Making It Happen: A Global Civil Society

Commencing with the Stoic perception of a good citizen as a citizen of the world and culminating with the contemporary institutional and political developments, the essay concentrates on the heated debate around the creation of a global civil society. This idea is neither new, nor extremely futuristic; instead, it is based on a combination of the two core elements of cosmopolitanism: moral universalism and institution building. Although the essay is not concerned with dissecting the reasoning against or for cosmopolitanism, it can be perceived as a proponent of it. Thus, a global civil society, regardless the diverse opinions on its conceptualization, is to be understood as a result of the cosmopolitan philosophical thought.

In defence of this idea, the paper aims to account for the following questions: (1) what is a global civil society? and (2) what are the viable means of implementing it?. The answers I reach in the essay are not absolute; rather, I try to offer a somewhat different direction in respect to the assembling of a civil society at the global level. Essentially, in respect to the second point raised previously, I propose a new framework for creating a global civil society that works in parallel with the other global and/or local mechanisms of governance.

Therefore, the paper is structured in three sections. The first part addresses the theoretical aspect of a global civil society by explaining its roots and its applications in the current international arena. The section starts from Mary Kaldor's well-known article on "The Global Civil Society" upon which I present my own understanding of the global civil society. Furthermore, the next section deals with the existing proposals of a global civil society, namely The Global Peoples Assembly also known as the World Parliament. Daniel Archibugi and David Held's interesting article on "Cosmopolitan Democracy" and Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss's renowned paper "Toward a World Parliament", are explored in this chapter. Engaging in a critical analysis of the two works, I reveal the inefficiency of such a proposition and the impossibility of implementing it. Thus, section three picks on the points raised in the last chapter and describes and explains the model upon which a global civil society can be created without distorting the current international system, yet maintaining its cosmopolitan nature.

A Theory of The Global Civil Society

From the Latin word *societas*, society means a friendly association with others. Civil society, on the other hand, has been the object of deliberations for political philosophers since Ancient Greece. From Aristotle's comprehension of a civil society based on face-to-face relations between friends who articulate the public good (Ehrenberg, 1999:xii), civil society evolved into a global phenomenon whose core function is to influence the decision-making process. So, who are the agents that create a civil society, moreover, a global civil society? What does a global civil society imply? And what do we understand by it?

As Mary Kaldor (2003) rightfully explains, the concept of a civil society has witnessed radical transformations. If Cicero envisioned the civil society more or less in terms of a legal realm, while Hobbes thought it as "an artificial creation for the purposes of survival" (Ehrenberg, 1999:xiii), nowadays, civil society departed from any correlation with the state. The 19th century, especially, marked the beginning of this distinction by introducing the market in its conception. Hegel filled in the gap between the family and the state with the notion of civil society "where the individual becomes public person and through membership in various institutions, is able to reconcile the particular and the universal" (Kaldor, 2003:584). For him, that was the masterpiece of modern world. Fortunately, he was not

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completely wrong. Civil society, as it stands now, is not apprehended as the interplay between the two agents – family and the state -; but is, indeed, the sphere in which individuals become public persons who bring the particular (usually expressed through beliefs, interests, skills) into the universal (the social) through self-organized associations and/or institutions. Therefore, Kaldor's (2003:585) own appreciation of civil society as "the process though which individuals negotiate, argue, struggle against or agree with each other and with the centres of political and economic authority", perfectly explains the relation between the particular and the universal presented above.

Yet, Immanuel Kant remains the pillar of the universal civil society based on the moral foundation that moral duty brings together all individuals. In his view, only in a civil society based on universal categories of right, a man can enjoy a moral life. (Ehrenberg, 1999:111) The same idea is conveyed by Kaldor (2003:593) – "global rules based on consent", but current affairs remain way behind this ideal. More precisely, the universal civil society is an ideal system of civic participation and governance, yet not applicable to contemporary politics. Hence, a global civil society presents a more feasible design due to 4 reasons: (1) it involves a "supraterritorial" (Scholte, 2001:8) organization of the citizenry without relying on universal moral principles; (2) still, the principle of equality at supra-state level is already an underlying rule in international arena and does not affect domestic politics; (3) it enables the creation of a social geography (Scholte, 2001:9) without disrupting the territorial borders of nation-states and (4) is founded in cosmopolitanism which "accepts and embraces the fact of human diversity that exists within and across communities that expands ultimately to the widest circle of humankind" (Hayden, 2005:34).

Having shown what a global civil society is I turn to the question – *who are the actors?* To explore this inquiry, I restate the conviction that (global) civil society is a non-governmental, autonomous and self-organizing structure. Consequently, appealing to Kaldor's (2003) identification of the three meanings of civil society – the activist, neoliberal and postmodern version -, the actors range from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ethnic movements and bazaars. Sharing both the idea that not only good movements can be included in the concept of a civil society and the belief that such a creation should not be exclusive, a global civil society must extend beyond NGOs. However, it is impossible to account for unofficially recognized organizations that do not have a rationale or larger purpose that extends to a public or greater good, such as bazaars, religious meetings, motherhood gatherings in public spaces etc. A global civil society's goal, in this sense, is not to incorporate "tamed social movements" (Kaldor, 2003:589) that foster consensus as it is impossible, even if this would be the case. Instead, a global civil society must display a palette of diverse beliefs, perspectives, opinions, ideas and ideals, skills in a structured organizational manner; that is, officially recognized (footnote) structures that "organize themselves and conduct their cross-border social, business and political activities" (Keane, 2003:12).

Bearing this framework in mind, a (global) civil society includes: NGOs, think-tanks, business forums, academic institutions, trade unions, labour unions, religious congregations, peace associations etc. All these forms of association, so much praised by Tocqueville, empowers the formation of a "dynamic non-governmental system of interconnected socio-economic institutions that straddle the whole earth and that have complex effects that are felt in its four corners" (Keane, 2003:11). Furthermore, it is a continuous process of social interactions, reinvention and networking that "consists of pyramids and hub-and-spoke clusters of socio-economic institutions and actors who organize themselves across borders, with the deliberate aim of drawing the world together in new ways" (Keane, 2003:11).

The global civil society is not a master plan for humanity, but as Archibugi and Held (2011) convincingly claim, it is one of the ways worth pursuing in order to attain a global order. Thus, citizen participation in the global forum is the focal point of discussion.

Citizens of a Cosmopolitan World

As indicated in the last section, the global civil society is the result of cosmopolitanism. Scholars in the area have attempted to lay down viable solutions for a human governance which is explained in terms of "governance from below" (Falk, 2000:319). Archibugi, Held, Falk, Strauss are some of the proeminent adherents for a Global Peoples Assembly or World Parliament. How feasible are these propositions? What do they entail? What are their limitations? These are the questions that I hope to find answers to in this chapter.

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Both Falk (2001) and Archibugi (2011) rest their arguments in favour of a global citizenry governance on the solution to the democratic deficit problem. Specifically, the European Union (EU) has set the example and opened the doors for a replication of its model at global level. However, the lack of legitimacy from the citizenry poses serious institution-building doubts for international actors. So, Falk and Strauss together with Archibugi and Held seek to offer alternative perspectives. Firstly, let me explain what a democratic deficit is. Even if there is not much consensus on a strict, timeless definition, the democratic deficit has been generally understood as a lack of accountability due to a low turnout in elections. On this note, Crombez (2003) illustrates two approaches though which democratic deficit can be analyzed: (1) evaluating the political process – if voters get what they want – and (2) analyzing if voters are adequately represented. The same issues are raised for the World Parliament which is believed to account for both problems. Yet, it is still to be seen.

Falk sets up his model for human governance on the advances of the business sector in international arena. Business forums are institutionalized and there is a growing number of economic leading global institutions – such as the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization – that provide "arenas for discussion and recommendations on shaping global policy" (Falk, 2001:215). Thus, Falk gambles on a cooperation between the civil and business sector in the shape of a world assembly that could tackle global issues from all angles removing the illegitimacy rhetoric from the peoples. A daring proposition as such, obviously meets with criticism. Respectively, the following rationale is displayed against it: (1) the business sector is a rational agent that seeks to maximize its profits in a competitive market while the NGOs, unions and congregations are representing the *voiceless* and more inclined to "a policy of sentiments" (Rorty in Geras, 1995:102) and secondly, (2) the business sector, thou a private part within the state, is not in absolute terms separated from it and often criticized as extremely politicized and selective (see Mizruchi, 1992; Koza and Lewin, 2000; Stark and Vedres, 2006).

On the other hand, Falk essays to shift the dynamics from a state-centred approach towards individuals because of the rupture between foreign affairs and domestic issues. As Scholte (2001:13-4) acknowledges, even the most committed governments did not give much information about the global initiatives and activities they follow. Let us not speak about a proper consultation of the citizenry through referendums or polls. As far as this goes, Falk central point is legitimacy at a global scale. But, he portrays this as the ultimate goal of humanity in order to attain peace: "the assembly's very existence would also help promote the peaceful resolution of international conflicts" (Falk, 2001:217). This is not necessarily true because the assembly would not include only *good* actors but as I argued in the last chapter, the global civil society will be defined by diversity, which includes also *not-so-good* actors.

Moreover, predicating for an elected global assembly (on the model of the European Parliament) brings along enormous implications. Even if this assembly would, indeed, be more credible and would represent better the society, it does not automatically mean it is flawless. Let's consider some of these implications as follows:

1. an elected Parliament subtly implies the need for a global citizenship. Candidates must be able to solve problems arising in larger contexts while disregarding their national identities for greater purposes. The issue is: are we prepared for such a "radical movement for political reconstruction?" (Falk, 1980:23) Obviously not, citizens from Europe are still importing handmade carpentry at the expense of Indian children exploited in bonded labour.

2. this assembly would, in fact, remain non-inclusive because in order to be able to participate in elections, one needs accurate information and knowledge about the process, funds for campaigning, the necessary skills (education, language skills) to stand a chance in the electoral process. Thus, such an assembly still favours the elites in any society while silencing the voiceless.

3. supposing the previous points have been solved, a more technical question arises: what kind of party system is most suitable: multi-party, one-party, dominant party? Then, who gets to have the final say? This, again, leads to the argument that citizens are not prepared to participate, or to vote, in such competitive elections due to a lack of specialized knowledge; at least, not the citizenry the assembly thought to give voice to.

4. then, who will oversee the elections? Even if initially elections are held at national level, who guarantees transparency and legitimacy? Clearly, there is a need for a global authority entitled with the power and resources to

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conduct these elections. Rhetorically, is this possible in a world in which the principle of non-interference is a top priority in national agendas?

The same enquiries can be brought against Archibugi and Held's (2011) World Peoples Assembly who, as Falk and Strauss, consider that because the European Parliament (EP) has been successfully created out of scratch, so will be the case for their proposition. However, there is a small rectification to this statement: the EP is a regional institution that shares a common identity (not the same!) and its territorial borders are strictly defined while the parliamentarians are representing their nation-state and not their own beliefs. Thus, there are distinct features between the two structures of governance only at a glance.

Be that as it may, Archibugi's project for a global civil society is not the same with Falk's. Per contra, Archibugi and Held (2011:9:) believe the assembly should have only a consultative role on the global arena and not legislative power; fact with which I concur because it eliminates the possibility of power abuse based on formed coalitions during the parliamentary process. As well, the assembly will only focus on the most relevant or top-priority problems such as climate change, poverty. Still, taking into consideration only a few issues, that seem most pressing, means risking leaving individuals with no education or at the mercy of oppressive regimes in terms of human rights protection. "The dispossessed" as Archibugi (2011:11) names them, the migrants and all other groups that should benefit of the novelty of a global civil society, are the same people who will be left outside the system just because their problems are not global in nature. Hence, the global society in whatever form is designed has to be inclusive not only in numbers but as well in scope.

Making It Happen

Picking on the last chapter's core idea that "global legislatures are not the answer" (Scholte, 2001:15), I introduce a new proposition for a global civil society. This new project aims at giving a solution to the identified flaws of the World Parliament or/and Global Peoples Assembly. Taking note of the existing normative initiatives in respect to the idea of a human governance in the international sphere, a global civil society can be created without distorting the current international system, yet maintaining its cosmopolitan nature.

First of all, the global civil society will not bear any political marks. Here, I refer to an autonomous, politically independent and self-organized alliance. The Alliance, as I like to call it, is not a homogenous organism, rather, it is a composition of a multitude of mini-organisms that form its purpose: a global representation of the beliefs, ideas, ideals and opinions of the citizenry. This project should not be understood as a short-term alternative, but as a prospective plan for a world order. To be more precise, the Alliance will initially start, preferably, as an NGO whose aim is to provide networking and diversity in unity. The Alliance will start local by attracting as many other unions, NGOs, congregations or movements, as possible. At first, it will provide a social space of interactions between members of the different organizations who joined it, in order to enhance civic participation, awareness, multi-disciplinary approaches on project implementation and so on. Basically, the Alliance would represent a space of development both for individuals and for the organizations, trade unions etc.

No project that hopes to be borderless in its objective can disregard the ideological dimensions that might harm its effective and transparent functioning. Therefore, the Alliance's rule of thumb would be its apolitical structure. This indicates that all NGOs, unions, movements, congregations, lobbyists, will not be allowed to advocate any political preference or ideological view within the internal structure of the Alliance. For example, if an NGO that strives for the equality between genders joins the Alliance, but its political ideology inclines towards, let's say socialism, this does not mean the Alliance will reject its membership; but will refuse any lobby or campaign founded on political views. However, if there are a number of organizations that share the same political ideologies, the Alliance will treat them with the same respect and moreover, equality, approving any partnership between them as long as they do not disturb the well-organization and harmony of the Alliance. The same applies for any other case.

Secondly, the Alliance will foster a cosmopolitan notion of a good citizen by engaging the organization in projects targeting humanity's issues, such as malnutrition, healthcare, human trafficking, labour exploitation, trade regulations, humanitarian aid etc. However, due to the status of the organization, no international or regional treaties,

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accords or conventions would be applicable and/or legally binding to the members of the Alliance. The reason behind this is that the Alliance represents peoples and not states; the international declarations, conventions have been drafted by the state themselves through their representatives. Accordingly, members will not give up their unifying ideal endorsed by their organization, but will develop a sense of globality and universal responsibility through the actions and projects implemented by the Alliance. At this point, the Alliance would act as the platform for establishing trans-boundary connections between officially recognized forms of associations with the scope of promoting cooperation, consensus, equality between individuals and representativeness.

Representativeness, especially, is a primordial task of the Alliance. Just like Archibugi and Falk mentioned in their articles, the global civil society must be inclusive and legitimate allowing for all voices to be heard. The Alliance does exactly this. Attracting within its structure a numberless of associations, the Alliance's ambition is to offer a public space where each victim or each individual can tell their stories and be provided with possibilities of *making a difference*. Equipped with the skills each organization brings, the Alliance could develop hundreds of projects affecting each corner of the world. Admittedly, human resources are the most valuable tool of humanity and the Alliance makes use of it. Even more, in this scenario, we eliminate the technical problems that arose in Falk and Archibugi's case (see chapter III). People do not need anymore the information and knowledge compulsory to gain a seat in the World Parliament because the Alliance will be an organization that extends beyond the state but works in parallel with it. Also, the Alliance, as a future plan, will gain international power and recognition from the other global actors, such as United Nations, World Trade Organization, European Union. If this is the case, the global civil society represented by the Alliance will become institutionalized and will directly affect the decision-making process; thus, reaching a cosmopolitan world order.

Conclusion

The proposition made in this essay was the creation of an Alliance based on a multitude of officially recognized associations (NGOs, unions, congregations, movements) on a global scale. This alternative was given based on the projects of Falk, Strauss, Archibugi and Held in respect to a global civil society. The Alliance, therefore, tries to offer a solution to the flaws of the World Parliament and Global Peoples Assembly without affecting the international system's structure on a short-term basis. But then, the argument against such a solution can be its lack of cosmopolitan characteristics, more precisely its moral universalism and/or global citizenship. Yet, as it was discussed in the previous chapter, the Alliance's goal is to encompass all mini-organisms existing at national level, thus, fostering a sphere in which the idea of global citizenship and moral universalism will not only normatively develop but will become a social phenomena. One response to this, might be the reluctance of the members to adopt this cosmopolitan worldview. Still, as I already explained, the Alliance's target and rationale should not be assessed on a short-term basis, rather, on long-term depending on its progress.

Worth mentioning is that the global civil society is not a plan in itself, but is part of a greater restructuring of the international system, a world order. Consequently, as philosophers before our times rightfully attested, the global civil society "was founded not merely to preserve the lives of its members; but that they might live well" (Aristotle). In this context, I do not wish to overstate the importance of a global society for human beings; but the point is that we have gone a far way in rationalizing the implications and different methods through which a global civil society can be formed. These propositions are crucial to reform the global governance in realistic and efficient terms.

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