DRAFT REPORT

On the research

“THE CRISIS IN THE MODERN WORLD SYSTEM AND CIVIL ACTIVISM”

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ongoing academic discourse of crisis is predominantly focused on explicit manifestations, short-term factors, or pessimistic prospects for the nearest future. What is lacking in such typical approaches is the view of the crisis in a broader historical perspective and prospects for civil engagements in its resolution—such fundamentally different standpoint is suggested by proponents of world-systems perspective. According to I. Wallerstein and G. Arrighi, a hegemonic and systemic crisis is marked by an increase of competition, social conflicts, and emergence of new configuration of power, ending up in a system chaos—economic, political, and social; and this is exactly what we currently observe.

Of course, the crisis will finally come to an end, but nobody is aware what will be its outcomes. In this respect, global civil society has a unique opportunity to induce global social change. Thus, it is essential to understand the role of civil activism in the current crisis. What are the most influential actors on the global scale? What is their impact on revealing the crisis? What is their impact on resolving the crisis? These are the research questions worthwhile to investigate.

The research methods applied are theorizing, quantitative survey analysis, and qualitative expert interviews. The majority of data comes from the qualitative research in the form of a series of 16 semi-structured phone and online expert interviews. The guide consists of blocks about scholars’ background, the structure of global civil society, interpretations of the crisis, global civil society impact on revealing and resolving the crisis. Some questions were reformulated, others eliminated or added based on previous interviews.

The sampling was the following. Online video and audio interviews were the priority, while phone interviews were an alternative. The experts were selected if they had publications, preferably books, on the topic of global civil society. Then, interviewed scholars recommended further experts. The fieldwork lasted from April 15 to June 27, 2014 until the saturation point, when new interviews added fewer ideas and points to the already gathered data.

2. BACKGROUND

THEORETICAL APPROACH

It is important to understand the theoretical framework applied by the scholars in their studies. The experts deliberately named the following approaches they utilize.

- Problem-based approach, finding theoretical instruments suitable for an issue studied
- Systems approach, complexity theory (systemic structures, mutual constitutions, multi causal and multi directional, emergent properties, nonlinear regularities, limited predictability), Niklas Luhmann theory
- Constructivist approach (the world is socially constructed)
- Legitimation discourse
- Organizational sociology, Weberian approach
- Analysis of hegemony in Gramscian sense
- Social movements theory by Charles Tilly
- International law
- Post-statist politics, contentious politics in the view of Sidney Tarrow
- Pluralism (multiple actors) in international political sciences
- Critical social theory and international social theory, sociology of international relations
- World-systems analysis
- World system approach (there are multiple structures in the world, not fully reducible to capitalism)

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

The experts conducted lots of research in the field of civil society. Overall, the methodology includes conceptualizing, theorizing, empirical research, quantitative, secondary data survey analysis, qualitative, case studies, historical document analysis, interviews, fieldwork, ethnography, combination of theorizing and empirical research.
GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

ACTORS

Concepts:
- Global civil society is a fictional construct
- Civil society in global politics (it is not necessary organized around all planet)
- Some movements have transformed into NGOs
- NGO have become a significant phenomenon relatively recently
- There are different discourses of civil society – as a normative aspiration and as complexity network (in 1990s civil society was a perceived as a normative aspiration but now, when the crisis is under way, it is understood more as a complexity network of thinking reflexively and responsive with practices of power with the aim to tackle the problems)
- It is an expression of globalization from below, it is a medium of social contract launching negotiations
- Civil society is a fierce place of class struggles; its language has been appropriated by corporate elite

Classifications:
- Movements, NGOs, think-tanks, funds, maybe corporations (though some exclude business)
- Organizations, fora, campaigns
- There are new kinds of movements – like Maidan, Square movements, the Occupy movement
- Local, national, global
- National and global levels of action of civil society – it is an intellectual challenge to link them
- Committed and situational (some organizations disappear when media disappear)
- We have a handful of big players and many small organizations – there are inequities within civil society and they are becoming bigger
- There are grassroots (Amnesty International) and subconsciously elitists (Human Rights Watch) groups and activities
- Small and very professional organizations (consisting of highly trained and specialized individuals who know how to act in international environment) versus speaking on behalf of many people and still being very influential (Amnesty International, Greenpeace)
- System critical approach (for fundamental change) and broad critical approach organizations (more pragmatic)

Measurements:
- It is hard to measure the degrees of influence of individual actors
- There is no database to measure by the same criteria
- It is the interaction on the whole which imposes influence
- A solution is to take a specific issue, make a list of organizations, study, which are the most influential

The most influential:
- Business is the most influential because of money and connections
- Elite groups from the Global North (Group of 30) have greater influence than from the Global South (World Social Forum) because they have institutionalized access to all positions of decision-making, through legislators, for instance, by giving expert opinions
- Amnesty International (from 1960s), Human Rights Watch (from 1970s)
- George Soros Open Society Foundation (a fund), The Bill Clinton Foundation (a fund), NGOs working under UN umbrella
- The protest movements are the most critical voice in Europe and Middle East
- Religious groups, the Arab Spring movements
Fellowship of Reconciliation (religious), War Resisters International (secular), Landless Workers’ Movement


LEADERS

- Citizens of the world (they might even come from the Global South, but have Western education, they have access to wealth, they belong to an elite group)
- A growing professionalization within the NGOs: senior positions require years of schooling
- Part of their influence derives from being in accordance with thoughts of others
- Civil society activists: William Pace, Bround Moses, Vandana Shiva, Chiko Mendes, Fintan Farrell, Jose Bove, Aryeh Neier, Michael Ignatieff
- Politicians: Vaclav Havel, Lech Valenca, Nelson Mandela, Rene Zavaleta Mercado
- Economists: George Soros, Joseph Stiglitz, Paul Krugman, Paul Volker, Mark Carney, Nouriel Roubini
- Academics: Samir Amin, Walden Bello, Boaventura de Sousa Santos

PARTICIPANTS

- Most people are male white Westerners with a very good university education in either law or political science or economics – they are part of elite (though some can come from marginal groups – travelers)
- Activists, researchers, finance experts (managing funds), lawyers (who can do it for free – pro bono work, appear before the Supreme Court and add it to CV, but for reputable organizations), retired diplomats (who have personal connections)
- They are able to act on international level
- It is important to be present in world cities like New York, London, Geneva and be personally in touch with politicians, so traditionally they are based there
- At some point some successful NGO activists are hired by INGOs like United Nations
- Usually leaders remain the same over time
- In the global North: centrist or leftist center, social-democrat parties, civil libertarian – stressing on individual freedom, others sharing the idea of equality, coming from Judo-Christian tradition, though there are some conservative right NGOs;
- In the global South: the civil society tends to be more collectivist, focusing on community

VALUES

- NGO world is very various and multifaceted
- Commitment to protect and empower free and equal human rights is extremely widespread
- The normal values: thinking about global interests rather than national interests, thinking about ethics rather than representations, thinking about future generations rather than current ones, different from what liberal politics fail to provide
- They are passionate, deeply believe in the cause, they care about and want to change the world for the better, it is a part of their core identity, it is a quasi-religious movement
- General liberal commitment background (values of democracy, human rights, individualism)
- Basic altruistic orientation, they are thinking about a world community
- Liberal individual-oriented NGOs from the West versus governments (Singapore, China, Russia) and collectively oriented societies who try to use their own conception of human rights (their use the word human rights but mean something different)
- Heterogeneity, respect for differences, dignity, solidarity
- System critical, anti-authoritarian, anti-fundamentalist, anti-neoliberal, for radical or participatory democracy
INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CRISIS

EXPLANATIONS

Concepts:
- Skeptical of the discourse of crisis
- Don’t see any crisis (in the sense of a specific turning point – bifurcation point)
- Crisis cannot be permanent – it is a kind of devaluated turn
- There are rather global problems (no central system, they can be solved separately): inequality within countries and in global trade, denial of human rights for economic reason
- Crisis is an opportunity and a challenge

Economic and inequalities problems:
- Regulatory problem of financial processes (those are new hardly controllable instruments)
- Global financial crisis has accelerated the shift of economic power from the West to the East
- The private component of economy has become too big, in contrast to public one
- Huge debts have been moved from private to public sector by states, so the burden is put on taxpayers
- The democracies of Europe are stagnant
- The peace has allowed some people and groups to accumulate a lot of wealth, but this wealth is very unevenly distributed and not fully invested into the global economy
- A lot of barriers collapsed and allowed capital move easier than labor and gave it more power, so the income distribution is worsening in many countries
- The shift from manufacturing to finance has produced mass inequalities

Political, ideological and technological problems:
- Connected with the collapse of traditional forms of modernist way of governing in politics
- New information technologies, to which society still has not adapted institutionally
- The hegemony of neoliberalism is broken, so there is a search of a new hegemonic project (more social – world social forum; Tahir square; neoliberalism of Stiglitz kink, neofascism)

Multiple problems:
- There are multiple transformations: of modes of production, identities, knowledge systems, time, relations with environment
- The crisis of surplus accumulation, crisis of ecological integrity, crisis of knowledge (truth of Western modernity knowledge is challenged), crisis of identity politics (indigeneity, racial issues, gender, class), multiple futures and unpredictabilities
- Crisis of accumulation, inequality, social polarization, ideological crisis, material crisis, crisis of market and state legitimacy, rise of strike actions, crisis of governability

IMPACT ON REVEALING THE CRISIS

PROBLEMS CRITICIZED

- General human rights organizations work with everything though they prioritize, though others more specialized focus on one issue

Human rights:
- Human rights, acting for collective humanity
- Civil rights issues (minority rights, migrants)
- Results of colonialism and imperialism (discrimination and inequalities)

Inequalities:
- The system is inadequate by its own standards – there are huge inequalities
- Global inequality, economic inequality, privatization, poverty
- Inequality is a big issue: within countries and on the North-South divide
- The privileges are for the minor part of the world, exploitation
Political economy:
- The democracy is not working in a desired way
- The political elites have lost their legitimacy, authoritarianism
- Who is actually making decisions? State-sanctioned private regulation. And it is not what should be
- They want to reduce the control of private organizations and states on global financial institutions
- Elitist Washington Consensus, whose recommendations are that bad that sometimes the cure is worse than the disease, Western rule
- War

Other problems:
- Threatened freedom of expression, there is a growing surveillance – it is a global problem
- Ecology and environment

MECHANISMS

General considerations:
- Diplomacy (approach politicians directly) and work with public (raising awareness with more emotional appeal)
- Witnessing, monitoring, gathering information, keeping on the agenda and pressuring states to change the situation (examples: civil wars in Sudan or Syria)

Information and normative influence:
- Resisting the dominance of particular ways of thinking
- Civil society organizations share information and knowledge
- Mainly informational politics: balanced reporting and appealing to governments and corporations
- They put out their views in the public sphere (press-conferences, presentations for the public)
- Marketing: reaching out the media and getting attention and support, reframing issues making them interesting for international audience
- Global communication, growing global awareness
- Norm emergence: some actors would see an injustice, work on it and then it becomes a mainstream international issue

Advocacy:
- Trying to intervene in the policy-making process (working with politicians)
- Lobbying on national and international levels

Direct action:
- Trying to work within the system of capitalism to make private institutions themselves change (shareholders activism)
- New movements try to experiment with their own methods like protests on squares
- Many fora then translated into Square protests (to draw attention)

IMPACT ON REVEALING GLOBAL PROBLEMS
- Civil society doesn’t have a huge influence
- It is hard to connect civil society activities with any specific accomplishments
- Consciousness raising
- Due to Millennium goals the attention has been turned to more complex issues
- The link between inequality and the structures of capitalism (the Occupy movement) – it drew attention to the link between the financial instability and the increasing inequalities; and actually the Occupy movement forced local grassroots politicians to consider those arguments (their arguments are transformed into discourse on local level in the US); poverty indicators are considered in the EU
- On the last meeting WTO has claimed the biggest reduction of debt in the Third World
- Global surveillance problems awareness
- Alternative political economies are put on the agenda (green, democratic control)
CAUSES OF EFFECT

Human and organizational resources:
- Specialization in a particular issue
- Have professional lawyers and diplomats
- Large budgets, lots of media attention

Informing patterns:
- They produce very high-quality research, they have a very high level of credibility
- Vividly show the problems
- Adding popular discourse – what touches people
- It depends on issue – anything related to children with nice pictures will attract more attention

Cooperation:
- Cooperation among dispersed agents in a network format (Seattle 1999)
- Collaboration with academics (social investments approach to welfare)

Advocacy patterns:
- Effectively utilize networking
- Coalition between social movements and political parties
- They speak the same language and know how to reach those in power

Overall considerations:
- Extraordinary combination of methods and collaboration of people
- Combine national and international impact
- The lesser the proposal, the greater the attention (corporate responsibility versus global taxation proposals)
- Transformative movements were much stronger during the crisis (financial transactions tax) – the governments are much more receptive to the idea

IMPACT ON RESOLVING THE CRISIS

MODELS

Criticism:
- The biggest weakness is that global civil society lacks a common vision of alternative institutions (not to count marginal individual suggestions), for instance, this was the flaw of the Occupy movement

Specific issues:
- Enlarge transparency, accountability and responsibility
- Make IGOs (like IMF) more transparent, more equitable; give civil society more voice in the work of these institutions
- Governments should impose greater control on financial operations of private business
- Partially neoliberal, but a more complexity approach
- Alternative welfare, access issue
- More equal society, more equal world, equality of opportunity, equality of treatment
- Other groups want to ensure that the private accumulation has a higher social contact (responsibility), they want to shrink space of freedom of operation of individual economic and financial agents and increase the space of social responsibility (are banks public good or not?)

Holistic models:
- The struggle for socialism
- A different kind of globalization; it is about a balance between private and public; they are on the correct side of history as the history must be sustainable politically, and for this it should have a vast share for redistribution; and it requires a strong state
- Conformist (how do we make existing policies work better), reformist (might critique the current structures but to a limited degree, the mechanisms should be adjusted), and transformist models
(the critique of the capitalism as a core structure, radical suggestions, deep ecology, Islamic political economy)

- Each of BRICS represent a different model – but all of them have a stronger role of state than in Western states; at the same time is stronger state more democratic?

**MECHANISMS**

**General principles:**
- There is issue of diverse responsibility: it is relatively obvious who is responsible for human rights violation in a certain country, while it is difficult to establish responsibility for inequality
- Nobody can campaign for human rights, one should campaign for specific issues (like International Court, individual political prisoners)
- Protest, but global society cannot protest, only local actors
- This change comes from grassroots in countries and states on the whole are second-order reactors

**Approaches and mechanisms:**
- Change the mentality of people
- Enact peaceful resistance, mobilize mass demonstrations, use targeted boycott, show civil disobedience
- Self-organize from below by mass practices (like alternative economic and democratic practices, fair trade movement) and build up local alternative institutions
- Strategic litigation: increasingly going to courts and using judicial decisions (refugee cases, extradition, discriminatory funding, death penalty, torture) – you can make an immediate effect on law, that’s a very effective strategy.

**Advocacy mechanisms:**
- Sometimes the violation of inequality and discrimination rests within a state so it is public policy, which is changed
- Advocacy: meeting with national politicians, working within UN institutions, using personal social networks like making personal calls to classmates, college peers
- Human Rights Watch works with US government to influence other states
- The shame effect for governments: you have ratified this treaty, but do not implement it

**Holistic models:**
- Apply a diversity of tactics
- Raise awareness, protest, implement a policy, build up an alternative

**IMPACT ON RESOLVING GLOBAL PROBLEMS**

**Skepticism:**
- Civil society can’t resolve structural problems (inequality and poverty are still present, no impact)
- It is hard to attribute the changes to NGOs
- One can measure references to NGOs in public discourse and it might be a criteria
- In any case, the achievements are partial, local or national

**Human rights:**
- After 1970 we have achieved lots of rights we didn’t have, after 1980s NGOs became present in the UN
- Political apartheid has been eliminated
- From the middle XX century, more and more countries became abolitionist of capital punishment
- Reducing death penalty and torture

**Equality:**
- There is a much bigger gender equality than before 1960s (Liberal women peace movement)
- Greater equity in poor countries
- Popular empowerment in BRICS
- Success in redistribution – Venezuela (reduced inequality)
Disarmament and humanitarian aid
- Humanitarian relief, postwar recovery
- Changed situation with civil wars in Sudan or Syria, literally less dead people
- Disarmament, ban on land mines, chemical weapons

International law:
- International law is no longer between states, but individuals as well as states can use it, like applying for International Criminal Court
- International Criminal Court is an easier goal, while radical suggestions are important, but rare
- Coalition to promote Kyoto protocol (however, some major states have not signed it, like US or China)
- MAI initiative (which basically was about to give corporations right to sue governments for social policy changes) has been blocked

Changes in particular countries:
- Regime-oriented democratization movements, successful protests in Egypt and Tunisia, Arab Spring
- Real democracy introduced in some countries
- Local alternative institutions (Land movement in Brazil, where they have their own land, self-organization, cooperatives, and schools based on Paolo Freire pedagogy)

CAUSES OF SUCCESS

General principles:
- The activists need to have a vision of an alternative
- There is a need for legitimation for IGOs and only civil society can provide it
- The least challenge to the existing structures
- Fighting for inclusion (women rights) is easier; fighting for transformation of the system (Occupy) is much harder to translate into institutional change
- Combine national and international impact
- There is the goal to break the cycle of short-term and centrism in politics
- Continue to try and work for a long term (people are resistant to change before it is too late to solve a problem)
- One should overcome the “fatigue syndrome” (getting tired of working on the same issue for long)
- Resilient and tenacious: working on long-term success, long game is what important, being committed to values, passionate and patient (15-year long project of transforming the guns industry)
- There are activists very committed to their ideals and pragmatic ones, so there is a challenge to find a balance between seeking an ideal unrealistic solution versus agreeing on a working good solution
- Combine resistance to the existing institutions and establishment of alternative ones
- To be at the right historical structural moment permissive of change, good timing
- To be lucky that everything combines and works

Human and organizational resources:
- Have professional lawyers and diplomats
- Using modern business models of corporations for management, marketing and fundraising
- Have specific personal qualities: confidence, commitment, passion, energy to go over a long term
- Mobilize skills and resources with exceptional leadership
- Reflexivity (think how activists relate to the dominant power structures – many activists have their own interests vested in capitalism, how far are they embedded in capitalism and how far are they ready to go) Institutional resources to sustain a campaign (money, organizational infrastructure, media)
- Expertise and credibility are crucial resources - people trust their work for common good

Communication:
- Being more clear and persuasive (bringing evidence in numbers)
Cooperation:
- Leverage: being allied with larger public opinion
- Efficient networking with partners
- Finding links with governments
- Coalitions with other actors: local NGOs, IGOs, businesses, national politicians
- Connect and collaborate globally

Tactics:
- They understand how the political process works and how to insert into it, they have very sophisticated communication strategies, they can put pressure on states to pursue certain policy
- Have clever politics and clever tactics (have a good understanding how capitalism works today)
- Decide whether to process a case publicly to protect people

Holistic models:
- Objective conditions + spoken by CSOs + altered moods + spoken by CSOs + INGOs and IGOs accept for legitimation
- Work locally + inform and communicate + use positive opportunities of globalization
- Crisis + pressures of civic society + enlightened leadership + power to pressure
- Vision + personal qualities + institutional resources + clever tactics + reflexivity + conducive historical moment + luck

6. CONCLUSION

Despite certain criticism in the very existence of global civil society, it does consist of movements, NGOs, and funds, working on local, national, and world levels. It is comprised of few grand and numerous regular NGOs, which are small and exclusive vs. huge and inclusive, grassroots vs. elitist. Their influence is difficult to measure, however, there are opinions that elitist NGOs from the North, UN organizations, wealthy funds are more influential, but grassroots protest movements have effect too. Most NGO activists are male white Westerners with a very good university education, experts in law, economy or political science, they constitute a definite elite; on the other hand protest are popular. Usually activists demonstrate commitment, value human rights, believe in the possibility of change, have more global views. Western NGOs tend to have a more individualistic approach, while some governments and Global South movements – collectivist one. Many experts don’t see a crisis, but rather separate global problems, when others confirm global crisis of economic and political nature. Global civil society challenges the issues of human rights, inequalities, elitism, war, surveillance, and ecological crisis. They put it on agenda by monitoring, analyzing, raising awareness, advocacy, and direct action on protests. They have drawn attention to a number of issues. Human resources, informing, cooperation, advocacy, and crisis – all contribute to success. Basically, the suggestions of alternatives are conformist, reformist, and transformist, and some countries even implement them. Methods of influence include mass practices, information campaigns, protests, and advocacy. Global civic activism has been successful in promotion of human rights, equality, disarmament, humanitarian aid, international law. Recipe of success consists of: vision, personal qualities, institutional resources, clever tactics, reflexivity, conducive historical moment, and luck.

7. APPENDICIES

BIBLIOGRAPHY


**EXPERTS LIST**

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**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

With experts for the research

“THE CRISIS IN THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM AND CIVIL ACTIVISM”

**INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon. At first a few words about me and the research. My name is Dmytro Khutkyy; I am sociologist from Ukraine, currently working in Germany as post-doctoral visiting scholar in the frame of Erasmus Mundus Program. I conduct research in the University of Jena under supervision of Hartmut Rosa. The aim of the inquiry is to comprehend the role of global civil society in revealing and resolving the global crisis. Our interview will last less than an hour, it will be tape-recorded and I will cite you personally as an expert, if you agree.
1. BACKGROUND
   1.1. PROFESSIONAL STATUS
       1.1.1. What is your current professional title?
   1.2. THEORETICAL APPROACH
       1.2.1. What is your theoretical framework for explanation of global crisis and global civil society?
   1.3. RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
       1.3.1. What professional experience do you have or what research have you conducted about global civil society?

2. GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY
   2.1. ACTORS
       2.1.1. What global civil society actors acting on global scale are the most influential?
   2.2. LEADERS
       2.2.1. Who are the most influential individuals in global civil society?
   2.3. PARTICIPANTS
       2.3.1. What is the social profile of activists of these associations?
   2.4. VALUES
       2.4.1. What values or ideologies do these activists share?

3. INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CRISIS
   3.1. EXPLANATIONS
       3.1.1. How do you view and explain the global crisis?

4. IMPACT ON REVEALING THE CRISIS
   4.1. PROBLEMS CRITICIZED
       4.1.1. What global problems do the NGOs criticize or challenge?
   4.2. MECHANISMS
       4.2.1. How do they express the critique or opposition?
   4.3. IMPACT ON REVEALING GLOBAL PROBLEMS
       4.3.1. What is their impact on revealing global problems?
   4.4. CAUSES OF EFFECT
       4.4.1. Why are they influential in it?

5. IMPACT ON RESOLVING THE CRISIS
   5.1. MODELS
       5.1.1. What is their vision of the desired world order?
   5.2. MECHANISMS
       5.2.1. How do they introduce the desired changes?
   5.3. IMPACT ON RESOLVING GLOBAL PROBLEMS
       5.3.1. What is their impact on resolving global problems?
   5.4. CAUSES OF SUCCESS
       5.4.1. Why are they successful in it?

6. CONCLUSION
   6.1. LITERATURE
       6.1.1. What literature on the topic will you advise to read further?
   6.2. EXPERTS
       6.2.1. What experts would you recommend to interview next?
   6.3. FINAL REMARKS
       6.3.1. If you have any final remarks, please share them.

Thank you very much for the interview!