



Graduate School of Development Studies

Réquiem for Radical Citizenship:
on the rise and fall of Radical Citizenship in Brazilian and Dutch
non-governmental cooperation

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List of Acronyms

ABC – Agência Brasileira de Cooperação
ABONG – Associação Brasileira de Organizações Não-Governamentais
Cebemo - Centrale Bemiddeling bij Medefinanciering
Ontuikkelingsprogramma's
CFA – Co-Financing Agency
Cordaid - Catholic Organisation for Relief & Development Aid
CPI – Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito
CSO – Civil Society Organisation
FASE – Federação dos Órgãos de Assistência Social
GIFE – Grupo de Institutos Fundações e Empresas
GPN – Grupo Pedras Negras
IBASE – Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sócio-Econômicas
IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística
ICCO – Inter Church Organisation for Development Cooperation
IDF – International Aid Field
IDOS – Institutional Development and Organisational Strengthening
INESC – Instituto de Estudos Sócio-Econômicos
JOC – Juventude Operária Cristã
MP – Member of Parliament
MST – Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem-Terra
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
NOVA – Nova Pesquisa e Assessoria em Educação
Novib - Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand
ODI – Overseas Development Institute
OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCIP – Organização da Sociedade Civil de Interesse Público
Oxfam - Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PAD – Processo de Articulação e Diálogo
PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores

Abstract

In the past years, International Organizations in Brazil have been showing the tendency of withdrawal and/or decline of budgets, as well as shifts in priorities and regions in the country. The reasons for such changes are manifold, and ascribe to phenomena taking place both in national and international contexts. The paper discusses the reasons behind such changes, and asks about the future implications to projects that take radical democracy as a normative guideline in Brazil. In order to do so, it draws upon recent discussions in social movement theory and networks to analyse the rise, the evolution and the alleged demise of the network around radicalism in Brazil. Finally, it speculates about the alternatives to the radical democratic project given the changes in the presence of Private Aid Agencies in the country.

Relevance to Development Studies

This work brings close attention to the relationship between the International Aid Industry and Brazilian Active Citizenship Organisations along time. The research process has showed that this relationship cannot be summarized in simple static conceptualizations, and the terms and relationships between partners are often more contentious and less hierarchical than the literature on development studies tends to suggest. Thus, the work offers a different intake towards North-South relations by focusing in the dynamically evolving relationships between actors along time, rather than on the assessment of the roles and attributions actors according to static (mis) conceptions of one another.

Keywords

Keywords: NGOs, Private Aid Agencies, Development, Radical Democracy, Contentious Politics, Networks

Introduction

In February of 2008, the Brazilian NGO FASE has received a letter from ICCO - Dutch co-financing development agency - stating that the organisations, “after a fruitful collaboration that has taken place for almost thirty years, are going through different paths nowadays, which eliminates the basis, so far existent, to pursue any further institutional collaboration” (ICCO-FASE forthcoming). The news hit FASE with “perplexity”, given that no longer than six months before, the organisation had received from ICCO the information that the funds for the next triennial period were approved.

Oxfam Novib - another big and well-established Dutch co-financing agency - has announced the phasing out of “most of its activities in Latin America and the Caribbean” after over fifty years of cooperation (Novib 2010: 47). The organisation has said “goodbye to all its partners” in late 2010¹, ceasing partnerships with more than ninety organisations all over the continent. Mexico and Brazil - the two biggest and richest countries in the region - are going to be the only countries where the organisation will still be indirectly connected through partners to be incorporated in the “Oxfam family”.

These two examples stem from an on-going trend. However “sudden” or “hard to take”² Latin American organisations may find these ruptures, they are the materialisation of a general fear that has been growing stronger along the years in the field of development and cooperation in the region (Biekart 2005). Latin America has once been the global centre for democratic struggles against authoritarian and ferocious regimes that went against northern liberal values in almost every way possible. It was also an essential space for “innovation of social policies” as well as a “pilot area for new forms of aid delivery” (Pearce

¹ Oxfam Novib Network nr. 5. October 2009. p. 11.

² Reactions present in the recent report written by FASE and ICCO about the end of a more than 30 year partnership.

1997; Fowler 2000; Biekart 2008). Nowadays, the region is known to have gone through substantial changes and achieved a degree of political stability that serves as an example to the developing world. Moreover, given the steady economic growth and development of the region as whole³, and the severity of the social, economic and political situation in Africa, it would make little sense for northern private aid agencies to dedicate their increasingly scarce resources in a region that allegedly can stand in their own feet.

Brazil serves as a microcosm to understand the relationship between Private Aid Agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations in Latin America. In spite of the particularities and specificities of the country, such as the relatively better formed and structured NGO field, the improvement of the country's economic performance⁴, the steady growth in development indicators⁵ and the political stability acquired along the past 25 years show that Brazil has been mostly successful in dealing with these issues in most dimension regarded as crucial to development in Latin America, namely, political stability, economic growth and poverty reduction.

This paper, inspired by the recent unfoldings in the region, draws close attention to one specific set of relations within: the relationship between Brazilian Non-Governmental Organisations and Dutch co-financing agencies in the context of promotion of participation and democratic strengthening. By focusing in a particular set of circumstances within a particular number of arenas, this work also attempts to contribute towards a better understanding of North-South dynamics in the promotion of alternatives to development. It is

³ Economic growth in the region as a whole has showed variations along the last 30 years, but the average growth over the period was 2,5%. Meanwhile, HDI shows a steady and solid growth throughout the same period.

⁴ As stated by the consistent growth of GNI per capita index especially in the last decade. In: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD/countries/1W-BR-ZG-ZJ?display=graph>

⁵ According to Brazil's HDI timid but steady evolution over the past 10 years. In: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BRA.html>

thus also an effort to blur the usual borders that portray northern aid agencies as input providers and southern counterparts as output deliverers.

However often obliterated by the mainstream literature on democratic transition and citizenship in Brazil (Linz & Stepan 1996; Power 2000)⁶, civil society – especially the organisations that emerged from it - have had a historic role both in the re-democratisation process during the 1980's, and in the struggles for improvement of participatory processes and spaces during the 1990s (Doimo 1994; Dagnino, 2006; Paoli 2003). Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have had – and still have - a long-lasting role in pushing the political agenda towards widening and deepening democratic arenas, as well as qualifying the debate in the Brazilian public sphere. Within the heterogeneous arena of CSOs, Non-Governmental Organisations⁷ have emerged as an important node in the social movement network, helping to foster active participation both within and outside the state, either by providing smaller organisations and groups with resources, or by linking grassroots groups among themselves and with the state, that is, acting as brokers of these processes.

Northern Private Aid Agencies have a long tradition in the promotion of new approaches to rights, participation and civil society strengthening in Latin America (Biekart 2008; 1999). They have showed historically a big interest in the political dimensions of development and in the promotion of “progressive social change” (Pearce 2010), in ways that mainstream agencies such as the World Bank and the UN have not usually done (Derksen & Vernhallen 2008).

⁶ The literature on democratic transition in Latin America, in part because of its overly institutionalist framework of analysis, often focuses its attention on the interactions among institutionally legitimated actors within the political sphere, leaving civil society actors as secondary and instrumental.

⁷ There is no such figure as a “Non-Governmental Organisation” in the Brazilian legal system. NGOs are, rather, an expression charged with identities and vested with different disputed meanings that started to gain shape alongside social and political dynamics of Brazilian society throughout mostly the 1980s (ABONG, 2007). Those identities have varied greatly along the decades in the country. As we shall see later on, the NGO boom in Brazil during the 1990s has, for good or bad, diverted an alleged original meaning of NGOs. Sections 2 and 3 will elaborate further on the theoretical, analytical and historical dimensions of this ever-changing concept.

Dutch Co-financing agencies have been an important agent in pushing this progressive agenda in Latin America and especially in Brazil, providing organisations with resources to pursue democratic reforms and participatory claims (FASE/ICCO, forthcoming; Kadt & Armani, 1997). This fruitful relationship not remained the same throughout the years, reaching the aforementioned critical point recently. Nowadays, two tendencies emerge: complete withdrawal, as in the case of ICCO, or realignment of cooperation principles more aligned to the mainstream agenda of development, as the new character of Oxfam's presence in Brazil shows.

The general objective of this research is to understand the reasons behind these recent changes. In order to do so, it draws upon the social movement literature to come to grips with the dynamics that have led to the critical juncture the Brazilian network of “Active Citizenship Organisations”⁸ now face. By setting up the mechanisms and processes pertaining to the dynamics of contention around the struggle for the promotion of a more “radical” understanding of democracy in Brazil – one that regards the polity as inherently conflictual and normatively understands democratic regimes as a set of spaces designed for taming conflicts between constantly emerging identities -, it speculates on the consequences of the recent disturbances on the organisational sustainability of these organisations. Finally, it assesses in which ways this shift has affected the prospects for radicalisation of democracy in Brazil. Therefore, the questions on the table are straightforward: why are Dutch Co-financing agencies withdrawing from Brazil? How is their withdrawal affecting the NGOs working with the promotion of active citizenship? What consequences do these shifts have to a radically-oriented understanding of democracy and citizenship in Brazil?

The findings of this work stem basically from the analysis of documents, reports and publications of Brazilian and Dutch organisations, as well as from independent consultants in the past 30 years. In addition, during the month of

⁸ The terms between brackets are self-attributed adjectives collected from interviews and unpublished reports provided by the organisations themselves.

May 2011, a snowballing process was started in Brazil in order to acquire a more dynamic and up to date understanding of the mechanisms and processes going on over the past 30 years as well as more recently. Six semi-structured interviews were held between May 10th and May 20th in Brasilia and São Paulo. In order to comprise a wider array of actors, three other interviews were conducted in the Netherlands along the months of June, July and August in The Hague and Den Bosch. The intention behind the crossing of official data and interviews was to capture both the official discourse behind the continuities and changes within the network around international cooperation in Brazil, and the dynamics stemming from the interaction between actors along time.

My attempt to respond the aforementioned questions will be structured as follows. First, I would like to set out the theoretical, methodological and analytical instruments I am going to use in order to address the issue. Then, I will argue why they are the most suitable for such enterprise. Secondly, I would like to present the actors of the network around active citizenship in Brazil, their histories and perspectives, as well as their positions and roles within therein. Sections 2 and 3 are dedicated to this, presenting respectively the Dutch Private Aid Agencies and the Brazilian Active Citizenship Organisations in their contexts of creation, changes and continuities throughout the decades. Section 4 will be dedicated to the discussion of the dynamics emerging from the interaction of the two sets of actors along the years and its consequences for the active citizenship network in the country. It will present the different interpretations of the same issue within the network and will assess the consequences of these grievances for the radical democratic project. Finally, the concluding section will speculate both on the actor's and my perspectives around the prospects for more radically oriented intakes of democracy in Brazil given the downfall of one important node in the network that sustained that claim over the years.

Chapter 1

Ontological, Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks

It is difficult to grasp the nature of social groups and collective action. Generations of social scientists have dedicated their careers identifying the nature of social things, measuring and categorising social ties that bind subjects or structures together and either push them towards action or constrain it. Yet, in spite of all the effort dedicated to ascertain a logical thread to social action, the objects of knowledge – social groups and/or structures - keep thwarting experts by not behaving according to their models. Where does the issue reside? Are actors behaving misleadingly and must therefore be tamed/guided towards more socially optimal outcomes? Or would it be the case that social scientists are framing the social world in inappropriate ways?

1.1 On the tenets of Relational Sociology

Mustafa Emirbayer, American sociologist of pragmatist tradition argues that a big part of the problem above lies not on the choices made by scientists, but rather on the lenses used and questions there derived. Contemporary social scientists today face a fundamental dilemma in terms of the portrayal of the social world. The dilemma lies on a choice between an understanding of the their object of study as consisting primarily either in “*substances*” or in “*processes*”, with its basic unit of analysis being either “static *things*’ or dynamic, unfolding *relations*” (Emirbayer 1997: 281). In an attempt to move away from the former “substantialist” understanding of the social world, recent studies brings together several contributions gathered around the concept of a “relational” understanding of the social world.

In a now seminal work, Emirbayer argues in favour of the second perspective embracing the “relational approach” to social phenomena. The “Manifesto for a Relational Sociology” (Emirbayer 1997) takes a pragmatist, linguistic and interactionist starting point, along with historical and network analysis to develop a critique to the so-called “substantialist” intake to social

analysis. The “transactional” approach he advocates for focuses its attention not on the substances, actors or structures of certain social phenomenon, but on the interactions, transactions and exchanges therein. In a relational approach to social phenomena, the very terms or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction." (Emirbayer 1997: 287). According to Andrew Abbot (1997), the central reason for doing this is practical, inasmuch as “it is possible to explain reproduction as a phenomenon sometimes produced by perpetual change; (but) it is not possible to explain change as a phenomenon sometimes produced by perpetual stasis" (Abbot 1997: 98)”. As a consequence, the relational approach to social action calls for the shifts of analytical focus from the subjects and their interactions the dynamic, unfolding process of transaction itself⁹.

The ontological roots of relational sociology draw upon Peirce’s “triadic relation of sign, object and ‘interpretant’” (Mische 2011: 16). The founder of both pragmatist school and semiotics agrees on the need for shifting away from substantial categories towards an understanding of meaning as a position in relation to a wider web of symbols, very much in the same way as traditional Sausurrean linguistics and its social science “structuralist” branch. However, Peirce’s triadic understanding argues in favour of an ever changing and continuous process of interpretation conferring new understandings that are not only relational but also dynamic. Rather than a simple relation, signifying processes are continuous *acts*, which bring forth new interpretations and new relations among actors mediated by interpretations of objects in the world (Emirbayer 1997). Again, relations rather than substances come to the fore, but in addition, repetition and iteration, thus time, play an essential role in understanding social phenomena.

⁹ Things “are not assumed as independent existences present anterior to any relation, but (...) gain their whole being (...) first in and with the relations which are predicated of them. Such ‘things’ are terms of relations, and as such can never be ‘given’ in isolation but only in ideal community with each other” (Cassirer 1953, p. 36 apud Emirbayer 1997: 287).

If substantial approaches to the social world are limiting in terms of circumscribing the actors and structures to a set of static definitions, they possess the comparative advantage of allowing the researcher to operate with a widely established set of concepts. Given the dynamic nature of relational sociology, if on the one hand the researcher succeeds in portraying subjects and social groups in their complexity, it assumes the challenge that this indeterminacy brings along. In this sense, three major problems arise when one embraces a relational perspective in social theory: the problem of setting boundaries and entities across time and space, the dynamics inside those boundaries and the causal connections within the dynamics (Emirbayer 1997).

In relation to the setting of the analytical boundaries in relational sociology, given the aforementioned limitations of substantial and interactional understandings of the social world, the question of how to set the limits of the research arises. How to move from flows of transaction to clearly demarcated units of study without falling in a substantialist trap? Emirbayer states that social-network researchers "continually grapple with the question of where to draw lines across relational webs possessing no clear-cut, natural boundaries" (Emirbayer 1997: 303), and that there is no definite solution to this problem. Concretely, scholars in collective action theory (Saunders 2007; Von Bulow 2010; Diani 1995; Abers & Von Bulow 2011) have summarized the attempts of dealing with this dilemma in two distinct, yet interchangeable, routes, so-called a realist and a nominalist approach. While the first is more directly related to the point of view of the actors involved, the network of organisations being what is consciously perceived and experienced by actors themselves, the latter stems from the concepts and purposes of the social-scientific observer, who draws its analytic boundaries. As I will show later on in this section, the path here taken lies more on the latter, consequence mostly of the time constrains to engage in a more rigorous network analysis through the use of questionnaires and specific techniques. However, given dynamic character of these boundaries, the side effects of eventual arbitrary definitions can be minimised with the long-term analysis and emphasis on the changing patterns of relation across time, with eventual widening or narrowing of the scope of actors involved.

Finally, with respect to the issue of causal connections in relational sociology. Emirbayer puts that causes should not be regarded as immaterial phenomena. Forces, structures, factors somehow "impel" social substances down a causal path. Relational reasoning on the other hand, calls for a "new action language for the social sciences". Drawing upon Roy Schafer psychoanalytical theory (1976), Emirbayer refrains from using nouns and adjectives to refer to transactional processes, events, etc. Relational sociology, instead, makes use of verbs and adverbs to address such issues. "Action language (...) clears the ground for causal analysis by eliminating reified structures as "causal factors", yet it needs to be supplemented by an explicit concern for the "situational mechanisms that actually channel flows of events" (Emirbayer 1997: 307). In that sense, causes are only regarded as such if situated in space and time. We now turn to the theoretical implications of the relational approach.

1.2 Theoretical Implications

Whilst a relational orientation has sprouted in different intellectual fields (Mische 2011), this work draws on the emergence of a particular strand within this broader framework. The "New York School of relational sociology", as Mische calls it, proposes a new theoretical agenda where interaction and performance of social relations come to the fore of analysis in order to "overcome the stale antinomies between structure and agency through a focus on dynamics of social interactions" (Mische 2011: 1)¹⁰. If ontologically the relational school is based on pragmatist approaches to social phenomena, its epistemological tenets go on to what Tilly (1998) calls "relational realism".

¹⁰ The New York School of relational sociology emerges from the encounters between a technical and overly mathematical network analysis approach and the subfield of cultural sociology in the US, which at the time was increasingly overlapping with a wide array of other subfields such as political sociology, comparative-historical sociology, social movements and collective behaviour theory. For a more thorough description, analysis and context of its emergence and development, please refer to Mische (2011).

Relational realism is a by-product of Tilly's intense debates with post-structural and structurally oriented historical scholars within a series of debates in New York circles, which pushed him towards a "re-examination of the role of identities, narratives and discourse in theories of contentious politics"¹¹ (Mische 2011: 4). Tilly defines his revised epistemological approach as "the doctrine that transactions, interactions, social ties and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life" (Tilly 2004: 72 in Mische 2011: 6).

This perspective informs the understanding of power and politics of this work. In a tradition that draws back to relational approaches to power (Foucault 2004; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Elias 1978), it cannot be understood "in exteriority with respect to other types of relationships" (Foucault 1992 in Emirbayer 1997: 292). A proper understanding of it would involve determining "the mechanisms, effects, relations and apparatuses of power, as well as the spaces in which it operates" (Foucault 2004: 13). If a relational conception of power that does not ascribe automatically to a specific set of relations or a previously established arena, the conception of politics it entails needs to be broad enough to encompass all transactions between individuals, groups and organisations. If power is pervasive, politics must also be. Thus, the political is understood as an all-encompassing sphere involving public and private spaces, "a dimension of antagonism that is inherent to human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations" (Mouffe 2000: 101).

Political processes, accordingly, can be understood as conversations (Tilly 2004) likely to happen in every social setting. It does not follow, however, that political processes are conversations aiming at consensus. Conversations are understood as interactional processes vested with power and inherently

¹¹ Contentious politics theories represent an inflexion point within the scholarly field of social movements and collective action. Directly related to relational analysis and having Charles Tilly as one of its most prominent figures, contentious politics is defined as "episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants" (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001: 5)

contentious. Any attempt of noise elimination in the search for some sort of equilibrium would go against the normative relational refusal of “the intrinsically reified nature of all categories” (Emirbayer 1997: 309). Thus, although consensus is desirable and potentially achievable, it must inherently be contingent.

If relations, interactions and dynamics are at the centre of the relational realist approach this work takes as a starting point, mapping social situations must come as a logic epistemological next step to relational realism. Network analysis and the identification of mechanisms and processes emerging therein, in that sense, comes as a potentially fruitful strategy to analyse the relations between actants in the aforementioned setting. Recent unfoldings of Social Movement Theory and Networks (Diani & McAdam, 2003; Saunders 2007; Von Bülow 2010) provide interesting tools and analysis for explaining not only the evolution of social movements into more formal organisations in Brazil, but also their eventual regression in the eventual shifts in the networks they are inserted. The flexibility of the concept of network, and in many senses its very ambiguity, has enabled researchers to “deal with phenomena of change, which are difficult to contain within the boundaries of formal bureaucracies or nation states, or at the other pole, the individual actor (Mutti 1996 in Diani & McAdam 2003).

If we embrace Diani’s attempt to describe social movements as, among other things networks of “(...) groups with various levels of formalization, linked in patterns of interaction which run from the fairly centralized to the totally decentralized, from the cooperative to the explicitly hostile” (Diani 2002: 1), this would allow for an engagement with the different identities the organisations dealt here assume in different times and arenas. This perspective is endorsed by Mische (2002: 269) when describing the possibility of activation and de-activation of relations “through conversational mechanisms” when activists negotiate their claims in different arenas.

The next sub-section is dedicated to clarify what kinds of categories would be useful to account for these dynamic environments dealt with in this research, both in terms of the actors and the settings they interact within.

1.3 Methodological Implications

Before engaging directly with the methodological implications of the theoretical approach chosen, it is adequate to mention a few words about the methodology of choosing the components of my object of inquiry. That way, the methodological discussion can shift from the more abstract dimension examined so far to this paper's actual element of concern.

The setting up of the network hereby analysed started off with a general question related to the Brazilian democratic struggles and dynamics after the demise and fall of the military dictatorship: what kind of civil society organisations have taken the role of brokers for grassroots democracy promotion, participation and social transformation as their main motto in the country? Even though the universe of such organisations is rather vast and heterogeneous, this work tried to identify a set of organisations that have had a substantial contribution to democratic improvements of the country in close relationship with the state as well as social movements without necessarily calling to themselves the role of representatives – with different levels of success, for that matter¹². One last criterion used to narrow the universe of organisations of this work was the use or not of particular normative radical framing of democracy in which conflict would take a central place in the setup of institutional arenas. Finally, four organisations were chosen to be dealt with in closer detail, all urban-based – although with some history in rural settings as well – and with a long and solid contribution to debates revolving around the improvement of democracy and participation in Brazil: Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE), The Federation for Organs of Social Assistance and Education (FASE), the Institute for Socio-Economic Studies (INESC) and the POLIS Institute.

Given the strength of the ties among these organisations, the association created by those four institutions, along with several other smaller – though

¹² At least not in the formal sense usually ascribed to such concept in the context of liberal democracy. For further discussions with respect to the dynamics of representation by civil society organisations in environments of widened participation, refer to Gurza Lavalle et al. (2006).

not less combative - organisations in the wave of the outburst of Brazilian civil society – the Brazilian Association of NGOs, Abong - was also part of the research efforts, mainly because it acts as an advocacy network for these organisations within Brazilian society and it aggregates data regarding their relationships with the state, private initiative and international cooperation as a whole.

One of the first findings of the research was the extensive reliance of this set of organisations on international funds for the execution of their mandates, especially in The Netherlands. The setting up of the network then has mapped the Dutch Co-Financing Agencies that have had consistent and frequent relations with Brazil along the past 40 years. From the four big CFAs in The Netherlands, three of them – namely ICCO, Novib and Cordaid – have had a strong presence in Brazil at least since the 1970s (De Kadt 1997). Hivos, albeit present in Latin America, have not consistently had any projects directly with Brazil.

Even though it seems rather obvious that the main actors of this paper have already been laid down as Brazilian NGOs and Dutch Co-financing Agencies, if one takes a closer look on the constitution of those actors along time, the resemblance between the same actors throughout time is less automatic. As an example, FASE, organisation founded in 1961, has, along its forty years of existence, went from a catholic organisation working with education projects in close relationship with the church and private companies¹³, to a powerful and progressive view working in close connection with international cooperation, a shift that substantially changes not only the organisation's mission, but also affects its portfolio and personnel therein. In

¹³ In 1971, Fase's budget composition counted with the presence of individual contributions members (38%), private companies – including multinational corporations such as Gillette and Coca-Cola (4%), International Aid Agencies (18%), consultancy services (5%) and patrimony (34%). According to the ICCO-FASE report (2011), Fase has faced a major turn in terms of not only its funding portfolio, but also in terms of its approach towards society and partners. In their own words, they have “become NGOs”, and joined the “horizontal network” of actors against the military regime.

that sense, agency must be regarded with a focus “on the embedding of actors in multiple socio-temporal contexts, with varied orientations towards past, present and future (Mische & Emirbayer 1998 in Mische 2011: 6), in other words, their situatedness¹⁴.

In concrete terms, the methodological step stemming from this acknowledgement relates to providing a broad enough set of identities to such organisations so that the analytical framework can account for eventual identity turns and properly situate actor’s narratives in time and space. In that sense, Diani & Bison (2004) provide a powerful analytical framework in which collective action can develop without falling in any substantialist trap. With the assumption that social movements are “informal interaction networks among a plurality of individuals, groups and associations engaged in political or cultural contention with a sense of shared identity (Diani 1992: 13), they build a typology of forms of collective action that allows scholars to account for the identity dynamics of these organisations. Social movements are not synonym of collective action, and the research here undertaken is not interested and does not intend to understand Brazilian and Dutch Organisations as social movements. However, this body of literature, while trying to understand this particular phenomenon, ended up providing a wider analytical framework that allows for the analysis of a wider array of collective action processes. Diani and Bison (2004: 282-3) define the analytical space in three dimensions:

- Presence or absence of conflictual orientation to clearly defined opponents;
- Dense or sparse informal exchanges between individuals and organisations engaged in collective projects;

¹⁴ Thus, it should come as no surprise if usually criticised terms such as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) in the international aid and development literature (Biekart 1999)¹⁴ re-emerge in this work. The apparent confusing use of such wide array of terms is intentional, and accounts for the situatedness of the concepts. The emphasis here relies more on the verbs than on the nouns, that is, on the processes and interactions rather than in taxonomy of actors themselves. Hopefully this will not compromise the understanding of the narrative and analysis here undertaken.

- Strong or weak collective identity between members of those network.

The examination of the different types of combination stemming from the three sets of properties mentioned above allows for the creation of a typology of collective action processes, reproduced in Table 1. It is important to bear in mind that from a relational perspective, it would make no sense to think of such depictions as substantial categories. They represent the array of institutional forms such configurations may take at a particular point in time. As far as this work is concerned, this is going to be the setting in which the Brazilian Dutch network will transit within.

Table 1 A Typology of Collective Action Processes

Dense vs. sparse informal networks	Network identity vs. organizational identity	Conflictual vs. consensual action	
		Conflictual action	Consensual action
Dense informal networks	Strong network identity	Social movement	Consensus movement
Dense informal networks	Weak network identity	Conflict coalition	Consensus coalition
Sparse informal networks	Weak network identity	Conflict organization	Consensus organization

Source: Diani & Bison (2004: 284)

Thus, in accordance to the density of the social ties existent in a network, the strength of identity and its more or less propensity to identify a common enemy and thus engage in conflict, the networks of organisations movements and/or individuals combine across space and time generating collective action phenomena that either sustain or promote shifts in a given social structure.

If the associational scope of this work is theoretically informed, the temporal dimension arbitrarily defines the beginning of the relationship between Dutch and Brazilian Non-Governmental Organisations in the moment The Netherlands counterparts stepped foot in Brazilian soil as Co-financing Agencies. Even though the moments that precede this set of events play a non-negligible

role in terms of setting pathways through which the penetration of these organisations in the form that it took was made possible, analysing this anterior moment is out of the scope of this paper.

Once the actors and the boundaries of the network in question are set, we turn to the matter of the substance that has tied those actors together. In the theoretical framework proposed in this work, this is translated by the identification of the particular claim(s) around where civil society organisations and co-financing agencies revolved around, sometimes collaborating, sometimes engaging in conflicts, interacting with a variety of actors such as the state, social movements, political parties, churches and the private sector.

1.4 On claims as the unit of analysis and radical citizenship

In abstract terms, it is reasonable to acknowledge that those particular organisations had a sense of shared meaning that allowed them to work together in furthering a given set of objectives. But what was exactly the problem that triggers (or used to trigger) collective action among those actors?

The network of Dutch and Brazilian organisations working in Brazil revolved, in general terms, around social transformations in Brazil. Among these transformations that ranged from the provision of basic education at grassroots level to the financing international fora for the discussion of alternative development paradigms, the claim for citizenship, that is, the inclusion of subordinated and marginalised groups in the public sphere seemed somewhat stable along the years. Even if the concept has taken different shapes and meanings throughout time, it is safe to say that this particular claim was one of the main amalgams of the network in terms of the shared meanings they possessed, a sort of tacit common agreement around the importance of a particular understanding of citizenship that needed to gain centrality in the Brazilian authoritarian regime and further on in the evolving democracy.

One central character of the particular shared understanding of democracy that helped bring the network together was a “radical notion of citizenship”, in which participation, albeit essential, is not automatically equated to citizenship.

Change is thus pursued as part of a wider radical political project, engaging with underlying processes of social change (Hickey & Mohan 2005). Contingency plays a big role in setting the agenda of a radical political project. Framings and ties connecting participants together are constantly renegotiated and reinforced. Changes in the framing of binding concepts are not only possible but also very likely to happen given the changing circumstances of the situation this project is inserted, especially when it assumes a radical character. Having this in mind is essential when it comes to understanding the changing meaning of citizenship within democratic struggles of this particular network in Latin America and especially in Brazil (Dagnino 2008), where their framing of citizenship, participation and, ultimately, democracy, has changed in order to preserve its original meaning. However, in the International Aid Field (IDF) the understanding of participation, citizenship and democracy seems not to have evolved in the same pace. The progressive clash of those particular understandings, alongside structural transformations both inside and outside Brazil, contributed to the shifts and eventual disengagement of ties within the radical political network in Brazil. The following two sections are dedicated to detailing how the nodes of the network were constituted and how they evolved and changed along the years.

Chapter 2

Perspectives from the outside

Given the limits and dynamics of identity formation and transformation of the previous section, I now turn to the concrete dimension of the construction, changes and continuities of the actors and institutions involved in the collective action dynamics of the active citizenship network. First it is important to take a close look on the external dynamics that have steered the changing perspectives of Dutch co-financing scheme throughout the years and eventually affected its relationship towards Brazil.

2.1 International Private Aid Field: continuities and changes from the 90's onwards

“NGOs have always served as our collective conscience, and as a vehicle for *direct citizen participation* in nearly all the areas that affect our lives... These groups are *closest to people*.”¹⁵ This quote from former Canadian MP Jean Augustine summarizes what can be called the prevailing understanding of NGOs and their position in northern liberal democracies. As a consequence of their proximity, “they know what is needed”, and by knowing what is good for the people there are close to, they acquire their legitimacy that overly bureaucratized and often straightjacketed governments lack. (Sogge et al. 1996: 1). Curiously enough, the recent “crises besetting agencies” (Sogge 1996: xi) find their roots in the very same dimensions NGOs were supposed to have their comparative advantage. They are currently regarded as highly bureaucratized big conglomerates where experts design policies with little or no input of citizens (Alvarez 2009), without grasping local dynamics properly (Ferguson 1994), and often disregarded as legitimate due to their vested interests coming from elsewhere (Petras 1997; Escobar 2004)¹⁶. Thus, far to

¹⁵ Quote of former Canadian MP Jean Augustine in Sogge (1996: 1).

¹⁶ James Petras makes his point by incorporating NGOs into an imperialist project. I do not go that far. However, Petras has the merit of bringing rather evidently the issue of vested political dimensions behind NGOs policies in Latin America.

the people as opposed to close, indirect as opposed to direct, and guiding peoples needs instead of knowing them. But what is in between all this? The conflict between the normative and positive understandings of NGOs is somewhat well established. The processes that led to this gap, however, remain to be explained.

Before jumping to the analysis of the dynamics that led to the impasse NGOs today face, one might be still uncomfortable with the generalisations made in the paragraph above. Several counterexamples could be brought to the fore to counter the line of argument I have just established, and this is mostly due to the fact that NGO has become a “container concept” (Biekart 1999) that does more analytical harm than good¹⁷. Private Aid Agencies is a subset of this larger and more diverse category of NGOs. Their distinct traits relate to their “greater command of tangible resources” (Sogge et al. 1996). Big or small, Private Aid Agencies supposedly preserve a certain degree of autonomy in relation to donors, mostly because they possess separate managerial bodies. Along with NGOs, they also have been praised as “public-spirited bodies rooted in ‘civil-society’” (Saxby in Sogge et. al 1996). Thus, Private Aid Agencies can be understood as “organisations autonomous from the state and primarily founded to collect funds in the North for development aid delivery in Southern countries on the basis of a set of humanitarian values originating in ‘compassion’ and ‘altruism’” (Biekart 1999: 60).

Private Aid agencies appear in the international arena in three different moments along the twentieth century. Whereas the first two relate to the provision of relief after the two great wars in the western world, the third peak is more directly related to the decolonisation process (Biekart 1999). The independence of the ‘Third World’ brought about new challenges of economic development and institutional building in a world increasingly interconnected economically and at the same time politically divided as a reflex of the cold war. Private Aid Agencies were regarded as an interesting vehicle to channel funds to developing countries and not only alleviate poverty, but also to

¹⁷ Refer to footnote 12.

counter the spread of communism (Boilings 1982 apud Biekart 1999). In addition to the usual short-term relief provision, Aid Agencies emerging from the decolonisation process were also interested in providing more sustained and long-term interventions in developing countries, with a perspective of promoting self-reliance in the countries.

Dutch Private Aid Agencies belong to this third wave of creation of Private Aid Agencies. They benefited especially from government support, which took the decision to channel their development aid efforts through partner organisations, with the coordination of newly created development cooperation ministries in a system known as ‘co-financing scheme’. In The Netherlands, given the principle of vertical pluralism known as *verzuiling*, the co-finance system was set up to account for the three vertical pillars of Dutch society, namely Catholics, Protestants and Secular groups.

If the 1960s and 1970s have seen the emergence of a more political ‘alternative’ development discourse that led not only to the creation of new organisations, but also to a more progressive intake within the already existing institutions, the 1970s and 1980s represented the decade of NGOs scaling up and consolidation as main actors in the development chain. In a combination of the increasing presence of Private Aid Agencies in home societies – mostly with awareness campaigns and a stronger advocacy capacity – and the emergence of a new paradigm in development studies where economic growth ceased to be the sole answer for poverty alleviation, private agencies provided the organisational flexibility, the expertise (Sogge et al. 1996) and had the political legitimacy (Biekart 1999) to carry on activities that would appear as politically sensitive to official aid institutions, being then regarded as the “institutional alternative to development approaches” (Bebbington et al. 2008: 9).

The increase in importance of the agencies has not come without a variety of problems. What once has started as a solution to pressing circumstances in the International Aid Field has turned into a part of the problem (Sogge 2002). With the increasing reliance of the international community on the work of NGOs, the scaling up of their activities and the increase in funds directed

towards these organisations, Private Aid Agencies have become big organisations with complex bureaucratic structures. Today, 30 percent of all the public and private aid money available in the world is channelled through Non-Governmental Organisations (Ridell 2007). However, on the contrary of what one might expect, the scaling up has not necessarily resulted in increase in effectiveness of their activities. The substantial amounts of resources managed by such organisations have brought them to the centre of the development aid field, and casted doubts about the actual importance – inside and outside organisations - of Private Aid Agencies in development promotion.

The 1990s represent a time where organisations face this identity crisis in a stricter manner. If along the 1980s some sparse criticisms already started to arise, the new decade comes with the stagnation growth of agency income and an eventual drop in 1993 (Biekart 1999). This is a consequence of not only the questioning of private aid agencies effectiveness and legitimacy, but also the by-product of structural shifts taking place in the world since the late 70s. The rise of the neoliberal agenda after the collapse of the Bretton-Woods system is a double-edged sword for the International Private Aid Field. If on the one hand the rhetoric of a small state has allowed for the reification of their role as the most legitimate actors for development promotion, the rhetoric promoting efficiency and de-politicising approaches to development has steered organisations towards a dead-end that compromises their effectiveness, which ultimately lead to a loss of legitimacy. In addition, the same minimal government framework questions the official funding of such organisations, which also ends up compromising organisations' ability to carry on with their projects.

If the concerns emerging in the previous decades related to the size and the tensions between alleged and actual effectiveness of NGOs, the debates within the field midway through the 1990s up until now revolve around the actual existence of this sector as it was originally conceived. The consolidation of a 'neoliberal order', the increasingly dominant poverty agenda and the more recent security agenda have limited the scope of action of NGOs to a point

where the question whether they are effectively promoters of alternatives to development arises (Bebbington et al. 2008).

The outreach and scaling-up of Private Aid Agencies have come at the expense of the capacity of providing alternative solutions to development. Politics has given way to Economics, process-based programmes have been downsized to the detriment of efficiency-grounded projects with quantifiable results, and structural changes have been left aside in order to open space for short-spanned yet highly marketable changes. How has that played out in a country that has historically been keen to provide aid to Southern countries? In addition, what has it represented to the approach of Dutch organisations towards Latin America, and more specifically Brazil?

2.2 Dutch Private Aid Agencies: from alternatives for development to the reification of development alternatives

Dutch Private Aid agencies are at the centre of the dynamics of foreign aid and development for a long time. The Netherlands were one of the first countries to abide by UN recommendation that encouraged developed nations to dedicate 0.7% of their GNI to development aid, meeting the target already in 1975 (OECD 2010), and today still spend almost one percent of its GDP on development assistance (OECD 2010). Dutch society, accordingly, has normally shown itself supportive to initiatives of solidarity towards the underprivileged. However, these strategies have always walked along the less altruistic dimension of political and economic self-interest (Breman 2011), and thus development policy was always dependant on favourable economic and political environments.

If at first Dutch CFAs were organised more on the lines of assistance provision and economic growth related paradigms on development, Dutch co-financing system proved to be very useful in promoting more politically oriented support for the global south during the 1970s. As an example, they have been pivotal in relation funding and providing support for political groups struggling against military dictatorships and for democracy in Latin

America during the 1970s. Since the funding mechanism operated through indirect ways, that is, money flowing from the Dutch government to Non-governmental CFAs and then to support groups and movements in the countries, it represented an ingenious way for providing support without running the risk of challenging national Latin American governments in a sensitive geopolitical context dominated by the Cold War. At the same time, the co-financing scheme appeased the popular pressure towards solidarity and support for the groups opposing Latin American dictatorships in an increasingly progressive Dutch society. The combination of the “need to do something” and the straight-jacket provided by the sensitivity of the Cold War context led to the increase of the provision of funds and the autonomy of the CFAs along the 1970s.

In spite of a long history of development promotion, regular engagement in “conflictual coalitions” (Diani & Bison 2004) in the Third World and massive investments on marketing strategies and public relations, the co-financing scheme in The Netherlands has been suffering from a “swelling tide of scepticism” (Breman 2011: 833). This incredulity on the potential of these organisations sees its first symptoms already midway through the 1980s, and has been progressively increasing along the years. The arguments supporting it are various. First, it is hard to state that CFAs were actually effective in tackling underdevelopment. Second, doubts are raised with respect to the efficiency of these organisations in handling taxpayers’ money and their ability to show tangible results. In the Impact Study conducted in 1991, Frits Wils argues that lots still remained to be done in terms of promoting efficiency within these organisations¹⁸. Third, a process of solidification of government’s mind-set

¹⁸ The “Impact Study” was a big research venture that took place in the early 1990s. Sponsored by CFAs, it was first intended to silence the arising criticisms from Dutch society and Academy in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of their programmes. An external committee of retired politicians and researchers was created and assessments of programmes were carried out in four continents. The results were far from reassuring. Even though it recognised the positive and important contribution of Dutch organisations in the promotion of democracy, there was no way to assess the actual effectiveness of specific programs, and it highlighted a general lack of professionalism, disregard for cost-effectiveness and an over voluntaristic, often hasty,

arising from the will of increased efficiency led to a swelling technocratic rhetoric in the Dutch government, with eventual strong spillover effects in the organisational structure of CFAs. Finally, a progressively conservative, nationalist and anti-globalist wave in Europe, especially The Netherlands¹⁹, drives away public support for development initiatives abroad and campaigns for spending money inside the still troublesome national borders.

The increasing narrowing of possibilities for more conflictual collective action within The Netherlands along the years has not automatically pushed CFAs towards more consensual and less politicised mainstream development. In spite of a profound internal re-evaluation process emerged as a consequence of the not so positive “Impact Study” during the 1990s, their relatively stable financial situation²⁰ up until the 2000s has allowed for several attempts of these organisations to try and strike a balance between the progressive perspective of officers, often with strong personal ties in target countries, and the institutional imperatives of accountability and provision of quantifiable results. Furthermore, the existence of previously established communication channels allowed for conditionalities to be negotiated among agencies and partners²¹.

The turn of the decade represent a major shift in terms of the space for alternative development in The Netherlands. On the one hand, the rise of the security agenda within the government has brought up much stricter conditionalities for the agencies to get funds and brought up a specific set of

policy decisions that overlooked the real needs of people (Sogge et al. 1996: 120). As a consequence, the study triggered a series of changes within CFAs.

¹⁹ If in global terms this conservative turn finds as a general concern the rise of a “new security agenda” (Fowler 2008), in The Netherlands the conservative turn draws upon the increasing concern with non-Western minorities in general, Muslims in particular. Events such as the assassination of the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn and the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh contribute to the spreading of this general fear.

²⁰ We can take ICCO’s numbers as an example. If on the 1990s the amount of resources they received from the Dutch government was X, their 2009 budget accounted for 131 million Euros.

²¹ As I will show later on, the interviews with Brazilian organization show a high regard of Dutch reforms related to the increase in efficiency. In a sense, it allowed for a rationalization of processes without, at first, compromising the capillarity and political orientation of the Brazilian counterparts.

countries that agencies should relate to. Furthermore, in 2002, the relationship between the four big co-financing agencies and the government has reached - according to Eveline Herfkens, development minister at the time - a point of “unsustainable consequences”, in which their monopoly over Dutch development assistance undermined any sort of improvement of their part (ICCO-FASE Forthcoming). Thirdly, a generational change can be observed in Dutch co-financing agencies as well as in the government, giving way to a more managerial intake towards development. According to one of the interviews made for this research²², the feeling of certain senior officers within organisations was that their views were being progressively marginalised, and more technocratic perspectives gained terrain even inside agencies. Words like “structural change”, “politics” and “capitalism” started to give way to more technical, less contentious terms such as “institutional development”, “governance” and “entrepreneurship”. Thus, if the conflictual dimension of policies in The Netherlands could have been regarded as progressively losing terrain ever since the Impact Study, it was increasingly clear that the political and social environment for that particular kind of claim has almost disappeared not only from the portfolios of the organisations, but from the minds of officers themselves.

I now turn to the opportunities and constraints for radicalism within Brazil. How has active citizenship come about in Brazil? Why have they decided to scale-up and raise funds abroad? How is the Dutch cooperation related to the organisational set up of those groups? Finally, what do they have to say about their role in democratic strengthening in Brazil and how has this become a noise in North-South dialogues?

²² Interview Pim Verhallen.

Chapter 3

Perspectives from the inside

This section is divided in two parts. The first one intends to identify the group of practices, beliefs, social relations and particular institutional analysis that mark the creation of a particular field of organisations self-proclaimed as centres, movements, NGOs, and more recently Active Citizenship Organisations, with their particular choices over time regarding their position with respect local groups, organisations and social movements. The following part relates to the second of the two sets of necessary relations of these organisations (Landim 2002), namely their relationship with co-financing agencies and international actors as a whole.

3.1 On the origins of NGOs as a field

The dynamics of contention that gave way to the rise of Active Citizenship Organisations stem from a polarisation and eventual rupture between the state and certain social groups midway through the 1960s. The 1964 military coup brought about a polarisation that held the relationship of the state with progressive strands of the Catholic Church and leftist leaning groups, impossible. Even though different from the more radically oriented, often guerrilla related movements emerging in the rural and urban areas that were actively pursued, religious and education movements also suffered from the complete rupture of institutional channels after the regime shift. Thus, their emergence is promoted not by an increasing connection to the state. Rather on the contrary, the seed of what is known as the Brazilian NGO field emerges as parallel to such structures, in internal dynamics inserted in distinct networks that soon reached the international level and would only join the state apparatus several decades later.

The political and social mobilisation around the years of the military coup were intense and have not stopped in spite of the repression of movements and dissidents of the instituted military regime. It is hard to account for the size and significance of these movements at that given moment, especially in

the beginning of the military regime. Informality and weak social ties (Granovetter 1983) play a major role in this process, given that even though resistance has unarguably started right after the coup, the military regime started off fiercely pursuing “subversives” in order to bring an alleged “stability” to the country. Thus, the movement was at first rather diffuse, given that networks of activists have been dismantled, brokers pursued and organisations put in illegality. Several activists have either fled the country or escaped to the countryside.

To different degrees and in a variety of forms, a vast array of groups ranging from more to less institutionalised, violent to peaceful, urban to rural, has emerged in order to counter the emergence of the anti-democratic regime. The resistance took many shapes, and one of them used education as an emancipatory tool for subaltern groups. A diffuse movement of popular education emerged from the link between fled militants - several already related to the Catholic Church in groups and movements such as the “Juventude Operária Cristã” - rural communities and religious missions. The latter accounts for the origins of the strand of resistance of this work. In spite of the engagement of activists and the attempts of groups to promote change, in fact they have only started to get substance in the beginning of the 1970s, as a consequence of the maturation of the relationships the aforementioned “centres” and the brokerage of international aid organisations linking the loosely connected activists spread over the national territory. This particular phenomenon relates directly not only to a rising international concern for the situation in Brazil (and in Latin America generally), but also due to the advocacy of fled activists in exile abroad.

Little had activists known that the set of organisations conflating missionary activity from the Catholic Church and leftist militancy founded at the time would later be known as a “new sociological reality in Latin America” (Fernandes 1985). The already fairly established network of entities that dedicated themselves to education related activities in a missionary fashion has turned towards a more politically leaning, emancipatory approach. However, the “at service” character of these often religion related groups remained

untouched. The issue of the institutional character of these organisations as a part of a bigger and growing movement was secondary in relation to the served target group or cause at stake, namely, the emancipation through education of subaltern groups. Thus, rather than actors in their own right, the “centros de educação” or “assessoria popular” brought along the idea that their role was temporary and instrumental, later to be appropriated by the dynamics of the social groups and movements they connected to (Landim 2002).

Along the years, the instrumental character of the education and emancipation movements has progressively lost ground to an increase in reach and in organisation. A common identity arose and a claim for a more active role in a society that was increasingly modernising and diversifying autonomously from the state started to make sense. Thus, their self-affirmation process entailed a double movement of both assuming their role as systemic rather than merely instrumental, as well as secular and autonomous from subaltern groups and the Catholic Church. The year of 1972 is emblematic in the building process of these loosely connected activities into “a movement” (Landim 2002). A small group of people connected to education and intervention projects decided to promote a meeting in order to evaluate the character and reach of these practices in Brazil. The responsibility of bringing people together was given to an international aid agency²³ worker that took charge of travelling around the country in order to get in touch with people linked to previously established social intervention projects. In a five-day meeting in a Catholic Church convent, participants reached the conclusion that the context claimed for space dedicated to jointly debate the work of these institutions within a more technical and professionalised framework. “NOVA – Nova Pesquisa e Assessoria em Educação”²⁴ – was founded as a consequence of the meeting, and is regarded as the “first future NGO” in Brazil (Landim 2002: 222).

²³ At the time, the International Aid Agencies supporting the meeting were the French CCFD (Comité Catholique Contre la Faim et pour le Développement), “Développement et Paix”, from Canada, and the Swiss World Council of Churches.

²⁴ NOVA - Research and Support in Education

Landim argues that this sort of founding myth of the NGO sector in Brazil is interesting inasmuch it carries along the constitutive elements of NGOs as a somewhat structured field: the creation of horizontal relation networks between certain agents of Brazilian society, the relationship with international (mostly) non-governmental organisations, and the direct connections with grassroots social groups. Along the 1970s, the organisations have built their autonomous field as their projects and works become increasingly more professionalised, technical and political at the same time. Their work drives further from the traditional private assistance in Brazil, regarded as imprisoning, and also from the church, through the strengthening of secularisation and autonomy and conflictual dimensions, perspectives at odds with more mainstream sectors of the church²⁵. Thus, we can see the shift of these networks of collective action from the loosely connected ties in a consensus coalition, to a “consensus movement” with stronger network ties. After the meeting in 1972, it is safe to say that the “conflictual element” is unveiled and personified. The state plays the role of antagonist and emancipatory democracy turns to be the main claim of a “social movement”.

The shift from the strong but informal network ties towards a sustained “movement” of conflictuous organisations comes only in the beginning of the 1980s, in the wave of the Brazilian Amnesty Law²⁶ and the return of thousands

²⁵ The dynamics of withering away from the church is in itself extremely complex. For further information please refer to Roelof (1988) and Neuhouser (1989). The point to be made here is that the gravity-centre of the movement has drifted from the Church, but not necessarily from Catholicism. The rise of liberation theology has managed to encompass both a Christian perspective and an autonomist intake to the projects. As one former priest working in the “centres” at the time mentioned in an interview to Leilah Landim, “look, we are not here to form a religious organization, we are here to make a popular organization” (Landim 2002: 227). Later on, several priests aligned to that particular strand of thought in the country were either excommunicated or retired themselves voluntarily. Most of them are still active figures in the Brazilian political scenario, such as Leonardo Boff, Frei Betto.

²⁶ The Brazilian Amnesty Law came into force in 1979, as a part of a slow and controlled distension of the military regime. Thus, in addition to the evident symptomatic effect of the increase of cadres in the struggle for democracy, it is also commonly seen as a clear signal that the military regime would not be able to control dissent - stemming from the parliament, the military, international community and civil society especially in urban areas - for much longer.

of exiles from abroad. In addition, the turn of the 1980s comes in reaction to the immersion of those technical and professional organisations in the dynamics of increasingly complex fields composed by a new emergent syndicalism, stronger social movements. At the same time that this particular shift in the political opportunity structure has represented the window for either the scaling up of previously existing or the creation of new ones²⁷. With funds flowing generously from abroad, it posed a challenge to them to the extent that their functions started to overlap with party and social movement organisations²⁸. As a consequence, a new wave of distinctions and self-affirmation needed to come in order to account for their survival as institutions with a specific role in Brazilian society. Borders needed to be set in relation to the various emergent movements and parties, which at one point have simply outgrown the organisations that have supported them from the very beginning. What kind of specific role should these assistant organisations have, given that their role as social promoters has been, at least at that particular moment, successful? What would be their niche in in this vibrant array of institutional fields composed churches, parties, unions, newly constituted government institutions, the constituent assembly²⁹, actors around which these organisations gravitate?

In an attempt to find an answer for these concerns, and in the quest for providing a meaning to their existence, these organisations dive into their own histories in order to identify the thread that connects them together³⁰. Interestingly enough, this quest is not performed only within their own national boundaries. Meetings, colloquia, publications and consultations take

²⁷ Most of the Active Citizenship Organisations have been created in this particular moment. Except for Fase, organisations created in 1961 (albeit with a very different purpose, much more oriented towards the traditional form of “*assistentialism*”. Inesc, 1979. Ibase, 1980. Polis, 1987.

²⁸ As an example, the Workers Party had a functioning think-tank, Wilson Pinheiro Institute (later to become Fundação Perseu Abramo), since at least 1984.

²⁹ The Constituent Assembly was setup in the Brazilian National Congress with the purpose of building the new constitution of 1988.

³⁰ The International Development Aid Field role in this regard is crucial. Later on this section, their function as international brokers, connecting the otherwise independent networks of activists and organisations worldwide will be further clarified.

place nationally and internationally. Along those processes, members realise that a meaning and a character has been built throughout the years. Similar histories, trajectories and repertoires emerge. There was a clear NGO identity convergence, with a non-negligible role of the international private aid field in its construction.

In addition to the complexities of the international context, the intricacies of national social dynamics forced the reassessment of the organisations' role as mediators in a field marked by democratisation and a consequent institutionalisation of movements. An NGO director interviewed by Leilah Landim in 1993 summarises this general assessment:

“the complexification of the popular civil society took us to a clear definition of the role of actors, leading us to bring back our own role, our identity as actors (...). The movements went forward, and our helper identity was withered. The approximation among NGOs has strengthened the perception that we were a political field, and to assume the NGO identity seemed the most favourable position (to take)” (Landim 2002: 21)³¹

From the popular education centres servicing the “*bases*”, groups and communities, going through the “centres for assistance and support”³², the organisations have embraced the identity of NGOs in the end of the 1980s. The denomination thus comes as a product of a long and complex process that brings back to the origins of their diffuse struggle in favour of a loosely agreed perspective of emancipation. It comes also as a strategic step in order to claim for an autonomous place within an increasingly complex societal field. Translating the concept of NGO indiscriminately to other contexts and circumstances thus demands the same effort of contextualisation in order to highlight the idiosyncrasies of a process that culminates circumstantially in the same epithet. NGO is a term that has international relevance and confers legitimacy to actors in a wide range of arenas. However, it adapts and acquire

³¹ Free translation from Portuguese.

³² In Portuguese, “*Centros de Assessoria e Apoio*”.

different meanings in relation to situational social dynamics. If it represented the “new” within Brazilian social dynamics at that moment, relatively independent from old structures and with no evident ambition to take on power, they’re comparative advantage has deteriorated along time, a process already started in the beginning of the 1990s.

3.2 The NGO boom and the relocation of identity: Active Citizenship Organisations

In the same way that the International Private Aid Field had been regarded as way out of the dilemma between an inefficient state and a socially insensitive market, the Brazilian policy field also have seen the emergence of a “third sector” with good eyes. In addition, the gathering of the main actors of the international NGO field in Rio for the Environment Summit of 1992 has showed the potential this kind of organisation had in steering social change and gathering attention. Thus, becoming non-governmental has become one major strategy for a wide array of not only social activists, but also for social entrepreneurs.

The government has also seen an interesting opportunity in promoting the rise of the Third Sector in Brazil. Their intake to the role and usefulness of NGOs was nonetheless much less aligned to the emancipatory self-perspective perpetrated by NGOs. If NGOs represented a vehicle for the expansion of a so-called participatory project (Dagnino et. al 2006), in which the state would become more and more permeable to citizen’s claims, the use of the participatory claim by the hegemonic neoliberal perspective in the governments of Fernando Collor de Mello and Fernando Henrique Cardoso was much more oriented the delegation of activities from the state to these organisations – regarded as service providers – in an outsourcing process that ended up re-signifying the original understanding behind participation and citizenship present in the 1988 constitution. Instead of relying on the public sphere as a space for the manifestation of conflict and eventual coordination, the state reforms in the 1990s have appropriated participation and citizenship as “de-politicised (concepts), neutral and apparently emptied of ideological

bias” (Abong 2007). Civil Society has ceased to be seen as an arena where conflicts were regulated, being regarded as a space for cooperation and setup of policies in *coordination* with the state. By emptying civil society of its political significance but providing it with a specific role, the state managed to absorb the rhetoric of participation, creating a “perverse confluence” (Dagnino 2002) that brought as a consequence a different understanding of the role of NGOs, and civil society as a whole, in political dynamics.

As a consequence of the 1992 Rio conference and the alternative that NGOs provided in outsourcing services and taking the burden off the state, the amount of resources dedicated to the Third Sector in the form of public funds have substantially increased during the decade, especially after the economic stabilisation and the setup of the general state framework in 1995³³. The conditions for the establishment of a so-called “third sector market” were set, and a new wave of NGO creation takes place in substantially different circumstances from the 1970s and 1980s, transforming not only the concept of NGO into an agent with no discernible substance apart from being “non-governmental”, but also the general understanding of participation and citizenship in Brazil.

In other words, if collective action networks in the Brazilian public sphere during the 1980s were mainly *conflictuous* in the sense of having de-politicisation and inequality as the main enemies, found not only in authoritarian vestiges within the state but also in society in general, the 1990s see the emergence of a less radicalised movement that brings *consensus* building at the centre. Thus, a particular vision that endows civil society with an active and crucial role, but nonetheless instrumental to a broader economic agenda - a combination of a

³³ According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in a survey conducted along with the Brazilian Association of NGOs and the Group of Institutes, Foundations and Enterprises (GIFE), 41% of the 338 thousand non-profit organisations in Brazil have been created during the 1990s. Furthermore, the average age of these organisations in 2005 is 12,3 years old (IBGE et al. 2005: 24). Thus, it would be reasonable to assume that there is a connection between the opening up the Brazilian government to outsource its service to a so-called Third Sector and the increase in numbers of non-profit organisations, commonly called NGOs in the context.

neoliberal and a participatory project - arises. NGOs therefore acted as a vehicle for the perpetration of a neoliberal project in Brazil. However, this field was already understood as much vaster than the set of institutions that founded the Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG) in 1991. While the Federal Constitution has set up participatory guidelines accounting for a strong and active participation of social movements, unions and NGOs, the management and State reform carried out throughout the 1990s promoted social shifts in another direction, also within the synergic rhetoric of participation, but with a fairly different (instrumental) conception of citizenship in mind.

The rise in power of the Workers Party with Lula in 2003 has not come along with substantial changes towards participatory enhancement on the grounds of a more inclusive and radically oriented polity. The reaction to the perverse confluence of the hegemony of a neoliberal project during the 12 years of Collor, Itamar Franco and Fernando Henrique Cardoso came with an attempt to restore the bureaucratic capabilities of the state without compromising its praised permeability. Thus, the state focus has shifted from regulator of services provided by third parties to executor of collectively created policies by means of the expansion of the network of councils and conferences in the local and national level. It is possible to identify, then, a shift in the approach of the two governments in relation to their strategies towards partnerships with civil society in general. It does not follow, however, that this shift has represented improvement, especially in terms of the legal framework for state-society relations and the de-instrumentalisation of participation and democracy in favour of more radical understandings of them.

As a result of this half-achieved dream and the outburst of the non-governmental sector in Brazil, a general sense of misplacement struck original NGOs. Once again, a sense of loss of identity started to take over, not as a consequence of the completion of the claim for citizenship as originally conceived, but as the result of the relative success of the claim for participation that diverted citizenship towards a different place. At the same time, the claims were heard and somehow furthered and absorbed by the state, but that there

was no sense of accomplishment, and no evidence of effective results. As a consequence, instead of acting out and engaging in promoting change in direct confrontation with the state, these original NGOs have entrenched themselves in their own world, with occasional contentions with the state mainly in terms of the legal framework reforms, participation in local, national councils and committees. In terms of their financial and organisational sustainability, these organisations relied upon another network, international cooperation.

Meanwhile, NGOs in Brazil were increasingly being regarded as a vehicle for money diversion and sponsoring of clientelistic practices. The number of scandals and corruption cases involving civil society organisations, usually related – often created by - to politicians is astounding, with a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPI)³⁴ created to investigate several charges of allegedly illegal transfers of money to civil society organisations, among which the Landless Workers Movement (MST).

In order to differentiate themselves from this bigger and bleaker universe, a re-assessment was needed, with fresh delimitations of scope and reach. The feeling of erosion of the concept of participation and citizenship, its colonization by not only neoliberalism, but also traditional political elites claimed for the invention of a new name in order to signify an old claim. In order to re-found citizenship in a radical fashion, these organisations needed once again to differentiate themselves from the “enlarged field of NGOs” and define themselves alternatively. Given the common perspectives in “social transformation”, “building of alternative models to development”, “anti-

³⁴ Commissions of inquiry are spaces created within the Brazilian National Congress aiming at investigating cases of corruption or misuse of public money. Often used with political purposes, it is a common mechanism used by opposition groups to bargain over political outcomes and affect public opinion. In the case of the CPI of NGOs, it has started off with strong media coverage and ended nearly 3 years later, with four demands of extension, with almost no attention. ABONG claims in a public note that it has been against the creation of the CPI from the beginning, given its clear attempt to “criminalise social movements and organisations that fight for deep changes in Brazilian society” (ABONG 2010 - Public note about the end of the Public Inquiry Commission on NGOs. Available at <http://www.abong.org.br/noticias.php?id=2576>)

capitalism”, “anti-patriarchy”, “radicalisation of democracy based on the tenets of equality, rights and diversity” and “valuing of politics as a space for active participation”³⁵, these organisations gather around the still loosely connected concept of Active Citizenship.

Along with the need for a re-assessment of their position within Brazilian society, NGOs saw themselves forced to address this situation as a consequence of the realisation that their main financial provider, namely International Private Aid Agencies, would withdraw from the country. The next section is dedicated to tell the story of the setup of this network, its evolution and its current disturbances. Later on, I will deal with the consequences of these perturbations.

³⁵ Terms and concepts present in a document circulated as the memory of the seminar of Grupo Pedras Negras, financed by Novib and dedicated to reflect upon the organisations’ position within the enlarged NGO field. Not published.

Chapter 4

The International Cooperation network

This section is dedicated to analyse and describe, first, the emergence and evolution of the Dutch Co-financing Agencies presence in Brazil and how this partnership has evolved to a point where it made no more sense for it to continue. Second, it draws some analysis given the likely imminent disappearing of one important node of a network that has been working uninterruptedly along the past 30 years, that is, the International Cooperation node.

4.1 Formation and evolution

The work of Dutch Co-financing agencies in Brazil has started as early as early as 1970 (Wils 1991)³⁶. Cebemo³⁷ was the first one to start working in the country, followed by ICCO and later on Novib. Usually organisations relied in the already set up network of catholic, protestant or grassroots groups in the country, and their approaches varied in terms of more solidarity-based projects and more secular and politically oriented behaviour. This is an important distinction and justification for not dealing more closely with Cordaid along this work. Even if the organisation have historically worked closely with a wide array of community based organisations and also NGOs, their portfolio traditionally revolved around solidarity rather than politics. Thus, ICCO and Novib emerge as the main international actors within the scope of this paper.

³⁶ Frits Wils, in the report commissioned by the Impact Study of 1991, states that even though relationships between Dutch missionaries working in Brazil, the institutional support only came to be in 1970, in partnerships established with the Catholic Church, namely the National Bishops Conference (CNBB) and CERIS, a project and research oriented organization connected with the conference.

³⁷ Later to become Balance – network composed by the fusion of Cebemo and Vastenactie - and then a part of Cordaid, an organization created from the merge of Balance, Mensen in Nood (Caritas Netherlands), Memisa Medicus Mundi and Vastenactie.

Collective action between Dutch co-financing agencies and Brazilian groups and organisations has evolved considerably along the decades, and its changing dynamics bear credit to the international structure, national circumstances in both countries as well as internal processes to the organisations themselves. The beginning of the relationship relates to the previously mentioned social dynamics favouring solidarity moves with a contentious dimension especially in terms of the promotion of democracy. Brazil, as several other countries in Latin America, was under a repressive and violent dictatorship. Thus, a connection was made possible between those willing to help and those who needed it. As a consequence, the collective action network set up in the beginning of the 1970s had a strong political character and a clear enemy: the repressive Brazilian government. Given the traits of informality of most of the ties among activists at the moment, this phase can be identified as possessing mainly a social movement dynamics, where actors shared the claim for democracy and human rights despite of their organisational affiliation (important, but not determinant).

It would be hard to conceive a Brazilian national scope democratic movement outside the parliament without the brokerage of international non-governmental organisations, and more specifically the Dutch. Through the use of the already set networks of the church, these organisations managed to infiltrate spaces and connect activists around the country. In addition, they provided activists with resources and helped setup meetings that served as benchmarks for the consolidation of the movement and later on for the establishment of the NGO field. Examples are various. The aforementioned meeting in 1972, for instance, in which loosely connected movements related to “*educação de base*” started to get a sense of common identity was only made possible by the interference of the international cooperation. However, the brokerage role played by international organisations at the moment was often part of one or two individual attempts to bring together people that were felt to be important given the particular circumstances, not the product of a carefully planned and consequential framework of action.

The 1979-82 ICCOs reverse consortia, in which unions, “advisory centres” and the newly founded Workers Party (PT) were brought together, somehow falls into the same category, but already signal a different approach from agencies mostly because of the different, more opened, political atmosphere in Brazil at the moment. The dense informal networks gain a formal character with the newly created “advisory centres” such as Ibase, Fase and Inesc³⁸, but the social movement aspect of the actions undertaken were still evident in terms of the need to push for democratic reforms in the country and the still unclear definitions and borders between a “movement” towards democracy.

When struggles for democracy and the overruling of the military regime finally came to a positive outcome midway through the 1980s, the civil society field in Brazil was still blurred by the vast number of organisations that did not have formal existence and did not know how to call themselves. The 1988 Novib meeting, also mentioned in the previous section where those “assistant organisations” finally acknowledged their common identity as Non-Governmental Organisations, represented a stepping stone inasmuch it provided Brazilian groups with the character that allowed them to be part of a global movement.

From that moment on, The “NGO sector” was more easily identified as actual intermediary organisations in the international aid chain. Dutch CFAs were already struggling to adapt to the new imperatives of effectiveness and efficiency that were doubtlessly harshened by the 1991 impact study, and the collective action dynamics between the organisations mainly took an organisational character rather than a movement one. However, if the organisational dimension was progressively being introduced, and imperatives of effectiveness and efficiency were increasingly gaining centrality, the previous ties among officers from both countries still had a shared sense of the need for democratic deepening assured the conflictual dimension of that particular network. Furthermore, these common perspectives allowed for the

³⁸ But also others such as Sos Corpo, Centro Luis Freire etc.

reinforcement of a shared set of interests through the existence of a variety of interactive moments within platforms and consortia.

According to De Kadt, the 1990s mark a shift in approach by Dutch CFAs, in which they assume a much more proactive role in the country (De Kadt 1997). At the same time, the increase in proactivity has been followed by an improvement of the communication mechanisms among partners. ICCO has increased the role of their “*Grupos de Apoio*”, alongside with the PAD (“*Processo de Articulação e Diálogo*”)³⁹. Novib, accordingly, set up the Support Systems, “*Sistemas de Apoio*”, in 1994 in order to strengthen its program in Institutional Development and Organisational Strengthening (IDOS). Thus, although with different structures, there was a common understanding in Dutch CFAs that the creation of such arenas would allow for better overall control and supervision as well as greater autonomy for partners in terms of decision-making at the local level.

Accordingly, Brazilian counterparts praised those shifts inasmuch as they helped to improve efficiency and enhance internal processes. The conditionalities and the search for indicators and concrete results pushed NGOs towards professionalization, without necessarily undermining their critical intake, at least in their first moments. In the interviews conducted in May 2011, Brazilian NGO officers recognised that those particular shifts have helped their managerial abilities and helped organisations to work more effectively⁴⁰. Although they only vaguely recognise a degree of “voluntarism” before a turn towards more professionalization, most of the interviews show that the introduction of management toolkits and the more systematic monitoring and evaluation of programmes was fruitful. The fears of loss of autonomy, co-optation and “instrumentalisation” of NGOs by both the state and markets, albeit present, have not directly affected the work of Brazilian organisations in the short run, mostly because they remained financially

³⁹ Initiative that brought together European protestant organisations and their counterparts in Brazil

⁴⁰ Interviews 1, 2 and 4.

independent from the state or the market⁴¹ and they had mechanisms of expressing dissent when needed through the effectively working platforms and consortia. Thus, in addition to the fruitful coordination effects originally intended for those platforms, they also served as a space to accommodate eventual contentions within the network. Besides, the platforms also permitted to align the nodes of the network around a common set of issues and objectives, thus not allowing the loss of their conflictual/radical dimension.

The third phase comes with the aforementioned generational shift within Dutch organisations and the conservative turn in Europe mentioned in the 2nd section. If the previous ties between officers in CFAs and NGOs in Brazil were effective in terms of buffering and adapting institutional changes in The Netherlands without greatly compromising projects taking place in Brazil, when more progressive views up north were finally overshadowed by a more technocratic approach inside organisations, consequence of the progressive retirement of older personnel, according to a former officer in ICCO⁴², the conflictual dimension of policies undertaken started to give way to more consensually based and technocratic approaches. What follows is a period of adjustment and intense struggle within the network. According to all interviews made, the tipping point where they posit that the relationship between organisations got from contentious but productive, to troublesome and difficult was the beginning of the 2000s.

The end of the platform in 2005 represents an inflexion point and a symptom of the changes taking place. According to one Brazilian organisation member⁴³, changes in Dutch staff pushed for the shifts in the approach of Novib towards Brazil and directly affected the quality of the relationship. This shift has largely undermined the quality of the communication between Novib and its Brazilian counterparts, given that since then, the interactions between

⁴¹ If the conditionalities for funding have shifted, the amount of money has remained stable along the 1990s. The substantial cuts in funding were only to be felt by the end of the decade, and more strongly throughout the 2000s.

⁴² Interview Pim Verhallen

⁴³ Interview José Moroni; Interview Taciana Gouveia

managers on both sides has become scarcer and differences in interpretation about processes seem to have expanded. According to one officer in Brazil, NGOs did not know who to talk to anymore if problems arose⁴⁴. Analytically, the termination of the platform represents the end of a space of negotiation within the network of Brazilian and Dutch NGOs, not only in the case of Novib and its counterparts, but also in relation to other organisations, considering that once the information within that particular node/arena has been created, it was spread out through the channels of the network as a whole. As a consequence, the loss of an arena for the manifestation of dissent and exchange of opinions has impeded it to be posed in a constructive fashion, giving thus way to internal/national perpetuation of poor analysis, poor communication, poorer policies and eventual complete misalignment of frames leading to a complete rupture.

The period around the beginning the 2000s up until now can be regarded as a move from collective action based on radicalism organisations to an attempt to move the main dynamics inside the network towards a more consensual, technocratic logic. The stalemate nowadays relates directly to that particular struggle stemming from this clash of perspectives. However, if the clashes in perspectives arise in the beginning of the decade, consequence not only of the noises in communication, but mostly as a result of a conservative and technocratic turn that severed conditionalities within The Netherlands for CFAs to get funded⁴⁵ and reduced the number of countries with which the country would cooperate.

Whereas Brazilian organisations claim the need for a re-invention of themselves as Active Citizenship Organisations, reinforcing their character as politicised and radical, Dutch Co-financing Agencies, as a consequence of the recent internal changes in Development Cooperation within national borders, are much more oriented towards the setup of a more consensual, mainstream set of policies aligned not only to a less politicised approach to development in

⁴⁴ Interview Taciana Gouveia

⁴⁵ As the statement by Minister van Ardenne in 2002 shows in the 2nd section.

general, but also a closer alignment to Dutch official foreign policy. That said, what alternatives might be available to Active Citizenship Organisations if they still want to pursue the radicalisation of democracy?

4.2 What now? The stalemate and the (lack of) alternatives to withdrawal

The withdrawal from Latin America, thus, is not a direct reflex of the disturbances in this network. According to the interviews conducted with Co-financing Agency's officers, it relates mostly to dynamics within Dutch national borders and organisations relating to the rise of a new agenda. Furthermore, it is also justified by a substantial increase in development indicators throughout the continent. In the case of Brazil, as one senior Novib officer states, it would make no sense to continue spending the increasingly scarce resources in a country that now has the 8th biggest economy in the world. However, given the remaining inequalities in the country, CFAs recognise the importance of a vibrant set of organisations that would push for such changes in the country. Consequently, if the possibility of financing Brazilian organisations is no longer possible, the phasing out process would need to be carried out in a way that would assure their sustainability in the long run.

Novib, in the process of trying to promote the least possible traumatic phasing out of the relationship with organisations, engaged in a series of negotiations not only with partner organisations in Brazil, but also with the Brazilian state. Thus, it invested in the creation of a group of organisations, the already mentioned *Grupo Pedras Negras*, aimed at thinking about the role of Oxfam International in Brazil, but inevitably related to the discussion about how to assure the sustainability of Brazilian Active Citizenship Organisations once the cooperation scheme came to an end.

At first, the shift would be made with the incorporation of IBASE into the Oxfam Network, thus becoming Oxfam Brazil. The organisation refused this invitation, and all the organisations present in GPN also came to understand that autonomy from international cooperation was an essential trait of these organisations, and therefore it would make no sense for any of them to become part of the Oxfam Network. In a sense, if the demise of the Novib

platform was symptomatic of the marginalisation of conflict collective action within CFAs, the refusal of GPN organisations to be part of a major international network of organisations serves as evidence that the relationship between Brazilian Active Citizenship Organisations and international cooperation was also misaligned in terms of perspectives. However, if GPN organisations were not interested in joining the Oxfam Network, it does not follow that the NGO sector as a whole has turned its back to that potential alliance.

Brazil now occupies a rather mixed position in terms of international development. It is at the same time emerging donor and recipient of aid flows (ODI, 2010), and it follows a trend present not only in Latin America, but in all emergent economies (The Economist 2011). The capability of the country to export development technologies in technical cooperation⁴⁶ also serves as supporting evidence that the country is self-sustainable in terms of its own development. As a consequence, some Brazilian activists read⁴⁷ the attempts of incorporation of Brazilian organisation in the Oxfam network as not just an effort to enhance the representativeness and legitimacy of the Oxfam family, but also connects to potential fundraising inside the country. If the GPN network has not allowed the expansion of the Oxfam network in Brazil, the choice of the NGO Vitae Civilis as the official organisation to be incorporated in the network supports the evaluation that a less radical, more consensual type of collective action is sought to being promoted in the country in a sort of win-win situation for Northern Agencies that profit not only in legitimacy, but also financially.

Vitae Civilis is an organisation founded in the late 80s, and got institutionalised in 1992. Even though it has connections with democratic struggles, it found its way on the public sphere within the field of environmentalism and sustainable development. Since the beginning, Vitae

⁴⁶ Even though this role is marginal – though increasingly growing - if compared, for instance, to money spend in international cooperation for humanitarian assistance and support for international organisations (ABC, 2010).

⁴⁷ Interview Taciana Gouveia; Interview José Moroni.

Civilis has been closely connected to debates concerning the Agenda 21, local sustainable development and water management. At the international level, in the climate change network, it actively participates in international environmental *fora*. In terms of their funding profile, it has great connections with the state, with private actors and also with private aid agencies. But more importantly, at the same time that it plays an active role in public arenas, it states as mission a rather all-encompassing and flexible concept of “human development”, a much less radical mission than “radicalisation of democracy” or “anti-capitalism” as stated by groups such as GPN. Given these characteristics, it fits as a very suitable partner and gateway for the prospection of resources in the country⁴⁸ and aligns itself more closely to the recent changes described in CFAs.

The question then turns to what kind of partners should Active Citizenship Organisations look for if they aim to keep this radical perspective of things. However interesting and potentially fruitful Brazil appears to be in terms of fundraising, the interviews undertaken with Brazilian Active Citizenship organisations show that the alleged prosperous environment reflect specificities worth mentioning. Even though it is true that the Brazilian private initiative is strong and willing to invest in the third sector, those investments are dictated by a corporate social responsibility doctrine in which policies are formatted in a way that is short in duration, clear in the results and “highly marketable”⁴⁹. Therefore, Brazil presents a highly rich atmosphere for investment, but in a narrow array of possibilities. All the organisations interviewed in this research have somehow tried to engage in partnerships with the private sector in Brazil, and now actively avoid it in spite of the constant search for partnerships on the companies’ parts⁵⁰. One of the interviewees state

⁴⁸ Even though interviews with Novib officers do not confirm explicitly the intention of the Oxfam network to fundraise in Brazil, it is safe to say that the country is highly regarded as a “potential” country for prospection of resources, given the increase in importance of its companies and the emerging field of philanthropy (Interview X).

⁴⁹ Interviews Rubens Born, José Moroni, Taciana Gouveia.

⁵⁰ Walmart is one of the private organizations that constantly harass organizations to take part on their corporate social responsibility projects and activities.

that the nature of the projects they develop are understood to pertain to two different worlds. According to the report released by the GIFE (2010)⁵¹, the three main areas of investment for private organisations are education, culture and environment, and most of the resources invested are managed by private foundations with little or no relation to NGOs or social movements. Moreover, private social investment tends to avoid sensitive topics such as advocacy and accountability towards the state. As the interviews have shown, there is an expected prevalence of private interests in when tensions emerge within social investments of this nature. Consequently, in order to access the funds provided by private social investment in Brazil, Active Citizenship Organisations would have to change substantially their project portfolio and embrace less contentious attitudes, engaging in “human development” instead of “social struggles”, for instance. However, that clearly compromises their original claim and *raison d’être*, which was precisely bridging the claims of underrepresented groups in society and the struggle for citizenship in an increasingly unequal and atomized social environment.

Provided that the private initiative does not represent a promising space for fundraising of the network around conflictual collective action in Brazil, another alternative suggested to cope with the consequences of the halt on funding was to take advantage of the growing state apparatus in Brazil more than willing to embrace participatory approaches and promoting “a country of all”⁵². The wide array of participatory technologies in Brazil, as well as capacitation programs oriented towards capacity building of local and national council members would make one to assume that the relationships between state and society in Brazil are conducive to the set-up of partnerships between non-governmental actors and bureaucrats, in a sort of synergy that would

⁵¹ Grupo de Institutos, Fundações e Empresas - a non-profit network which gathers organisations stemming from private companies and civil society. It releases bi-annual reports comprising all the activities of the private sector regarding Social Private Investment.

⁵² “Brasil, um país de todos” was the slogan of Lula’s government from 2003 until 2010, and was present in every official communication as a part of the federal government logo.

ideally use the social density of Active Citizenship Organizations and the resources of the Brazilian state.

In a meeting with Lula in 2007, Novib's director of projects has received the proposition to set up a co-financing scheme in Brazil similar to the Dutch one. Even with a massive investment in terms of time by the GPN, and the guarantee of one third of the investment to be provided by Novib, the attempt to create such co-financing system has not gone through. This is due in great part to the lack of a proper legal framework to regulate state-society relations. According to one of the members of GPN, the attempt to set this agenda inside the government was fruitless mostly because of the same political obstacle to set a proper legal apparatus ever since the unsatisfying law of OSCIPs⁵³.

Even in the eventual possibility of finding an institutional breach to install the co-financing scheme, the initiative would not be politically viable given the aforementioned tensions within Brazilian Civil Society. The regulation of state society synergies has shown strong tenacity along the years even with the changes in governments. The heterogeneity of Brazilian civil society (Abong 2010), in combination with the persistence of traditional political groups especially in the Brazilian legislative, has provided insurmountable obstacles in establishing a more suitable legal framework up to now. In addition, Active Citizenship Organisations members mention the different interests present in civil society with respect to the regulatory framework, particularly the conflicts between philanthropic associations, inherited to an old and traditional charity paradigm earning substantial funds from the state. Thus, along with perspective differences, strong material interests are behind the regulatory stalemate for NGOs in Brazil. As a consequence, the loose regulation and the weak setting up of responsibilities have failed to prevent the misuse of state resources and corruption, and thus a negative image of the third sector as a whole. Therefore, a co-financing system that would support radical intakes of participation and citizenship remain politically not viable in Brazil.

⁵³ Interview José Moroni

Final Remarks

This paper intended to show the progressive narrowing of possibilities of survival of a radical democratic project in Brazil. By applying an analytical framework inspired by recent developments on Social Movement Theory and its dialogues with collective action theory, it tried to unfold the dynamics behind the creation, evolution and downfall of a network centred in a particular claim: an understanding of citizenship that had radicalism as a normative guideline and conflict at the core of its project. In that sense, this paper had the purpose of tracking a particular claim along different contexts and circumstances. Thus, even though it dedicates part of its time in covering the story of a long lasting relationship that now faces substantial shifts, the objective of the paper was less far reaching.

The evolution of this claim goes as follows: if once this claim for radicalism arose strongly as a circumstance of an alignment of perspectives brought up by different national circumstances, creating a relationship based on a shared perspective and a strong prevalence of what Diani calls “social movement” dynamics, the success of this claim, attributed to both well succeeded strategies and structural shifts that allowed for the emergence of such a movement – in that case the Brazilian distension process - led to the formalization/founding of Civil Society Organisations. At that particular moment, we can see a “conflict coalition” as the main dynamics of collective action within the network, and citizenship within the agenda of democracy promotion as its particular claim.

Once the military regime gives way to the democratisation process, Brazilian counterparts felt the need to distinguish themselves in a context of an outburst of Civil Society Organisations. Consequently, the NGO field starts to gain existence as such in Brazil, and this represents the reaching of a phase in which a “conflict organisations” are in the centre of collective action in the country, having as claim of citizenship as deepening of democracy and participation. This is the peak of the claim for radicalism both in organisational and political terms.

From this particular point on, that is, the process started immediately after the Constitution of 1988 and the beginning of the actual implementation of the long struggled institutionalisation of participatory democracy in Brazil, the network around radical citizenship in Brazil starts to see its first fractures, a consequence of both internal restructurings of partner organisations in The Netherlands and the perverse confluence that led to a NGO boom in Brazil. However, the claim for stretching the boundaries and quality of democratic processes was still central in the network, consequence of the previous strong ties among practitioners and the spaces for negotiations of eventual contentions.

The beginning of the 2000s marks a new phase in the network, where the radical character of the practices can no longer be sustained, mostly a consequence of the generational shift within CFAs in The Netherlands, as well as of a conservative turn that directly affects Dutch foreign policy and the autonomy of Co-Financing Agencies. In addition, the phasing out of platforms and other arenas of contention in the network do not allow for conflict to be undertaken within the network itself, leading to a progressive detachment of organisations in both countries. This detachment, however, does not come along with a sudden cut in funding to NGOs in Brazil. That will only happen in the second half of the decade, when CFAs announce the phasing out of their projects in Brazil, with substantial change in the approach towards the country – such as is the case of Novib and the attempt to incorporate Brazilian Organisations in the Oxfam network -, or complete withdrawal, such as is the case of ICCO. From that moment on, the network for radical citizenship in Brazil loses one of its most important nodes, provided that International Cooperation – Dutch CFAs included - were responsible for the majority of funds for the sustainability of Brazilian NGOs. What follows then is the phasing out process, in which a network still tries to be maintained, but now along the lines of “consensual organisations”, thus relegating radicalism, at best, to the margins of projects.

The apparent choices Active Citizenship Organisations have do not seem to allow for the continuation of the radical project. Once the international

cooperation branch of this network has disappeared, the material underpinning that sustained collective action has faded, and no alternatives are envisioned on the short run, what should one expect about the future of the radical democratic project in Brazil?

So far, the prospects are unpromising. The private initiative is not willing to give funds for overtly political initiatives that have in its centre the criticism capitalism. The state, another apparent viable option, has its own agenda, and is unlikely to support institutions that, in their perspective, have substantially lost their legitimacy in advocating in favour of subalterns. Thus, Active Citizenship Organisations are now in a crossroads, in which a choice must be made between either remaining faithful to radicalism and embrace “Active Citizenship”, or choose to survive and go along with major trends in development that refuse radicalism and embrace politics and citizenship with a normative character that intends to ultimately suppress conflict, thus becoming one of the many “Citizenship Organisations”. Now, more than ever, these words seem irreconcilable.

Surely this is a rather pessimistic view of an environment that is much broader than the particular set of organisations of this work. The alternatives set up above must be seen more as extremes within which a wide range of combinations and alternatives can account for the reinvention of radicalism in different fashions. One of them, for instance, is the division of organisations into consultancies and active citizenship organisations, in which organisations would find their sustainability in the provision of services and consultancies that would end up financing a broader portfolio of actions. However, the accountability mechanisms are increasingly improving in terms of the control of resources, and conditionalities often highlight the constraint of not investing money in institutional sustainability.

Another potential shortcoming of this overly pessimistic intake is that it seems to overlook all the good work done by this network throughout the decades. If the projects undertaken and the struggles put forward were any fruitful, seeds of radicalism must be spread all over society, waiting to be activated or to activate themselves. Thus, an interesting future research agenda

is to search for these other *loci* of radicalism present in Brazilian society. If this is true, however, it does not counterbalance the loss of a particular network so well grounded and well connected with society and the state. Whether this is the case of a complete demise or the case for major institutional shifts but with the survival of the biggest organisations, the fact is that the downfall of Active Citizenship Organisations represent a major loss in terms the prospects for more radical intakes of politics to be set in the state's, as well as in society's, agenda.

Although this work is mainly interested in the evolution and eventual demise of radicalism in Brazil, it cannot help to relate to a broader debate revolving around normative understandings of development and the pathways that are being taken by global south countries in order to achieve their self-established ends. If Active Citizenship Organisations face a downturn in their history at present, it does not follow that the country itself is facing a lack of alternatives. In fact, this might be the moment in history where Brazil faces the widest array of possible choices to make, sitting in a comfortable economic position, with a capable bureaucracy and free from any substantial foreign intervention. Consequently, big decisions are about to be made, with far reaching consequences to society. Southern emerging economies are coming to the centre of the international development debate, and the discussion over their development paradigms thus come to the fore.

The decision regime is a dimension that permeates these other concerns, and it is not neutral in terms of what kind of development it aims at. When one thinks about the primacy of (agonistic) pluralism and active civic engagement in the decision making process of a country, one embraces an inherent alternative to development, one that privileges means over ends, and therefore aligns itself closer to currently heterodox understandings of how societies must evolve. The obstacles for the emergence of such option lead us “naturally” to an agenda the praises economic growth, trade surpluses and profit above all things. It is time to try and claim back the primacy of means in political decision regimes. In Brazil the prospects do not look promising. On the other hand, times are conducive to re-assessment, innovation and creativity. A time

to take a step back, look for new questions, also about ourselves and our practices, before we get to the answers.

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List of Interviews

Brazil

José Antônio Moroni – Participation Director. Inesc. Brasília. 11/05/11

Jorge Kayano – Coordinator Polis. São Paulo. 16/05/11.

Taciana Gouveia – Former Director of Abong. São Paulo. 17/05/11.

José Antônio Moroni. Participation Director. Inesc. São Paulo. 19/05/11

Rubens Born – Former Executive Director Vitae Civilis. São Paulo.
20/05/11.

Marcelo Cardoso – Executive Coordinator Vitae Civilis. São Paulo.
20/05/11.

Netherlands

Frits Wils – Consultant. The Hague. 23/06/11.

Pim Venrhallen – Former Head of ICCO Latin America Department.
Den Bosch. 18/07/11

Theo Bouma – Oxfam Novib Projects Director. The Hague. 17/06/11

Table 2 - Private Foundations and Non-Profit Associations (Year of Foundation)

Private Foundations and Non-Profit Associations (Year of Foundation)		
Year of Foundation	Number of Organisations	%
Total	338 162	100,00%
Until 1970	10 939	3,23%
1971 to 1980	33 408	9,88%
1981 to 1990	64 388	19,04%
1991 to 2000	140 261	41,48%
2001 to 2004	73 847	21,84%
2005	15 319	4,53%

Source: IBGE et al. 2005. As fundações Privadas e Associações Sem Fins Lucrativos no Brasil 2005

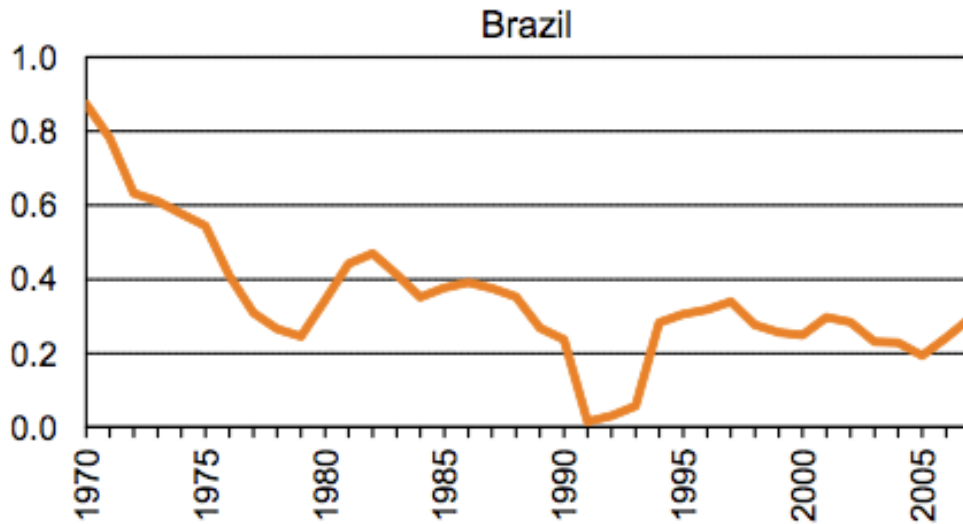
Table 3 - Comparison Financial Resources within Abong associates in 2000, 2003 and 2007 (% of organisations that relied in the alleged resource)

Comparison Financial Resources within Abong associates in 2000, 2003 and 2007 (% of organisations that relied in the alleged resource)			
	2000	2003	2007
International Cooperation and Solidarity	78,57%	78,71%	78,30%
Public Federal Resources	45,41%	36,63%	60,40%
Individual Donations	12,24%	38,61%	42,40%
Companies, Institutes and Private Foundations	32,65%	35,15%	41,50%
Commercialization of Products and Services	46,43%	42,57%	38,70%
Municipal Public Resources	22,45%	27,23%	30,20%
Associate's Contributions	26,02%	20,19%	29,20%
State Public Resources	32,65%	22,28%	28,30%
Multilateral and Bilateral Agencies	6,12%	10,40%	3,80%

Source: Abong, Panorama das Associadas. 2010.

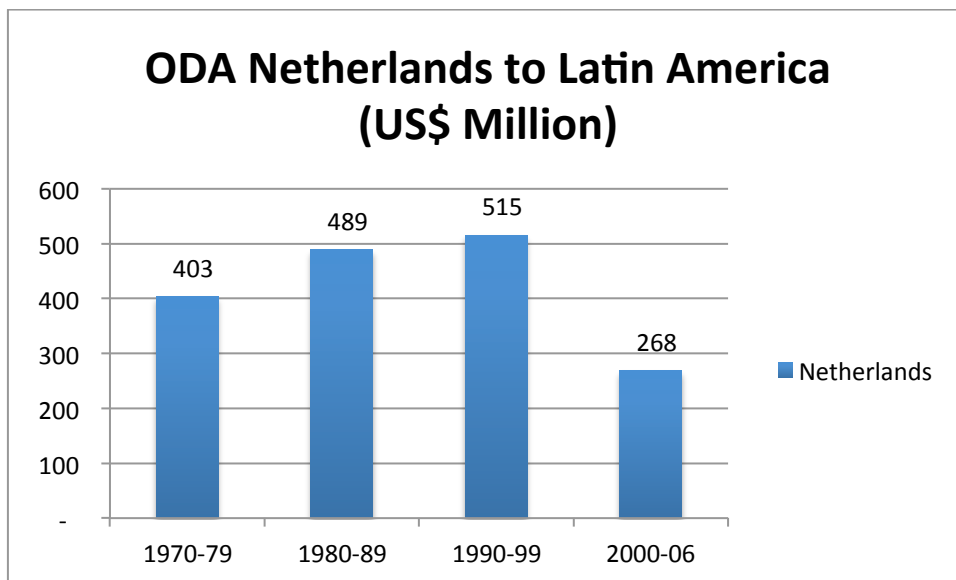
Figure 1 - Trends in aid to Brazil since 1970

USD billion, 2007 prices and exchange rates, 3-year average net ODA receipts



Source: Development Aid at a Glance 2008: Statistics by Region

Figure 2 - ODA Netherlands to Latin America



Source: Development Aid at a Glance 2008: Statistics by Region