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# Assessing the Third Transition in Latin American Democratization

## Representational Regimes and Civil Society in Argentina and Brazil

*Elisabeth Jay Friedman and Kathryn Hochstetler*

In the last two decades most Latin American countries have made the political transition to formal liberal democracy. With a few notable exceptions, the threat of authoritarian reversals has diminished. But although democratic stability does not seem to be imminently imperiled, the quality of the democracies in the region often seems quite low. Instead of consolidated democracies, observers have found “hybrid” or “delegative” regimes, run on the principles of “neopopulism” and “neopluralism.”<sup>1</sup> In order to ensure another transition, the economic transition from state-led to market-driven economies, presidents are ignoring legislative and judicial branches, their own parties, and many interest groups. As a result of these developments, analysts are increasingly using the institutionalization of political interaction as the litmus test of democratic consolidation.

This article continues this concern with the quality of democracy and the institutionalization of political interactions but turns from issues of decision making to theorize about developments in the arena of representation, particularly civil society. Under pressure from the economic transition, traditional institutions of representation, including corporatist unions and political parties, seem to be in transformation, if not decay.<sup>2</sup> As these institutions lose their legitimacy, there is a search for others, such as social movements, nongovernmental organizations, and “associative networks,” to replace or augment them.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, analysts claim that an “institutionalized civil society” is an arena in which to assess the institutionalization and consolidation of regional democracies.<sup>4</sup> The ongoing transformation of civil society is a potential third transition in Latin America and other transitional regions, as important as the often concurrent and mutually constitutive political move from military to civilian rule and the economic turn to market-oriented economies.

This analysis departs from the classic definition of civil society as the realm of associative life separate from the family, the state, and the market.<sup>5</sup> Civil society is instantiated by actors like social movements, interest groups, nongovernmental organizations,

and other noneconomic, nonstate actors who are quite diverse in their modes of organization and their goals. As a group, they can be called civil society organizations. Defining the subject in this way allows more systematic investigation of the nature of their relations with state-based actors and political society, especially important in assessing the quality of democratization, and with economic actors like business associations and unions. To examine how developments in the civil society arena are linked to processes of democratization and economic liberalization, the conceptual territory of democratic representational regimes will first be defined and mapped out. A comparative case study of civil society in Argentina and Brazil will then assess the consequences of different representational regimes for the quality of Latin American democracies.

### **Representational Regimes**

Representation is important in any democratic regime because it relates the expressed preferences of the ruled with the choices and policies of the rulers. Civil society organizations, like parties and unions, help link citizens and leaders for the purpose of representation. The framework presented here could be used to assess the evolving nature of representation for the other linking actors as well, and a full understanding of current representational regimes in Argentina and Brazil would have to include such actors, although the characterization of the regime might be different for them. Due to limitations of space, it will be applied initially to a comparatively overlooked set of mediating actors, civil society organizations.

All of the four representational regimes discussed here are compatible with the minimal or electoral form of democracy, so democracy is one part of their names (see Table 1). The need for qualifiers indicates that electoral mechanisms alone do not account for different kinds of representation, and these qualifiers in turn substantially alter the quality of the democracy in question. The four representational regimes are categorized along two axes, by their dominant actor and their degree of institutionalization of civil society organizations' access to state actors. Representational mechanisms such as corporatism have long been classified by whether they are organized from the top down (within the state) or bottom up (within society). However, the

**Table 1** Four Representational Regimes

<b>Dominant Actor</b>	<b>Level of Institutionalization</b>	
	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Society</b>	Adversarial democracy	Deliberative democracy
<b>State</b>	Delegative democracy	Cooptive democracy

study of democratizing countries brings another consideration to the fore: the degree of institutionalization. Institutionalized mechanisms of representation reduce the levels of uncertainty and arbitrariness for potential participants.

Adversarial democracy is a representational regime that, while organized by societal actors from the bottom up, has relatively low levels of institutionalization.<sup>6</sup> Citizens are not controlled by state actors, but neither are they assured a regular channel of access to political decision making. In addition, the state does not protect weaker civil society actors against stronger ones. For example, representation through clientelistic networks depends largely on citizens' trade of political support for favors from highly placed elites, who are not institutionally bound to represent them. Both pluralism and neopluralism are placed in this category.<sup>7</sup>

While there are dangers associated with a lack of institutionalization when society is in charge, even less representation is ensured when low institutionalization is coupled with state control of state-society relations. Delegative democracy is a democracy in which state actors are selected democratically but run roughshod over other political institutions.<sup>8</sup> Of particular concern is executives' ability largely to ignore representative organizations, from interest groups to parties to the legislative branch itself. Only the interests of the people as perceived by top state actors are taken into account, often with only plebiscitary or even no consultation. Examples of delegative democracy include populist types of authority relations where mobilization from the top down is largely intended to support a leader and does not depend on institutional or autonomous forms of representation.<sup>9</sup>

High levels of state control coupled with high levels of institutionalized participation produce cooptive democracy. Citizens have access to government elites, but in ways established and maintained by those elites. Far from ignoring civil society, state actors seek to coopt or repress autonomous civil organization. Civil society actors may approach the state, but only by obeying its participatory rules. This representational regime shows clearly that even inclusive institutionalization in and of itself does not enhance the quality of democracy. In Latin America the classic example of such a cooptive democracy is state corporatism, where control and initiative over corporatist arrangements are exerted from the top down by the state.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, in deliberative democracy, state actors facilitate social and political dialogue that is broadly equitable and inclusive, that is regularly engaged in, and that carries weight in elite decision-making processes. Political theorists are currently delineating the preconditions and promise of such an approach.<sup>11</sup> Their efforts partially fill the gap left by the paucity of historical experiences with deliberative democracy, especially in Latin America. Modes of representation such as societal corporatism, prominent in western Europe and distinguished from state corporatism by its greater impetus from societal actors, approximate some aspects of deliberative democracy but fall short of the theoretical ideals.

How do these representational regimes condition civil society? An emerging con-

**Table 2** Dimensions of Civil Society Organizations in Four Representational Regimes

<b>Representational Regime</b>	<b>Adversarial democracy</b>	<b>Delegative democracy</b>	<b>Cooptive democracy</b>	<b>Deliberative democracy</b>
<b>Dimensions of CSOs</b>				
<b>Political opportunity structures</b>	Open; elite-privileging	Arbitrary; dependent on leader	Regulated by state or closed	Open; regular and egalitarian access
<b>Mobilizing structures</b>	Varied; competitive	Included: weak institutionalization Excluded: protest?	Included: institutionalized Excluded: protest	Varied; cooperative
<b>Frames</b>	Individualistic; issue-specific frames	Individualistic; issue-specific frames or anti-state master frame	Competing master frames: pro-state and anti-state	Shared master frames

sensus stresses the importance of three related factors in understanding the origin and development of social movements.<sup>12</sup> Political opportunities (and constraints) emerge in the relations between civil society organizations and external political actors and institutions. Civil society organizations organize their own activities through mobilizing structures. Mobilizing structures may range from friendship networks to highly structured permanent organizations. Finally, civil society organizations shape shared conceptions of problems and solutions and of their own identities through framing processes. Frames draw attention to the role of ideas and understandings in social movement mobilizations. Master frames lie at a higher level of abstraction and allow related movements to see themselves as part of a common struggle. Table 2 summarizes the relationship of these three dimensions of civil society organizations to the four representational regimes.

The political opportunity structure of adversarial democracy is characterized by a relative hands-off approach by state institutions and actors, who do not try to direct the number, type, and goals of civil society organizations. Interest mediation is more ad hoc than regularized. Thus, the political opportunities characterizing adversarial democracy will be more open to the influence of multiple civil society organizations, but may easily privilege those representing elite interests. With respect to mobilizing structures, adversarial democracy will not lead to predictable organizational structures among civil society actors. They might in fact foster competition rather than cooperation among different kinds of groups, given that there is a relatively open marketplace for the expression of interests. Not surprisingly, the orientation of mobilizing structures will often be

geared to the organizations' ability to generate the funds, training, and access necessary to achieve a high profile and garner political access. Finally, the framing processes of adversarial democracy will be focused more on the common points of reference of a specific set of groups than on a multisectoral vision. Adversarial democracy does not present an incentive structure for groups to develop shared identities that will bind them into stable networks. Therefore, civil society organizations will be less able to achieve goals beyond influence on specific policy issues.

In delegative democracy political opportunities will be arbitrary and will depend almost entirely on the actions of populist leaders. Individual relationships will be of considerable importance. Those ignored by political leaders will have little institutional recourse, whether political or judicial. The mobilizing structures under delegative democracy will differ for the sectors that leaders seek as supporters and those they exclude. Leaders may well direct resources toward supporters' organizations, though institutionalization will remain weak. The sectors that are excluded may seek alliances to protest their exclusion but will find organizational solutions to their predicament difficult to coordinate. Finally, the framing processes of civil society organizations under delegative democracy will repeat the pattern under adversarial democracy: temporary formulation of understandings around particular issues. However, given the exclusion common to many sectors, protest against arbitrary government may become a common frame.

In cooptive democracies the state will provide different kinds of access for different sectors of civil society, with participatory mechanisms established for some and repression for others. State actors will strongly control the scope and form of the access of even those civil society organizations that have direct access to decision making. These arrangements are generally institutionalized beyond the tenure of individual administrations. Cooptive democratic arrangements will favor different mobilizing structures for included and excluded civil society organizations. Special state resources and access for favored organizations will support relatively complex organizational structures, while the dependence on state resources orients the organizations to conventional opportunities for collective action. Among excluded groups, the rigidity and selective inclusion associated with cooptive democracy may spur new protest movements. Civil society organizations in cooptive democracy will develop shared frames stressing the central role of the state in framing collective problems and solutions. As in delegative democracy, excluded actors may also join together within a master frame in demanding broader participation, although their frames could also be fragmented and individualistic.

Finally, in deliberative democracy the political opportunity structure will be both systematically open to civil society organizations and susceptible to their reformulation. The state will also mediate the interactions of different sectors of civil society to assure their equitable and uncoerced participation. Mobilizing structures will vary

in deliberative democracy because many different kinds of participation will be assured through the open and equitable political opportunity structure. The voices of experts and less conventional kinds of political actors will be heard. Mobilizing structures will depend more on the preferences of the organizations themselves than on state-driven forms. Finally, framing processes are central to deliberative democracy. Continuous open dialogue that respects many kinds of participants will produce broader understandings of issues. Proponents of deliberative democracy argue that participants will be transformed through their dialogues and reoriented to thinking in collective rather than in individual terms.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

The concept of representational regime will be applied through a structured, focused comparison of two Latin American countries that have recently undergone the three transitions: Brazil and Argentina. Under Vargas and Perón, respectively, these two countries developed the representational regime of cooptive democracy known as state corporatism. In the 1960s their military governments heavily restricted democratic representation. Now their representational regimes are again changing. To assess this change, the three factors identified above as central to the origin and development of contemporary civil society organizations—political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes—will be analyzed.

The general approach of this article is historical institutionalism. In particular, it begins with the premise that institutions of interest representation structure the preferences and strategies of the actors within them. In addition, historical institutionalism assumes a stickiness of institutional arrangements that helps set trajectories for future political choices and arrangements. Thus, the past experiences of interest representation in these two cases should have an impact on current representational regimes, although “political choices, strategies, and contingencies remain central determinants of social and economic processes, and their meaning and consequences perhaps gain even greater relevance in a conjuncture of deep economic crises and transformations.”<sup>13</sup> Although many institutional approaches do not give adequate attention to the central framing processes that help nonstate actors interpret and construct their alternative courses of action, they are considered important here.

### **Brazil**

The Brazilian transition from military to civilian rule developed gradually and unevenly. Elections and parties were constrained throughout the military period.

Significant opposition victories began in 1974. Some elements of the transition are still incomplete, and the new democracy suffers from significant failings.<sup>14</sup> The economic transition also proceeded in fits and starts. Comprehensive neoliberal reforms began only in 1994. Not surprisingly, civil society also shows signs of both progress and regression, although the degree of institutionalization of state-society relations is high in Brazil compared to both Argentina and other aspects of Brazilian politics.

New political opportunities opened during the final years of the military regime. Politicians from the parties in opposition to the military were elected to subnational positions even before control of the national executive passed into civilian hands in 1985. From their new positions they extended participatory invitations to their former allies in civil society organizations. The Workers Party (PT) was especially committed to creating popular councils where civil society organizations could directly join in policymaking and implementation, but other parties also joined in the effort.<sup>15</sup> The 1988 national constitution and subsequent lower level constitutions required councils that included civil society organizations to orient policy in a variety of issue areas. By the 1990s the proliferation of councils led to what Alvarez calls "council democracy" in Brazil.<sup>16</sup> There are at least eighty-four national councils, and thousands of lower level councils across the country.<sup>17</sup> One estimate suggests that there are 1,167 councils on social issues operating in the state of São Paulo alone.<sup>18</sup> These councils are difficult to characterize as a group. Some are made up of appointed members, which often limits participation. Others allow civil society organizations to select their own representatives to the councils. On paper, many of the councils have significant decision-making and/or executive authority, which is shared unequally with their civil society participants. Civil society organizations have pushed to make the councils and their own roles within them more powerful and even share the leadership role with state actors in the councils on children and adolescents (Conanda) and social assistance (CNAS).<sup>19</sup>

Without doubt, Brazil's council democracy presents unusually extensive and institutionalized opportunities for political participation. Less clear is whether these institutionalized opportunities are best understood as instances of cooptive democracy or as rare examples of deliberative democracy. Hoping they would be the latter, civil society organizations in many cases requested such councils. Nonetheless, councils are currently arenas of struggle over exactly this issue. The struggle is especially intense in the social councils, where civil society organizations deliberately push an extensive agenda that runs directly counter to the neoliberal spending plans of the national executive. In this struggle state actors hold many advantages over civil society actors. They use their control over resources to punish and reward civil society organizations and simply try to ignore these fora if they will not rubber stamp the government's preferred policies.<sup>20</sup> Civil society organizations have responded by trying to mobilize their bases and by capitalizing on the basic representational advance of the councils. Even if governments do not want to listen, the



councils are a new space for civil society organizations to speak publicly and to deliberate with each other.

Other participatory opportunities have been more episodic. Large numbers of civil society organizations mobilized to influence the new federal constitution. Several large nongovernmental organizations set up operations in Brasília during the deliberations, coordinating a far-flung network of civil society organizations called the Plenary for Popular Participation in the Constituent Assembly. The Plenary for Popular Participation lost several early battles over the format of the constituent assembly but gained the opportunity to present popular amendments to the constitutional drafts.<sup>21</sup> Civil society organizations collected over six million signatures for amendments about economic inclusion and nearly five million for rights of various kinds.<sup>22</sup> Some of these proposals were included in the constitution, while other cherished amendments, like agrarian reform, were not. A similar opportunity for influence and debate emerged just a few years later, when Brazil hosted the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Civil society organizations again created a broad cross-sectoral coalition of over 1,200 organizations in the Forum of Brazilian Nongovernmental Organizations, which both developed their own civil society positions on the conference issues and tried to influence their government's positions. The Forum held eight national "encounters" to plan their participation before hosting a global nongovernmental forum parallel to the governmental summit.<sup>23</sup> Some of the same large organizations that helped to coordinate the Plenary for Popular Participation also sat on the national coordinating committee of the Forum and created an ongoing umbrella organization of nongovernmental organizations called the Brazilian Association of Nongovernmental Organizations (Abong) in 1991.<sup>24</sup> The constituent assembly and UNCED mobilizations were most similar to adversarial or even deliberative forums of interest representation; civil society organizations charted much of their own course for their participation.

During the first decade of civilian politics in Brazil opportunities for civil society organizations were scattered across the numerous councils and the occasional larger mobilizing opportunities. Government attention was focused primarily on the continuing economic crisis, and no national administration attempted to think more broadly about the emerging civil society organizations and their political role. Despite a series of economic shock packages, staggering inflation rates of nearly 2,500 percent in 1993 persisted alongside sluggish growth (-0.7 percent for 1981–1990 and 1.2 percent for 1991–1996), lower real wages from 1990 to 1995, and continuing unemployment.<sup>25</sup> Excluded from economic decision making and alarmed at rising levels of violence, a broad array of civil society organizations took to the streets in protest against increasing poverty and hunger. Ironically, an important new opportunity emerged for civil society organizations only after Fernando Henrique Cardoso, as finance minister, tamed inflation with Brazil's fullest neoliberal reforms in 1994, without addressing any of their other concerns.

Brazil's nongovernmental organizations have received major funding from international sources; \$400 million went annually to 5,500 Brazilian nongovernmental organizations in the mid 1990s. As Cardoso's new antiinflation policies succeeded, the dollar's value dropped sharply, and 86 percent of nongovernmental organizations had to cut employees and programs.<sup>26</sup> After Cardoso was elected president, Abong met with his transition team to discuss both short-term assistance and possible longer-term partnerships between nongovernmental organizations and the federal government.<sup>27</sup> Cardoso's team decided that the appropriate place for such ongoing discussions would be in a new agency within the executive branch called the Solidary Community (CS). The CS was in some ways the institutional successor of the previous president's National Council on Food Security. It was led by the first lady, Ruth Cardoso, as is typical of Latin American social programs, and is partly oriented toward the alleviation of poverty.

However, most Latin American first ladies are not anthropology professors and long-term scholars of social movements, as Ruth Cardoso is.<sup>28</sup> Her influence is most notable in the Council of the Solidary Community (CCS). The CCS took nearly eighteen months to settle on a mission, while civil society organizations, including Abong, heavily criticized the CS as a clientelistic effort to distract attention from the ways Cardoso's administration was gutting social programs.<sup>29</sup> The CCS eventually defined a three part mission: strengthening civil society, forming new social development partnerships between the state and civil society, and maintaining systematic high-level dialogue between governmental and nongovernmental actors on social issues.<sup>30</sup> A major mechanism was a series of discussions that tried to make concrete consensual proposals among invited governmental and nongovernmental participants. Eight of these political interlocutions (*interlocuções políticas*) have covered topics ranging from agrarian reform to integrated local development.<sup>31</sup> The CCS itself can be considered a major new opportunity for civil society organizations to participate in a deliberative problem-solving forum. Its defenders see it as wholly innovative and positive. They insist that the CCS is truly a space somewhere between the governmental and nongovernmental, that its "publicization" of problem solving is a necessary counterpart to neoliberal privatization, and that it breaks with all old conceptions of representation by inviting individual participants who do not represent their organizations, their sectors, or their governmental agencies but instead represent important ideas.<sup>32</sup> Few outside the CCS itself are prepared to grant it all these claims, but civil society organizations have been willing to engage in the political interlocutions with varying concrete results.

One recent result is a law that addresses some of the concerns of Abong and other civil society organizations about reshaping relations between them and the state. This law was largely drafted in a CCS interlocution process in 1997 and 1998, with about \$8 million in funding from the Inter-American Development Bank for early stages of the debates and the participation of various civil society actors.<sup>33</sup> The fed-

eral executive presented the law to the congress in July 1998, which passed it in March 1999. The law updates the previous legislation from the 1950s by creating a new legal category, the Civil Society Organization of Public Interest (OSCIP), and a new mechanism for funding such agencies, the partnership (*parceria*). Despite its lengthy and deliberative genesis, the law has been largely stillborn. A year after passage, while 192 organizations (a tiny fraction of those eligible) had applied for OSCIP status, only eighteen were approved.<sup>34</sup> The ministry of justice found statutory irregularities in most of the rejected organizations, partly because some clauses in the new legislation were inconsistent with the tax code.<sup>35</sup> In addition, no partnerships have been established, confirming the skepticism of civil society organizations about forthcoming resources. Federal economic agencies, in fact, resisted the creation of tax deductions for contributions to OSCIPs, despite the civil society organizations' requests, and consistently refused to guarantee funding for partnerships.<sup>36</sup> The Brazilian nonprofit sector received about 15.5 percent of its funding from the public sector in 1995, well below the global average of 40.1 percent.<sup>37</sup> In light of these problems, the small number of OSCIPs is not surprising.

Some opportunities consistent with adversarial democracy exist with respect to the national congress. Formally, there are few restrictions on lobbying and attempts to influence congress. Nonetheless, the weakness of both the party system and the congress itself have made them a secondary arena for most civil society organizations.<sup>38</sup> The congress has been especially weak in economic policymaking. Executives have made economic policy largely without it.

Finally, diverse international actors have both provided new opportunities for civil society organizations and channeled their activities in particular ways. The most direct impacts have come from the funding that international actors have given to Brazilian civil society organizations; 170 different international institutions provided 83 percent of the total funding to Abong's member associations in 1993.<sup>39</sup> Other impacts are less direct. They include the reorganization and renaming of recipient organizations as nongovernmental organizations rather than other kinds of social organizations<sup>40</sup> and the adoption of new substantive discourses, as in the turn by indigenous and rubbertapper associations in the Amazon to an environmental discourse in the 1980s.<sup>41</sup> International actors have also been an important support for many Brazilian civil society organization campaigns and mobilizations, on topics ranging from the Amazon to human rights to street children.

Nongovernmental organizations have become an important mobilizing structure for civil society organizations since 1985. A leading Brazilian scholar (and employee) of nongovernmental organizations, Leilah Landim, characterizes them as "a group of the most modern and recent organizations in our history, professionalized and secular, where world-views and activities go in the direction of promoting citizenship, equality, and democracy."<sup>42</sup> Many definitions of nongovernmental organizations stress only their

professional and organizational qualities. In contrast to social movements, they are less spontaneous and tend to more conventional and apolitical kinds of participation, based on special skills and expertise. Brazilian nongovernmental organizations, however, tend to be more engaged with frankly political and unconventional organizations and to participate more in protest mobilizations than their counterparts in other countries such as Argentina. In Brazil the same broad and diverse coalition that mobilized to lobby professionally at the constituent assembly and the UNCED conference also organized a million people to march for the impeachment of president Collor in 1993 and then launched a large campaign against hunger and violence.<sup>43</sup>

More traditional social movements also continue in large numbers as part of the mobilizing structure. They have lost some visibility with the rise of nongovernmental organizations but, as Sonia Alvarez notes, they are always there for an observer who knows where to look for them and are as active as ever, with smaller demonstrations, numerous gatherings, and clear positions on the issues of the day.<sup>44</sup> Because of their precarious organizational structure, they often can not move quickly and expertly enough to compete with nongovernmental organizations for state-defined opportunities. But they have been a critical part of the civil society organization networks in Brazil since the 1970s, swelling the numbers for protests and lobbying, contributing ideas, and pursuing their self-defined ends. A few social movements, notably the Landless Movement (MST), have played even more visible roles, protesting ongoing inequality in land ownership and the neoliberal state's economic agenda.

For Brazilian civil society organizations, the mobilizing frame since 1985 has been citizenship.<sup>45</sup> This master frame goes well beyond the political meaning of citizenship to social and economic inclusion as central indicators of its presence. Citizenship, as used by Brazilian civil society organizations, is a social justice rights claim. Civil society organizations claim citizenship for themselves, and they use their access to the political system to push for citizenship for groups that continue to be excluded. This frame has proven to be remarkably adaptable, motivating all of the mobilizations discussed above. First articulated during the constituent assembly mobilizations which marked the political transition, this conception of citizenship was equally appropriate for civil society's responses to the second, economic transition.<sup>46</sup> The antihunger campaigns of 1993 and 1994 called themselves Action of Citizenship against Hunger, Misery and for Life. The frame has also helped establish links to a part of the business community that is committed to both economic prosperity and social justice. The citizenship frame is obviously both broad and compelling enough to sustain national links within civil society over quite long periods of time. As the concept is defined in Brazil, it also necessarily links all three sectors: state, economy, and civil society. It is a deliberative democracy frame that can not easily be turned to supporting state control over representation, since its emphasis is on equitable participation and inclusion.

## **Argentina**

The Argentine transition to democracy happened much faster than the Brazilian. The authoritarian “dirty war” (1976–1983), in which tens of thousands of Argentines were killed or disappeared, ended after the external shock of Argentine military defeat in the Falkland/Malvinas war galvanized the opposition in the early 1980s.<sup>47</sup> The October 1983 elections heralded the end of the military dictatorship. A turnover in power from one civilian government to another took place in the second national election in 1989, though somewhat ahead of schedule. Radical Party leader Raúl Alfonsín resigned six months before the end of his term because of his failure to curb hyperinflation.<sup>48</sup> In response, Peronist Carlos Menem began neoliberal economic reform upon taking office. Although there was a time lag between the political and economic transitions, the third transition of civil society had a rocky start before the neoliberal transformation and has been deeply affected by it. The degree of institutionalization of state-society relations today, while evolving, is relatively low.

Social movement activity, particularly of the human rights groups that spearheaded the opposition to authoritarianism, marked the political transition of the 1980s. Whereas the rejected Peronist presidential candidate had ties to the military, the winning Radical candidate, Alfonsín, explicitly affirmed human rights and rejected the military’s attempt to declare a self-amnesty.<sup>49</sup> In a weighty symbolic move, he adopted the slogan “we are life” from the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the most famous of the human rights groups that fought against the military regime.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the transition was guided by a human rights frame developed by the most symbolically powerful element of the opposition.

Human rights organizations pressed the new democratic regime to address its central claims for the rule of law and justice.<sup>51</sup> A civilian commission was established to look into human rights violations. Eventually, nine members of the military junta were tried; five were found guilty; and two were imprisoned for life. All others were absolved through military trials. Despite enormous protests, the government passed the final stop and due obedience laws to restrict trials to only the highest-ranking officers by mid 1987.<sup>52</sup> The threat of military rebellion continued to affect the opportunities extended to the human rights movement. National and international protests notwithstanding, Menem issued a general pardon in 1990.

The impact of a political opportunity structure increasingly closed to the demands of the human rights movement was destructive. Failing to achieve its central goals, the movement split over whether to work in or outside of the system.<sup>53</sup> The mothers themselves divided, particularly over the issue of identifying cadavers and abducted grandchildren.<sup>54</sup> The organizational strength of other civil society organizations was sapped by the growing economic crisis.<sup>55</sup> Participation in civil society organizations declined from 35 to 19 percent of the adult population between 1984 and 1991.<sup>56</sup>

The economic transition heralded a new phase in civil society organizing. The economic reforms started in 1989 and crystallized in the convertibility plan of 1991 were focused on definitively opening the internal market to private investment and promoting exports.<sup>57</sup> They called for reduction in state support for economic development and social welfare. Supportive political reforms, granting the president more decree power and promoting decentralization, were also included. Although reducing state involvement in economic (and political) life could be seen as providing opportunities consistent with adversarial democracy, executive power and decentralization have often produced delegative results, even after Menem's *decretismo* gave way to Radical president Fernando de la Rúa's more conciliatory attitude.<sup>58</sup> In particular, relations between civil society organizations and the state seem to depend more on the whims of administrations than on institutionalized frameworks. However, the response of the judiciary to the demands of civil society organizations, particularly in recent human rights cases, shows that some degree of institutionalized deliberation may be evolving. Such opportunities can be seen in several examples.

A subsecretariat for human rights, part of the ministry of the interior, was created in 1984. It has collaborated productively with particular human rights groups.<sup>59</sup> But under Menem's watch it switched from the investigation of specific violations to the promotion of rights education. This more hands-off approach was reinforced by decentralized (provincial) state contact with civil society organizations.

Menem also created the National Women's Council (CNM), upgrading the previous national women's agency, in 1992. Its mandate is to oversee the national fulfillment of the U.N. Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to promote public policy to ensure gender equality. However, during Menem's administration the CNM had strained relations with feminist civil society organizations, particularly due to the CNM's support for the Catholic church's position on reproductive rights. Some nongovernmental organizations claimed that the CNM channeled grant monies from international institutions only to government supporters.<sup>60</sup> With the change of administration to de la Rúa, the CNM was almost closed. After supporters lobbied hard, it was reinstated, though with a shrunken budget from overall administrative reductions. New leaders prioritized links with civil society organizations.

In 1995 an executive branch office was established to mediate between civil society organizations and the state. The National Center for Community Organizations (CENOC) began as part of the Presidency's Secretariat for Social Development. Its purpose is to help civil society organizations play a greater role in the development of social policy. Its methods include the articulation of links among the state, civil society, and the market and the promotion of civil society organization networking and development. One of its central tasks is to keep a data base of organizations. Although it helps civil society organizations connect with funders, the former direc-

tor of CENOC made clear that it deliberately avoided compulsory registration or distribution of state monies to avoid the possibility of clientelism.<sup>61</sup> With the change of administration, CENOC's budget was cut, and a new director without a civil society background was appointed. As a result of the confusion in CENOC's shifting mandate, the provincial network of nongovernmental organizations felt cut off from the capital.<sup>62</sup>

Although in a similar institutional position, CENOC differs from the Brazilian CS in two crucial ways. First, it was established not through negotiations with civil society organizations, but at the suggestion of the wife of the then head of the Secretariat for Social Development. Its uncertain fate may be due to the top-down nature of its creation. Second, it has not made state-civil society dialogues a key part of its program. It has served more as an information conduit for civil society organizations.

Another opportunity on the legislative end was the Subcommittee on Nongovernmental Organizations, subsequently integrated into the lower chamber's Commission of Mutual Societies, Cooperatives, and Nongovernmental Organizations. It was started in 1998 by Peronist deputy Mario Cafiero, due again not to civil society pressure but to his recognition of the growth of the civil society organization sector in the 1990s.<sup>63</sup> The subcommittee first proposed legislation to regulate nongovernmental organizations that wished to use public funds, including those distributed from international financial institutions, voluntary labor, and non-profit tax liabilities and benefits. In countrywide meetings it found that, while many civil society organizations were anxious for legal status, some challenged state regulation of voluntary service or access to funding.

This legislation faced intense competition with other proposed laws on civil society organizations in the congress, including one project supported by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and other proposals by the major parties. Clearly, there is rising interest among legislators in "representing" civil society. However, a legal consultant who has evaluated both the Brazilian and the Argentine legislation on civil society organizations considers the Argentine both comparatively modest and more controlling than the Brazilian.<sup>64</sup> At the end of 2000 only the legislation on volunteers was seriously under consideration, and it manifested a disposition for state control.<sup>65</sup>

In adjudicating a legal action brought by the rights group CELS (see below), a federal judge in March 2001 struck down the final stop and due obedience laws as unconstitutional because they violated international human rights treaties that Argentina had signed.<sup>66</sup> Along with the successful judicial prosecution of members of the military who trafficked in the adoption of infants of the disappeared, this ruling indicates the potential for more responsive relations between the judiciary and civil society.

There is also an international aspect to the political opportunity structure: support

from international financial institutions and international civil society organizations. Both the World Bank and the IDB are heavily involved in funding projects around second generation reforms, including market-completing measures, distribution issues such as the alleviation of poverty, and governability issues.<sup>67</sup> They have made civil society organizations, seen as more efficient service providers than the state, a key player. The president of the Social Sector Forum, an organization of larger nongovernmental organizations, credited these international financial institutions with forcing the state to engage in dialogue with nongovernmental organizations; the Forum itself participated in a civil society organization assessment project cosponsored by the U.N. Development Programme, the World Bank, and the IDB.<sup>68</sup> This form of participation has resulted from “the massive demands of ‘northern’ civil society organizations” as well as international financial institutions’ search for effective development.<sup>69</sup> From academic exchanges, such as the participation of CEDES, a prominent Argentine thinktank, in a comparative Johns Hopkins University study of the third sector, to international human rights organizations’ historical support for domestic actors, such international involvement must be taken into account in understanding national civil society organizing. But not all international opportunities have similar impacts. The channeling of international funds through the state allows for continued state control over civil society. The public share of funding for Argentine nonprofits was 19.5 percent of their total funding in 1995, slightly above Brazil’s ratio but half the global average.<sup>70</sup> Much of it is required matching funds for international contributions and mandatory social welfare payments.<sup>71</sup>

The mobilizing structures of civil society organizations, particularly in the capital, Buenos Aires, present competing projects. While this competition seems to be compatible with adversarial democracy, continuing clientelistic practices between state agencies and certain nongovernmental organizations, as well as a significant protest sector, also support delegative democracy.<sup>72</sup> It is also supported by particularistic and protest-based issue framing. However, some civil society organizations are trying to organize more deliberately. Drawing on the concepts legitimized by human rights groups under dictatorship, many groups use a rights-based frame for their demands.<sup>73</sup>

Human rights groups seek to establish a politics of accountability by drawing attention to and prosecuting past and present violations. The Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) focuses on the legal aspects of human rights documentation and defense and won the case against impunity in March. The latest generation of family groups is H.I.J.O.S. (“children”), formed by the children of the disappeared. This group holds public “outings” (*escraches*) of human rights abusers, targeting those as prominent as the president’s brother-in-law.<sup>74</sup> Other family organizations include Active Memory, started by the family members of the victims of the yet unresolved 1994 bombing of the AMIA, a prominent Jewish center in Buenos Aires, and the Commission of the Family Members of the Defenseless Victims of Social Violence, formed in response to police brutality and repression.



Spontaneous protest in the last decade has been directed against the severe impact of neoliberal economic restructuring on the population.<sup>75</sup> The economy is in recession. External debt has more than doubled in the past ten years, and exports have been cut in half.<sup>76</sup> From 2000 to 2001 alone unemployment increased from 15.4 to 16 percent; 18 percent of the country in 2001 was living below the poverty line.<sup>77</sup> The economic crisis has sparked *puebladas*, in which a whole city (*pueblo*) erupts in protest, including the takeover and burning of public buildings and blockading of major roads.<sup>78</sup> Unemployed *piqueteros* have coordinated nationwide roadblocks and with the support of leftist parties and certain unions joined in general strikes under the uniting frame of opposition to state austerity measures.<sup>79</sup>

The nongovernmental organization sector in urban development and social services has expanded to make up for state downsizing.<sup>80</sup> This sector has spawned organizations promoting state-market-civil society linkage. For example, the umbrella Social Sector Forum was established in 1996 to represent the so-called third sector (volunteer, charity, and nonprofit organizations). The Forum seeks third sector participation in public policy formation and involvement in the distribution of multilateral loans.<sup>81</sup> Conscience Association, a citizen education group started by the president of the Forum, also has connections to government officials, church leaders, and business.<sup>82</sup>

This trend towards the privatization of civil society is affirmed by the business sponsorship sought by particular groups. For example, the Fifth Argentine Conference of the Social Sector (June 26, 1999), underwritten by various businesses, was focused on “assuring the future of our organizations.” Some conference training was oriented at helping organizations make strategic links with businesses as well as foundations and government. Domingo Cavallo, the finance minister, was a closing speaker. He advocated a civil society free from state regulation, comparable to the free market. However, as faith in the free market declines with the growing economic crisis, interest in “private” collaboration may also be waning.

Other mobilizing structures, sometimes with reach into government, seek to coordinate the efforts of smaller community organizations.<sup>83</sup> For example, the Interinstitutional Community Resources Network of Buenos Aires began in the late 1980s to coordinate work of the state and civil society organizations focused on the urban poor. In May 2000 it held the First Latin American Conference of Networks of the Third Millennium: Public-Private-Third Sector. Although the network deliberately used third sector language to legitimate its grass-roots focus, representatives have felt marginalized by the larger networks’ access to state and international resources.<sup>84</sup>

## Conclusion

The changes in civil society over the last two decades are substantial enough to call them a third major transition in recent Latin American history. Democratization and

economic reform, as well as international financial institutions and foundations, have provided incentives for the transformation of social movements into nongovernmental organizations. Nongovernmental organizations can more consistently interact with democratic institutions, take on duties from a retrenched state, and fulfill the requirements of external donors. Nonetheless, social movements continue to be an important part of civil society, especially in reaction to incomplete democratization and the impact of economic transformation.

The impact of this third transition on the quality of democracy is not direct but rather is mediated by the larger representational regimes into which civil society organizations fit. The representational regime in Brazil since 1985 has been oriented toward more institutionalized alternatives. Both state actors and civil society organizations have worked to create deliberative spaces and regular opportunities for participation of civil society organizations. Few political systems have such extensive and regularized participation by civil society organizations. It is unclear whether the resulting representational regime is a cooptive form of democracy that works primarily to consolidate state control or a deliberative democracy that gives new actors a more equitable role in politics. The final representational regime of contemporary Brazil is likely to depend on the outcome of intense struggles between state and society over exactly this issue. Both the mobilizing structures of periodically cooperative nongovernmental organizations and social movements and the citizenship frame, which continues to draw attention to both the successes and the gaps in achieving citizenship, indicate that, at least among civil society organizations, deliberative democracy is thriving.

The representational regime in Argentina presents a complex picture, with an overall openness compromised by inconsistent state action. The political opportunities for Argentine civil society organizations seem to vary by branch of government. Executive action (or inaction) is consistent with adversarial and delegative democracy. Legislative attempts to regulate the formation of civil society organizations may indicate cooptive democracy. But the judiciary's recent action supporting the work of human rights groups indicates that there is a move towards dialogue between state actors and civil society organizations.<sup>85</sup> Mobilizing structures predominantly suggest adversarial and delegative democracy. A variety of organizations seek to represent their competing goals. In addition, a strong protest sector representing those most excluded by new economic models is increasingly active. But some organizations, from CELS to the new community networks, are trying to foment horizontal linkages within civil society. Finally, framing efforts are those of delegative democracy; issue-specific frames are combined with an antiausterity/state reform frame. However, the groups focused on rights-based claims are participating in a deliberative democracy framing process.

The usefulness of the concept of representational regimes is apparent in this comparative study. Comparatively high levels of societal control and institutionalization indi-

cate that Brazil has some tendencies towards a deliberative representational regime. However, as in Argentina, the amount of state control in organizing society continues to be at issue. Argentina's lower levels of societal control and institutionalization indicate that, with certain sectoral exceptions, it tends more towards a delegative or adversarial regime, pointing to a lack of democratic consolidation within the civil society arena. But the very lack of institutionalization of state control may provide some room for societal maneuver in the future. Particularly because of the history of state control in both countries, institutionalization in and of itself is not an absolute political good but must be weighted by its impact on all actors in a democracy.

## NOTES

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79. *Página 12*, Aug. 1, 2001.

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