

..... NGOs' ROLE AT 'THE END OF HISTORY': Norwegian Policy and the New Paradigm

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'Civil society' and NGOs are now at the centre of the development debate, while both were marginal or non-existent terms when development aid started. The aid system was established at the height of the anti-colonialist movement — in a very different ideological context from the 1990s. During that period there was an unprecedented trumpeting to promote the cause of the state: the European nation-building project was globalised, the dominating development theories were state-centred and for the first time a global institution was established; the state-centred UN system. Influenced by the fall of the Soviet empire, the crisis of the welfare state in the West, and fundamental questions raised about the legitimacy of many existing state-structures, theories have recently been formulated that express an assault on the state and a trumpeting of the 'civil society'. Just as in the 1950s and onwards almost all social scientists from all disciplines were not only concerned about the state, but became 'state activists' (Migdal 1988, 11), now social scientists from most disciplines seem to be discontent with only analysing what has been named 'civil society' and have become 'civil society' activists.

This article will identify some important features of this 'new paradigm', compare it to other ideas about 'civil society' and the role of NGOs, and analyse Norwegian policy on the issue. The aim is to understand how the NGO 'civil society'-state relationship is conceptualised in aid, in an historical period which influential political forces has termed the 'end of history'.¹

Foreign Affairs published recently an article which argued that the current proliferation of NGOs worldwide makes it possible to talk about a 'veritable associational revolution' at the global level, comparable in importance with the rise of the nation state in the nineteenth century (Salamon 1994). What is taking place is a fundamental redefinition of the relationship between society and state, where NGOs are playing a mobilising and catalysing role. I do not here intend to discuss this interpretation of actual world developments. The fact that such theories are put forth can, however, indicate the importance of NGOs, development NGOs and the NGO channel in present discussion about global development trends. To understand this language is therefore to understand a language which represents and influences important forces of global power and change.

The 'New Paradigm'

Historically the need for NGOs in development has been argued in different ways. In the 1960s, when the NGO channel was established in most donor countries, the NGOs were regarded as marginal actors complementing state-to-state aid. Their main task was to secure and deepen national support for aid in the donor countries (Smith 1990; Tvedt 1992). In the beginning of the 'NGO decade'², NGOs were primarily described as places where people through praxis learn about society and how to organise, commonly equated with grassroots movements, often populist or leftist in orientation. Documents on NGOs in development from the early 1980s focused on micro-level development and the need for empowerment of marginal groups. The thinking centred around loose concepts like strengthening of local capacities, grassroots participation and mobilisation (see for example OECD 1983). There was no clear idea to determine on what social level and to what extent this grassroots mobilisation would be effective for societal development at large. Emphasis was often put on local economic self-sufficiency and on projects aiming at the mobilisation of popular organisations like producers' societies, co-operatives, self-help groups etc., possibly supported by external donors or implemented by Northern NGOs. The more politicised version aimed at delinking rural producers from the capitalist world market, by mobilising and organising the local people for self-sufficiency.

In the 1980s the discussions about the 'crisis of the welfare state' in the West led to more interest in the private and third sector generally. In Britain under Thatcher and in the U.S. under Reagan the role of the state as such was questioned. Thatcher's slogan was 'against a paternalistic state and a dependent people' (Lowe 1993, 3, cited in Seip, 1994, 382). The logic of the market was evoked in the name of individual freedom as an alternative to public systems; and in the name of competition as a method and a technique to make the public system more efficient. In Norway the criticism was generally less ideological and more pragmatic; the welfare state required more funds than what the people/societies could afford. In all welfare states it became common to argue that a strong, expanding state created passive, recipient-oriented citizens. Others saw the problem as a question of community relations; the emphasis should be put on encouraging mutual, moral obligations within smaller social networks rather than on the individual's legal demands and rights *vis-à-vis* the state. The growth of the state administration and its interventions represented an oppressive force, contributing to an erosion of this local community network and its in-built support mechanisms.

While the above points relate to Western developments, two factors have been of special importance in placing these viewpoints at the core of international development debate in the 1990s. The collapse of the state-led, one-party systems and economies of Eastern Europe changed the way the 'civil society' and the NGOs' potentials were conceptualised and described. They could now be regarded as important actors within an alternative model of development, avoiding what was described as state-failures. The NGOs were no more sim-

ply 'gap-fillers' in service delivery programmes, they represented important elements in a new development paradigm, focusing on 'civil society', market mechanisms, etc. The restructuring policies of the World Bank and other influential donor institutions led to a planned reduction of the role of the state and increased space for NGOs, but not so much as representatives of a 'civil society' as service delivery agents in many developing countries. The combination of this political factor (the collapse of the Soviet Union) and the economic factor (World Bank's debt-service programmes) have combined to stimulate an unprecedented growth in the NGO channel worldwide and in most developing countries.

The triumphalism of adherents of the neoliberal paradigm and the enhanced power exercised by governments and agencies associated with it over recent years, may as yet not have created a 'New World Order', but it has established a 'New Policy Agenda'. A 'New Development Paradigm' has emerged. It is an amalgam term that describes a particular set of discursive propositions and policy recommendations. It is far from being a homogeneous discursive or political entity. It is supported by leading policy-makers in many donor states and strongly backed by influential international (and many big national) NGOs. Although intellectual roots and inspirations, aims and emphases may vary, there seems to have emerged among many actors a broad consensus, also outside the neo-liberalist camp, that former development strategies seriously underplayed historical experiences about the real and potential role of what now generally is termed 'civil society' and the organisations therein. The term 'new' implies the re-emergence or re-articulation of a different blend of development strategies, one, in fact, that in conventional parlance has put the celebration of the 'civil society' and the 'market mechanisms' as a central and distinctive feature. It suggests a far-reaching re-definition of relationships between state, society and external actors on a macro-political level. It is influenced by the new neo-liberalist ideology — the idea of the 'minimum state', with reductions in the tasks of the state and strengthening of the private sector through household, markets or voluntary organisations (Mishra 1989). The 'new paradigm' has an economic dimension (reliance on markets and private sector initiatives) and a political dimension. Democratisation is equated with strengthening the 'civil society', and reducing the role of the state. While support to NGOs in the early 1980s often was based on ideas that the state was too weak or too bureaucratised to mean anything to the poor, or that the state was controlled by anti-popular forces, the 'new paradigm' regards the relation between state and 'civil society' as a 'zero-sum' game.³ Former development strategies are rejected because they regarded, it is said, the state as the origin and cause of progress, while society, when thought of at all, was considered either an obstacle to or an object of development. The policy for NGOs is within this perspective part of an agenda that includes monetarism, supply-side economics, economic neo-liberalism and the public choice approach to economic analysis. It changes the boundaries of what is considered to be the legitimate extent of direct state involvement in both economy and social service provisions.⁴

The NGOs' role is thus to substitute the state in key aspects of societal development. It is a paradigm of competition and struggle between the society and the state, carrying a

major assault on the concept of the 'the state' itself and a widespread call for its roll-back. Aid should be geared towards 'civil society', defined as those uncoerced human groups and relational networks of consensual associations and empowerment that enable society to exist independently of the state. The NGOs are thus given a crucial role in creating a more just and democratic development. This 'paradigm' has rarely made it clear how NGOs and governments (and especially the former) are supposed to contribute to democratisation. This theory with its universal ambitions is given authority by pointing to historical experiences in the West. In the West voluntary associations played a formative role and represented a counterweight to the accumulation of excessive power by a political executive, opposite to what is described as the norm in developing countries. There the sequence of institution building has departed from the checked and balanced model in the West.⁵ Development and democracy are therefore dependent on building up a strong 'civil society' with strong organisations, now represented by development NGOs.

There are many reasons why the NGO channel has had a rapid growth. Within the perspective of the 'new paradigm', their success is a symbol of this re-assessment of the role of states and governments. Within the aid system the NGOs represent one of the most important political-ideological symbols and also forces in this reappraisal. Their very existence and proliferation are used as an argument in this global political-ideological struggle and thus affect state/society relations in fundamental ways in many developing countries. The relationship between civil society and the state, or between NGOs and state-to-state aid, is part of a debate that invokes basic ideological and political questions. It is interesting that very few NGOs with a different value orientation take part in this debate, partly, perhaps, because they all economically and institutionally thrive on the current popularity wave.

NGOs and civil society

To support and strengthen the 'civil society' has become a declared aim of most donors. Most often the connotations in aid documents seem to be human rights realisation, good governance, privatisation or de-regulation, participation, empowerment, public sector reform. It has become a core-term in the NGO literature over the last years and has become synonymous with positive and compatible values and ideas.

The aid discourse on 'civil society' is very much influenced by Western political thought and recent Western experiences, but does not explicitly place itself within this tradition. This seems to have contributed to a situation in which 'everybody' shares the same rhetoric, but without really agreeing about what to do. Norwegian NGOs may be a case in point: their traditional value orientation and profile are very different from that of the neo-liberal paradigm, but they are employing more or less the same NGO language, and although they may act differently they have not voiced opposition. The character of the 'new paradigm's' implicit definition of 'civil society' and its relations to the state may become clearer if compared to other descriptions and definitions. UNDP has recently proposed a definition of

'civil society' which on a general level reflects the influence of the 'new paradigm', but which distances itself from the most idealised and harmonised versions:

"Simply stated, civil society is, together with state and market, one of the three 'spheres' that interface in the making of democratic societies. Civil society is the sphere in which social movements become organised. The organisations of civil society, which represent many diverse and sometimes contradictory social interests are shaped to fit their social base, constituency, thematic orientations (e.g. environment, gender, human rights) and types of activity. They include church related groups, trade unions, cooperatives, service organisations, community groups and youth organisations, as well as academic institutions and others." (UNDP 1993, 1)

Before analysing this definition, it may be useful first to compare it with other definitions. The German philosopher Hegel drew a famous distinction between state and civil society in 1821, in his book *Philosophy of Right*. The civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) was regarded as a 'stage' in the dialectical development from the family to the state 'which contradicted the kind of ethical life found in the human micro-community in order to be itself contradicted and overcome (i.e. cancelled and preserved, aufgehoben) by the macro-community of the politically independent, sovereign nation'.⁶ The 'civil society' represented a stage in the development of a metaphysical idea, where the state was the final, end-station of human development. The role of the 'civil society' was to educate the community in moral norms, and in this way establish a basis for the ethics of the state and for the state's final victory.⁷

The term was reformulated by Marx, and he made it (the bourgeois society), and not the state the arena for political life and the source of political change, but not against the state, but in order to take over the state. The civic organisations would disappear after the revolution of the proletariat, as would the bourgeois society itself. The organisations were primarily regarded as reflections of economic interests, and had therefore no or little independent, intrinsic value. While Marx had a more reductionistic view than Hegel, both of them did — as do the present notions — exclude national or cultural characteristics from the notion of 'civil society'.

One of the most influential theories on the 'civil society' was formulated by the Italian marxist Antonio Gramsci whose revolutionary strategy relied on the concept of such an entity. He argued that in Italy and in other Western European countries the working class under communist leadership had a better chance for gaining hegemony within the civil society than within the national/political arena and when they had achieved that, they could conquer the political power of the state. For him 'civil society' was not identical to bourgeois society; their organisations had a relative autonomy, both in relation to the state and the market.

During the 1970s, French neo-marxists put forth another view, arguing that both market and state were totalitarian systems (Cohen & Arato 1992). This view, in this aspect

related to traditional anarchism, regarded the intrusive and oppressive role of the state as not being related to who governed the state, but to the institution as such. In order to strengthen and develop independent social activity the role of the state should be curtailed. In Germany, Jürgen Habermas talked about the state as a coloniser of the 'lifeworld'. The legitimacy of the state was thus questioned from many corners and in many social fields.

Another, and more recent theory of the role of the civil society, is represented by the new communitarianism. In 1993 Amitai Etzioni published *The Spirit of Community*. Here he put forth a programme for turning communitarianism into a political movement, placed between what he describes as the authoritarian, extreme right and the civil rights activists on the left. This in-between position was expressed in the slogan: 'Free individuals require a community'. Etzioni had in 1988 published *The Moral Dimension*, in which he criticised the economic model of the rational, interests-maximising individual, the right-based welfare-state policies and the erosion of local, social networks. In order to counteract a development with increased criminality, social unrest and poverty, the way out was seen as a combination of increased local, social responsibility and public resources, or to propagate the 'I & We' view, or the responsive community, which would give full status both to individuals and their shared union (Etzioni 1988, 8). The society was not seen as a constraint or as an opportunity, it was described as 'us' (ibid., 9). With Clinton's victory this communitarian movement acquired increased importance. Both Al Gore and Hillary Clinton declared themselves to be communitarianists, viewing individuals as members of social collectives rather than as free-standing beings as does the neoclassical paradigm. In Britain a similar trend is detectable; the new leader of the Labour Party, Tony Blair, is strongly influenced by the same communitarian movement: the free individual should be supported by a strong social network. Hence the slogan of social solidarity, instead of 'class solidarity', 'black solidarity', 'women solidarity' on the one hand and the stark individualism and market liberalism of the Tory party on the other hand.

The term 'civil society' has not been a 'universal' concept, like 'state', 'class', 'public sector', 'private sector' etc. The *Fontana Dictionary of Political Thought* does not have 'civil society' as an entry, which can indicate how new this term is in research and policy discussions. In Norway, the notion 'civil society' has not been common, be it in research, public debate or the aid context. The organisations have worked with the state rather than against it. The goal of the organisations has mainly been to increase the responsibility of the state — not to replace or supplement it on a permanent basis within a zero-sum game. Even the organisations opposing the state, such as the labour organisations of Thrane in the 1850s and Tranmal before and after World War I, did not wish to limit the role of the state — but rather to increase it, preferably by taking it over. The organisations have been more interested in furthering basically shared goals than in distancing themselves from the state.⁸ Thus, the idea that there is a civil society in need of defence — against the state — has not been prominent in Norway. The organisations have generally come to expect public support, and the state has naturally assumed this role. This state benevolence towards the organisations

has dominated ever since the establishment of The Royal Norwegian Society for Rural Development in the beginning of the 19th century. The Norwegian form of social and political integration has shaped the third sector, characterised as a state-oriented sector. The implied dichotomy of state versus society has played a marginal role in Norway's history.

The UNDP definition, quoted above, is clearly influenced by the American-Western tradition. It draws attention to the idea that 'civil society' consists of a broad range of organisations. It opposes therefore some of the rhetoric of the 'new paradigm'. It indicates that 'civil society' is not uniform. It can be regarded as a social space where interests and ideologies are confronting each other; religion against religion, ethnic group against ethnic group, capitalist against workers etc. UNDP says that the organisations 'sometimes' represent 'contradictory social interests'. Others would argue that it is safe to assert that there always are contradictory interests in society, but that the degree of conflict will vary. Civil society organisations are by UNDP defined as organisations caring for 'environment, gender, human rights', as UNDP indicates. But what about organisations of racists, authoritarians, fundamentalists and male-chauvinistic interests and groups? It is possible to argue that to strengthen the civil society is therefore never in itself identical with strengthening 'positive' or 'progressive' values. Its overall role depends on particular circumstances.

The rhetoric about 'civil society' assumes that to strengthen it implies to improve democracy, the individual's freedom and also the 'popular will'. This theory has not been universally substantiated. The strength of 'civil society' might increase in an implicit 'zero-sum' game, if the state is also weakened. The sphere where the state does not function may be enlarged, but there is no evidence to suggest that this automatically strengthens 'civil society'. This has been demonstrated in many developing countries as a result of the restructuring policies of the 1980s. To strengthen 'civil society' might mean that some groups, not seldom at the cost of others, are strengthened. If some groups become very strong compared to other groups (for example if development NGOs emerge as a much stronger force than traditional trade unions, leftist parties mobilising landless farmers, etc.) some people would argue that the potential for impacting government policies on crucial issues is reduced. This also implies that whether a particular strengthening of civil society is seen as 'good' or 'bad', depends on the observer's value orientations.

In dominating corners of the 'NGO world' the term has signified progressive, positive, unified, democratic ideas and interests. There are many examples showing that strengthening of NGOs has weakened the civil society. The special character of international NGOs and the international NGO channel and its resource transfers, may create artificial organisations or fundamentally affect the balance between internal forces in the society unintentionally (see Tvedt 1994a). Stronger NGOs may have emerged not as a result of a stronger civil society, but because of the vacuum left by a weaker, rolled-back state and the funds provided by stronger external donor states.

The strength of the new paradigm and the weakness of alternative development thinking (if not the demise of) have created a situation where the former's slogans have conquered the

NGO world, but without being substantiated by empirical research, be it in Africa or Asia. How useful is this term in parts of Africa? Is it fruitful in Zimbabwe, but not in Sudan or Rwanda? And what is the actual role of the development NGOs? To what extent will the NGO channel's character as an international social system affect the 'civil society' in different countries? Research on what NGOs actually have achieved, how they have functioned and how they have affected developments in the developing countries has come very short, indeed, not the least because the field has been so enmeshed in ideologies all the time since it emerged as a force in the beginning of the 1980s.⁹

NGOs, particularism and sectarian interests

NGOs and development NGOs are increasingly hailed as instruments in this redefinition of state-society relationships. Here only a few points considered relevant to the state/civil society dichotomy will be discussed.

The rolled-back state of the 'new paradigm' implies erosion of universalism in welfare provisions. 'Particularism' has often been pointed out as one of the historical and institutional weaknesses of the voluntary sector. As already J. S. Mills said in the last century: 'Charity almost always does too much or too little; it lavishes bounty in one place, and leaves people to starve in another' (Mills 1891, 585). Indeed, one of the prominent features of the development NGOs is their particularistic, group-oriented approach and strategy. The very character of the power and role of the organisations prevents them from guaranteeing the rights of the target group. The demand for guaranteed rights can only be addressed to the state, and recognition of such rights can only be the responsibility of the state. It is therefore appropriate to speak of 'philanthropic particularism' (for this term, see Salamon 1986) when discussing development NGOs in relation to the state and to the 'civil society'. Development NGOs are only a small, often a very small section of the organisational landscape in a society. They can therefore never aspire to talk on behalf of society or of 'the people', or of 'the popular organisations'. They always talk on behalf of some particular group-interests, no matter how broad and altruistically formulated their demands are.

NGOs' roles *vis-à-vis* a 'civil society' may be different in societies where there is some kind of common identity and where the rules of the games are basically accepted, and in societies where they may become vehicles for ethnic chauvinism or localism or for forces questioning not only the boundaries of the state but also of the 'civil society'. Comparative research in European history has shown that a multiplicity of development NGOs in itself is not a vehicle for achieving a democratic society or a sign of democratic improvement. It can be, but it does not have to be. Research in developing countries has not substantiated this theory either (Smith 1990, Tvedt 1994b). More important than the number of NGOs is their character, strength and mobilising capacities — and not least, their legitimacy, roots and value orientation in the society. One of the characteristics of the NGO channel is that external funding from a foreign state might become a liability and a serious Achilles' heel,

precisely because it questions the sustainability and support of the organisations in a given society. It might increase the number of organisations, without strengthening a people's capacity to organise itself.

Within the perspective of the dominating NGO language, the NGOs are generally regarded as being above ordinary social constraints and developments. The 'iron law' of organisations may be wrong, but within the NGO discourse it is as if the theory never had been formulated. It is also very important to analyse how the NGOs' role in 'civil society' is affected by the NGO leaders, who in some areas form a new and very influential social group, belonging to the middle class in general, but representing an elite in the society as compared to the marginalised areas and the poor. This new elite represents an organisation, often run in a paternalistic way, they are often on good terms with the leadership of the state and not the least, with the international donor community. Besides which, they are of course proficient in English and in the global jargon of the international NGO channel. But whereas historians on colonialism have grappled with the crucial question — how did colonialism affect the post-independence leadership of these states — the NGO discourse is mute on a similar issue: Will the NGO channel create *laissez-faire* entrepreneurs, citizens with community responsibility or strongmen with a particularistic outlook — in the long run?

In parts of the NGO community (not least in Norway) it is common to equate NGOs with popular forces, the poor etc. Another view holds that NGOs are representing elite interests (Arnove 1980; Coockson & Persell 1985), i.e. that the people-centred ideology is a sort of rhetorical camouflage. In this perspective charity is seen as a form of regressive redistribution, where the rich exchange domination for prestigious charity activities, an exchange which enhances their social status and thus maintains and legitimises existing power structures. Far from representing democratic ideals and the interests of the poor, development NGOs can be fronts for seeking personal gain. It is possible to interpret foreign and national NGO communities as representing elite interests, exchanging richness for legitimacy in a chain of interlinked dependencies, with the role and impact of basically maintaining *status quo*. Some argue that the multi-level NGO network contributes to the paralysis of social and political action. This has been a criticism of the successful service-providing NGOs in Bangladesh. Lowi (1969) and Olson (1982) argue that private associations have this effect in Western welfare states, i.e. that far from contributing to democracy they contribute to paralysis of political action. In analyses of the 'crises of the welfare state' it is said that states maintain legitimacy by delegating more and more functions to the non-profit voluntary sector. It is thus also possible to regard their growth and mushrooming as a sign of the crisis in legitimacy of the state. Since in developing countries it is not the state, but often the donors, that delegate services and therefore also power to the NGOs, the states' legitimacy might in some cases be maintained, but in other cases undermined without a parallel strengthening of the 'civil society'. The neo-liberal viewpoint may both be in line with or oppose this description of NGOs.

A 'State-centred' Theory

The image of the strong state in developing countries is a fundamental premise for the 'New Paradigm' in aid. It comes in large part from the rapid expansion of the state organisation in Latin America, Asia, and Africa during the last generation. In this period, state leaders in many countries have set to build a 'nation state' by trying to offer viable strategies to the populace at large and win people and ethnic groups over to the state's rules.¹⁰ The state-building elite in some places took over the colonial administrative system, enlarged it and built up impressive military power. One should not, however, equate a growing state apparatus and ability to get rid of opposition with state predominance.¹¹ This state politics has been characterised as patron-client politics, which has had devastating effects on institution-building. Since most theories agree that institutions are a key to increased political participation, it is a problem that many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, have relatively few effective institutional linkages between the rural, low-income farmers and the city elites. Another school has argued that the elite is unable to construct institutional arrangements that can induce support and reinforce rational behaviour. This has led to authoritarian politics, by Organsky called 'syncratic politics' (Organski 1965), a policy that is counterproductive both in strengthening the state, creating development or building up the society.

As there are different notions of the 'civil society' and its potential role, there are, of course, also different ideas about the role of states. The 'new paradigm' has mostly been developed in the West. There the history of state/society relations in important respects has taken on a different aspect than in many (far from all) developing countries. Not least, the omnipresence of a strong state is much more visible and real than in large parts of the so-called developing world. This is especially so in some of those countries where Western donors support NGOs (most of the Norwegian-supported NGOs are working in sub-Saharan Africa). Both the state-builders, the opposition, the human rights activists etc., face a very different world, but they, and the NGOs may learn to develop new combinations of policies from a detailed analysis of the many facets of European experiences and experiences in the developing countries. A question is whether the European sequence can simply be repeated in these new states.

Below I will briefly present a state-centred theory which may indicate some of the issues that a comprehensive NGO strategy has to take into account. As a contrast to the 'new paradigm' those aspects with relevance to the NGO issue will be presented. The main problem in developing countries in general is, according to this perspective, weak states rather than weak societies, i.e. that the emergence of stronger states is a precondition for functioning 'civil societies'.

This perspective will emphasise that most states in, for example, sub-Saharan Africa are still in a state-building phase. It is based on an argument that a main problem in securing development and democracy in the long run is that states manage to take control. Where states are at loggerheads with ethnic groups, kinship, particularistic oriented organisations,

strongmen or localised sentiments, neither living standards nor 'civil society' can improve in the long run.

States differ, as do of course NGOs and third sectors/ civil societies. They represent different elite interests and economic and political interests. This perspective is, however, less interested in the character of the state or the question of the autonomy of the state, than in the strength of the state. The strength of a state is seen as a continuum in which states vary in their ability to enforce the rules of the game. The states' social control has been described as the 'ability to appropriate resources for particular purposes and to regulate people's daily behaviour' (Migdal 1988, 261). Without a tremendous concentration of social control, strong states cannot develop, Migdal argues. The following is a short presentation of his theory.

Migdal argues that the rapid extension of the world market from the late 1850s through World War I led to a fundamental penetration of the world economy to all parts of society. This eroded existing foundations of social control. Migdal says that several factors worked against the creation of conditions for the emergence of strong states in the non-European world.¹² In Latin America and in societies that escaped formal colonial rule altogether, the alliance of European merchants and indigenous strongmen limited the ability of state leaders to concentrate social control. Key players in the expanding world economy channelled resources into societies selectively, allowing for the strengthening of 'caciques, effendis, caudillos, landlords, kulak-type rich peasants, moneylenders', and others. Through credit, access to land and water, protection, bullying, and numerous other means, 'strongmen' were able to hinder efficient state control across the societies, and the existing survival strategies could be maintained. British colonial policies favoured in many places the emergence of new or renewed strongmen, and often led to the re-establishment of fragmented social control. State rulers have thereafter faced the legacy of such fragmented social control which has continued to constrain state-building efforts. Once established, Migdal argues, 'a fragmented distribution of social control has been difficult to transform. State leaders could not easily dismiss conflicting sets of rules in society. Their central problem has been in political mobilization of the population' (Migdal 1988, 263).

States and 'strongmen'

The effects of society on the state — that is, 'the impact of fragmented social control and the consequent ruler's dilemma on political style and state preferences in distributing resources have been monumental' (Migdal 1988, 264). Fragmentation of social control and the difficulties in political mobilisation have led to a pathological style at 'the apex of the state'. It is this feature that has led to 'the politics of survival' characterising many elite groups in societies with weak states (Migdal 1988, 264). State leaders in such states have destroyed the very apparatus of the state that could have achieved the goal of mobilisation. The state leaders have used a variety of techniques to deal with major power centres in society, including co-optation and allocation of huge amounts of state resources to such centres.

At times state leaders have allowed power centres to grow, inside or outside the state organisation, because they have felt they could not do without the services these centres provide (for example, as Migdal mentions, security and wealth from industrial production, or, in our context, strong NGOs providing necessary services). The risks to the leaders have not been reduced, however, since allowing them to grow may, in the case of NGOs, imply furnishing others with a political platform. Such centres outside the state may supply, and often do supply, more highly valued services than does the state. The dilemma of the state leaders thus still remains. This results in vacillation and unpredictability in state policy toward powerful agencies and organisations inside and outside the state. State leaders have accommodated power centres, but they have also developed trade-offs with less powerful strongmen. In exchange for resources and minimal interference, strongmen have ensured a 'modicum of social stability'. The strongmen of the NGO world do not depend on state resources since they usually get funds from abroad. Due to the character of the resource transfer they are not forced to accommodate state leaders (although they often do), and due to their level of activities and support (from foreign donors, embassies, the UN system and the local people) they can capture lower levels of the state. Most NGOs do not have enough power to represent a serious form of fragmented social control. But as a group — or better, when conceived as collective agent for the 'new paradigm' — they often possess such power. This might make the strengthening of state power difficult, especially in societies where the state is not able, in spite of its apparent omnipresence, to make operative rules of the game for people in the society.

The whole issue of the state-society relations and the actual role of NGOs has become very ideologised — especially in the wake of the political and ideological triumph of the liberal democracies in the West. To assess the role of NGOs and the potentials of the 'civil society' etc., will require both in-depth case studies and broad comparative studies, not only examining formal aspects of organisations, but also focusing on empirical and actual state-society relations. In spite of the fact that people talk about an 'associational revolution' and that the NGO channel in aid has grown at a very rapid speed, the actual knowledge about what has taken place or is going on is very scanty indeed.

Norwegian Policy on NGOs

How does Norway's policy fit into this framework? The policy which aims at influencing relations between the state and the civil society by way of aid, in particular through NGOs, has been outlined in major reports to the Storting, particularly in 1984 (Report No. 36) and 1992 (Report No. 51). What roles were attributed to NGOs in these reports? And to what extent did the basic philosophy underpinning this policy — and the particular role of development assistance — change between 1984 and 1992? I will start with the 1984 Report.

The 1984 Report was of course formulated in a very different ideological context. The old state-centred theories had come under attack, but not so much because they were state-

centred but because the new states did not meet the expectations, and had to be reformed by popular, marginal strata in society. Report No. 36 (1984-85) put great emphasis on the role of organisations in creating democracy and economic development: Through the organisation of small groups society would be democratised, and the mobilisation of small groups to active participation was described as a prerequisite for a sound and self-sustaining process of development.

Consequently, popular participation through the support of NGOs was perceived as something more than just a method for the implementation of a project, although it represented that as well: It was underlined that the Government would give priority to popular participation in development work and choose 'forms of aid and implementing agencies' that are 'in accordance with this aim' (p. 34). In addition, this aim was described as a main strategy for the furtherance of democratic development. It was in the course of the work for the political and economical organisation of groups that internal structural changes might take place. The strategy was formulated as a general rule: 'If the groups organise in their work for their rights, this will be an element of democratisation in the internal affairs of a country' (p. 23).

This description of the role of organisations in furthering democracy was no duplication of the parliamentary, representative democracy in Norway. On the contrary, this process of democratisation had few traits common with the history of democracy in Norway, which at large can be said to have been a struggle for participation in the governing of the state. The development of democracy has been closely connected to the process of nation building and the entry of the various classes on the national political arena. As a result, democracy has been associated with forms of central government, and its development with the struggle of the citizens for the democratic right of influencing the state's decisions through negotiations in Parliament.

NGO and democracy in developing countries

The Report's approach to democracy in developing countries was of a totally different character. It was not concerned with state formations or national assemblies. This does not imply that it was unaffected by European experiences. The experience it referred to was, however, confined to the period after the emergence of the industrial state, a period in which the relation between state and civil society has been at the centre of attention in the West.

The strategy's perception of democracy was in many ways similar to a pluralist participatory model. This doctrine is tightly connected to the expansion of the industrial state in the early 20th century. The demand for participation might be viewed as a reaction to the increased power of and presence of the state. The aim was to defend various interest groups in society from excessive use of state power. The underlying ideology was based on a belief that the groups were inherently representative, as opposed to the nature of the state. The model as described in this Report — and which should be applicable for organisation build-

ing and democracy promotion in rural Africa where the state often is non-existent or often very weak — was a model that was developed in Europe as a response to industrialisation and a strong state.

The Report did not discuss whether there is a material, political or cultural basis for its strategy of democratisation in the developing countries. If the strategy is to work properly, it requires a national political arena where the state's authority manifests itself, and a local basis for this kind of popular participation and organisation. Obviously, political institutions are not mere reflections of socio-economic conditions. However, experience indicates that in order to play a role in society in the long run they must have some connection with the articulation of economic, political and social interests in the society itself. The question is whether the organisations that were mentioned as collaborating partners in this model of participation — 'agrarian and fishery cooperatives, community councils, trade and enterprise organisations, women's organisations, religious, social, and human rights movements, etc.' (p. 89) — will have the necessary local basis considering that they are established and/or kept alive by the financial and political support of the development aid organisations.

The way the target-oriented, poverty alleviation strategy was formulated assumed that the exposed groups, the poor and the women involved with traditional farming, would establish not only social groups, but formal groups of organised interests. Indirectly, it presupposed that the groups aimed at were actors in an internal conflict that more or less constituted not only the social system and the societal order, but also the groups' social and political consciousness. The strategy related to a different reality than many of the targeted groups lived under. Such groups do not primarily show affection to a social category, and they do not act as one either. The strategy does not reflect on the difference between organising people whose primary solidarity is oriented towards religious, ethnical, geographical or kinship and people who have developed consciousness about mutual social or economic interests.

While the Report is very critical towards the state and the existing elite, it is uncritical towards popular organisations. It does not distinguish between various phases of organisational development, such as mobilisation, bureaucratisation and demobilisation stages. Since aid is a kind of gift economy with, at least in local terms, enormous amounts of money involved, it manipulates local elite formations with projects and means, and new elites emerge through the newly created organisations on the basis of their control with the disbursed resources. What characterises the new elite that emerges through the aid projects? What historical role will it play? The local administrators whom the colonial powers educated became the new leaders in the newly independent states. What role will the emerging elite play in the work for national unity, consolidation and development? While the Report has critical remarks about the elite that grew up during colonial rule and immediately thereafter, it has no reflective attitude to the new elite established through aid and the support of local organisations. Social groups are created through aid work, often in contexts where the initiative comes from 'above' and abroad. Groups do not necessarily already exist beforehand —

indeed the Report states that they should be organised. Experiences so far indicate that the groups often dissolve after the aid workers depart, or the funds are stopped.

The role of the NGOs and the image of developing countries

Implicitly this model presupposes that there is a state to make demands on. This presupposition is baseless. Many states still fight to justify their supremacy, indeed their sovereignty over other institutions — especially ethnic groups and religious societies. The principle of state sovereignty over competing domestic institutions, which emerged in European state theory and political practice in the 18th century, is not accepted in all developing countries. Thus there is no consensus on what constitutes the national arena where political conflicts concerning the power of the state can take place. Influential groups in society may not only question a particular government's right to govern. They question the legitimacy of any government to rule, since the state formation itself is regarded as illegal or an artificial construction.

The model of participation in the Report does not limit itself to furtherance of the ideal of a balance between the state and the society through the modification of the state's power. 'Local participation', 'popular participation' and 'active mobilisation' are presented as a means for the establishment of counter-power for the 'furtherance of political and social demands' (p. 89), to 'disclose decisions that compromise the interests of the poor' (p. 89), and to strengthen their 'ability to further their interests' (p. 23). Hence, the objective is counter-power against the elite, the state and the interests of the bureaucracy. This popular participation is not seen as possible stages in a process of national integration and consolidation. In the Report, 'people' should be interpreted as contrary to the state, and the organisations as contrary to state authority. The popular organisations are also collectors of deviating attitudes and actions in relation to the state — but still, as we shall see, agencies for participation in relation to aid. The importance of creating national consensus concerning the basic rules of the game and the borders of the 'arena', recedes into the background compared to the conflict and counter-power perspective.

Most developing countries have not established the strong, well-developed bureaucracy and state apparatus that Norway has, i.e. they lack the ability to counter the partial and limited interests of interest organisations. Nonetheless, the Norwegian government furthered a policy that at home it warned against and feared the consequences of. Populist ideas were very popular in parts of the Norwegian population, particularly during the seventies. It is, however, surprising that the conservative coalition during the eighties promoted an extreme populist strategy in the developing countries. It emphasised popular participation rather than bureaucratic professionalisation. There is no trace of Weberian admiration of the national and state bureaucracies as institutions that can and should educate the self-interested people in 'moral behaviour' and as a potential negotiator and mediator between conflicting interests.

The Report did not discuss whether the poor in rural Africa or Asia might have demands, ideas or policy opinions conflicting with a sustainable, sound and just development of their society. Although the Norwegian population has experienced a rather long process of political socialisation, a high level of education and broad access to information, claims of 'lack of national responsibility' and 'group politics' are the Norwegian state's main arguments against interest organisations in Norway. In developing countries, where the discourse about common interests, either on a state- or a class-based level, is often undeveloped, the Norwegian state did not acknowledge that this problem exists.

To support the development of representative parliamentary democracy was not a priority objective in the Report. On the contrary, it encourages negligence of national assemblies and governments in order to enter into direct co-operation with organised interests. Thus organisations in society may be strengthened at the expense of representative democracy at the state level. As a general model this vision of democracy is incompatible with parliamentarism, which is *per se* indirect and representative. The perspective of the strategy was of course not against parliamentarism, rather the contrary, but the difficult and important relation between direct and indirect democracy was represented in such a way as to make direct democracy the most important method to democratise society.

It was 'primary democracy', and not the 'committee democracy' or representative democracy that at this time was presented as the Norwegian state's ideal for the developing countries. Little is said about aid to development of national institutions, and not a word about helping the economic and administrative problems of national assemblies. The general attitude indicates that the ideal lies close to Rousseau: The legitimate authority is the people's when assembled for deliberation. Where he talked about 'city state', the Report's focus was rural rather than urban, directed at the town rather than the city.

But — based on recent historical experience — under what conditions does a society have 'sufficient' participation in order to maintain a level of democracy without introducing sources of cleavage which will undermine both the cohesion of the society and the little democracy that exists? The belief that a very high level of participation is always good for democracy has proved to be invalid. The problem is much more complicated than the Report made it out to be, and therefore also the role of the NGOs. If the claim that lack of fundamental 'primary consensus' is one of Africa's most important problems is still appropriate, how could NGOs operate?

The role of the NGOs and the image of aid

Furthermore, the slogan 'popular participation' has an important limitation in relation to aid itself. 'Participation' means to take part in. In the Report this is implicitly defined as taking part in the donors' activities. The mobilisation of the population is necessary for the recipients to feel responsibility for the projects. The method is not intended to create counter-power, let alone is it indicated that the power of the donors shall be shared with, or taken

over by, the local people or the recipient state. The picture painted is a scenario of the aid administrators and the local population 'hand in hand' as a counter-power to the national bureaucracy and state administration. In consequence the Report allots the aid bureaucracy, as opposed to the national bureaucracy, solid attention as a party to the case rather than an impartial expert. The strategy is not against the state as such, since the donor state is benevolent but the recipient state less so, and therefore could and should be circumvented.

This model creates a problem of accountability that is left without consideration. It is generally acknowledged that a main problem in many developing countries' democratic evolution is to establish a political-administrative system and a political culture that make the bureaucracy and administration accountable to its people. The direct cooperation between the aid organisations and the local NGOs will easily create a structure that is characterised by lack of accountability. This collaboration between aid experts and bureaucrats that report to another country and local interest groups will make it difficult to establish the accountability of various actors in policy articulation and formation. The Report adopted a policy where formal responsibility might deviate radically from factual responsibility. The model did not consider that experts may stand on the outside of the formal government of the state, but at the same time govern.

It is claimed that an organisational society breeds the 'Organisational Man'. The Report seems to reflect this Organisational Man's recipe for democratisation and development, independent of whether the recipients live in an organisational society or in a 'traditional' rural village where formal organisations are not part of that tradition. The problem is not regarded as very relevant, because the aid channel will overcome these limitations, as time goes by.

To what extent were these perspectives carried into the 1990s? Report No. 51 (1991-92) paid much more attention to support of the state and state institutions. Only three and a half page in a document of 279 pages dealt specifically with NGO support, although the channel was responsible for more than 25 per cent of Norwegian bilateral aid. In many ways the Report represented a shift in orientation and emphasis in a more 'state-friendly' direction. On the other hand the Report argued that a challenge for the 1990s would be to handle the ongoing redistribution of tasks between the public and the private sector. The government declared that, in this situation, the 'NGOs may enter an even more important role' (p. 235). At the same time it was of great importance for this new role to be 'integrated into the authorities' administration'. The organisations in the co-operating countries are described as 'channels for support to increased pluralism, strengthened democracy and the defence of human rights'. It was underlined that 'local and regional organisations will be central in this respect'.

The role of Norwegian NGOs

The Report further stated that the government wished 'to underline the important and positive role' played by Norwegian NGOs in Norwegian aid, and that it would uphold 'an

orderly and close relationship' with them. Co-operation with the NGOs 'must build on their popular and voluntary character, at the same time as their integrity and peculiarity must be respected'. The 'complimentary' role that NGOs could play in relation to state-to-state aid and multilateral aid was emphasised. It also stressed that competence requirements expected of Norwegian aid in general, should apply to the NGOs as well.

The work of the NGOs 'must be related to our total aid to a singular country or a single region'. It was underlined as 'desirable' that the NGOs' work aimed at 'priority groups and sectors' in overall Norwegian aid strategy. The Government also welcomed the organisations as a 'more active part of the Norwegian aid cooperation, and that the NGOs should be a part of the dialogue in the planning and follow up of Norwegian aid'. The NGOs' role as what was called 'listening posts' (this has nothing to do with espionage, the term notwithstanding. The word describes the NGOs' potential role as organisations that can inform the public about living conditions in the 'South'). They are described as 'particularly valuable' when it comes to imparting knowledge, and in the promotion of positive attitudes among the Norwegian public concerning Norwegian development aid. There is reason to give the organisations a considerable part of the honour for the fact that a large majority of Norwegians have a positive attitude to aid (p. 236). Their 'considerable experience' is also underlined, and the Government invites them to put more emphasis on the transfer of experience and knowledge, and to involve in co-operation with each other.

NGOs represent also another channel for state money, because of their 'well-developed network in important disaster- and conflict-ridden'. The government underlines that it sees as positive that several organisations were 'developing strategies that entail a more integrated view of the two kinds of aid', because this would 'contribute in securing that acute emergency efforts are followed up by long term development programs, intended to prevent new catastrophes' (p. 239). The Norwegian NGOs are clearly not seen as adversaries in a zero-sum game, but as useful instruments in the donor state's policy, underlining the need for 'complementarity' in aid efforts (p. 235-236).

NGOs, states and the 'new paradigm'

Implicitly the Report distances itself from the 'new policy paradigm' although it has taken some crucial terms from it. Explicitly it rejects the general 'assault on the state' by focusing on the need for state building in developing countries, while at the same time employing a political language that borrows some fundamental concepts furthered by the 'new paradigm'. The Report underlines that it is important to assess the character of the organisations. It is argued that a 'rise in the tendency among the people to organise within society is a prerequisite for the evolution and consolidation of a democratic system. The indigenous NGOs in developing countries are particularly important in this respect'. But efforts should be geared towards 'strengthening a broad popular organisational activity' and support to NGOs is to be given on 'the condition that the organisations have a broad and solid basis in

the population'. The trade union movement is described as particularly important in 'defending human rights and in the development of democracy'. The development of NGOs will happen 'through a process that emerges from 'below', i.e. through the population itself'. However, it is most 'important that the authorities in developing countries stimulate this process. Not only must the freedom of opinion and expression, and the freedom to organise, be secured, but the public administration must develop a system that incorporates properly the opinions of the organisations in civil society' (p. 216).

On the other hand, the Norwegian government underlines the importance of the state in the recipient countries. The relations to the recipient government 'are essential in any kind development effort', and it 'has been an important principle for Norwegian aid that it shall be recipient-oriented. This means that such aid shall be included in the recipient country's plans and priorities' (this is historically not correct, but it underlines the change of direction). The Report criticises that 'donors have in many cases started to operate alongside the national administration', because it is important that the countries themselves 'take responsibility for their own development, both when it comes to planning and implementation. An integration of development efforts in the countries' own plans is the only way to secure that the recipient countries' authorities obtain control over their own development, and that they take responsibility for the choices that they make' (see p. 220-221).

Conclusion

The strategy in Report No. 36 (1984-85) was very 'pro-NGO' and gave them an important role in social, economic and political developments, but not as representatives of the 'civil society' against the state, but rather as representatives of the people, perhaps in opposition and perhaps not in opposition to the state. The important point was who and what these organisations represented, not that they formed part of a 'privatisation' policy, a strengthening of the 'third sector' or of a communitarian movement. It had few links to the 'new paradigm' of the 1990s.

Report No. 51 (1991-92) was influenced by the 'new paradigm' in some core terms. It distanced itself from the dichotomous perspective inherent in the 'new paradigm' and underlined the importance of strengthening the state and the state's responsibility of strengthening the organisations in a society. The Report has few linkages to the 'zero-sum' perspective inherent in the paradigm. The NGOs are described not as the saviours or as a leading force in an associational revolution but as important actors within a country strategy, formulated by the recipient government. At the same time NGOs are attributed a number of positive and general characteristics, as if they, as a group, have important comparative advantages to other sectors or institutions in society. At the same time the Report is clear, compared to the Report from 1984, about what is meant by good, supportable organisations.

The effect of Norwegian NGOs and the activities of the Norwegian state when it comes to influencing future organisational societies and cultures, should not be underestimated.

Norway is the main funder of hundreds of organisations in different developing countries, and some of these organisations play very important political, economic and religious roles in these societies. The NGO sector is probably one of the areas where the effect of aid is the more lasting, for better and for worse. The manner in which the organisational landscape developed, has played an important role in Norway's history. Assisted by aid, there has been an explosion in the establishment of organisations in many recipient countries. There is a growing gap between the actual role of the NGO channel in aid, and the attention it is given in official policy documents. The relation between these organisations and the state, the conception of group interest versus national interests, their role in establishing particular welfare systems, their importance for creating civic moral norms etc. will have consequences far into the future. The Norwegian strategy for this sector has been a mixture of different traditions — as it has been for most other donor countries as well.¹³ This analysis can demonstrate the difficulties a small donor state has had in formulating a comprehensive and operational strategy for this field, enmeshed in ideology as it has been and in a period when the NGOs are said to spearhead an associational revolution.

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NOTES

- 1 See, for example, Fukuyama, 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man*. The following quotation is one of the most clearly formulated arguments in support of directional history, ending in a liberal capitalist democracy, with a strong civil society and strong associations: 'Rather than a thousand shoots blossoming into as many different flowering plants, mankind will come to seem like a long wagon train strung out along a road. Some wagons will be pulling into town sharply and crisply, while others will be bivouacked back in the desert, or else stuck in ruts in the final pass over the mountains. Several wagons, attacked by Indians, will have been set aflame and abandoned along the way. There will be a few wagoners who, stunned by the battle, will have lost their sense of direction and are temporarily heading in the wrong direction, while one or two wagons will get tired of the journey and decide to set up permanent camps at particular points back along the road. Others will have found alternative routes to the main road, though they will discover that to get through the final mountain range they all must use the same pass. But the great majority of wagons will be making the slow journey into town, and most will eventually arrive there. The wagons are all similar to one another: while they are painted different colours and are constructed of varied materials, each has four wheels and is drawn by horses, while inside sits a family hoping and praying that their journey will be a safe one. The apparent differences in the

situations of the wagons will not be seen as reflecting permanent and necessary differences between the people riding in the wagons, but simply a product of their different positions along the road' (p. 338).

- 2 It is common in the literature to refer to the 1980s as the 'NGO decade'. The development has varied from country to country. In Bangladesh the most important NGOs were established and started working in the 1970s (after the war of independence with Pakistan in 1971 and the famine in 1974). In many countries in Africa the 1980s was the NGO decade, while the growth in Southern Sudan took place in the 1970s. In Nicaragua the explosion in number of NGOs came at the very end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. There will be some variations from country to country based on national traditions. But generally the 1980s saw a steep increase in donor funds for NGOs (in Norway funds channelled through NGOs rose from about 8 per cent of total bilateral aid in the 1970s to about 25 per cent in the 1980s), which affected the NGO landscape worldwide.
- 3 This theory does not explain actual patterns in how NGOs are funded. A survey undertaken during the study 'Private organizations as a channel for Norwegian aid. An analysis of developments in the relation between the Norwegian state and the third sector' (in Norwegian) showed that of 70 organisations, 6 received more than 90 per cent of the development budget from the state, 16 between 80 and 90 per cent, 17 between 60 and 80 per cent and 23 less than 40 per cent (see Tvedt 1992). This development is a general trend in all donor countries. In the developing countries the majority of the development NGOs are almost 100 per cent dependent on funding from external sources, mostly states. A strange zero-sum game, indeed! This dependency on the state has reportedly reduced the involvement of US NGOs in advocacy (Smith 1990). In Britain fears have been raised that this financial situation over time will foster reluctance in speaking out (Edwards and Hulme 1994).
- 4 The concern of the 'new paradigm' echoes some of the problems envisaged by Hobbes and Smith. When the public domain inaugurated by the social contract had been established, a problem arose: How could public power be controlled? Hobbes, in his *Leviathan* (1651), asked how the drive of self-interest (existing in a state of nature) could be harnessed for the common good. Hobbes argued that to overcome the aggressiveness of self-interest it was necessary to submit to an absolute authority. But if this absolute power was necessary, how to control the ruler or the government or the administration? This concern is echoed in the contemporary new paradigm's concern with the Big Brother state. As is well known, the British economist Adam Smith suggested a political and economic response to this problem; the market and its invisible hand (*Wealth of Nations* 1776). The market represented the counterweight to the authoritarian tendencies of the political system. The state must be restricted in scope and constrained in practice to ensure the maximum possible freedom for its citizens.
- 5 If history had provided such clear-cut lessons and this summary of African state-formation and the implicit assumptions about history of democracy in the West had not been highly questionable, then the 'new paradigm' could stand secure — on the shoulders of History. But there is no clear causal link between number and diversity of NGOs and democratic institutions in a society. The expansion of social welfare services in the 'West' required in general the active involvement of the state. An NGO-dominant paradigm might therefore be consistent with a high level of welfare provision or strengthened democracy, but this is no universal historical law. This view of the civil society has a corollary: NGOs will be described as sources of diversity and innovation; they con-

tribute to democracy, pluralism or peoples' empowerment by establishing centres of influence and institutions outside the state and provide instruments which deprived or disenfranchised groups may use.

- 6 This quotation is taken from Pelczynski (1984, 1). The literature on both Hegel, Marx, Gramsci, Etzioni and many other social theorists' views on the relation between state and civil society is very voluminous. The reasoning is often very complex, and in this short article it is impossible to do these theories justice. Here the point is not this history of ideas, but to draw up a comparative background for an analysis of present conceptualisations.
- 7 Hegel's view on the state was rather clear: 'The march of God in the world, that is what the state is', or 'It is the way of God in the world, that there should be the state' (from the addition to paragraph 258 of the *Philosophy of Right*). In his *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel, in his search for 'the ultimate design of the world' (Hegel 1956, 16), argues that "for Truth is the Unity of the universal and subjective Will; and the Universal is to be found in the State, in its laws, its universal and rational arrangements. The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on Earth" (Hegel 1956, 39). Fukuyama reinterprets Hegel to boost his argument and says that Hegel makes rather similar arguments as Tocqueville in support of 'mediating institutions', that is to say, he thought the modern state was too large and impersonal to serve as a meaningful source of identity, and therefore argued that society ought to be organised into *Stände*. The 'corporations' favoured by Hegel he says, were neither closed medieval guilds nor the mobilisational tools of the fascist state but rather associations organised spontaneously by civil society that served as a focus for community and virtue (Fukuyama 1992, 323).
- 8 Kuhnle and Selle (1990, 170) have characterised this by the term 'avhengig samordning eller binding' ('integrated dependency').
- 9 Tvedt (1994b) summarises some of this research tradition and presents new empirical data on the NGO scene in Norway, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, collected during Phase II of an evaluation of the Norwegian NGO channel.
- 10 Saul (1974) called these states state nations rather than nation states.
- 11 This situation has, of course, been noted by many scholars. Clapham (1985) described the states as both 'powerful' and 'weak' while Jackson and Rosberg (1982) discussed to what extent African states existed as empirical realities in many societies. Migdal's state-centred theory analyses the state more as an actor than a product or reflection of social forces, and based on a viewpoint that regards the state as fundamentally a weak actor to another extent than what did Clapham and Jackson and Rosberg.
- 12 From an empirical point of view it is highly questionable to describe states in general in the so-called Third World as weak. There are obvious exceptions to such generalisations, as, for example, Egypt and China. This does not make Migdal's theory less relevant in our connection, however. It captures important aspects of state-society relations in many countries, and more importantly here, it puts forth an alternative to current hegemonic perspectives and can thus make the content of this paradigm easier to identify.
- 13 See Smillie and Helmich (1993).

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