in both areas. It is rare in most countries that the two types of organization work together or that human rights are examined from the perspective of democracy or vice-versa.

### 3.2 CONCEPTS-IN-PROGRESS

Several concepts and their accompanying assumptions have been central to the approach implemented by Rights & Democracy over the decade. They were first articulated in the 1993 framework (Gillies 1993), amplified in the 1996 version (Thede et al.), and have continued to be revisited in the light of our experience and discussions with colleagues in Canada and in the South. The major ones at the outset were *the link between democracy and human rights* , the role of *civil society* in a process of democratization. As time went on, we have looked more closely at the concept of *citizenship* and the relationship between *peacebuilding and democratic development*.

In our understanding of the *link between democracy and human rights* , we have moved from the simple assertion of the idea that a democratic society is one in which the entire family of human rights is fully respected, to a conceptualization of the dynamic relationship between the two. We have come to see *democracy and human rights* in historical perspective as *mutually constitutive processes*. That is: struggles for the recognition and institutionalization of rights are the very stuff of democratic institutions and processes. Thus, in admittedly very broad terms, the movements organizing for the recognition of rights are the primary agents of democratic development. This does not mean, however, that organizations explicitly defining themselves as “human rights organizations” have the monopoly of this role. On the contrary, it is much more widely disseminated throughout (civil) society, and at a particular moment a particular type of right may be strategically much more crucial for advancing the democratic agenda than others. Thus, not all rights at all times carry the same strategic potential for democratic development as a dynamic (rather than as an outcome). The objective has now become to use the revised democratic development framework as a tool for identifying those rights that carry that strategic potential in a given country at a given conjuncture.

*Civil society* is cast, in Rights & Democracy’s approach, as the fundamental and necessary – but not sufficient – actor for democracy. A democratic civil society can exist without a democratic State, but the inverse is impossible. Civil society can and must be very diverse. That diversity is necessary for democracy – even if parts of civil society are not themselves allies of democracy. But that structural characteristic of civil society is not sufficient to underpin a dynamic approach to democratic development. Not all components of civil society are relevant even to the process of democratic development. In the question of the dynamics of democratic development, to work with “civil society” is virtually meaningless: rather, it is necessary to identify specific actors or sectors within civil society that have a strategic potential for democratization.

If civil society per se is an essential element of democracy, it is first because it is a generator of articulated positions and projects on the part of the citizenry with respect to the State, *and* – second – because it is a “school of democracy”, where democratic values and practices are learned, transmitted, developed on a small scale throughout society. Those two aspects may not be equally shared throughout an entire civil society. Therefore, democracy support also means: 1. Supporting the capacity of civil society to interact with the State, and 2. Supporting the development of a democratic culture within and throughout civil society itself. Rights & Democracy’s vision has been more specific on the first aspect. We have consistently aimed, in our own work as an institution in Canada and in other countries and in many of the projects we have supported elsewhere, to develop that crucial interface that is the site of policy dialogue between State and civil society.

Our reflection on *citizenship* (Thede 2000) grew out of the examination of the dynamics of the relationship between human rights and democracy. It became apparent that citizens were, historically, the members of the groups within society whose demands for rights had been recognized and institutionalized into the political and legal systems. From this perspective, marginalized groups are those whose self-defined rights – or principal demands – have not been taken on by the rest of society as part of the social consensus underlying and defining the political system. Thus, the motor force for democratic development comes from those groups presently not recognized within the democratic consensus and who are attempting to renegotiate its scope and definition through the recognition and subsequent institutionalization of their rights. Citizenship is therefore the recognition of social groups or categories as full members of the political system. In this light, participation becomes a strategic issue for democratic development.

*Peacebuilding and democracy* is a relatively new field of systematization of our experience. Although some of the countries Rights & Democracy was working in were actually peacebuilding situations (e.g.: El Salvador, Eritrea), it was only in 1996 – stimulated by Minister Axworthy’s new policy on the subject – that we actually began to approach such countries in their specificity. Since then, we have carried out specific peacebuilding initiatives in Guatemala, Colombia, the Congo and Burma. Although our overall framework for democratic development remains valid and applicable in those situations, we have found that most of our work tends to fall into certain areas. In particular, these are: 1) building common grounds within civil society **(21)** , 2) developing the capacity of civil society organizations to articulate alternative policy proposals, and 3) developing the capacity of civil society organizations and government for dialogue and negotiation. These aspects are well set out in the report on our peacebuilding work in Guatemala (Desnoyers & Proudfoot 2001).

None of these concepts are perfect and they will remain, hopefully, works-in-progress that we revisit and revise as we continue to evaluate our experience in democratic development. A couple of aspects, in particular, will clearly require more work. One is the question of power and conflicts over it. Power is implicit in all we say about struggles for rights, about marginalization, and about civil society and its relationship to the State. But in our approach to these issues, are we really equipped to identify issues of power and address them? Or are we avoiding them and developing concrete actions that do not deal with them? The whole problem of economic power and its relationship to political power has to a large extent remained outside the scope of our analysis and our work.

Some of our assumptions also are undoubtedly somewhat naïve and need to be "unpacked" in order to even understand where the problems lie. For example, it appears implicit in our vision of the sort of regime that preceded the democratic transition that we assume it was a dictatorship. We therefore assume that certain types of processes and institutional changes are necessary, whereas different prior regime types may require different solutions. This is aside from the broader question of the different political cultures in which democratization is taking place and how they influence the type, form, direction and pace of change.

## 3.3 TAKING STOCK

In late 2000, Rights & Democracy undertook a reassessment of its strategy for democratic development. On the basis of the changes – concrete and conceptual – that had taken place over its first decade, the institution aimed to determine to what extent its approach was justified, where it needed reorientation and how it might define the strategic focus of its democratic development programme. To do this, we carried out: 1) a series of interviews with specialists in Canada and in the countries where we work; 2) a series of field visits and consultations with partners and activists in Thailand/Burma, Kenya, Tanzania, Peru and Guatemala, 3) a review of the major publications in the area of democratic development, and 4) a statistical overview of our past project work (Spuches 2000).

### *The View from the Field: Priority Issues*

There was no unanimity in the results of this survey, but there was a striking overlap in the issues that emerged from the field studies. We asked what, for people and organizations working to strengthen democracy in newly democratic countries, were the major issues they see themselves confronting. Broadening and deepening political participation and the public sphere were the two major areas, and they have been discussed above. The list of remaining issues that emerged was also similar from one country to another.

- *Beyond Transition :* There is a need to develop an inclusive strategy for democratic participation beyond elections, and to develop spaces and fora for reflection and exchange.

- *Culture of Democracy* : How is it possible to develop the attitudes and skills for participation, dialogue, policy advocacy and negotiation that are central to democratic processes?

- *Political Parties* : How can civil society organizations play a role in reforming, strengthening or creating political parties that are transparent, accountable, responsive to the interests of citizens? How to build links at grassroots level and construct citizen platforms for negotiating with political parties?

- *Indigenous Identity*: A very deep sense prevails that democracy is not a "one size fits all" phenomenon. It cannot be imported and must grow from internal values, movements, history. What, then, does that mean in terms of the debate between universalism and multiculturalism? What forms of multi-ethnic (multi-identity) power-sharing can be effective?

- *Accountability*: An ethic of accountability has to be generated and enforced within the institutions of governance. How can citizens ensure oversight? What are methods for citizen audit?

- *Constitutional Development*: Strategies for citizen participation in constitutional reform processes have been implemented with varying success in diverse country contexts. How can those experiences be evaluated and transmitted to civil society movements elsewhere?

- *Internal Democracy of Civil Society Organizations*: Organizations are often weak or inexperienced in democratic processes and structures of internal governance, and in their capacity to actively involve members and ensure the development of new leadership cadres. This problem is particularly acute in transition situations, because the

experienced leadership is often siphoned away by government.

### *The Funding Relationship*

There were a certain number of points of convergence from organizations in the field concerning the relationship with outside donors. The funding relationship easily generates unequal power relations, rendering true partnership impracticable and making it difficult, if not impossible, for the recipient organizations to determine freely their programme priorities. Such a relationship fundamentally contradicts the purported goals of democracy promotion. Without weakening mechanisms of accountability (which can in themselves be a useful discipline for learning by recipient organizations), it is possible to envisage characteristics of a funding relationship that gives maximum priority to responding to the strategic needs of democracy-building on the ground. Some of these are the following:

- Partners first and foremost appreciate flexibility of funding. When not restricted to specific activities, funding can allow them to respond creatively to the demands of an evolving political situation, encouraging the ideological development of the leadership.

- Granting core funding, taking risks on new organizations and giving proactive support to the historically excluded (indigenous peoples, for example), are seen as highly positive and rare on the part of international donors. Willingness to support partners' policy work and to complement the work of partners at key moments, with policy work in Northern countries is also seen as valuable. Showcasing donor contributions is not seen as positive; reinforcing the commitment to partners and to the work they do rather than to the donor institution's visibility and image is clearly considered preferable.

- The relationship is best built on the basis not of dictating what partners should do; but rather listening and clarifying mutual interests.

- When trust is developed, organizations see partnership as more than a funding relationship: they want funding partners to provide intellectual resources, advice, contacts and technical and political support. This requires a more intensive form of partnership. It is eventually possible to go beyond "partner" relationships to develop and work on a common agenda for democracy.

## IV. LESSONS AND PERSPECTIVES

What have we learned about the process of democratic development over the past ten years? What have we learned about how to "do" democratic development? The "lessons" we have been able to sift out from our experience, and from the thoughts of other analysts, have more to do with how we conceive the problem of democratization (the issues involved, the actors, the time-frames, the scope, the strategies), than with clear-cut how-to's. If anything, they take us farther away from clear answers to the question of how to promote democracy than we thought we were when we started out. And we are learning that this is a good thing.

The kinds of things we have learned have to do with how we understand "civil society", its complexity, its limits as well. They include issues of "deepening democracy": citizenship, participation, civic values, the public sphere. They lead us to recognize the need to understand how democracy can be developed from inside societies, based on their own values and institutions. We have begun to examine the potential of the notion and implications – positive and negative - of an alleged *right* to democracy. Finally, it is important to understand democracy as a political process and not as a management concept. These lessons actually complicate rather than simplify our vision of democratic development. What we have learned takes us farther away from a simple formula for democratization. We cannot produce a manual on good democratic development, or even a booklet of "best practices". And by all means, *we should not*. We must attempt to continue identifying and integrating into our work the multiple new factors and issues that arise in this long-term, context-dependent, uneven, conflict-ridden field of democratic development. This is not an admission of defeat: it is rather a plea for a sane recognition of the fact that democratic development is an extremely complex and contradictory process that cannot be reduced to universal formulae.

### *Reconceptualizing Civil Society: Its Scope and Limits*

Democratic institutions do not a democracy make. From the outset, Rights & Democracy was convinced that a strong civil society is the fundamental component of a democratic system and society. Our experience has shown us that a strategy for supporting democratization cannot rest on such a broad and vague vision. A much more textured analysis or problematization of civil society is necessary when it comes to devising concrete strategies. The issues set out below are especially crucial in defining an approach.

First, a broad and active civil society is a necessary ingredient of democracy: strong civil societies reflect a relative dispersion of political power throughout the entire polity (Oxhorn 2001: 4). *But* – not all of that civil society will be actively involved in building democratic

institutions nor will all its members necessarily adhere to or promote democratic values. A democratic civil society can "check authoritarian tendencies at the level of the State" (Oxhorn 2001:5). However, in some cases civil society can be predominantly anti-democratic and promote authoritarianism (e.g.: Nazi Germany) **(22)**. It is not necessarily "the source of healthy democratic activity that breeds participation", and "enemies of democratic life exist within civil society itself" (Chandoke 2001:16, 17). Civil society is thus not a monolith in this sense, nor is it in the sense of all civil society organizations supporting a single agenda of democratic transformation. Civil society is, rather, criss-crossed by contending power relations (Fowler 2000:7).

Second, civil society has become the catchword of international funders interested in democracy – one has the impression that it is often seen as a "neutral" alternative to funding (corrupt) government agencies or political parties. The latter are often implicitly delegitimated in the discourse of funders, rather than understood as necessary institutions for agglomeration and representation of disparate interests, something civil society per se is rarely equipped to do. Doherty (2001:25) writes that strengthening civil society while neglecting political parties is ultimately irresponsible and can undermine the democratic process by preparing the way for populist leaders who are not constrained by a party machine. Certainly, in the review carried out by Rights & Democracy, the need to develop the capacity of political parties to play their role of agglomeration of interests was signalled as central for new democracies.

Third, our understanding of civil society has been revealed to be profoundly anchored in the Western context (Europe, the Americas). Challenges to the way we have construed it have come from various quarters. In Africa, for example, we have seen that the boundaries of civil society, the family, the State are extremely vague and overlap much more with one another than they tend to do here. In the case of some Islamic countries, it is not just the political moment that breeds an anti-democratic civil society: it can be the product of a political culture or ethos that imposes certain undemocratic values (Antonius 2001:7). The very manner in which we analyze civil society therefore is – and must be – context-dependent as well.

### *Beyond Civil Society: Citizenship, Participation, Democratic Culture, Development of the Public Sphere*

We have also learned that there are many areas of interrelationship between State and civil society that are necessary for democratic development, but that cannot be subsumed under one or the other. Citizenship, participation, development of the public sphere, democratic culture – all these are crucial challenges that concern both State and civil society in new democracies.

The notion of ***citizenship*** has been profoundly transformed by the experiences of democratic transitions and pro-democracy movements in the East and South (Thede 2000). The rather passive liberal vision of citizenship (i.e.: formal membership in the polity) has been revitalized by the participatory demands for real exercise of citizenship put forward by movements in new democracies and by the new social and identity movements in the North. This has brought strikingly to the fore the fact that "the history of citizenship is also that of people demanding the equality, justice, and participation that democratic citizenship promises in ways that force the State to recognize them as new kinds of citizens and their demands as new kinds of valid claims" (Holston 1998: 41). Effective citizenship, problematic as it is (as we have seen above), is an essential element and measure of democracy.

***Participation*** is the life-blood of a democracy. But we must conceive of participation as a right to be exercised, and not as the "formulaic tyranny" (Fowler 2000:28) that has invaded the discourse and practice of nearly all inter-governmental agencies, and which may even undermine a democratic system by confining participation to relatively inconsequential aspects of the local execution of projects (Joseph 2000). Participation must be approached as an aspect of citizenship, that is: "participation as an inherent non-discretionary civic right" (Fowler 2000: 28). Participation is what makes the principles and structures of democracy function. But participation is the major casualty of the democratic deficit: the effective exercise of the right to participate is being weakened both at the level of citizens and their elected representatives.

***Democratic Culture*** (a complex of attitudes, implicit rules and values that orient people in exercising their citizenship) is weak in most new democracies. Nzomo (2000) defines democratic culture as "values of tolerance, inclusiveness, equitable sharing of power and responsibilities and distributive justice." Without it, it is impossible to sustain democratic institutions or develop a democratic society. Implicit in early approaches to democratic development was the notion that a democratic culture would be the automatic by-product of democratic institutions. Preoccupying recent findings from Latin America (Lagos 2001), Asia (Chu, Diamond & Shin 2001), and Africa (Bratton and Mattes 2001:117) suggest that youth are not absorbing the new democratic culture, and that amongst the better-educated sectors of the population there is cynicism, rather than development of a commitment to democracy. Attempts to explain this development are centring on traditional social patterns of hierarchical authority (Lagos 2001: 142). An NGO in Lima, Peru – Alternativa – has identified a complex structural relationship between the individual, her vision of development and her willingness to become politically active. Jaime Joseph (2000: 160) writes: *"We are finding that where 'weak' individuals with low self-esteem predominate, while they are conscious of what they lack, they do not formulate interests nor do they consider their own capacities... In weak individuals and organizations we also find a limited vision of development,... where we find weak individuals and a narrow vision of development, we also find a negative vision of politics and a lack of political will."* This finding exemplifies the problematic relationship between political participation and social exclusion.

The development of a dynamic ***public sphere*** is ultimately what allows all the other aspects of democratic participation to interweave and flourish. "The public sphere consists of the institutions and social terrain which make possible the resolution of social conflicts through reasoned discourse, not through violence or status or tradition. The adequacy of a given public sphere is determined both by the quality of discourse (and underlying social norms and values) and the quantity of participation involved. The concept of a public sphere also depends upon the assumption that there exists a 'common good' which can be articulated through public debate within

both State and civil society." (Macdonald 2000:53). Somers (quoted in Oxhorn 1999:2) puts it slightly differently: "The public sphere denotes a contested participatory site in which actors with overlapping identities as legal subjects, citizens, economic actors and family and community members form a public body and engage in negotiations and contestations over political and social life". Thousands of definitions of the public sphere exist, but the main aspects are that it is a virtual or physical "space" where citizens negotiate the concrete expressions of the common good through debate. The mass media are important channels of present-day public sphere, but the notion encompasses much more than that, from face-to-face meetings to parliamentary commissions. The public sphere can be both a motor and product of democratization. In new democracies it is often weak: its development is strategic for the future of citizen participation.

### *Indigenization (Traditional Sources)*

Democracy as we know it is a product of Western political culture. With the emergence of a world-system, democracy has become a widely shared value throughout the globe. Even in the West, there is not a single democratic system, but many of them are based on a common set of principles, values, institutions and processes. We have seen above that democratic development is context-dependent. The logical follow-up to this observation therefore is that democracy is rooted in specific historical and cultural contexts. Many authors argue that traditional institutions and value systems (in Africa and Asia, for example) possess their own concepts of rights and democratic process (Taylor & Muntarbhorn 1993, Silverstein 1996:212, Ngondi-Houghton & Wanjala 1999:6, Ibhawoh 2001:51-2), and that these values and concepts can be mobilized to develop democratic institutions. Concrete proposals for doing so are rarely developed, however. Moreover, it is important not to idealize and reify traditional culture. We must recognize that traditional cultures were not static, and that they also encompassed struggles over meaning and power (Ibhawoh 2000). Some argue that in practice subordinate groups, women in particular, are contesting the conservative visions of traditional values: "in their conception of 'cultural legitimacy', (they) focus on themes such as traditional methods of conflict resolution, the centrality of the family, and the reciprocal relationship between rights and duties rather than patriarchal hegemony" (Ibhawoh 2001:56).

### *Right to Democracy*

Certain authors are beginning to approach democracy as an emerging international human right (see Ezetah 1997, Muñoz 1998). The idea is founded in part on the erosion of State sovereignty in the face of growing recognition of international responsibility for protection of internationally-recognized human rights. Ezetah – in by far the most elaborate of the treatments of the issue - argues that the right to democracy can be classified as an overriding customary international law (p. 504). "Given that the right to democracy is an aspect of the peremptory norm of self-determination, all States have an obligation *erga omnes* (i.e.: opposable to, and valid against, the whole world and all legal persons irrespective of consent) to protect the democratic character of member States" of the United Nations (p. 509). He further argues that in international law it is unnecessary to specifically define the content of democracy – that it simply must be accepted as "a context-dependent idea that has a core universal standard" (p. 496). That standard is expressed in Article 21 of the ICCPR, which guarantees the rights set out in Articles 22 to 27, as required by Article 28 (p. 522). As in the 1981 UN Commission on Human Rights ruling on the Uruguay coup sets out, it is "unnecessary to protect any given model, for the term 'democracy', as used in international rights parlance, is intended to connote the kind of governance which is legitimated by the consent of the governed" (quoted p. 513). Ezetah argues that international law must support democracy by "clearly defining violations of a democratic mandate as international crimes against peace" (528).

The recent adoption of resolutions on the protection and enhancement of democracy by three major inter-governmental organizations **(23)** may open new avenues in this area. Although the resolutions are political rather than legally binding in nature, they may provide a stepping-stone towards the recognition of a human right to democracy. If we conceive of rights as emerging values borne and promoted by broad and diverse movements of citizens, then efforts to institutionalize this emerging right may be a manner for ensuring greater protection for democratic regimes and movements.

### *Governance as a Political Issue*

As noted earlier, the concept of democratic development is progressively being replaced by that of "good governance" or simply "governance". The trend began with the World Bank as early as 1989, and has crept into the policy documents of the other major inter-governmental organizations (UNDP, OECD, IADB), bilateral agencies and even independent institutions and NGOs. This trend represents an attempt to depoliticize democracy by reducing it to a question of management of power and resources.

The World Bank, leader in the development of the governance paradigm, has defined the concept variously (to the point that some underline a confusion with respect to its meaning – Forsythe & Reiffer 2000:1002). In 1989, it defined governance as "the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs" (Nzomo 2000). In 1992, it had put a more developmental spin on the notion: "the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the management of a country's social and economic resources" (quoted in Lévy 2001:877). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) adopts the same definition but adds that *good* governance is "the exercise of power by various levels of government that is effective, honest, equitable, transparent and accountable" (CIDA 1996:21). Campbell (2000:4) thus claims that the dominant approach to governance emphasizes efficient management of administrative and political affairs. This, in contrast to an NGO definition such as that of the Institute on Governance: "the institutions, processes and traditions which determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken and how citizens are accorded voice *effective governance* (is) the responsible and responsive exercise of power on matters of public concern" (IOG 1996:1).

Many authors are critical of the attempt to depoliticize. UNRISD (2000b) charges: "The World Bank tried to depoliticize democracy,

first by reducing it to governance, and then by reducing governance to technical institutional conditions that are necessary for successful (structural) adjustment: the rule of law, transparency and accountability." Ghai (2001:26) pushes the argument further in the same vein and asserts that "the IMF and the World Bank have hijacked democracy and rights through the advocacy of the narrower concept of 'governance'". This effort to depoliticize, as Campbell points out, is not simply a means of reducing and simplifying a complex process. It is a way of redefining political space. She argues that a specific model of State-market relations is built into this governance model. The notion of desirable political process is reduced to the rotation of elites. Political space is seen as a site for management of resources rather than access to power. "The attempt to treat political processes above all in terms of efficient technical management, in effect 'depoliticizes' these processes with the result of denying the legitimacy of a whole range of political objectives" (p. 22). Ultimately, she adds, this touches upon the redefinition of the rights and responsibilities of citizens. This whole approach envisions "democracy" as a well-oiled machine producing tangible results, rather than recognizing the fact that democracy is about debate, dissent, building compromises, broadening participation and even confrontation within certain broadly agreed-upon bounds, but often in a messy and "unmanageable" way.

A related issue lies in the choices this approach leads funders to make in newly democratic countries. In general, they tend to shy away from overtly "political" organizations and initiatives, whether they be CSOs or political organizations per se. Political parties, in particular, are looked upon with suspicion by many large funders. By so doing, they overlook and marginalize an aspect of the political sphere which is essential for building a functional democracy. Political parties are the mechanisms through which the diverse sectoral interests of civil society actors can be aggregated (through negotiation) into a common platform, which moreover constitutes the basis of accountability for parties once elected. Some authors even argue that this unbalanced approach runs a real "risk of undermining representative politics The neglect of political parties, and parliaments, can undermine the very democratic process that development assistance seeks to enhance" (Doherty 2001: 26, 25).

The issue of globalization is often raised as a problem in the discussion on governance. Good governance, particularly in the sense of citizens participating in the decisions that concern them, simply is not applied to the workings of the major IFIs (Lévy 2001). In this sense, the technocratic approach to governance participates in the growing democratic deficit increasingly afflicting all countries (Evans 2000:424) and compounds it.

### *Women and Democratization*

The political participation of women is widely recognized as being a "next frontier" for new democracies. It was signalled as a crucial issue by all the pro-democracy movements we consulted in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The relationship between women and democracy encompasses so many diverse dimensions, that it is difficult even to frame it. One possible angle is that of "engendering democracy": another is "political participation of women". The first concerns the distinct nature of women's experience and the necessity to redefine democratic institutions and practices to adequately reflect that difference. The second deals rather with enhancing the participation of women in the formal political sphere, an issue that has gained great public profile since the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women. Both angles are present in the literature, but there is a much stronger emphasis in recent years on the latter.

In general, however, whatever the angle, the discussion of the issue of the relationship between women and democratization takes place in a sort of ghetto, somewhat divorced from the rest of the writing on democracy. Only rarely do those writing on women and democracy situate their discussion within an overall analysis of trends in democratization (e.g.: Razavi 2000, Molyneux & Razavi 2001), and almost never do authors writing on democratization in general discuss the issue of women. The analytical work thus mirrors the gap that exists on the ground between pro-democracy movements and women's movements in transition processes. This curious separation is all the more unfortunate in that it thereby fails to address – and even to recognize - the *crux* of the problem of women's exclusion from democratic processes and institutions. The problem can be stated as follows:

*While many of the problems afflicting the 'new democracies' (such as the elitist character of political parties, and the failure of the State to guarantee civil and political rights or make a significant dent in poverty) affect all citizens, they are manifested and experienced in gender-specific ways. Women's persistent exclusion from formal politics, in particular, raises a number of specific questions about how to reform democratic institutions, since these institutions are not automatically gender-equitable." (Razavi, 2000:iv).*

Finally, the relative underdevelopment of the discussion on women and democratization is underscored by the lack of theoretical works on the subject – the vast majority of publications are region- or country-specific or comparative case studies.

Two main problems are explored by practitioners and analysts alike. The first concerns the translation of women's perspectives and priorities into democratic institutions and processes. The second deals with the participation of women in the political sphere, and particularly with the mechanisms to enable and enhance that participation. Although the two can and should be complementary, and the first can be seen as encompassing the second, the recent emphasis on the second has led to the predominance of a somewhat narrow perspective on the issues. At the same time, each of the two main approaches is itself riddled with internal debates. We propose here to briefly identify a few of the major issues in order to provide a sense of their scope and potential for rethinking democratization.

*Engendering Democracy.* This approach starts from the observation that women cannot participate as equals in the political sphere because gender roles as socially defined and as enforced by the State inhibit their participation. Political institutions and processes have been constructed on a gender bias, predicated on the implicit assumption that women's interests, priorities and perspectives can

be subsumed to those of the male "norm". Those institutions and processes function on the basis of what is considered "work" and "participation" for the adult males of society. However, "the labour entailed in the so-called duties of the domestic sphere not only inhibits women from competing in the political marketspace, but creates the freedom for men to do so" (Ashworth 1992:9). The domestic division of labour, and its enforcement by the State (through civil and family codes, social policy, etc), has even graver implications for poor women: *"The incapacity of the poorest women – and poverty has specific gender origins and differences, too – to be mobile, to make choices, to gain access to organizations that might defend or protect them, to enjoy the rights and comforts others take for granted, also sets them apart"* (idem: 14). The problem of male violence, also often defined out of the public sphere by the State – has an inhibiting effect on women's political participation as well. If one admits the existence of these problems, the necessary conclusion is that both the public sphere and political institutions are skewed, allowing for the expression only of male citizens. The consequence is that both must be redefined and restructured to enable the participation of women. The public sphere must be redefined to encompass the domestic sphere (the family), or at least certain aspects of it. **(24)** And political institutions must be reformed (or redefined) to reflect the priorities, experience and perspectives of women. **(25**)

The foregoing implies first, the necessity of recognizing the biases that inhibit women's full participation, and second, acting to correct them. In this sense, the two approaches cited above are complementary. However, in practice, the second approach, dealing with the mechanisms of women's political participation, has become somewhat divorced from the broader analysis of the first approach. As "mainstreaming" has become the driving logic, efforts have been concentrated on creating mechanisms permitting increased representation of women in existing institutions, with the ultimate goal being numerical parity. Similar efforts have not been directed towards rethinking and redesigning institutions and processes to incorporate women's needs and priorities. As a result, in most democracies, be they new or established, those women who have been drawn into the political process are principally from the elite – in other words, from the circles of society already included amongst the "stakeholders" of the democratic consensus. It has done little to alter the level of direct participation by women from marginalized sectors of society.

*Mechanisms for Women's Political Participation:* Despite the shortcoming mentioned above, the relatively abundant literature on the subject of mechanisms for women's political participation points to some important areas of qualitative as well as quantitative progress. On the whole, although most analysts agree that there has been an increase in the number of women elected to government over the past decade, the absolute figures are disappointing **(26)** and the regional discrepancies enormous. **(27)** But the trend, with some exceptions, is towards greater representation of women. It is frequently pointed out that in public opinion surveys, women are increasingly seen by the general public as potentially more competent representatives than men: less corrupt, better at negotiation, less confrontational (Htun 2001:13, Rousseau 2002:8), so the numbers may reasonably be expected to increase in the coming years. One of the more interesting findings of this type of research is however that important changes in favour of women's interests can be made even with a relatively small number of women in the legislature: "even a modest number of women in parliament can have positive repercussions on the advancement of women's rights when there is a balance of forces in civil society and within the State that allow for such progress to be made" (Rousseau 2002:2). As Razavi (2000: vii & 34) underlines, the mechanics of women's participation is not developed in a political vacuum. Democratic transitions provide new opportunities for negotiation and redefinition, and in many cases women have been able to achieve important changes in the constitution, in the definition of their legal rights, and on the terrain of violence against women. But those gains are not only – nor even principally, perhaps - the result of the mechanics of getting women elected. Rather, an astute strategy of political alliances to make the most of the potential convergence of a series of factors is the most beneficial path. Such factors include: the number of women in parliament and in political parties; a dynamic women's sector in civil society; an international environment that gives importance to gender equality; locus of allies within the State structure; an executive branch willing to push the issue (albeit for opportunistic motives) (Rousseau 2002: 20, Razavi 2000: 49).

Thus the issue is not whether or not to support mechanisms for getting women elected, but rather how, once elected, the space created by having those women representatives can be creatively used and integrated into a multi-faceted strategy. Interestingly, often even women who were not elected on a pro-women platform become more active on women's issues once elected, because they are regularly solicited by the women's movement and come to see themselves as their representatives. In many cases, cross-party women's caucuses have become effective vehicles for advancing debates and legislation on women's issues. Writing on Latin America, Htun affirms that "women legislators, united in multipartisan political alliances, were responsible for enacting laws on domestic violence, rape, quotas, and the reform of discriminatory civil and criminal codes" (2001: 8). But even such multiparty alliances have not been able to generate the same level of impact on issues affecting women, but not considered specifically "women's issues", such as economic policy and planning (Razavi 2000:34). **(28)**

Clearly, electoral mechanics alone are not the answer. But they are strategically important. "The masculine construction of political authority makes it extremely difficult for women to be elected into office without some form of electoral engineering – such as through quota systems or reserved seats" (idem: 2). Research appears to be revealing that quotas are preferable to reserved seats. The latter – although they do guarantee a given proportion of women elected - tend to create an enclave for women, whereas quotas give greater legitimacy to women parliamentarians as representatives of the entire collectivity (idem: 26). But quotas also meet with widely varying levels of success. In order to be most effective, Htun (2001:8) asserts that: a) the law must be clear and obligatory in nature; b) quotas work best in closed lists or large electoral districts, and c) they must require the placement of women candidates in electable positions.

*Women and Political Parties:* A key aspect of the broader political environment affecting the capacity of women to advance their policy agenda is their role in political parties. There is a strong current of distrust towards political parties within some sectors of the women's

movement, advocating the position that political parties simply recuperate women's demands, without advancing their interests. Some even affirm that an absence of political parties can enhance women's capacity to work together in favour of the collective representation of their interests (Razavi 2000:25). **(29)** Without attempting to enter this debate, it is important to note that one of the factors crucial to the gains made by women in the Nordic countries has been the willingness of the social democratic parties there to establish women's demands firmly within their party platforms. Not only did women gain acceptance of quotas for political representation, but also the intervention of the State in the market in order to alter the relationship between the public and private spheres in favour of women (Razavi 2000: 49).

The weight of analytical evidence points clearly, though, to the need for political parties in order to ensure functioning democracies. The generalized weakness of political parties in new democracies and the problem that poses for democratic participation in general is discussed elsewhere in this paper. Their weakness has specific repercussions for women, for example in the fact that a dysfunctional political party system can inhibit the advancement of women's interests due to lack of effective membership pressure. Comments on the case of Uganda are undoubtedly applicable to a large number of cases: the "lack of formal structures, lines of authority, or structured approaches to determining policy priorities effectively disable attempts to render [the party] more gender sensitive and more transparent" (Molyneux and Razavi 2001 : 30). In other words, the clientelism and lack of internal democracy and pluralism in political parties make women dependent on political patronage. The issue of how to reform political parties, how to make them vehicles for representation of women and for their policy priorities, is every bit as crucial for women as it is for the pro-democracy movement as a whole.

The overall trend over the past two decades has been towards the creation of a hitherto unknown set of circumstances particularly favourable to enabling women's political participation. These circumstances include strong women's movements internationally and in many developing countries, a favourable international policy environment, more open and flexible political spheres in new democracies. Analysts differ in their assessment of the solidity of the gains made during that period. While Htun (2001:13) sees reason for hope and future advances given the increasing credibility amongst the population in general of women as political representatives, others (e.g. UNRISD 2000:7) consider that the problem of uncivil democracies and the restricted political sphere that they "engender" will render the past gains of women very fragile in the future.

## CONCLUSIONS

The view expressed here that human rights and democracy are mutually constitutive processes, and that citizens' movements for the recognition and institutionalization of rights is a main motor force of that mutual constitution, is reinforced by much of the recent research on democracy. But it remains a vision in very broad strokes. The learning that we can extract from ten years' experience in democratic development, as outlined above, in terms of the tools and methods we use, in terms of the way in which real democratic transitions have evolved, and in terms of the experience and contacts developed with organizations on the front line of democratic change, leads us to propose a series of choices. Those choices are informed by the major findings of this survey.

*The single most striking and prevalent conclusion is that all recent democratic transitions are truncated or partial in that participation in the political and public spheres is limited to a small urban elite* . The effective exercise of citizenship is restricted to a comparatively small circle of social actors. Participation in the institutions of the new democracies is exclusive of the majority of the population. Be it for reasons of gender, ethnicity, or economic status, entire sectors of the populations of new democracies are virtually absent from the sphere of the formal institutions of democracy. In the terms of the foregoing analysis, this phenomenon is a product of the fact that the democratic transition has not led to a redefinition of the social consensus that founds the institutions and practices of democracy. The *major strategic challenge in new democracies is therefore to enable the renegotiation of that social consensus* in a manner that includes those sectors presently excluded. That requires not only a quantitative logic (further expansion of those institutions in order to include the outsiders), but an ability and the political will to qualitatively redesign institutions so as to accommodate difference (gender, cultural, economic) with a view to equality and justice.

Corollary aspects of that conclusion are the following:

*In general, following a period of intense popular mobilization, democratic participation in new democracies is hindered* by various factors at the level of the State (uncivil democracies, growing social inequality). The participation of women and indigenous peoples is often hindered by even stronger barriers.

*Developing citizen participation through the public sphere is key to the consolidation of a democratic system*. The public sphere in new democracies is a crucial mechanism for generating a broadly-shared concept of citizenship and the common good. But the public sphere is generally weak, as a result of the authoritarian structures and political culture which preceded the democratic opening.

*Participation must be construed as a right* , not a privilege, founded in international human rights instruments. The development of a culture of citizen participation is central to a qualitatively democratic system. In particular, *the political institutions which constitute the backbone of the democratic system will only give rise to a true democracy if citizen participation is deeply ingrained in their structure and functioning*. Specific *modes and issues for building democratic participation in political institutions may vary* according to the specific historical and institutional context.

Based on O'Donnell's model (described above), strategically our approach to promoting democracy should be to strengthen actors and institutional processes along two axes: 1. Electoral processes and institutions, 2. A democratic right of participation or a specific combination of such rights, that is strategic in the specific historical context for strengthening and broadening the institutions and culture of implementation of both elections and rights. These rights are envisaged as historical sites of agency which generate political institutions **(30)** and structures.

It is important to reiterate that our understanding of "participation rights" is that they are fundamental in order to generate other rights. "Rights of any kind depend on prior political conditions, and we might say that without political and civil rights there is no guarantee that other rights, even when they are inscribed in laws and constitutions, may be made effective" (UNRISD 2000a:5). The approach proposed is not, therefore, one of the traditional division between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. Although most of the rights we are referring to are contained in the ICCPR (freedom of expression, assembly, association, election, and equality before the law), **(31)** one is also contained in the ICESCR (association, Art. 8). We are not proposing necessarily a legalistic treatment of these rights. The instrument is there as a commitment on the part of States and a generalized acceptance internationally of certain attributes of democratic regimes. Participation is therefore at one and the same time a *right* and a strategic avenue for deepening democracy. The inclusion of those presently marginalized from the circle of citizenship demands qualitative change in democratic institutions and processes. Participation – seen as the collective capacity of systemically marginalized groups to articulate their policy proposals and to access processes and institutions of democratic decision-making to use the logic of rights to constitute themselves as rights-bearing *citizens* – is thus the key to effecting democratic development.

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## ENDNOTES

**CLICK ON ENDNOTE NUMBERS TO GO BACK TO THE TEXT.**

**1** An important limit is that the written material surveyed was published almost exclusively in Western Europe and North America. Our discussions with organizations from Asia, Africa and Latin America at an inter-regional seminar, held at our offices in Montreal October 29-30, 2001, allowed us to verify and modify our tentative conclusions. We limited the publications consulted mainly to those dealing either with concepts and issues or with more than a single country. The period covered is, in general, 1995 to 2001.

**2** Carothers (2002) sees this wave beginning with the democratization of the Southern European dictatorships in Portugal, Spain and Greece in the mid-1970s.

**3** Fowler (2000:7) rightly points out that civil society is also a site of contending power relations and cannot thus be treated as a monolithic entity. The vast variety of organizations that make up civil society have differing interests that are not necessarily convergent nor even necessarily democratic. Therefore, civil society must be specifically analyzed in each case.

**4** Certain exceptions exist. One might cite the informal network of democracy foundations involving NED, NDI, IRI, CIPE, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Rights & Democracy, the German Stiftungs, the Fondation Jean Jaurès and similar para-public institutions. Another interesting model is that of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), initiated and supported by a variety of middle-power governments from North and South, and presently including Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, India, Mauritius, Namibia, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Uruguay.

**5** By "agency" I am referring to the historical capacity of social actors to undertake initiatives to advance their collective interests and social project.

**6** I am indebted to François Crépeau for this insight.

**7** In an effort to bridge the gap, NED created the *Journal of Democracy* in 1990. The journal *Democratization*, while the product of British academia, also makes a consistent effort to link evolving theory with concrete cases and issues. Both exercise great influence on shaping the thinking of democracy promotion institutions.

**8** The literature reveals a frequent lack of knowledge of the scope of human rights as defined in the international instruments. Thus, authors often write of "freedom of expression *and* human rights", or "civil *and* human rights". From our perspective *human* rights include political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. An array of international and regional instruments exists: principal among them are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

**9** This also prefigures analyses such as that of Youngers (2000), pertaining to Peru and Venezuela, which have seen democratically-elected leaders combine neoliberal economic reforms with political authoritarianism.

**10** These authors establish as a baseline for consolidation 70% of the population in support of democracy over time and not more than 15% in support of authoritarian alternatives. I have commented elsewhere on the doubtful validity of such measures (Thede 2001).

**11** I argue here that the social consensus is a process by which the major actors in the public sphere of a society negotiate and ultimately implicitly agree upon the parameters by which they will abide in political competition and the collective actors recognized as legitimate to participate in that competition.

**12** A recent study on the potential impact of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) on human rights (Bronson & Lamarche 2001) suggests some concrete measures for addressing the problem of lack of coherence between international trade agreements and international human rights. Two of the proposals are the following:

- First, that a "*Trade Policy Review Mechanism should be created within the FTAA. Its mandate should include, among other objectives, an assessment of each State's compliance with human rights standards in the elaboration of trade policy. This process should explicitly include participation from civil society organizations and specialized human rights agencies* ."
- Second, that "*the Inter-American Commission, when reporting to the General Assembly of the OAS each year, should include a summary of its evaluation of the impact of regional economic integration on human rights. It should include recommendations on developing increased coherence between the FTAA and the regional system of human rights protection, identify obstacles to reaching the goal of consistency and formulate recommendations to the General Assembly and to whatever supervisory body the FTAA creates. Civil society should participate in the process of report preparation and be provided an opportunity to comment to the relevant national and regional authorities* ."

**13** I am indebted to Andrés Pérez for these observations, made by him in the inter-regional seminar on democratic participation organized by Rights & Democracy October 29-30, 2001.

**14** I am indebted to Bonnie Campbell for this observation, made by her at the same seminar.

**15** Andrés Pérez, comments in the inter-regional seminar, see *supra* note 13.

**16** Razavi (2000:36) asserts that in fact civil rights are the most vulnerable of all rights: *"While social and labour rights have enjoyed some legitimacy and institutionalization (due to pressure from left-wing and labour movements as well as State action in its populist-corporatist incarnation), the field of justice and civil rights is the least developed and most vulnerable to abuse."*

**17** O'Donnell earlier developed a series of concepts describing some aspects of this phenomenon, such as "low-intensity democracy" and "illiberal democracy".

**18** Eritrea, Togo, Kenya, Tanzania, Haiti, Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, Pakistan, Thailand, Burma, Rwanda, Mexico.

**19** As in all new initiatives, a number of unforeseen factors arose. Because the expected buy-in from other donors did not materialize, and because the process in practice was much more resource-consuming than anticipated, and because it generated much more potential programming than Rights & Democracy alone was able to handle, the approach was modified.

**20** Expected publication date: September 2002.

**21** In most of these countries, protracted war and repression has severely strained or destroyed the fabric of civil society. As a result it is fragmented and there is a very weak capacity to work together.

**22** This treatment of "civil society" presumes a more straightforward definition than actually exists. Here, in the interests of brevity, I am giving short shrift to the numerous debates that concern the definition, scope and applications of the term. Some analysts argue, for instance, that civil society as a category presupposes adherence to liberal-democratic values. My own view is that we gain nothing by attempting to define away issues that exist within society by creating closed categories.

**23** The Harare Declaration by the Commonwealth (1991), the Déclaration de Bamako by the Francopohonie (Dec. 2000) and the Inter-American Democratic Charter by the Organization of American States (Sept. 2001).

**24** A critique is emerging from countries of the former Soviet Union, where the family has been the site of political resistance, in opposition to the public sphere: "many of the outspoken women in the region seemed to question the core [Western] feminist tenet that women's confinement to the private sphere is oppressive and their public involvement in the economy and the polity is liberating" (Razavi 2000:40). It is not clear to what extent this critique can find an adequate response in the idea of a more complex understanding of the inter-relationship between the public and private spheres.

**25** This approach accommodates two divergent strategies, but it is impossible to elaborate further on them in the context of this paper. The first strategy is based on an ideal of equality, and aims to "level the playing field" for women's participation. The second assumes distinctiveness of women's experience, and therefore proposes to accommodate gender difference within the political sphere. In practical terms, both call for the elimination of barriers to women's participation, and the distinction between them is not always clear.

**26** The global average jumped from around 6% in the 1980s to double that in the 1990s (UNRISD 2000a:5).

**27** Figures for national parliaments range from a low of 3 to 4% in the Arab States to a high of 36% in the Nordic countries (Razavi 2000:4).

**28** The same might be said of parliamentarians in general, though, who experience the effects of a growing democratic deficit with respect to the executive branch of government on economic policy (see for example, Rights & Democracy 2000).

**29** Htun (2001:9) expresses a more moderate version of this argument by affirming that, in light of the fact that party loyalty can work against the solidarity of women legislators on fundamental issues, women's organizations in civil society play a crucial role in consolidating alliances amongst women political representatives.

**30** We understand "institutions" in the sense of Giddens, that is: as deeply layered and sedimented social practices.

**31** Respectively, Articles 19, 21, 22, 25 and 26.

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