

Transformative power of civil society

[Society](#)



Apartheid divided people and was in favour of white people and left the majority of black people poor. This created inequality between black people and white people, thus this resulted in the people in the people who are disadvantaged by apartheid to form civil societies to help fight poverty themselves. This essay will critically discuss whether civil society has transformative potential in south Africa and also to what extent does it have transformative potential, that is if it has transformative potential.

This paper will discuss this by looking at what at what civil society is, looking at development and how ordinary people challenge forced development (top down) by engaging in civil society. In this paper three case studies namely the Victoria mxenge and amadiba crisis committee and the xenophobia protest will be used as examples to analyze the topic further. Essentially this paper will attempt to show that civil society is both transformative and non-transformative. Development has been debated by social scientist and they came up with different theories of development.

Development theories are trying to equalize the inequalities that were created by apartheid and analyse and find reasons about why things are like this in south Africa. The theories of development include modernization theory, dependency theory, people centred development theory and sen's development theory. Modernization theory implies that western culture is more superior and modernization theory looks at the different levels of technological development across the globe and explores development in terms of inequality (Graaf, 2001).

According to Davids (2005) modernization theory focuses on the fact that if the less developed country wants to develop then it should follow the developed countries. According to Davids (2005, 09) “ modernization theory regards western culture to all others”. This notion of modernization takes us back to apartheid where the western culture was seen as the ideal culture out of the cultures we have in south Africa argues David (2005). This makes the people to start civil societies so that they can voice out their views.

Roodt (2001) argues that civil society is formed when the formal government becomes more distant from rural people and the people decide to do things for themselves. Modernization theory is often challenged by civil society by counteracting and challenging the status quo. Graaf (2001) talks about the two main approaches for development which is top-down and bottom up approach. The two approaches monitors how development happens the people that are needed to participate in order for development to happen.

According to Roodt (2001, 469) argues that “ participation is seen as one of the ingredients necessary to promote sustained development”, thus roodt further says that “ this not to say that development equals sustained development”. The “ top- down approach to development refers to the tendency of the state to implement development with little or no consultation with the people who are meant to benefit” Roodt (2001, 469). For example when wanting to develop the poor in south Africa the rich people will come up with ways to do develop them and the poor people will not have a say or will have a little voice. Bottom up approach of development is when the beneficiaries of any proposed development participate through their organizations in determining the type of

<https://assignbuster.com/transformational-power-of-civil-society/>

development most relevant to their needs, and may also participate in the implementation and subsequent running or monitoring of the development” Roodt (2001, 469). This approach is dependent on the needs of the community and its about how the community want to develop its self and not getting some one from the state to tell the community what they should do.

But its about the community telling the state what they are doing (Roodt, 2001). The bottom-up approach goes hand in hand with civil society and sen’s theory of development. According to Roodt (2001) civil society is the part is the part of the society outside the boundaries of both government and thefamilywhich is often seen to be the source of democratic innovation and of resistance to government excess. This means that people create social movements that does not include the government getting involved and so civil society is non-governmental.

Walby (2009) argues that the aims of civil society is to respond in changes inresources, power, and material positioning, revorking the frames and material positioning and reworking the frames and discourses that provide meaning. Blaaw (1999) argues that “ civil society is increasingly being looked on as the source of alternative and more equaltable forms of society. Civil society focuses more on people centred development and according to Scholte (1999, 07) Civil society exists whenever people mobilise through voluntary associations in initiatives to shape the social order.

Civil society challenges top down approach of development because it gets people involve in their own development by challenging the notion of top

down approach For example according to Ismail (2009) Victoria Mxenge was building houses for poor people because the houses that the government was building were too small and the government a lot of time to build the house so they built the houses. Note Ismail (2009) notes that since South Africa is a developing country so poor people regards or acknowledges learning and education to overcome poverty.

The case study of Victoria Mxenge Housing Development Association part of the south African homeless peoples federation, its an organization made up of women who wants to develop themselves by forming a housing social movement Ismail (2009). In this case study civil society has transformative potential because previously during apartheid “ in South Africa poor women have been excluded from mainstream education by apartheid legislation, lack of money, no easy access to educational facilities, or social prejudices which dictate that women stay at home to care for the family” Ismail (2009, 282).

So by doing this civil society changed the social order or the functioning of the country by breaking the boundaries. According to Ismail (2009, 292) “ The VM women built on traditional notions of African ‘ motherhood’ but went further in important ways and developed political skills in mobilising resources and learnt through great personal endeavour, patience, sacrifice and rigour but seldom developed a feminist consciousness and therefore made no analysis of patriarchy or capitalis

According to Ismail (2009) this social movement also broke the of women learning in informal and non- formal way, there for civil society transformed

them because they can now participate in learning in their every day life and support their daily struggles. Ismail (2009, 01) further says that “ in South Africa informal education and learning has developed so that excluded groups do have some opportunity for learning. This development is people centred because if people where not there it wouldn't take place.

Furthermore “ this development response has given rise to a ‘ poor women's pedagogy’ in which they become the advocators and innovators of development practice”. Victoria mxenge did have transformative potential because it built house for the poor and made a difference and changed the social order that not only can government can build houses for the poor but also women can build houses on their own.

However in the end the organization did not have transformative because Victoria mxenge was taking loans from banks to build the houses left the organization in debt and in that sense Victoria mxenge didn't have transformative potential. Furthermore the state ended up getting involved in the matter and they did not have much of a say now in the development so it didn't have transformative potential because they did not change the top-down approach of development. Victoria mxenge shows that civil society can be transformative and non transformative.

Roodt (2001) talks about sen's theory, Sen's theory argues that freedom is the primary end and principal means of development and Victoria mxenge has lost that freedom because they did not choose in the end, but the government choose for them and Victoria mxenge doesn't have collective agency. Sen's theory of development talks about development as freedom that looks at human well-being and how to evaluate it. According to <https://assignbuster.com/transformative-power-of-civil-society/>

Roodt(2001) Sen's theory values that in order for people or a community to develop, freedom should be taken as the foundation for development.

Furthermore more the theory talks about substantial freedoms or opportunities in the sense that if people have substantial freedoms they will have the " ability to achieve what they value, engage in economic transactions , participate in political values will be equal to the capability to function in ways they consider valuable achieving thegoalsthey have set for themselves" Roodt, 2001. Sen's theory is people centered and participation is important in order for development to take place and thus democracy matters in the sense that choice matters and so the theory takesequalityand rights of the people seriously (Roodt, 2001).

So this means that people centred way of taking decisions about what the community wants and what is valuable is important. sen's theory of development has human agency because public participation is important. " Globalizationrefers to the fact that we all increasingly live in one world , so groups and nations become interdependent" Giddens (2006). The interdependency takes place economically, technologywise andcommunicationwise. During apartheid in south Africa, the global civil society got involved and helped to fight apartheid.

According to Klungman (2011, 09) " global civil society is manifestation of social energies released by awakening of human consciousness to possibilities for creating societies that nurture and rejoice in a love of all human beings. According to Scholte (1999) argues and says that global civil society is ensures peace around the world for example if the is war global

civil society has to fight and try to create peace there. So in the context of south Africa global civil society helped and fought apartheid. In this context civil society has shown to have transformative potential by changing the social order that the apartheid government was using and brought democracy in south Africa. When globalization takes place there are people who are benefiting from it and some are not benefiting but are actually disadvantaged by globalization. For example looking franchise wise McDonaldization is not benefiting South Africa in the sense that they build their restaurants but more of the money that they get goes to their country of origin so it does not do much on South Africa's economy.

So it does not transform South Africa in that context however it does transform South Africa by creating jobs for the unemployed and they get money so it does have transformative power because it helps fight unemployment. Blaauw (2003, 02) argues that "the economic and social choices that government entails for national government also have enormous implications for civil society organizations and formations". By this Blaauw (2003) argues that the decisions that the government takes economically and socially affects civil society.

Furthermore Blaauw (2003, 02) argues that "the new global reconfiguration, which compels governments to become more responsive to financial markets than the needs of their poor citizens, has met with resistance from social forces ostensibly because of the dialectic of inclusion and exclusion". This means that since when the state gets involved in global reconfiguration it stops paying attention to the poor and pays more attention to globalisation. In addition Blaauw (2003) argues that as "global markets forces rise the <https://assignbuster.com/transformative-power-of-civil-society/>

role of the state as an economic provider lacks and this calls for a need for civil society to develop and grow”. The people respond to being disadvantaged by globalization by striking, forming civil society groups and some by sticking more to their ways of doing things. For example people are afraid of getting involved in globalization because they think they will lose they will lose their money.

For example looking at people in eastern cape are still farming for themselves to resist development and globalization. For that reason civil society has changed that and therefore it did not show to have transformative potential, because it did not change the social order of doing things. Looking at the under development in the transkei Bundy cited in (Graaf & Venter, 2001) argues that poverty and self-reliance in the former Transkei region was not in the form of the community not wanting to participate to the modern economic sector opportunities.

Amadiba community crisis committee is Community-based organisation which has members of about three thousand local people from Amadiba. Amadiba crisis development fought the lobby group against Xolobeni sand dune mining walby (2009). The organisation was fighting to get the mine back so that it can be theirs and amadiba favour sustainable community based eco-tourism argues Walby (2009). by this the community was in charge of their development and the development it their choice . madiba crisis committee has also partnership with ACC and Sustainable community based tourism Civil society has transformative potential because looking at the amadiba case study the community fought to get the mine back from the people from australia. The people fought by themselves without the help of <https://assignbuster.com/transformative-power-of-civil-society/>

the government and the government was not part of the people who wanted the mine. This brought transformation to the community because they were fighting for one thing and with the same vision and they got what the mine that they were fighting for .

However even though they got the mine they are not using it which brings the point that civil society can have transformative potential and non transformative potential. They don't have transformative potential in the sense that the mine is not benefiting them in any way because it is not opened and they are fighting alone and taking each other to court. Its also not transformative because the people who are fighting might be both members of the state and business and it leads to conflict, so now they don't know what to choose between the two. his shows that amadiba crisis committee have agency, because it manage to change the social functioning . The paragraph shows that one organization can have society having transformative potential and also not having transformative potential. During may 2008 south African citizens started a xenophobic attack , where by the citizens were removing people who came from other countries to work here while they are not south African citizens were removed (Bond, 2010).

Bond (2010) furthermore argues that the xenophobic attacks were violent such that 62 migrants were murdered while hundreds of people which includes children and women were attacked and some were raped. Bond (2010) argues that not only did the people attack the migrants but they also burnt their houses and some of the houses were destroyed. According to Bond (2010) peoples reasons for the xenophobic attacks was employment in

the sense that they saw the migrants taking cheap labour and taking most of the job opportunities.

Employment was the key factor for the xenophobic attack because Bond (2010) mentions that some of the citizens were saying that the migrants come in to the country and open businesses so jealousy was also involved and some said it's because the number of foreigners was uncontrollable. So this was implemented because of the lack of effective communication between communities and the state so it caused conflict and the citizens were angry and decided to do things by themselves and remove the foreigners out of the country.

In this case civil society had transformative potential because the community did what they wanted to do because the government was not doing anything for them. A civil society was formed then to move the people who are not South African citizens out of the country. The movement was not formal in the sense that was not like the Amadiba Crisis Committee or Victoria Mxenge because this social movement didn't have a name and it was a group of people from different parts of South Africa who saw the same problem and started the attack. And it had transformative potential in a bad way, thus according to Scholte (1999) civil society can be good and evil. Xenophobia brought social change because it resulted in the people going back to their countries and South African citizens getting the job.

The movement used a bottom-up approach of development but the question is, is it really bottom-up because they might have been someone who incited it. The transformation also has consequences which resulted in people

loosing their lives . he whole xenophobia transformed the image of south Africa and it made people to have doubts about whether the country will be able to host the 2010 FIFA World cup safely . It led to people wanting to change their minds about coming to watch the world cup. The transformation was bad in the sense that it disturbed south africa's interrelationship with other countries. So this brings out the proves that this social movement was creating the bounderies that globalization is trying to break.

So the transformation was against globalization in the sense that people were now not comfortable coming here and they lost their trust in south Africa. This negative transformation leads to a drop in the number of tourists that comes in the country and this ended up affecting the economic growth which ended up affecting those people who started xenophobia. However while people were chasing foreigners out of the country the was also civil societies formed which had people who were protecting the victims by hiding them (Bond, 2010).

Bond(2010) argues that the civil societies that were formed to protect the foreigners used mostly churches to accommodate the people who were being chased out of the country until the xenophobic attacks calms down. This brings the thought that not everyone sees things the same way because some saw the chasing the people out of the country as not good and others saw it as being good. This shows that civil societies can clash with one another and throught the clashing it shows that civil society had a transformative potential because a lot of the foreigners when back to their countries.

To conclude civil society has shown to have transformative potential as well as not being transformative potential in south Africa. I have proved that civil society has transformative potential it has helped the country to fight apartheid and change the social order of the way things were done during apartheid. This proved that civil society has a lot of transformative power when people have the same goal and showed that participation is important in order to change things.

In the case of xenophobia civil society showed to have transformative potential in the sense that it achieved the goal of the social movement and removed the foreigners from the country. The xenophobic attack showed that civil society can be can be evil as Scholte (1999) argues because during the social movement people were killed and some were hurted and this attack showed that civil society can be negative because people ended up looting houses of the people who were foreigners. The xenophobic attack also showed that civil societies can clash because people want different things.

The Victoria Mxenge showed that civil society doesn't have transformative potential because the organization did not change the top down approach. Furthermore the amadiba crisis committee showed that civil society has transformative potential because the people fought for the mine and got the mine. However it showed that even if people form civil societies to fight for things at times they end up not using the things they are fighting for when they have it. By compering this I can conclude that civil society has more transformative potential in south Africa since apartheid as it has changed many social orders.

<https://assignbuster.com/transformative-power-of-civil-society/>