Governance and Civil Society

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1. Introduction
Currently two concepts are very much en vogue in social sciences: „governance“ and „civil society“. Numerous publications and conferences are documenting their recent popularity. Governance arrangements and civil society organizations are gaining importance almost everywhere, in international and national politics but also increasingly at the level of local communities.

Originally the two academic concepts – governance and civil society - have very little in common. Governance, initially introduced in the academic debate by scholars of international relations, was soon taken up by policy analysis. In the meantime, governance has almost replaced the term “government” for the description of how the interplay of polity, politics and policy functions in the real world.

The term civil society, on the contrary, belongs to the realm of political theory and as such it illustrates an abstract and highly normative concept. The underlying rationale of the term civil society indicates that societies have constantly to struggle for a better world by both confronting everyday politics with its failures and simultaneously referring to a democratic utopia that is worth fighting for.

The two concepts, despite belonging to different traditions and sub-disciplines of the social sciences, are increasingly used simultaneously. Indeed governance arrangements without the input of civil society seem more and more to be looked upon as to be ham without eggs. Why is this case? Why do social sciences and particularly policy analysis turn to the abstract and normative concept of civil society while trying to come to grips with the complex reality of policy making in the modern democracies of our globalized world? And does it really work? Does civil society indeed contribute that extra something to policy analysis particular within the complex context of the European Union?

In the following, I will briefly describe each concept by highlighting its background and origin. In the next step, I will take a closer look at why and how the European Union makes use of the two concepts. In a third step, I will summarize central issues of civil society research. Finally as a recap I will discuss the hypothesis of civil society organizations gaining importance for the deepening of European integration.
2. At a Glance: Governance and Civil Society

2.1. From Government to Governance

In political science discourses the term “governance” has almost thoroughly replaced the terms “government” and “governing” (van Kersbergen/van Waarden 2004). This shift in terminology serves as a strong indicator for the falling out of fashion of the traditional way of governing and steering that was closely bound to hierarchical co-ordination within the boundaries of the nation state. As clearly worked out in recent political science literature (Smismans 2004, Benz 2004, Kohler-Koch 2003, 2005, Kohler-Koch et al 2006), day-to-day reality of polity, politics and policy has by far left behind the classical model of decision-making and policy implementation in democracies that, recently classified by Smismans as the “parliamentary model” (Smismans 2004), is rooted in David Easton’s analysis of the policy process.

Accordingly, “governing” translates into a situation in which the citizenry of a nation state puts elected politicians in charge of the business of running the country on behalf of the common weal. The state representatives are supported by, in the sense of Max Weber, a “neutral bureaucracy” which is assigned to take care of the implementation of the laws passed by parliament. Based on the rationale of contract theory, the concept of governing doubtlessly represents a so-called ideal-type that has never been a blue-print of reality. It neither takes into account lobbying activities, nor does it consider the societal embeddedness of parties which always have represented at least to a certain extent the cleavage structure of modern societies. Furthermore, staffed with personnel who are citizens, party members and experts endowed with vested interests, modern bureaucracies are far from being neutral institutions. In sum, the governing approach, modelled in accordance with the strong but minimal state of 19th century liberalism, has never been in conformity with the complex and confusing reality of the modern welfare state that from its very beginnings has increasingly made inroads into every facet of our daily life. Compared to the classical conception of a liberal state, welfare states are highly societal embedded in polity, politics and policy and thus in institutional arrangements, actors, instruments and programs.

Although “governing” has never been appropriate for depicting the real world of policy and politics in modern welfare states, there are two benefits going along with this model. First and foremost, the governing approach encompasses a simple answer to the legitimacy
question. Laws passed by parliament are endowed with legitimacy because they are the outcome of decisions taken by elected representatives of the citizenry. Furthermore, the citizens of a nation state are bound together by a common cultural and political identity based on the tradition of the respective country. The “people” of a country share norms and values which are preserved in the various institutional settings or regimes of the country such as the family, the economy or the welfare regime. From a neo-institutional point of view, regimes constitute “structures of meaning, embedded in identities and belonging: common purposes and accounts that give direction and meaning to behaviour, and explain, justify, and legitimate behavioural codes” (March/Olsen 2006: 3). Bound to the logic of the particular regime, policy and politics show a significant degree of path-dependency in a particular nation state context. Finally, since the early 19th century lively public spheres have developed within the boundaries of nation states. Safeguarded by the rule of law, the “public” is constituted by the media and a broad array of institutions and organizations among those associations and public interest groups which are offering arenas for discussion and deliberation including non-violent protest activities. Before entering the realm of parliamentary discussion, significant policy changes – so-called reforms – aiming at regime alteration are disputed in the “public” since they are indicating or intending an adaptation of traditional norms and values to a new and changed situation.

The increasing use of the term “governance” serves as a strong indicator for the catching up of political science with today’s reality of polity, policy and politics. Governance relates to changed actor constellations in politics that are no longer restricted to state actors and thus to elected politicians and so-called neutral bureaucrats, but encompass almost by definition private corporate actors, among them associations of any type and field, business enterprises, lobby groups, social movements and public interest groups, NGOs and NPOs or civil society organizations. The same holds true for the alteration of actor constellations in policy implementation. The term governance also illustrates the increasing blurring of boundaries between the public and private sphere. Indeed, in many policy fields public-private partnerships (PPPs) have developed into a frequently used tool for policy implementation. The welfare state has been transformed into an “enabling state” whose prime task consists of fostering and activating societal self-steering capacities. “Network governance” has developed into the dominant metaphor for both the decreasing significance of hierarchical co-ordination based on majority rule and the increasing horizontality of today’s political reality which is primarily embedded in processes of bargaining and deliberation among
heterogeneous constituencies. Finally, governance does not stop short with respect to the polity. From a neo-institutional perspective governance translates into a system of rules shaping the actions of the participating actors (Mayntz 2004) and therefore encompasses also institutional properties.

Serving as a synonym for the societal embeddedness of polity, policy and politics in modern welfare states the meaning of governance goes far beyond the concept of governing with respect to both policy actor constellations and modes of decision making. Moreover, the term governance is linked with positive connotations. It stands for an increase of participation in processes of policy formulation and implementation and thus for a deepening of democracy. Governance arrangements are supposed to achieve an improvement of policy decisions and a reduction of the costs of policy implementation because those, who might be inclined to obstruct a policy initiative are themselves involved in the development and shaping of the respective policy. Decision making is supposed to further benefit from the consensus oriented style of policy bargaining and deliberation among the participating actors of governance arrangements.

However, at least one caveat puts the positive image of governance into question. Until now, the problem of legitimacy that inherently touches any constellation of non-elected actors involved in politics has not been resolved. Those doubts and worries, once put forward against neo-corporatism are at the core of the critique towards governance arrangements. Among those are the lack of transparency, the impossibility of a straightforward corrective in the hands of the citizens, the limited access to governance constellations, the lack of representation of public interest groups, and finally the top-down perspective of many governance arrangements (for a detailed critique see Grote/Gbikpi 2002).

In a nation state context, these difficulties and set-backs are counterbalanced. Governance arrangements are operating under the auspices of a critical public. Particularly hot issues are taken up front by the media. Far reaching reforms, particularly those addressing core topics of welfare states policies, enjoy broad media coverage and are furthermore discussed by relevant constituencies and stakeholders. In particular at the local level, the introduction of elements of direct democracy - such as a referendum or the direct elections of the mayor - is counterbalancing the growing importance of governance arrangements. Furthermore against the background of fiscal constrains, local politicians and bureaucrats alike encourage the
citizens to contribute to “good governance” by inviting them to active participation in community affairs. Hence, similar to neo-corporatist arrangements an active public and a broad spectrum of interest groups, critical citizens and social movements are building a counterweight to the inherent lack of legitimacy of governance arrangements. In sum “good governance” therefore needs a lively public sphere and thus an active civil society.

2.2. The Civil Society Renaissance

The civil society approach looks back upon a long history dating back to classical Greece when the term was closely connected with the Aristotelian notion of an ideal way of life. It is fascinating to follow the various conceptualisations of civil society through the centuries (for detailed information look at Reichard 2004; Kneer 1997). However, its current popularity dates back to the 1970s when the term was used by dissidents and civic movements in Eastern Europe and Latin America in order to express their opposition against the ruling authoritarian regimes. Discussions that took place in these oppositional groups influenced debates on the further development of democratic regimes in the Western Hemisphere (Klein 2001; Thaa 1996).

The re-entry of civil society in the political discourse indicated a turning point with respect to democratic theory in political science. Since the late 1950s democratic theory had been dominated by theories of representative democracy, which, according to Fritz Scharpf, primarily focused on the output legitimacy of democratic systems (Scharpf 1970; 1999). With the “third wave of democratisation”, “input legitimacy”, closely linked to forms of participatory democracy, regained momentum in political science (Klein 2001; Schmalz-Bruns 1995; Young 2002).

The renaissance of civil society as a vital element of participatory democracy took place against the background of at least three distinct societal and political trajectories which are closely interrelated. One of these developments refers to the “growth to limits” (Flora 1986) of the welfare state that puts a limit to the problem-solving capacity of the nation-state. Secondly, since the 1980s democratic governments were increasingly confronted with a highly educated citizenry that, forming the backbone of social movements, started to criticize the routines and the closed shop logic of representative democracy. And finally, in the international arena globalisation gave way to the emergence of “governance without
government” (Rosenau/Czempiel 1992), which was accompanied by an “associational revolution” and foundation boom of international active NGOs.

Confronted with a turbulent environment, social science turned to political theory and more precisely to the notion of civil society in its search for a device to deepen and widen democratic participation. However, although civil society constitutes a well-established term in political theory (Cohen/Arato 1997), there is no clear cut definition of the phenomenon. Numerous schools of conceptualising civil society are distinguished in the literature. The spectrum ranges from the unorthodox neo-marxist Antonio Gramsci and communitarian authors such as Amitai Etzioni or Michael Walzer to Ralf Dahrendorf as a strong apologist of classical liberal thinking or to Jürgen Habermas as a prominent representative of the discourse theory.

In accordance with their specific normative-theoretical background the authors differ with respect to the societal and political functions which they attribute to civil society. Antonio Gramsci perceives civil society as a societal sphere in which the power play among various actors in favour of attaining cultural hegemony takes place. Gellner and Dahrendorf emphasize particularly the countervailing power of civil society vis-à-vis the state whereas Walzer and most prominently Habermas highlight the potentials of civil society for providing the societal sphere for deliberation and discourse.

Despite their different conceptualisations the authors share common features and constitutive elements which all of them attune to civil society. With the exception of Antonio Gramsci, they unanimously perceive civil society as a normative concept directed towards a “utopian program” (Dubiel 1994) that aims at the deepening of democracy and the transformation of the societal and political status quo. As such, civil society constitutes a political vision and program that asks for a permanent critique and revision of current societal and political affairs. Furthermore, their conceptualisation of civil society shares a normative underpinning. Again with the exception of Gramsci, according to their line of argumentation civil societies are non-violent entities, capable of intensive discourse and able to reach consensus by means of discussion. Hence, civil societies are civilized societies in the literal meaning of the term (Reichardt 2004: 36, Rucht 31: 43).

Accordingly, tolerance and non-violence, deliberation and public discourse as well as openness and a high degree of civicness are constitutive features of civil societies. Jürgen
Habermas developed a far-reaching approach of deliberative democracy which places deliberation and an undistorted discourse in its centre. According to his line of argumentation only those political actions enjoy legitimacy which in principle could have been agreed upon by everybody, who is subjected to these laws or regulations, in a free and thus undistorted discourse taking place in the public sphere (Habermas 1983, 1992). As the infrastructure of the public sphere, Habermas defines civil society whose core is formed by “a system of associations which institutionalise problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest” (Habermas 1992: 443). Accordingly “civil society consists of those more or less spontaneously emerged associations, organisations and movements which have the ability to identify social problems, to take them in, to condense them and finally to pass them on to the political public in an amplified way” (Habermas 1992: 443).

Thus, despite different backgrounds the authors also unanimously refer to voluntary organizations or associations as constituting the organizational infrastructure of civil society. While Michael Walzer relates to “the network of associations belonging to the civil society such as trade unions, parties, movements and interest groups” (Walzer 1992: 82), Ralf Dahrendorf points out that civil society is characterised by “the existence of autonomous, i.e. non-governmental or not in any other way centrally ruled organisations” (Dahrendorf 1991: 262). And the historian Jürgen Kocka defines civil society as a “societal sphere between state, economy and private life populated by voluntary associations, networks and non-governmental organizations” (Kocka 2002: 16). Indeed, a common ground of civil society discourse represents its reference to those entities and dynamic forces that constitute the “infrastructure” of civil society as a “public sphere.” In sum, in the 1990s civil society discourse took an “organizational turn” by increasingly focusing on the infrastructure of civil society and hence on its wide spectrum of organizations.

The implications of the “organizational turn” in civil society discourse were at least twofold: Firstly, highlighting civil society as a societal sphere, populated by voluntary associations, foundations, co-operatives, and mutual organizations opened avenues for empirical research which aimed at analysing the impact of these organizations on policy and politics in various settings and over time. Secondly, in contrast to the high theory of philosophical discourse on deliberation and societal self-reflectiveness, policy experts, bureaucrats and politicians were

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1 German original: “Zivilgesellschaft meint damit einen spezifischen Bereich, einen gesellschaftlichen Raum, den Raum gesellschaftlicher Selbstorganisation zwischen Staat, Ökonomie und Privatheit, die Sphäre der Vereine, Zirkel, sozialen Beziehungen und Nichtregierungsorganisationen...” (Kocka 2002: 16).
provided with “something real” they were able to refer to and which can be used in day-to-day politics. The “organizational turn” in civil society discourse triggered an abundance of empirical projects and thick descriptions by historians and social scientists researching civil society organizations in a broad spectrum of countries and settings (Hall 2006, Hildemeier et al 2005). Simultaneously, the European Institutions, and in particular the Commission and the Social and Economic Council highly welcomed civil society organizations as constituting the avant garde for a deepening of European democracy and for the fostering of European integration.

The reasons why civil society organizations became very attractive for Brussels are closely connected to the “democratic-deficit” of governance arrangements. Indeed, the critique, such as lack of legitimacy and transparency that is related to any governance arrangement is of high salience for the European Union and its specific type of multi-level governance.

3. European Multi-level governance and Civil Society Organizations

Governance arrangements in the EU contexts are in the meantime unanimously characterized as being multi-level network governance, thus constituting a highly complex constellation based on horizontal and vertical integration (Bache/Flinders 2005; George 2005). Indeed in the last decades, the notion of governance has taken a very prominent position in EU research. As mentioned by Kohler-Koch (2003: 10) there are at least four book series on European governance. Due to the specific European policy architecture, the vertical dimension refers to governance as loose coupling of the different “layers of authority – European, national, and sub-national – “ (Hooghe 1996: 18) of the European Union. The horizontal dimension relates to the constellation of actors that at each level or layer of authority is supposed to encompass numerous experts and stakeholders representing a variety of constituencies. EU research underlines both the “informality“ of governance arrangements (Jachtenfuchs/Kohler-Koch 2004: 94) and its networking characteristics.

It is not surprising that multi-level governance arrangements increasingly gained importance along with the expansion of the competencies of the Union. Whereas bargaining processes linked to regulatory policies primarily take place in Brussels, distributive policies, whose importance has significantly grown under the framework of European social policy, encompass actors on every level of governance, the national and the sub-national level. Moreover, regulations are primarily put into practice and supervised by governments and
public authorities. This, however, does not hold true for distributive policies, which often are implemented via private actors. Hence, the further integration of the EU with respect to the widening of its competencies particularly in social policy resulted in a definite increase of the importance of both vertical policy integration and multi-level network governance arrangement. The flip-side of the further integration and the increase of policy competence on behalf of the EU, however, is the increasing aggravation of the so-called democratic-deficit.

Taking the complexity of EU policy and politics into account, the legitimacy deficit of European governance arrangements is not only related to the selection and representativeness of the personnel participating in the horizontal and vertical network constellations. The European Union constitutes a polity sui generis that has very little in common with the traditional national state. Therefore, in contrast to neo-corporatism, European governance arrangements furthermore stand out for both a decisive lack of societal embeddedness and a significant deficiency of reciprocity or reliable relationships with the “public”. This concerns a well-informed European citizenry or European public sharing common norms and values as well as providing a sphere for the exchange of ideas, critical debates and processes of deliberation. Exactly against this background, European institutions, particularly the Commission discovered civil society organizations as a possible device and remedy for addressing and possibly curing the notorious lack of democracy of European multi-level governance.

As documented in the literature particularly in the late 1990s, the European Institutions started to discuss the possible benefits of building up a close co-operation with civil society organizations. However, from the very start when Brussels began to relate to the infrastructure of civil society the organizations were never restricted to their function of being exclusively vehicles for deliberation and public discourse. On the contrary, the wording of the communications, discussion papers and finally the White Paper on European Governance was heavily influenced by the results of third sector research which conceptualises civil society organizations as being multi-functional and multi-tasking entities that almost simultaneously are engaged in lobby activities, service production and societal integration (see Powell/Steinberg 2006, Zimmer 2004).
In its communication from 1997\textsuperscript{2}, which directly relates to the results of the second phase of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Project, the Commission highlighted both the economic and social importance of civil society organizations. They are acknowledged for their decisive role for democratic societies. Due to this quality, the Commission ascribes an influential role to civil society organizations in the process of further EU integration (COM 1997: 8). The opinion from 1999,\textsuperscript{3} issued by the Economic and Social Committee (EESC), introduced for the first time the term “organized civil society“ or “organizations of the civil society“ into Euro-talk. According to the EESC, civil society translates into “the sum of all organizational structures whose members have objectives and responsibilities that are of general interest and who also act as mediators between the public authorities and citizens” (EESC 1999, 7.1, footnote 3).

The Commission’s Discussion Paper of 2000\textsuperscript{4}, co-authored by the President and the Vice-President of the Commission, specifically referred to the multi-functional character of civil society organizations by distinguishing between operational organizations which contribute to the delivery of services, and advocacy organizations which aim to influence the policies of public authorities and public opinion in general (European Commission 2000: 1.2). Moreover, the Commission directly acknowledged the potentials of civil society organization for the democratisation of European governance since they are perceived as contributing to “participatory democracy”, “interest representation of specific groups and specific issues”, “policy making”, “project management” and last but not least to “European integration”.

The Commission’s White Paper on European Governance of 2001 (COM/2001/428 final) particularly highlighted the importance of civil society organizations as channels of communication between the EU and the citizens. Again, the White Paper stressed the importance of civil society organizations for providing a “structured channel for feedback, criticism and protest“ and for promoting democracy on the national level. Finally, the Commission’s Communication of 2002\textsuperscript{5} outlined how civil society organizations are envisaged to participate in those EU specific multi-level governance arrangements. Precisely, the communication refers to the establishment of the “civic dialogue“ to which primarily

\textsuperscript{2} “Promoting the Role of Voluntary Organizations and Foundations in Europe“ (COM/97/0241 final)
\textsuperscript{3} “The Role and Contribution of Civil Society organizations in the Building of Europe“ (OJ C329, 17.11.1999)
\textsuperscript{4} “The Commission and Non-Governmental Organizations: Building a Stronger Partnership” (COM/2000/11 final)
\textsuperscript{5} “Towards a Reinforced Culture of Consultation and Dialogue – General Principles and Minimum Standards for Consultation or Interested Parties“ (COM/2002/704 final)
those civil society organizations are eligible that “exist permanently at Community level, [...] have authority to represent and act at European level [...] have member organizations in most of the EU Member States [and] provide direct access to its member’s expertise” (COM 2002: 2. Footnote 15).

Hence the Commission takes primarily into account those networks of civil society organizations, the so-called Euro-Feds, which are umbrella organizations of nationally bound associations, operating in Brussels. These are perceived as transmitters of expertise and as forums for discussion and dialogue. To a certain extent the lobbying function of these umbrella organizations in Brussels is also acknowledged. However, the Commission is quite vague with respect to the problem of how to organize the flow of communication between the Brussels based Euro-Feds and their nationally bound membership organizations. Indeed, the communications lack any reference with respect to the vertical dimension of multi-level governance.

Moreover, civil society organizations are exclusively portrayed as offering either avenues for service provision or functional representation. There is hardly any reference to the norms and values, which civil society organizations stand for. Furthermore, Brussels thoroughly neglects the variety of traditions and local cultures, of which civil society organizations are a constituting part all over Europe. Deeply embedded in social environments civil society organizations are carriers of ideas, concepts and social norms. Brussels’ civil society concept stops short in acknowledging both the diversity and the normative embeddeness of civil society organizations. Hence the value base of civil society organizations, their very civicseness, is widely overlooked by Brussels.

4. Researching Civil Society Organizations
Many civil society organizations look back upon a long history dating back to pre-modern times. In those days, the organizations were closely connected with the Church offering services in the welfare domain for the poor and needy. Charity constituted the main rationale of civic life at that time representing with hospitals, shelters for the poor, and orphanages the typical civil society organization. The welfare domain continued to be an important area of civic activity, particularly after secularisation when the Churches had lost power and financial resources to run welfare units. Therefore, charity was and still is a major ingredient of civil society action.
However, civil society organizations changed their function as well as their funding and organizational structure along with societal modernization and the coming into being of the modern state. Reciprocity as an adjunct to club life that is experienced in member organizations developed into a main rationale of civil society organizations along with societal modernity. A new social class – the bourgeoisie – developed in the growing cities and in the new industrial centres that asked for societal and political rights. As Jürgen Habermas outlined in his work “Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit” (1990), for the first time in history a “public sphere” in the modern meaning of the term came into being. In Central European cities, the high day of associational life took place against the background of enlightened absolutism. The nouveau riche of the industry met with well-educated civil servants and liberal members of the nobility to discuss critical issues of day-to-day politics in voluntary organizations, which for instance in Germany were labelled “Salons”, “Reading Clubs” or “Patriotic Societies”.

Historical records reveal an interesting picture of civil society organizations in Europe during the first half of the 19th century. Across Europe the organizations had many common features, one of which refers to their central actors and entrepreneurs who at that time all over Europe belonged either to the new bourgeoisie or to the enlightened nobility. At the same time, there were striking differences, which came along with the proliferation of the European nation states. In Great Britain civil society organizations, the famous British Clubs, were indeed able to fulfil the function of “an informed public” in the Habermasian sense since Parliament was rightly perceived as being the only club in London without any time restriction for serving alcoholic beverages. Thus there was a close nexus between the associational life and politics, whereas on the Continent clubs and voluntary associations were – depending on the country – either put under state control or even not allowed to function at all, and therefore forced to operate clandestinely. Hence civil society has never been in a position to operate independently from its political environment. The nation-state and its civil society constitute a sort of a tandem functioning in co-operation. Whether and to what extent civil society is indeed able to fill out its function providing a participatory voice for the citizenry depends very much on the very nature of its political environment and the polity itself.

Current research dealing with civil society organizations often leaves out their societal function by focusing exclusively on their lobbying activities. However, again history tells us
an interesting story about societal differentiation and modernization via civil society organizations (Reichardt 2004). Specifically at the local level, civil society organizations were and still are vehicles for the formation and maintenance of social milieus and specific communities. Civil society organizations might work on behalf of the establishment by providing the space where “fat cats keep in touch”, but they also have always offered avenues for new social groups and movements to come together and to make inroads into the community. Therefore, societal integration supported by reciprocity constitutes a further important feature of civil society organizations.

The trust building function of civil society organizations has been widely discussed under the framework of the social capital approach. The identity building function in contrast, has not yet been well researched. The latter is understood as the sense of belonging to a specific community constituting a recognizable entity bound together by shared norms and values. However, the cleavage structure of modern European societies was well embedded in their civil society universe. In Continental Europe, civil society organizations could be grouped along the ideological lines and ideas of Catholicism and socialism, just to name the two major “islands of norms and values” of that time. “Social identity refers to the interaction processes in which persons identify others and are identified by them” (Kohli 2000: 115). Members of local civil society organizations join the association because they already share a feeling of belongingness that via reciprocate interaction will be intensified to a sense of attachment. Shared language, symbols and a particular epistemology become the glue of the community.

Finally historical records, organizational statutes and by-laws reveal the foundation myth of civil society organization. One of these founding ideologies is based on the concept of mutuality. Particularly in the second half of the 19th century, co-operatives and mutual societies became very popular all over Europe. These civil society organizations constituted a countervailing power against 19th century “turbo-capitalism” and enabled low-income farmers and craftsmen to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of the economy (Pankoke 2004). Again, the organizations were based in specific social milieus, which were attuned to “utopian socialism” in France, to Fabianism in Great Britain and to features of anarchism in Spain and Italy. Membership in mutual societies and co-operatives constituted a “way of life” besides serving the down to earth interest of making a living or having access to cheap housing. Besides being carriers of participation, as historical research reveals, particularly mutuals and co-operatives were solidarity based. Hence with reference to the French co-
operative movement Edith Archaumbault remarks: “At the turn of the 20th century, when the modern non-profit sector… appeared (…) the very basic of its secular ethics was solidarity… “ (Archaumbault 1997: 20).

To summarize: According to historical analysis the impact of civil society organizations on politics and society went far beyond their function of providing the infrastructure of a public sphere. Simultaneously the organizations functioned as carriers of meaning offering ideological and value based master plans for a societal and political improvement. Furthermore, these organizations contributed to the development of specific societal milieus, which again were held together by symbols, belief systems and a particular epistemology. Against this background the question comes up what lessons can we learn today from historical experiences?

5. Lessons from History and Civil Society Organizations today?

Historical research revealed at least three rationales of civil society organizations setting them apart from the market and the state by qualifying them as simultaneously value based and action oriented entities. Charity constitutes the first of these rationales that since medieval times translates into an engagement on behalf of the poor and needy.

The reasons for charity are manifold. However amongst those count most prominently the impact of religion and furthermore societal stratification. The wording “Noblesse oblige” serves as a synonym for a societal attitude and hence a culture of philanthropy which implicitly encompasses social divisions. According to the interpretation of Knapp and Kendall philanthropy in Britain also aimed at “signalling arrival< at a higher tier of society or of reinforcing existing social status” (Knapp/Kendall 1996: 59).

All over Europe philanthropy has also always been biased towards the middle class struggling in favour of social mobility. Although accompanied by a top-down approach addressing societal problems, charity and philanthropy nevertheless contributed to social coherence. Indeed civil society organizations funded by philanthropists and often run by the “ladies of the new bourgeoisie” laid the foundation for social service provision by the modern welfare state. Charity and philanthropy constituted the backbone of a progressive “culture of private welfare” which at the local level was ubiquitous at the turn of the 19th century all over Europe. Along with the growth of the welfare state, the “social contract” of private welfare between
the local entrepreneurial elites and the political domain changed significantly in favour of public welfare provision. Currently, as the welfare state literature clearly indicates, the welfare consensus is significantly put into question by societal as well as political stakeholders. How the “Social Europe” will look like is presently an open question that should first and foremost be addressed at the local level. To put it differently, local civil society organizations, still having access to volunteer and charity input should get a voice in current social policy discussions. Similar to the end of the 19th century, also today the growing gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots” asks for new solutions, which as many indicators clearly show, can not be tackled by exclusively referring to state power.

Also mutuality that according to historical research represents a further rationale attributed to civil society organizations currently seems to re-gain prominence for societal and economic advancement in Europe. Against the record of history, globalization does not constitute a new phenomenon of modern market economies. Already the late 19th century represented a high day of the internationalization of trade and production of goods. The exit-option of industry building new factories in the south and less developed areas of the world was first put into practice by the British using their colonies as prime locations for cheap mass production. The co-operative movement constituted a locally based counterbalance against the negative effects of economic globalization at that time. As Edith Archambault remarks “mutual insurance societies, mutual credit banks, shared housing, friendly societies guarantee against the disadvantages of free competition in the economic sphere” (Archaumbault 1997: 33).

Just recently politicians and policy experts have begun to recognize again the potentials of local economic activities which are based on the principle of mutuality. Co-operatives as a different form of organising business activities seem to regain importance all over Europe and particularly in the Scandinavian countries as well as in Italy (see http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/TSEP/publicdocfind.htm). Hopefully it is just a matter of time that co-operatives and mutual associations are again acknowledged as progressive platforms for doing business. Co-operatives are multifunctional organizations. They are providing avenues for entrepreneurial activities, and simultaneously as membership organizations they are offering a societal sphere for participation and societal integration. Against the background of high rates of unemployment particularly of members of the younger generations, co-operatives and mutual societies might develop into a reliable and feasible vehicle for the integration of these unemployed persons into local labour markets.
Thus mutualism offers pathways of integration into the economy, which are fundamentally different from entrepreneurship, which is exclusively based on individualism. Without being too enthusiastic the options of mutualism and co-operatives should be taken into account while considering approaches of tackling the challenges of Europe, amongst those particularly the challenge of mass unemployment.

Finally, civil society organizations stand out for reciprocity that translates into an exchange relationship among the members of the respective organization. The results of historical investigations proved the importance of these organizations for the societal integration of new groups, classes and movements such as the labour movement of the 19th and the so-called new social movements of the late 20th century (Della Porta/Diani 2006, Mayer/Zald 1989). However societal integration constitutes a phenomenon, which refers simultaneously to the macro and micro level of society. From a micro level perspective reciprocity has a significant impact on processes of identity building that result into the development of a sense of attachment and feeling of belongingness. 19th century Europe was characterized by waves of massive migration from the East and South of Europe to the northern countries. At that time, hobby and leisure clubs in the North - amongst those very prominent football associations – paved the way for social inclusion by offering societal spheres for individual affection and personal attachment. The famous glue that civil society organizations provide for societal integration translates into an answer to the question of where I belong to, and what is considered to be my homeland in the sense of the German “Heimat.”

European societies of today are highly affected by the global trend of individualisation putting an end to our traditional social milieus that were bound together either by religious or by ideological norms and values. Simultaneously our modern economies ask for mobility. In the search for getting a job Europeans are increasingly on the move. This is particularly the case for the well educated who are step-by-step constituting a European labour force. In the late 19th century, sports and in particular football was an export-product of the British Empire to Continental Europe. Although in the social sciences, leisure, sports and hobby activities and thus club life do not enjoy a prominent position these societal activities, which in many European countries predominantly take place in civil society organizations, might provide a potential of high relevance for societal integration and personal integration. What current club life with its modern symbols, networks and shared language means for European integration
and particularly for the development of shared European identity constitutes a topic which until now has been rarely addressed by politicians, social scientists and policy experts alike.

6. Conclusion
The linkage between the “utopian program” of civil society and the world of organizations was taken up by the European Institutions in the late 1990s. It is exactly the interaction between a progressive ideal and the real world of organizations that translated into the attractiveness of civil society as a buzzword of European political discourse. From a theoretical point of view, civil society provides the possibility of linking governance with participatory democracy. As actors of governance arrangements civil society organizations might provide the potential of tackling the notorious democratic deficit of European policy making. In particular the Economic and Social Committee added a further facet to the discussion by referring to the importance of civil society organizations for the deepening of European integration. However, up until now there is a decisive gap between the Brussels Euro-talk referring to civil society and the real world of these organizations being active at the local level in the European countries. So far Brussel’s civil society concept stops short in acknowledging both the diversity and the normative embeddedness of civil society organizations. Therefore, in order to make the linkage of “governance” and “civil society” fruitful for the deepening of European integration the top-down approach of European governance has to be complemented by a bottom-up approach that takes the diversity, the multi-functionality and the value base of civil society organizations into account.

References

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