

What impact might globalisation have on Irish civil society

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This paper has the ambitious aim of reviewing how globalisation might impact on Irish civil society. While this cannot be achieved in a short paper the aim is to introduce key theories that can help civil society actors begin to theorise how globalisation might impact on their own work and to indicate where further reading might enable further reflection. The paper first explores some key definitions and then outlines a theoretical framework from which to examine the puzzle of how globalisation might impact on Irish civil society. The macro theory focuses on how the state strategies, in the context of globalisation, to mitigate the power or effectiveness of civil society to articulate conflict about redistributive issues in society (Pierson 1998). Four examples of such state strategies are then briefly examined; co-optation into social partnership, reshaping discourse, reshaping civil society organisations and restructuring local governance. The discussion then reflects on the key issue relating to both theories, the strong directive control of the state over civil society organisational space and processes. The paper concludes by observing that not all civil society organisations have been effectively captured by the state and that it is in both the state and civil society's interests to have a more independent and balanced civil society and a more open and varied discourse. The paper concludes by commenting on possibilities for civil society organisations.

As Hay (2004) argues definitions of globalisation are highly contested. A common and widely used definition is that of Held (1999:6) who understands globalisation as a

‘process which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions, assessed in terms of their extensivity, intensity, velocity and impact, generating transcontinental inter-regional flows of activity, interaction and the exercise of power.’

While globalisation encompasses economic, social, political, technological and military changes the key focus for the purposes of this paper is on the key words *transformation, social relations, exercise of power*. The paper is interested in how the transformational processes associated with

increased economic and political global interdependence impact on social relations and the exercise of power between the state and civil society organisations.

Definitions of civil society and community development are just as contested. They overlap with globalisation in that civil society is also concerned with social relations and the exercise of power. Civil society is understood as the voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society. This is distinguished from both the state and from wholly commercial or market based profit making institutions however in practice there are overlaps between state, market and civil society actors (Daly 2007). Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. The London School of Economics adopts a working definition of civil societies that understands to be populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups. At a local level civil society includes community development processes. Drier (1996) makes sense of the numerous definitions of community development by drawing attention to how power is defined in those definitions. While community development can be understood as action to improve a local area or as a community owned/based service delivery process it is community development as the process of a community organising its own political voice that is the interest of this paper.

What then is the relationship between globalisation and civil society (Yeates, 2002). The paper is concerned with how globalisation impacts on the power of civil society to articulate its demands. It is concerned with how civil society relates to other power actors and the nature of power dynamic within and between state and society. In Polyanian¹ terms we expect Irish civil society to put pressure on the state to respond to the social vulnerability associated with globalization (Kirby 2002, 2005). The vulnerability arises from global structural economic and social transformation that benefits capitalism at the expense of social well being. Ireland as one of the worlds most globalised states is particularly sensitive to globalization. While the impact is already felt in a net loss of traditional manufacturing jobs, the June 2008 announcement by Hibernian Insurance of the relocation of over 500 skilled jobs to India has widened the scope of the

¹ This paper adopts a Polanyian (2001) view, which understands an interdependent relationship between society and the state. The relationship is often expressed in conflictual terms when society, fearing a loss of social well being when the economy disembeds from society, puts pressure on the state to re-embed the economy and protect social well being.

economy that is exposed to such vulnerability. The impact of globalisation is mediated by national political institutions so it is in reactions of the domestic state that we can discern the impact of the reaction of the state to the pressures of globalisation. Given we expect civil society groups to articulate to the state the tension society feels in the context of such globalization the key puzzle is why this conflictual role is relatively muted in Irish civil society.

The paper focuses on how the state manages its distributional conflict with civil society and whether globalisation is associated with shifts in power and interest formation related to distributional conflict. Paul Pierson (1994, 2001) and Duane Swank (2002) explore how, in the late 1980's, the US and UK states shaped the development of civil society interests in order to limit conflict about restructuring or retrenching the welfare state in the context of globalisation towards more active social policy. Pierson outlined how Thatcher in the context of managing the restructuring of the British welfare state went out to systematically 'break the main source of opposition', the trade union movement. Like wise he documents how Reagan in the US adopted a strategy of 'defunding the left' withdrawing funding from civil society organisations likely to resist the dismantling of US welfare. This raises the question of what strategies the Irish state adopted in the context of the need to restructure public expenditure in the late 1980's and what subsequent strategies have been adopted. Three examples of Irish state strategies are now briefly examined; co-option into social partnership, reshaping the community and voluntary sector civil society organisations and restructuring local governance. Because the first two are also examined in depth in articles in the volume (Harvey and O Brioin) more time is devoted to the third strategy, restructuring local governance.

Social partnership

Unlike Reagan and Thatcher's overt strategy of smashing opposition the Irish states strategy was to choose to manage possible dissent of trade unions to social and economic restructuring through a strategy of 'co-option'. Corporatist structures were renewed in 1987, when government faced into a difficult period of retrenchment, re-established Social Partnership. Trade unions, employers and farmers work in several overlapping institutional spaces to develop consensus on policy strategies and to negotiate and monitor national wage agreements. This enabled governments to 'adopt reforms with reduced electoral and social risks' (Natali and Rhodes,1998:7). In 1994 Irish Social Partnership broadened to include the NESF and in 1996 part of the community and voluntary sector was incorporated into partnership structures (Acheson et al 2004). The sectors'

1994 co-option into national corporate structures is unique to Ireland. While this is often reflected positively as strength of interest groups in Ireland (Healy, 1998) it has also been analysed as a state strategy to silence ideological debate or alternative political discourse expected from a third sector (Broderick, 2002; Murphy, 2002). So while many credit social partnership as the cause of Ireland's more humane welfare trajectory, relative to the UK or the US (McCashin 2004, 2001; Kennelly and O'Shea, 1998; Daly and Yeates, 2003), others argue that social partnership can, through co-option, limit protest and smother the potential for more radical change (Allen, 2000; O'Connell, 1999). This relationship between state and society has been described by Broderick (2002) as a 'smothering embrace'.

Acheson et al (2004:197) argue the state plays a key role 'in structuring the civic space in which voluntary action occurs' and that 'interaction of state drivers with cultural and ideological forces' shape voluntary action and development. This sector's capacity to be an effective driver of change has been curtailed both by state (or Fianna Fáil) strategies to control or limit the development of the sector (McCashin 2004) and by the sector's own failure to act cohesively (Acheson et al 2004). In this state controlled space meaningful distributional debate is limited (Acheson et al; 2004, Montague 2001). Murphy and Kirby (2008:6) argue the impact is that

the battle for ideas has been won hands down by those with a vested interest in ensuring the state takes an extreme market-friendly approach to public policy and in seeking to avoid debates about redistributive taxation, adequate social spending and provision, and more active state policies to generate more successful domestic productive sectors.

Social partnership performs the role of 'cognitively locking' (Blyth 2002) Irish discourse into a particular development model. Connolly (2007) explores how this development model constrains and limits the possibilities of anti poverty strategies. In Gramscian terms social partnership plays a powerful legitimisation role for the Irish state. It enables through a form of ideological persuasion a dominant ideology of neo liberalism to permeate our lives and discourse. Neo liberalism is accepted as 'common sense', therefore there is no alternative. The state through social partnership has an effective tool to achieve hegemonic power.

Reshaping Discourse

The state through social partnership and other discourse processes actively attempts to reshape discourse. One discourse that had been particularly dominant is the discourse of social capital. Robert Putman's (2000) treatise on social capital 'Bowling Alone' was bed time reading for

former Taoiseach Bertie. The term 'social capital' has certainly influenced political discourse about civil society in Ireland (NESF 2003, Task Force on Active Citizenship 2007). Ireland is not been alone in this regard. The international spread of social capital as a policy discourse demonstrates how globalization has intensified the speed and scale of international policy transfer. It also draws attention to the role international institutions like OECD (2001) and World Bank play in proliferating such discourse.

At the core of social capital is the thesis that relationships or social connections between individuals and communities matter, social capital is 'the glue that holds society together' (NESF 2003). While keenly contested in academic debate (Farrell, 2007) the term 'social capital' has been taken up in policy and political discourse as an optimistic 'mother hood and apple pie' concept that promotes a healthy society where communities are bonded together. However Farrell urges caution with the use of the concept social capital arguing social capital discourse has successfully drawn attention away from how income, power and other structural inequalities actually deplete so social relations. To be meaningful social capital policy needs to be situated in the context of economic, cultural and political capital. We must treat with caution the political promotion of a solidaristic concept like social capital in the context of dominant overriding mainstream Celtic Tiger neo-liberal values. Solidarity and individualism are difficult bedfellows, it may be that the discourse of social capital only serves to soften the political discourse of individualism.

Irish public discourse promoting social capital fails to examine the cause of declining social capital. NESF (2003) showed that while Irish social capital is average in EU terms there is lower engagement among young adults , the elderly, people living in rural and large urban centers, lower socio-economic group, women and those with a disability or illness. Most of these groups with low social capital correlate with high risks of poverty and are found in areas with poor social or public services (CSO 2006). Growing income inequality impacts negatively on social capital. Material poverty literally pulls social ties apart, there is also a psycho-social impact on peoples capacity for trust and reciprocity (Wilkinson 1996). While social support may mitigate it will not overcome poverty. In fact as Farrell (2007) argues poor areas may be relatively high in bonding type social capital (helping people cope with or get by(but low in linking and bridging capital (limiting capacity to get ahead). Social capital is not therefore nor should it be portrayed as a cheap fix for disadvantage.

Social capital discourse has had a particular impact on community development policy. It positively reinforced the need for policies and programmes that can strengthen social relations in and between communities. It is associated with new forms of community development like Asset Based Community Development (ABCD, explored in Chapter 11). These work towards a more functionalist or pragmatic version of community development which promote social cohesion within and between what may be unequal communities. This may be at the expense of a more political version of community development centered on mobilization, advocacy, empowerment and social analysis of unequal power relations. It remains to be seen how strong an influence social capital discourse has had on what Currie (2008) has described as 'sidelining' or 'erosion of the original vision and potential of the Community Development Programme' into a low key and fragmented individualised programme (see also Harvey in Ch 3 of this volume).

Reshaping the community and voluntary sector

However the Irish state strategy to manage dissent and opposition is not as simple as co-option and winning ideological hegemony through social partnership. The state also adopted a parallel strategy of reshaping the non economic interests in Irish civil society, that which is usually referred to as the community and voluntary sector. Harvey (2008) argues that civil society finds itself in ever more restrictive funding arrangements and that these are accompanied by greater political control by the state. Harvey (2008) observes how the Irish state has, since 2002, embedded this outcome. He remarks how the state consciously described in the White Paper *Supporting voluntary activity* the voluntary - statutory interface as a 'highly contested political space'. He argues the state has, proactively, by way of funding, regulation and institutional reform attempted to orientate the Community and Voluntary sector (and hence civil society) towards a particular development model. Harvey (2008) describes a more recent 2002 shift to a more managerialist culture as having an 'asphyxiating' impact on civil society. Harvey described the full extent of the states attempt to restructure the sector in Chapter 3 of this volume. The shift illustrates how the Irish state has attempted to manage domestic political tensions and mitigate societal reaction as it subordinates social policy to the needs of the economy. To manage political conflict about the direction of policy restructuring the State intervened in community sectors direction. The ideational role played by globalisation is important here. Both Hay (2004) and Cerny (2002) highlight the important role of globalisation as an ideational process transferring concepts idea and language. The ideational influence of the US concept of 'social capital' (and the related concept of 'asset based community development' explored in another

paper in this volume) has played an important role in shifting concepts of civil society from a conflict based disputation of redistributive policy to a more consensus based understanding of civil society as active citizenship and volunteering.

The 2000 White Paper – Supporting Voluntary Activity enabled shifts in discourse towards service delivery and social capital. The state has also endeavoured to promote a greater service delivery role for the community and voluntary sector. Generally since 1991 the state promoted the social inclusion role of the non-profit private sector with the local Area-Based Partnerships. Since 1994, employment support functions including the Local Employment Service have been delegated to local non statutory agencies. A 1999 White Paper promoted regulation of the community and voluntary sector. NESF (2005) and NESF (2006) signalled a shift to service contracts requiring a new model of governance where the role of the state moves away from the provision of services to ‘a regulator of rights and standards and enabler of local activist networks’ (NESF 2005 206-7).

Harvey (2008) argues that part of the strategy was a political decision in 2002 to centralize all funding for civil society in a new Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and to change the rules of funding so funds previously administered by arm’s length agencies were now under direct departmental and ministerial control (this was reflected in the restructuring of ADM an independent agency into Pobal whose board is politically appointed). This politicization of funding is associated with institutional funding shifts in third sector funding². It has for example promoted an umbrella group ‘The Wheel’ which advocates for service delivery and charity models of civic engagement (Acheson et al., 2004:189). This shift in power has been at the expense of the Community Platform and a social justice alternative policy agenda (Harvey 2008).

Restructuring local governance

How might globalisation impact on local civil society organisations. Competition state theory suggests globalisation poses challenges for nation states. Public governance processes need to adapt quickly and devise mechanisms that allow innovative, though manageable, risks to be taken to meet the diverse local policy agendas arising from the impact of globalisation. The state

² Funding patterns have shown a discernible shift toward service providing organizations. The allocation of €18m toward national organizations for 2008-10, the successor to the original white paper funding, included many service organizations traditionally funded by health boards.

responds to the challenges posed by globalisation by seeking to strengthen its institutional capacity by reaching up and down to draw new actors into a looser governance network of the state, a processes referred to as multi-level governance (Hambleton, 2001, Cerny 2002). Multi-level governance implies that local, regional, national and supranational authorities interact with each other vertically and horizontally. This is captured by the imagery of states moving “upward, downward and outward” (Clarke 2003:34). The role of the state changes so that both power and functions shift between administrative levels and between statutory and non-profit and commercial agencies at these different levels. Such innovation in the politics of place means changes in the nature of power and new local institutions. This change in governance may mean very different processes in urban³ and rural contexts. Governance here is defined as ‘including government but also the looser process of influencing and negotiating with a wider range of public, private and not for profit actors, to achieve mutual goals’ (Hambleton 2003: 147). Governing now occurs in a wider range of spheres and includes a broader range of actors than previously. The flexibility and innovative capacity associated with multi-level governance are seen as ways to enable the state to address the threats and opportunities arising from globalisation. Such change is referred as ‘a new localism’.

There is mixed opinion as to whether this is a welcome development. For some commentators these developments represent a positive shift and a meaningful transfer of power “from hierarchical modes of governance” (preoccupied with vertical relationships and the dominance of governmental authority), via market forms (based on competition and contracts), to “network forms” (built on trust and a sense of common purposes between partner agencies)” (Lepine *et al* 2007: 8). Others disagree with this assessment claiming that in nation states, governments retain sufficient power and influence over legal, financial and policy levers to ensure that governance takes place in the “shadow of hierarchy” (Jessop 2002: 5). Is the state in promoting new forms of governance empowering others or extending its power over more actors?

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Hambleton, Savitch and Stewart (2003) and Sassen (2004) explore how such pressures impact locally and in particular impact on cities and urban environments. Sassen (2001) identifies global cities as those where wealth and employment creation processes are linked to service industries, particularly financial and legal services, and theorises they face significant challenges as globalisation becomes both wider and deeper in scope. Sassen expects that the governance of complexity gives urban civil society and urban politics. *Glurbanisation* or new forms of governance in the urban and through the urban (Jessop 2002) has been coined to describe and define this new paradigm of local governance in the context the new challenges of facing larger cities competing in the global market place and within the wider metropolitan governance literature (Hoffmann–Martinot and Sellers 2005)

Worldwide, various new governance techniques have emerged to enable the planning and delivery of policy. New terms such as ‘globalisation’ describe these new forms of governance which include networked local governance, community governance, institutional networking, social cooperation and micro regulatory networks. These concepts are characterised by strengthening local government through policy committees and stronger roles for mayors, more active roles for citizens in participative governance, decentralisation or devolution, institutional changes to strengthen local government’s capacity for engaging in partnership and networking. Clark (2003: 81) summarises these approaches as a “new political culture”. This can and does also include a new approach to fiscal management which includes service or user charges. These shifts are often facilitated by ‘managerialism’ where new public management administrative and financial devices including service level agreements, targets and indicators as well as re-regulation, decentralisation and privatisation are introduced to maximise local flexibility. There are obvious tensions between the contradictory pulls of participatory governance processes and this type of managerialism (Lister 2004). There are also overlaps between this process and what Harvey describes in Ch X.

Clearly it is possible in the Irish case to associate increased globalisation and state strategies to strengthen local governance. The 1992 and subsequent Irish local development programmes and the development of various local partnership approaches to manage local sectoral challenges dominated much of 1990’s. The early 2000’s saw a process of Irish local government reform & the ‘cohesion’ process within the local development sector. As Harvey (2008) argues, since 2002 many local groups including local area based partnerships, community development programmes, RAPID teams and local drugs task forces have been obliged to work within more managerial processes.

Despite these elements of new localism however it is questionable whether Ireland has adapted urban governance sufficiently to meet the challenges of globalisation. Urban governance in Ireland is still relatively underdeveloped and there has not been a transfer of power or enabling of new actors to play strong governance roles. The tensions relating to the cohesion process and the difficulties associated with RAPID in Dublin City draws attention to tensions in managing metropolitan governance that arise when values of managerialism clash with community based local governance process. There are parallel tensions in rural governance. The ongoing 2008 legal and political controversy between Minister O Cuiv and various Leader organisations highlight

how the state's attempts to redefine the boundaries of rural governance processes have been met with significant resistance. Attempts at multilevel governance in Ireland are impeded by broader horizontal and vertical dysfunctional characteristics in Irish governance⁴. There are, for example, acute levels of 'geopolitical atomisation' where individual statutory organisations work in isolation within their own geographical boundaries. Weak local government systems compound the difficulties in rolling out effective metropolitan or rural governance programmes. The recently published Green Paper on local government reform signals the development of policy in this area including regional governance and the possibility of a directly elected mayor in some local authorities by 2012.

This short journey through Irish local governance reforms highlights that the Irish state's attempts to strategise multilevel governance responses to the pressures of globalisation has not necessarily resulted in any transfer of power to civil society actors. Rather the Irish state retained and even increased its power over civil society. Local groups are living in the "shadow of hierarchy" (Jessop 2002: 5). The Irish state in promoting new forms of governance is restructuring local civil society in its own interests. Some of this renders community work and local development work vulnerable to the manipulations of the state. As Craig (cited in Ledwith (2005:3) states the practice of community work tends to be 'drawn into the latest fashions of government policy agendas because that is where the funding --- practice is dominated by the policy and political context rather than creating it'.

To illustrate the practical impact of state power over local civil society actors an example offered by participants in a Nordubco seminar that informed the development of this volume of papers is briefly explored. Local civil society organisations working in the North Dublin area reported how they felt controlled from commenting critically on the states management and treatment of the Roma community camped on the Ballymun M50 roundabout in 2007. This control was often implicit, organisations 'felt' or 'knew' the subtle rules of their relationship with the state required them to be silent about the issues. However the control was also explicit with statutory employees from more than one statutory agency phoning local civil society actors to remind them that their funding arrangement does not to comment on the situation. One national organisation Pavee Point did campaign about the issue of humanitarian treatment of this Roma community.

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These themes are further developed in Murphy and O'Brioin's review of the Dublin Rapid programme (2008) and Murphy's (2006) review of the Dublin cohesion process. Access both at www.nordubco.ie

Subsequent comments by the then Minister of Justice Brian Lenihan threatening to review the funding arrangements of Pavee Point illustrate how the state uses funding to control civil society voices.

In summary then the three examples explored highlight state civil society tensions and how at an ideological, funding and institutional level the Irish state is managing distributional and restructuring consequences of global and domestic pressures through the parallel strategies of co-option and control. Within that the state has actively reshaped the ideational and institutional context within which civil society exists. Institutional power, funding and voice shifts from social justice defined civil society towards service delivery focused civil society processes. The previous exploration of state strategies to control dissent allowed an exploration of how globalisation impacts on the relationship between the state and civil society. Power is at the centre of this exploration. In both cases the state has, in the context of globalisation, reconfigured that national and local focus and role of civil society organisations away from dissent about redistributive justice and human rights and towards local service delivery in partnership with the state. Rosenial and Williams (2004) are wary of changing relations between the national state, local forms of government, and the institutions, organisations and movements of civil society. They suggest social actors need to be vigilant about how the state works to reframe political claims policy demands and public values. Civil society actors need to constantly ask what are the political, policy and cultural contexts that sets the parameters for collective action and public participation. There is a clear need to examine how changing modes of governance and new funding arrangements impact on public participation. They argue social movements are profoundly shaped by the policy direction of the governments they seek to influence.

The Irish state strategy of co-option and control has already impacted on civil society capacity to articulate the tensions felt within civil society. It is no surprise that civil society organisations should have found themselves a site of power struggle and a site for institutional and ideational struggle. The competition state theoretical framework exposes how institutional and political struggle about policy matters hugely and how an important and ongoing site of struggle is the emerging tension over the role of civil society and the community and voluntary sector. This space is vital. It is from here that Polanyi's (2001) 'double movement' or societal reaction to

commodification is likely to emerge. It is also here that the state will seek to constrain societal power and political energy as it seeks to maintain control and manage political conflict⁵.

While some civil society groups have influenced agenda-setting, delivery issues and income adequacy outcomes much of this discourse has been ‘voice without influence’ (Lister 2004). The growing consultative voice of the sector ‘has not proved enough to change policy priorities’ (Hardiman, 1998:142). Why is this? The Irish political system advantages groups able to organise and promote their interests (Coleman, 2006). To echo Hardiman (1998:122)

we may find that at least part of the explanation for the relative lack of progress in redressing these inequalities may be found in a closer analysis of the patterns of interest representation in the form of party policies and interest group formation.

Hardiman’s (1998) observation that wider civil society and organisations representing the poor are weak and unable to input effectively to policy learning, formation and implementation is more potent in 2008 given the fragmentation and territorial division of the community and voluntary sector. This limits the transformative capacity of that sector to respond to the increased pressures and vulnerabilities of globalisation. In the British context both Whitley and Winyard (1987) and Lister (1988) observed the ease with which governments consciously play groups off against each other and the importance of members of the British anti-poverty sector acting as a single unified lobby. The challenge is increasing the capacity to organise into a more proactive strong vested interest on a longer time scale (Harvey 2008). To achieve the transformative capacity of the sector to respond to the increased pressures and vulnerabilities of globalization the sector has to be able achieve scale and cohesiveness in Irish civil society. The pluralist power model of many diverse voices informs the development to date of Irish civil society. This should not preclude the possibility of investing in the organisational capacity to when required act as one single unified lobby.

How can civil society regain its role in creating a discourse of change and constructing a social crisis out of the serious redistributive tensions in Ireland. How can it influence local, regional

⁵ Polanyi (2001) anticipated that following a ‘movement’ towards commodification, society, sensing a diminution of human welfare, will respond in a ‘double movement’ by pressing the state to protect commodified labour from the excesses of market greed. Society would press the state to decommodify labour. Polanyi clearly differentiates civil society from the state.

and national discourse. Like other papers in this volume this paper aims to contribute this analysis and to promote awareness. These are key first steps. However as Harvey argues a key strategy has to be to regain some degree of financial independence for civil society organisations. A second key strategy has to be to examine the language of social discourse and reclaim language and concepts from the state. This means reclaiming the debate about active citizenship and articulating it in the language of social justice and political equality rather than social capital. A third important strategy for regaining independence is to review more critically the experience of co-optation into social partnership and civil society's practical relationship with the state. Fourthly as well as organisations needing to be more critical about the Irish state and its model of social partnership there also needs to be more self awareness of how social partnership processes (both local and national) have had the impact of institutionalising and deskilling civil society organisations from more radical and participative ways of working.

The recent Lisbon Referendum offers proof that there are examples of new social movements such as the ecological movements and anti military movements that offer alternative ways of organising. Two things are striking about the Lisbon referendum campaign. An internet analysis of the groups campaigning both for and against the treaty highlights that all active campaigning groups were effectively free from a structured relationship with the state in terms of funding or service delivery contracts. Conversely no civil society organisation dependant on state funding felt able to directly participate in this key campaign. This may have been because of direct fears about funding implications. However it is as likely to be because state control has effectively depoliticised a large section of civil society. While this has obvious implications for the freedom of civil society organisations it has just as serious implications for the state. Why was there so few civil society organisations articulating a pro Lisbon Treaty message. It is striking for example how key pro Lisbon campaigners had to campaign as individual campaigners under the hastily convened Alliance for Europe. In silencing the voice of civil society the state may be unwittingly silencing the voices of key civil society actors who would otherwise be key alliances in a campaign for stronger more social Europe.

The Irish state strategy to co-opt, control, disempower and attempt to effectively cognitively lock Irish civil society has been largely successful. However Geoghegan and Powell (2007:48) argue there is potential for renewed discourse about alternatives,

while active citizenship in the community sector may have largely been co-opted as a tool of government, it has the potential to reflexively reimagine itself as a democratic force where active citizens resist the alienating effect of thin representative democracy --- and build counter discourses’.

Ledwith (2005:7) offers some reassurance here. Recognising that such strategies ‘can be unchartered territory and at times frightening and unpredictable’ for already vulnerable community groups she reminds groups there are tools and concepts they can use to make sense of what needs to be done. As importantly she draws attention to the advantages of ‘breaking free from a controlling and controlling view of the world, one that we are taught to see as inevitable carries the hope that more socially and environmentally just future based on participatory democracy is a possibility’. The example of conflict and resistance in the recent 2008 Lisbon Treaty referendum also indicates civil society is not fully controlled by the state. A more radical, participative and democratic citizenship is clearly possible. Another and better world is also possible.

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