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# Civic Space in Arab Countries

## *Concepts and Problematics*





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## Introduction

This text involves two themes:

1. Drawing the features of the conceptual framework adopted by the Arab NGO Network for Development in looking at civil society and its role and presenting the package of concepts associated with it;
2. Addressing some of the problems that concern civil society at the present time, especially in Arab countries, in light of the transformations of the last decade (after 2010).

This text is a discussion paper submitted by ANND. It was developed through the civic space working program, in parallel with the regional report on the subject, which is a necessary companion to discussing the content of this paper.

The paper aims to launch a critical discussion of the reality of civil society and social and popular movements in light of regional and global transformations, especially after the Arab Spring, and global other developments, including the spread of the Coronavirus epidemic and the questions it raised regarding the entire civilizational pattern.

## Concepts and Terminology

This paper approaches concepts related to civil society from the required scientific perspective, in addition to practical terms allowing a convergence of views during practice, networking, and work among civil society organizations and networks. Its content is also based on scientific and academic contributions and the accumulated experiences of ANND and its members, in addition to writers, researchers, journalists, and activists from the region. It aims to impart a living knowledge that is directed at the service of change. Inevitably, it is dynamic and evolving, but does not claim to replace other knowledge and experiences. Thus, the following concepts will be discussed consecutively:

- 1) Development cooperation
- 2) Civic Space-Civil Society-CSO triad
- 3) CSO categories
- 4) Civic-Communal-Non-Governmental triad
- 5) Popular Movements-Social Movements-CSO triad

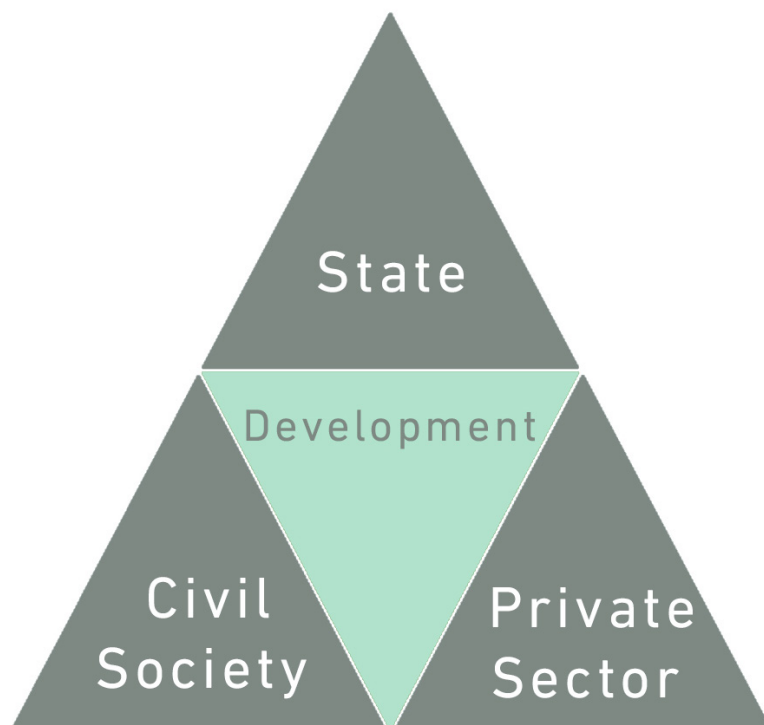
In its treatment of the above issues, the text does not fully depart from the prevailing approaches within civil society networks circles and the developmental-legal literature. However, the level of criticism will be high, in line with the approach of ANND and independent development-human rights organizations. The Arab Spring in 2011 and the current developments in the region and in the world, including the Coronavirus pandemic revealed structural distortion in the civilizational pattern, lifestyles, and the economy. It may even require a radical reconsideration of the entire development paradigm from its foundation.

## I. Development Cooperation

The golden age of the expansion of NGOs and the role of civil society in development is linked to the transformations after the collapse of the bipolar system and the emergence of the concept of human development in the early nineties, which was also accompanied by the series of global summits organized by the United Nations at the time. This does not mean that the concept of civil society and its organizations did not exist. The forms of voluntary association and interaction between citizens (people, subjects in previous regimes) and their charitable or religious associations, unions, craft syndicates, and so on, have been around since humankind moved from simple forms of organization to its modern or pre-modern forms.

However, the dominant contemporary developmental (and political) discourse has given these concepts and organizations special forms and made them one of their elements. Therefore, it is correct to include civil society concepts within the conceptual framework of development (sustainable human development, according to UN vocabulary) and within the concept of the triangular partnership between the public and private sectors and civil society (the third sector), which considers the latter as a key partner in development.

Figure 1: Development Triad



The above entails an epistemological shift, based on overcoming the prevailing division in the traditional growth and development theories that revolved around the dichotomy of dissonance and concurrence between believing exclusively in the role of the state as a leader of development or believing in the role of the market. Contemporary development theory has provided a way out of this false dichotomy, looking at the state and the market as tools for managing development and society that must be together in the service of all people, the ultimate focus of development. The role of civil society emerged on this basis, in addition to the previously recognized roles of the public sector, on one hand, and the business sector and profit-making economic activity, on the other. Civil society is sometimes called the third sector.

The transition from dissonant bilateral encounter to a tripartite partnership based on complementarity was not merely a quantitative addition of partners. It was a qualitative shift in the approach to development and in the basic value regulating the relationship between the parties from the competition and conflict over gains to cooperation, integration, and the constant search for dynamic settlement between the parties that contribute to advancing the development process and achieve the interests of all parties, albeit in varying proportions, but in by virtue of the logic of life itself and the logic of dialogue and balance.

### ***Partnership and Partnerships***

The developmental approach includes the need to distinguish between the use of the term partnership (singular) and the term partnerships (plural). The first falls within the concept of development itself, which is meant by the tripartite partnership between the state, the private sector, and civil society, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, the concept of partnerships in the plural form relates to the practical and procedural space, and is often associated with the so-called major groups or multi-stakeholders. They are formats often used during the organization of meetings, forums, and consultation processes, and are intended to represent the various stakeholders from governments, private companies, academics, experts, civil society organizations, networks, parliamentarians, UN organizations, international organizations, donors, and the media.

Expanding participation and inviting as many groups as possible is useful and what is meant by the concept of partnership in the first place. But it is also necessary to distinguish between the procedural level and the foundational level of the concept of development itself, so that this does not lead to ignoring the qualitative participation of the private sector (which is governed by profit), civil



society (non-profit), and governance institutions (which manage the development process through their legitimacy and responsibility by law, which has to note the balance between the interests of the different groups and ensure sustainability). Therefore, the concept of multiple partnerships cannot replace the concept of tripartite development partnership, which must respect the diversity of the principles guiding the work of each party, the independence of each partner from the other two partners, and the commitment to the limits of the roles that each partner is supposed to play. In this sense, when civil society turns into a partner in development, it must play a crucial role in preventing the state from deviating from its responsibility and the market from deviation. Both deviations impede development as a comprehensive and long-term transformation of society towards justice, human rights, and sustainability.

In the following paragraphs, the related concepts and terms are discussed within the above framework.

What is the difference between Civic Space, Civil Society, and Civil Society Organizations?

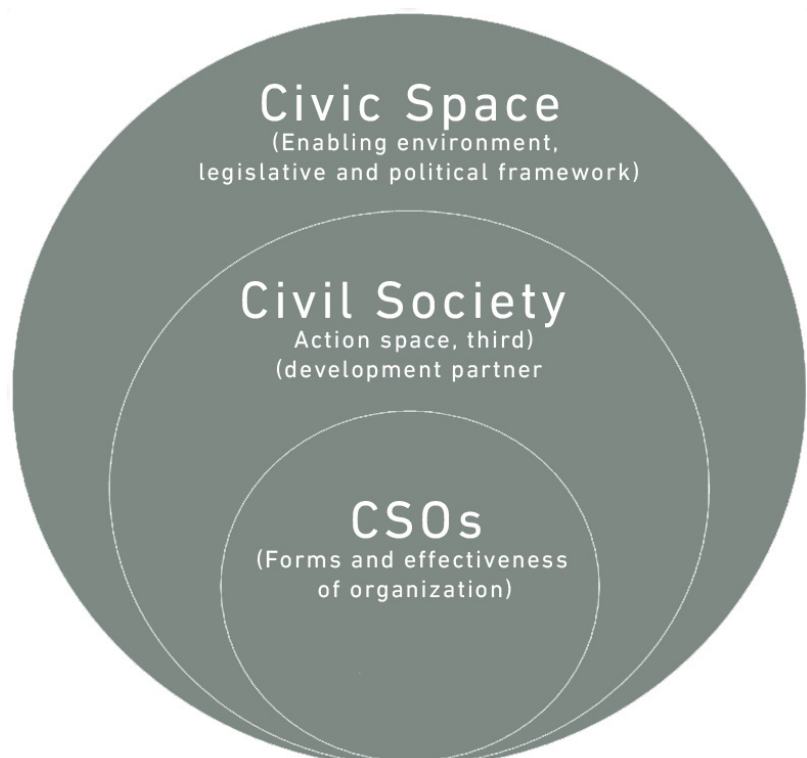
### ***Defining Civic Space***

The literature on the definition of civil society and CSOs is more widespread than the literature on civic space. The sequence governing these terms is described below in a simplified form:

- CSOs are the forms of organization and assembly.
- They exist within the civil society space, which is distinct from the state, the market, and the family.
- All of which function and act within the civic space that constitutes the environment in which civil society develops and in which the conditions for the effectiveness of civil society organizations are determined, and the role of society itself in the development partnership and its ability to influence.

## **2. Civic Space- Civil Society- CSO Triad**

Figure 2: Tripartite Partnership in Development





In this context, civic space can be defined as follows: “Civic space is the political, legislative, social and economic environment which enables citizens to come together, share their interests and concerns and act individually and collectively to influence and shape their societies. Civic space enables people to pursue multiple, at times competing, points of view.”

On the other hand, CIVICUS defines civic space as “the set of conditions that allow civil society and individuals to organize, participate and communicate freely and without discrimination, and in doing so, influence the political and social structures around them. Core civic space rights – the rights to freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression – are guaranteed by law, in most national constitutions and international and regional human rights instruments and as part of States ratification of these conventions are part [of] their obligations under international law.”

The two definitions contain the main defining elements of civic space. However, the first is neutral and the second is biased—that is, it carries a specific direction and choice. The neutral element in the two definitions lies in describing civic space as the sum of conditions (CIVICUS definition) or the political, legislative, economic, and social environment. The bias appears in defining a specific choice, such as setting a goal to influence policies, facilitating convergence and action, or guaranteeing basic rights. These are features of the possible civic space for civil society. So, is it no longer civic space if it constitutes an obstacle? And what do we call it in this case? Uncivic space!

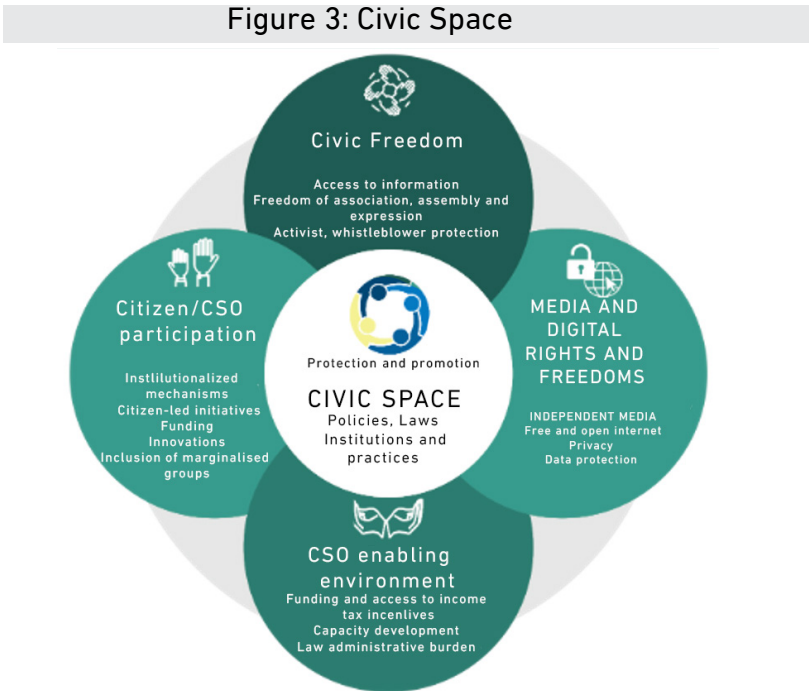
The definition is consistent with the modern legal-developmental perspective, which considers that the civic character (civil society, civic space) necessarily implies affiliation to this development-law system and to a modern form that goes beyond charitable work, what is termed as a civil society. It does not raise any practical problems from the perspective of organizations and networks affiliated with the global mainstream, especially in the countries of the North, but it may raise some difficulties in developing countries where the transformation of societal organization according to European models has not occurred.

Therefore, another option would be to define civic space in a neutral and comprehensive sense, as “the political, legislative, social, and economic environment (or set of conditions) that enables citizens to meet, share their common interests and concerns, and take individual or collective action to influence their lives and society, within the civic space that lies outside the public (the state), the private (the family), and the market.”

This scrutiny means that the civil space also includes the environment in which NGOs, charities, and others operate, whose work is limited to providing services (for example) and does not involve influencing policies. In developing countries in particular, this category should not be excluded from the definition. The definition of the civic here is neutral (outside the public, the private, and the market) and does not adopt a specific direction, the methods of formation, or the methods of work or the goals. In short, civic space is the environment in which civil society functions and is affected by and affects all its components.

**Primary Features of Civic Space**

Defining civil space as the environment surrounding the movement and effectiveness of civil society requires identifying the main features that make up this space. It is the sum of policies, legislation, institutions, and practices carried out by public authorities and the private sector at the national and global levels (including donors), which could facilitate or impede civil society effectiveness and the formation and work of CSOs, or that define the limits of citizen participation and the enjoyment of related fundamental rights, such as the right to establish associations and unions, the right to assemble, demonstrate, and act peacefully in defense of rights, or the right to freedom of expression and access to information.



According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), civic space is made up of four circles: participation (civil society organizations and citizen participation), civil liberties, media freedom and digital rights, and the enabling environment for CSOs (resources, capabilities, procedures) (see Figure 3). These dimensions are interconnected and equally important. The abridgment of any dimension will reflect negatively on the others, leading to a general shrinkage in the civil space and reduced civil society effectiveness and ability of organizations and individuals to exercise their rights.

The relationship between the constituent elements, their interdependence, and interaction, determines the general extent to which the civic space is considered broad and facilitates the exercise of these rights and helps civil society and its organizations to play the desired developmental role and to exercise full partnership with the state and the private sector. The term shrinking civic space expresses a situation characterized by restrictions on CSOs, citizens, and civil society, in a way that prevents the exercise of their role, whether this restriction comes through laws, in access to resources, during practice, or policies.

Civic space cannot disappear completely. However in totalitarian and tyrannical regimes, under military dictatorships, or in conditions of war and the control of extremist armed organizations or criminal gangs, civic space can be reduced to very narrow limits. Many Arab countries witnessed relatively long periods of such a situation after the formation of nation states post-World War II and it still exists in some countries.

## ***Defining Civil Society***

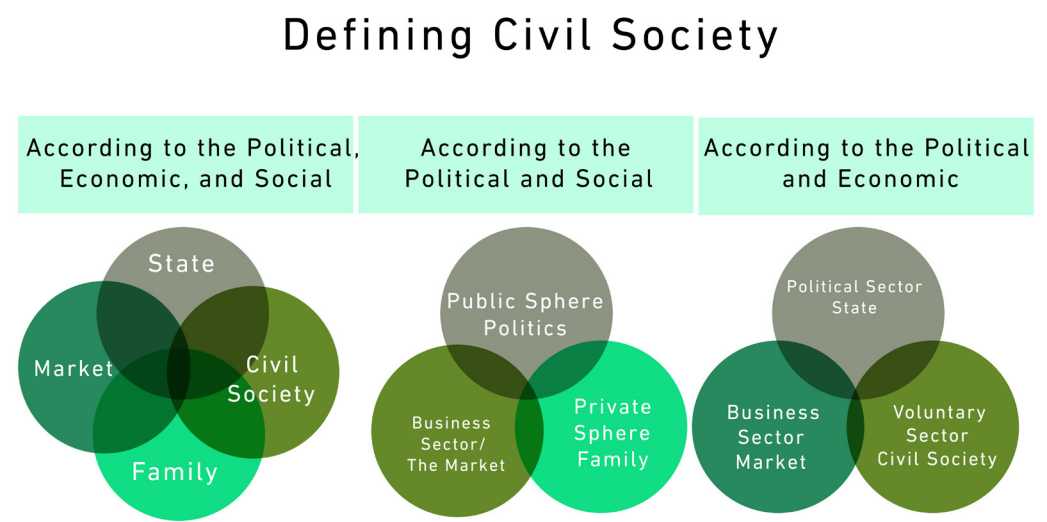
Literature defining civil society is many and as varied as the diversity of research levels and intellectual and practical backgrounds, including within the circle of networks, organizations, and movements active in the field. ANND and others active in this field find that unifying definitions is an unrealistic and unscientific task. Therefore, based on its function and role as an actor in influencing the course of societal development, it prefers a functional definition of civil society. It must be objective, flexible, neutral, and thorough enough to allow it to function, frame its work, and build alliances effectively in the service of achieving equitable development and respect for human rights. This functional definition does not dispense with identifying the more in-depth studies that deal with civil society and its formation, and which criticize it from outside its system.

In this context, the following functional definition is suggested:

**“Civil society is the sphere (space, circle) of social formation and action, which exists outside the political authority and the state and its institutions; outside the business sector as an economic activity striving for profit; and outside the family as a private field governed by its own rules. It is the civil space that lies outside the public (the state), the private (the family), and the market. The institutional forms and the forms of action and movement that civil society takes are different from the institutional forms of the state, the family, and the market.”**

This definition notes the position of civil society in relation to the political (the state), the economic (the market), and the private social (the family) and does not neglect any of them. Civil society could thus be considered the “fourth sector” and not the third that does not consider the family as an independent field. It also goes beyond defining civil society as non-governmental, which blurs the boundaries between the private sector, which is governed by profit, and civil society that does not aim for profit or operate according to market laws.

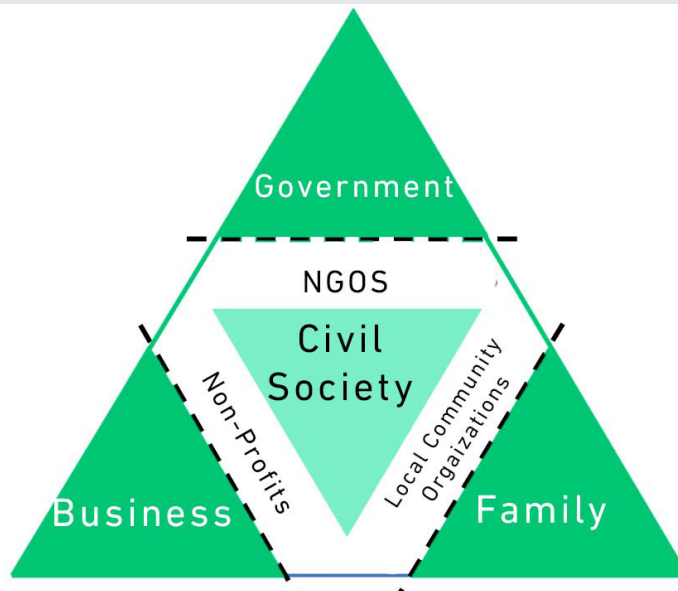
Figure 4: Civic Sphere from Various Perspectives



Source: Planning and Action on the SDGs, Training Guide: ANND, CAWTAR, UNDP

However, the issue is not as simple as it seems. The boundaries between the different spheres are not evident, nor are they fixed. They change according to place and time and based on each country's characteristics and nature of its civic space. An experience in Japan illustrates the areas of intersection (Figure 4 and Figure 5). from an experience in Japan.

Figure 5: Overlapping Spaces in Society



Source: Experience of a civic coalition in Japan.

The main idea here is the presence of areas of contact and interaction between one space and another. It focuses attention on the great diversity in the patterns of relations and interactions between the various actors. It also avoids strict positions and practices that would negatively affect cooperation between networks, communal and civic organizations, unions, social movements, and all other civil society components (a point which will be addressed later), thus weakening the ability to influence policies, improve development, and respect rights.

For example, local associations in their traditional forms (local cultural and sports clubs, neighborhood associations), as well as associations classified as “communal” (charitable, religious, family) are the space of contact and interaction between the private sphere (family - household) and civil society. On the other hand, non-profit institutions, economic and social projects, and cooperatives are located

in the space of contact and interaction between the business sector and civil society. Modern NGOs that engage in partnerships with the state (and donors) in implementing development projects and providing services can be viewed as a space of contact and interaction between the state and civil society.

## ***Defining CSOs***

CSOs can be defined as:

**“Civil society organizations are the various forms of organization in associations, committees, unions, bodies, campaigns, networks, and movements, real or virtual, structured hierarchically, horizontally, or unstructured, that operate in the social space without their goals being the pursuit of power or profit and which do not identify with state institutions, neither businesses, nor the family/household.”**

Civil society organizations are formed when citizens establish voluntary frameworks or movements to defend a cause, claim a right, advocate for an issue, or provide services. They take various forms and adopt different levels of organization. Civil society encompasses:

1. Formations with an organized institutional structure (some clearly hierarchical):

- Charitable Organizations,
- Trade unions, business associations, and professional federations,
- Local organizations, such as grassroots associations, farmers’ groups, local sports and cultural clubs, and loan funds.

2. More flexible forms of organization (some horizontal):

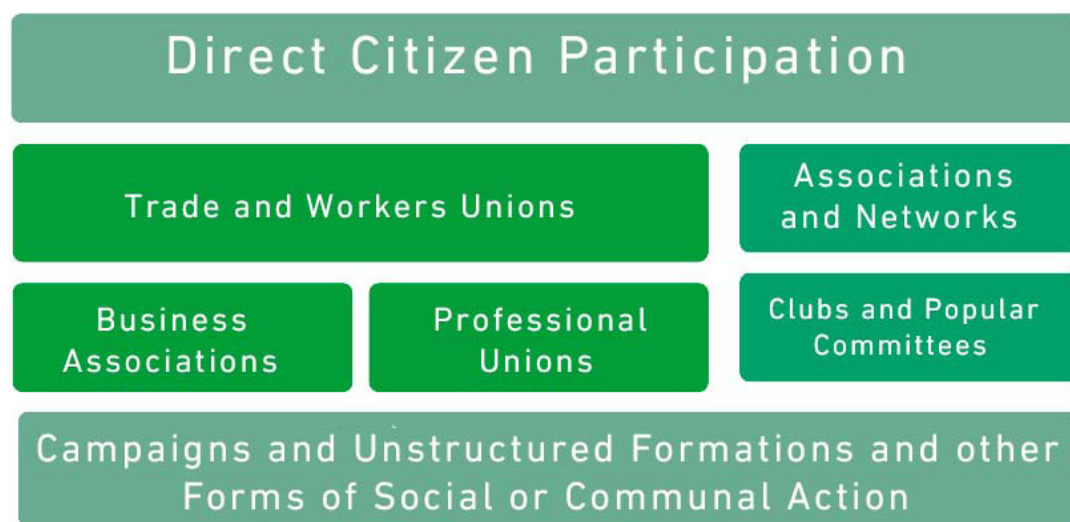
- Social movements, campaigns,
- Networks, virtual collaboration groups, lobbying and advocacy groups.

3. In addition to research centers, universities, the media, and similar forms.

All these forms of organizations differ from the state, the market, and the family.

From a CSO perspective, they are not limited to officially registered organizations, especially in the presence of political and legislative limitations, direct repression, or prohibition of associations and NGOs. They also include transitional forms that express themselves regularly on a specific topic, even if it is temporary, or people who meet and organize around a fixed issue related to identity (family, tribe, sect).

Figure 6: Various Forms of CSOs



Source: ANND in ESCWA Paper to Doha Conference

### ***Civil vs. Communal***

Development literature sometimes distinguishes between the concepts of civil society and communal space. Civil society refers to a space and organizations that are based on voluntary modern affiliation. Communal associations, on the other hand, are based on primary affiliations (family, clan, religion, sect, ethnicity). This distinction has an epistemological benefit. However, it is necessary to avoid simplification and hierarchical classifications that consider one type of work and regularity as being inferior to another. As a top to bottom approach, the latter may lead to divergence between various actors and lead to generalization and simplicity, where a certain category is attributed “praiseworthy” qualities (modern, professional, has programs, has good governance, is voluntary, has program management skills, and has organized budgets). However, in practice it is not possible to attribute a set of specific characteristics (good or otherwise) to a particular category, due to the great deal of overlap and similarities in distortions or capabilities between the various categories of organizations and associations that go beyond the communal-civil classification. Among other organizations, ANND believes that distinction in establishment motives of an association should not be an impediment in being considered part of civil society and civic space. The above distinction should not be used to justify the distance or mutual exclusion between the various components.

CSOs do not all adopt the same concepts, principles, and work rules, nor do they express the interests of all social groups without discrimination (labor



unions, employers’ unions). They may specialize in a specific category or issue (environment, women’s rights) or general issues (human rights, development). Some CSOs also adopt the concepts of human rights, development, and change, while others may adopt different orientations. Motives and approaches differ from one group to another (human rights approach, charitable approach). Therefore, it is necessary to maintain an objective and neutral position regarding the definition (civil society, CSOs). The values, goals, and principles guiding the organization’s work thus become standards of alliance and network building.

The distinction between what is considered a civil society organization and what is not should be based on criteria, not details. That is, that their goal is neither power nor profit, and that they are not part of the scope and functions of the family.

Nevertheless, there are differing views on some types of organizations or associations, summarized in the table below.

**Table 1: Contentious Points in Considering an Organizations as Part of Civil Society**

<i>Form of Association</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Cooperatives	Although sometimes considered as a type of CSO, they seek profit through cooperation and distribution of profits among members. In Figure 5, it is part of the intersection between civil society and the private sector. It is also a component of solidarity or social economy.
Political Parties	Opposition parties are considered by some as CSOs. However, they aim to reach power. Thus, it is inappropriate to consider them as CSOs in practice, especially in the Arab region, where there is no real distinction in political parties between political and civic action.
Business Associations	As business unions, they are similar to crafts, workers, and professional unions. They are considered part of CSOs that defend the interests of its members. However, companies aim for profit and are not considered as such. In practice, there is still a long way to go in this region to arrive at a practice that respects the relative margin of autonomy between business companies and business unions, and the same is true for the establishment of a social dialogue that respects the plurality of interests.

Religious Associations	They are sometimes political parties under the guise of associations, which means that the definition does apply and that they must be treated as political parties. However communal organizations with a religious character are part of the communal-civil sphere.
Family Associations	Households and families are a private space that does not belong to civil society. However, the definition applies to family or ethnic associations, as communal formations to defend or serve their members or specific demands.
Municipalities	Municipalities are elected local authorities, responsible to citizens for providing services and maintaining rights. The matter is sometimes confused because of their proximity to citizens, their weak resources, and when they are on the side of citizens in demanding rights from the central authority. However, they are a local local authority and CSOs must deal with them as such, demanding to participate in their decision, calling for the best performance, and holding them responsible for failure to perform their functions.

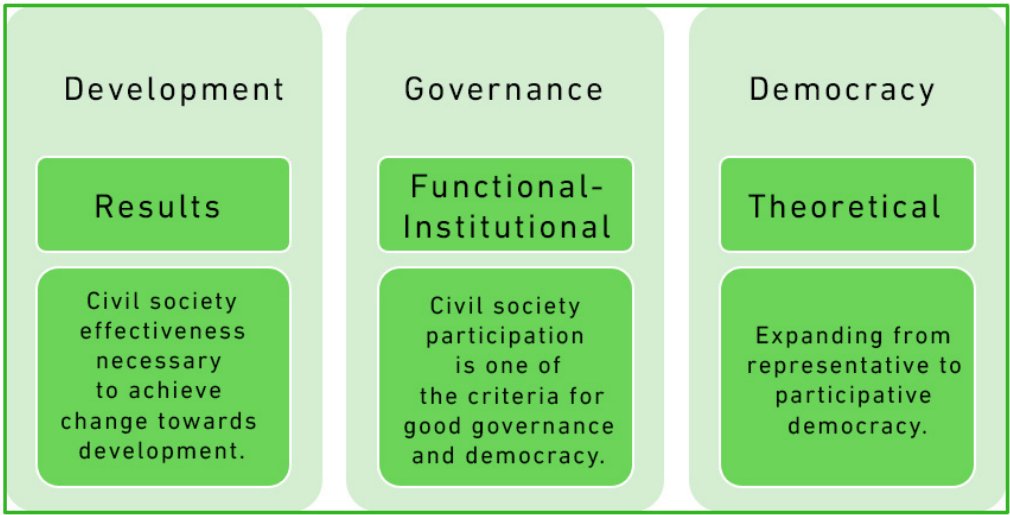
Various views exist on these points of contention. Conditions are in constant movement and change. Certain characteristics in a country at a given moment may make some criteria less important than others. It may also require adjusting the boundaries between one sphere and another according to the tasks of change specified at the time. However, what matters during the formulation of any practical and functional orientation in this field is not to sacrifice the main principle, which is independence from authority and from the principle of benefit and profit. The choice must also be internally consistent so that we do not fall into contradiction during practice.

3. Civil Society  
Roles Triad:  
Traditional-  
Current-  
Emerging

All of the above confirms the important role civil society and its organizations play in the development and rights process. In order to advance the discussion a step forward and to help establish the multiple roles of civil society and its organizations, the importance of civil society is illustrated from three main perspectives.

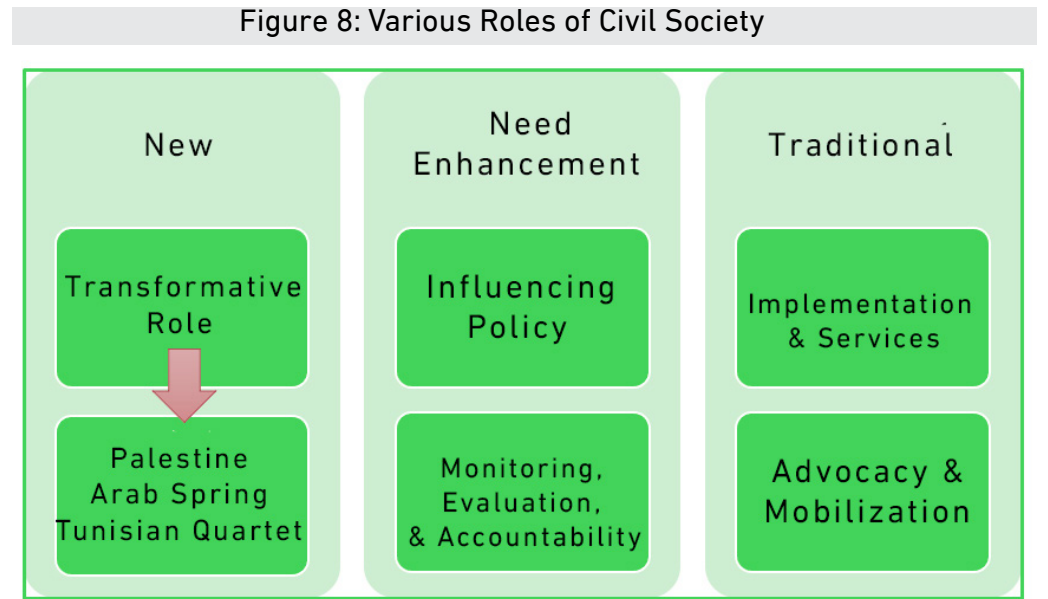
- 1. Its importance from the perspective of democracy, which has a theoretical specificity in terms of the relationship of civic space and civil society with democracy and its forms;
- 2. Its importance from the perspective of good governance, which has a practical and institutional specificity, especially the issue of partnership and the relationship between CSOs and various national and international parties;
- 3. Its importance from the perspective of development requirements, which is related to the results and objectives to be achieved from the perspective of development requirements and related plans and policies.

Figure 7: Importance of Civil Society from Various Perspectives



The above approach establishes the basis for identifying the different roles played by CSOs (and civil society by extension), beyond the traditional approach, especially if they adhere to the approach that includes civil society participation in the context of citizen participation in general, whether at the individual or the collective level through social and popular movements.

Consequently, ANND adopts the approach that sees that there are three categories of roles for CSOs (and for civil society), ranging from the traditional (intended, recognized, and common), such as service provision, project implementation, advocacy, and mobilization to roles more related to influencing policies that are less common and are supposed to be supported and reinforced, such as forms of advocacy and action to influence policy, follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation. There is also a third category of roles. It emerged strongly after the Arab Spring in 2011 in particular. It is related to a transformative role that places CSOs at the center of effective popular and social movements in the process of comprehensive societal change, including political change. Examples include the first Palestinian intifada in 1987 (which is the uprising of Palestinian civil society against the occupation), the Arab Spring (a direct citizens’ expression of participation as civil society according to the above definition, aiming for political change against tyranny, hunger, and inequality and for rights), and the role of the Tunisian Quartet in resolving the political crisis in Tunisia and preventing the country from sliding into an imminent armed conflict.



Needless to say, these roles, which take place at different levels of development and action for change, do not fall on the shoulders of a particular organization, association, or union. They constitute civil society's overall role, through the totality of its institutions and formations. In general, the services and implementation roles can be performed by individual associations and organizations within a local or sectoral scope, or in alliance with other organizations. On the other hand, roles associated with influencing policy, monitoring, and accountability often involve the engagement of national organizations, unions, or national networks. They have the potential of knowledge, action skills, lobbying, and the ability to mobilize multiple allies and partners.

As for the transformative role, especially in light of the experience of the Arab Spring, it shifts work to a completely different level where the goals are of a political nature and where achieving them requires transcending traditional methods and narrow alliances. The tools of action are social movements, broad popular movements, or direct citizen participation, in the streets or by employing broad and real popular representation to impose corrective paths that include bringing about fundamental transformations in the political or economic system or in the face of occupation. (Some of these points are addressed later.)

## 4. Campaigns-Social Movements-Popular Movements Triad

This section reviews the most important elements in a functional definition of the above concepts - the three terms are enough to distinguish them functionally. Examples can be found in the Civic Space Report, especially the regional paper at the beginning.

1. Campaigns are a form commonly used by CSOs that often take the initiative to organize a specific campaign specialized in a specific topic. As they arise and gain presence, campaigns are a component of civil society. That is, they have their own independent personality. Individuals can organize campaigns, either using virtual space - this is very common - or through direct communication and meeting with a specific goal. Also, associations, civil organizations, or unions can meet to organize a campaign, so an association or organization takes the initiative and others join it. Associations and individuals may also sign contracts, so that the campaign is launched by a group or coalition. The campaign usually has a clear objective, slogans, and distinctive signs that will last as long as the campaign period itself. In principle also, campaigns are clear and specific. They are expected to be within a relatively short and specific time frame. Campaigns are less structured and simpler than social and popular movements; their goals are less radical. They may be limited to an awareness campaign or to achieve specific change by mobilizing supporters for this purpose by adopting different methods of work and pressure.

The term campaign/campaigns is widely used in different fields such as a military campaign, a marketing campaign, a media campaign, or an election campaign. They all have in common the organized and purposeful use of a set of resources to achieve a goal within a foreseeable time frame.

2. Social movements are a more complex and permanent form of campaigning. In a sense, they are campaigns that extend over time, aiming to either achieve change (or prevent a change) through the involvement of large numbers of citizens and their institutions.

Social movements are defined as forms of collective action concerned with achieving fundamental transformations in some aspects of the existing system in a society (or preventing change). They aim to achieve a public interest or reach common goals by working outside existing frameworks and institutions. (Anthony Giddens – Sociology, p. 722,483)

A social movement can also be described as “a loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society’s structure or values. Although social movements differ in size, they are all essentially collective. That is, they result from the more

or less spontaneous coming together of people whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures but who merely share a common outlook on society.” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-movement/Types-of-social-movements>).

Civil society and development activists consider that the importance of social movements has grown “in recent decades, and their roles have expanded as a result of the inability or failure of traditional institutions to address specific forms of risks that threaten human societies of all kinds, such as: environmental issues, the dangers of nuclear proliferation, and the risks involved The process of globalization, or methods of producing genetically modified food” (Anthony Giddens, p. 487). Social movements (and global campaigns) are one of the effective forms of coordinating efforts in light of globalization. Its most prominent manifestations are the alternative globalization movements, anti-war movements, movements rejecting debt and the dominance of global companies, feminist movements, and youth movements.

Habermas believes that “social movements are a protest against the tyranny of the state’s logic and bureaucracy and its increasing interference in the private world of individuals,” which intersects with what was previously mentioned that social movements exercise their effectiveness outside the existing traditional frameworks and institutions, due to the latter’s shortcomings and its disproportion with social and cultural development. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-movement/Types-of-social-movements>).

The boundaries between campaigns and social movements are sometimes blurred, which does not necessarily harm their work and effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to return to the main criteria that characterize the various forms of regularity and effectiveness. In general, one of the main features of social movements is the form of their semi-structured organization, which distinguishes them from associations, cooperatives, and parties that have fixed organizational structures. Membership is also informal and non-contractual, and there are no formal procedures for making decisions, as it gives priority to the conviction of members of their loyalty (affiliation) to the movement.

3. Popular movements are a particular form of social movements, however, a clear and distinct definition is difficult to find in relevant literature. The concept of social movements prevails, as it is more consistent with the modern civil state in societies where social interests and organization are more crystallized. Therefore, there is less functional and cognitive need for a new concept of popular movements. Their additional actions can be covered using other concepts and terms (general



strike, protest movements, rebellion, revolution, popular demonstrations). Nevertheless, it is not that simple in developing countries. In Arab countries in particular, the term “popular movements” seems more accurate in describing the reality of social mobility, especially since the Arab Spring in 2011, than the concept of social movements. The similarity between the two lies in the absence of a structured organization, in their reliance on a broad public base, and in the fact that they aim to achieve significant change in society or institutions. However, there is a difference in at least three features:

- Popular movements are often more related to politics and political change in society, while social movements have a lower ceiling.
- Popular movements accommodate a greater degree of social diversity and divergence in orientations and visions. They are less homogeneous in social terms and in terms of intellectual affiliations and orientations of their members than in social movements whose goals are more specific, and whose members enjoy a degree of social homogeneity regarding the desired change.
- Based on the two characteristics above, popular movements have a greater affinity with rebellion and revolution than the social movements that often shy away from radical options of this kind, avoiding clashes with the authorities or systematic violence and counter-violence as a means of change , to prevent change. Social movements are closer to campaigns and CSO networks.

In this context, mass movements for change in the Arab world are described as popular rather than social movements. This applies to the Arab Spring’s first wave of revolutions, as well as the second wave in Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, and Lebanon.

### ***Similarities and Differences***

There are areas of intersection and points of similarity and difference between the four forms presented in the previous paragraphs. The following table summarizes them according to the criteria of organization, time range, breadth of participation, diversity, and political nature:

**Table 2: Similarities and differences between the different forms of civic action**

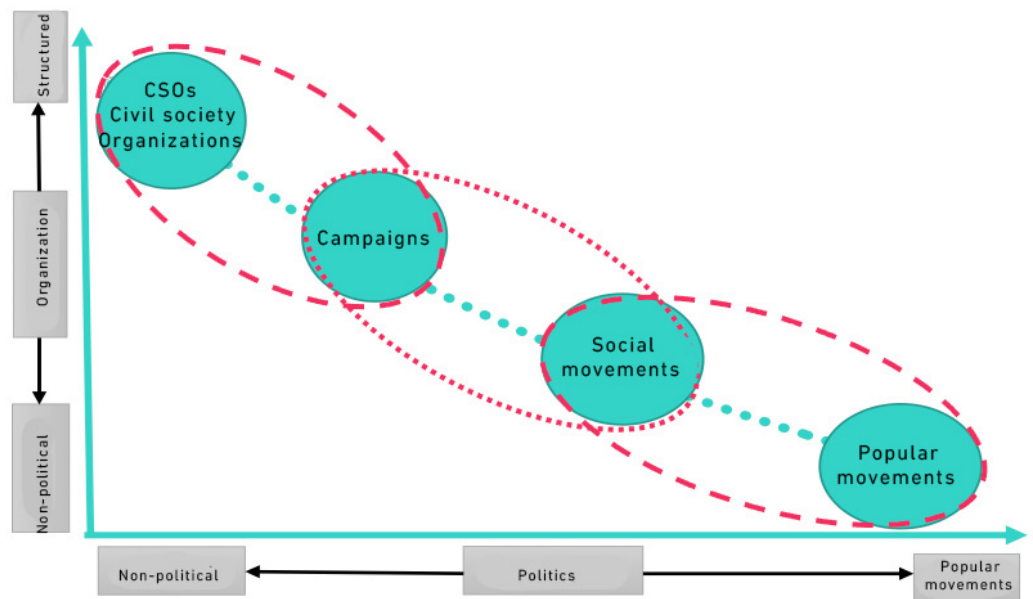
<b>CSOs</b>		<b>Campaigns</b>	<b>Social Movements</b>	<b>Popular Movements</b>
Organization	Structured	Organized based on needs	Semi-structured	Unstructured
Time Frame	Continuous	Short (Mostly)	Relatively long and varies by goal	Unspecified
Number of Participants	Could be limited	Varies based on needs	Wide participation	Wide participation
Diversity	Those who agree to the articles of association and affiliates	Not essential, based on participation	Common goal(s), relative harmony regarding desired change	Diverse and plural
Connection to Politics	Not strong, some focus on policy influence	Not strong, varies by campaign, and concerned with influencing policies	It seeks to bring about general social change, it can have a policy or political character	More overtly political, sometimes with direct political goals

However, these forms are not separated by walls. CSOs that operate institutionally often organize campaigns as a practical and effective method in achieving goals. Campaigns that are usually targeted and of a relatively short period of time can turn into more extensive social movements, and the latter can be transformed into (relatively broad) campaigns. There are also times social movements take a special, highly diverse form of participation and broad mass protest and for clearer political change goals, ie, the form of popular movements, as is the case in many Arab countries.

As Figure 9 below shows, popular movements are the most distant from structured and institutionalized forms and the closest to transformational political goals. Institutionalized organizations (not including political parties) are the most remote

from advancing political goals and are more capable of creating partnerships with government institutions and donors.

Figure 9: Civil formations based on institutional and political criteria



from advancing political goals and are more capable of creating partnerships with government institutions and donors.

### ***Civic-Social-Popular Interaction: Examples from Arab Countries***

The interaction here is presented according to the political axis (the civil-political problem) and the forms of movement (civil society organizations, campaigns, social movements, popular movements), which are strongly interconnected in practice and in the of Arab countries even before the Arab Spring.

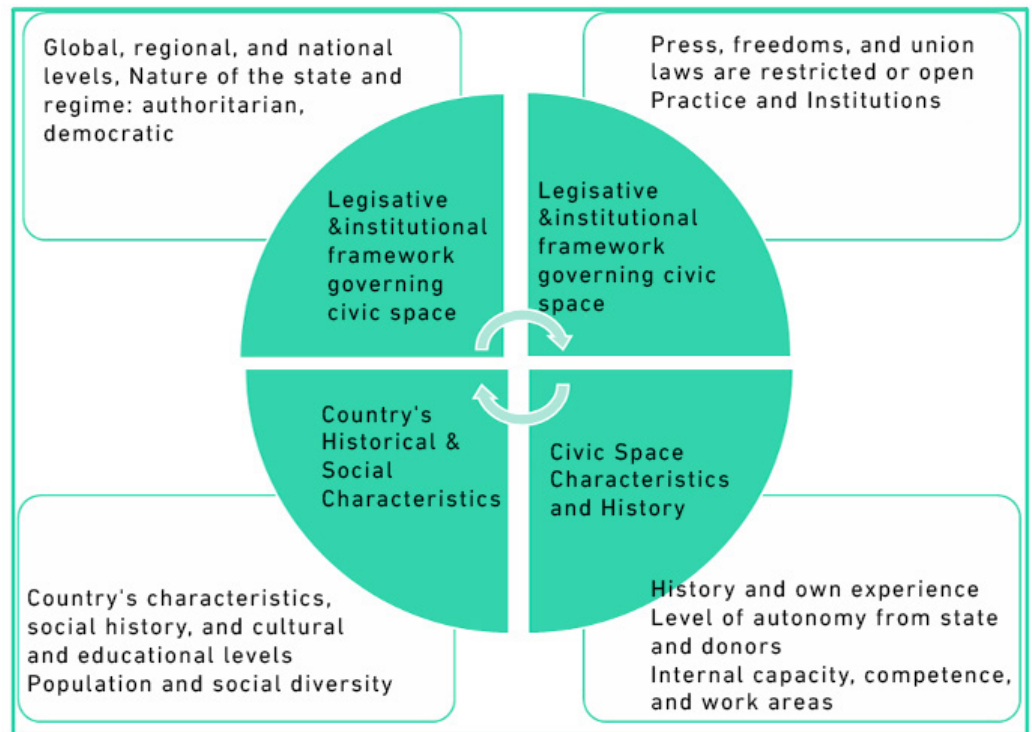
The question of distinguishing between CSOs and civil society, between civil and political, between campaigns, social movements, and popular movements, and between functions, forms, hierarchical and vertical structures, direct interaction, or virtual space have been raised theoretically. However, in the Arab countries at least, they have gained great practical importance during the Arab Spring and are no longer a matter of mere theoretical debate.

## ***Factors affecting the civil-political dichotomy***

Several factors affect the relationship between the civil and the political, and the forms that civil society takes. The main factors in relation to this paper are the following:

- The overall historical-social framework, which delineates the boundaries of civic space and the work of civil society at various levels, international (globalization, the war on terror, transformation with the human rights value system towards a culture of war and rights violations), or regional (regional wars and conflicts, inter-state relations, funding and resources, and religion and sub-identities), and national (our primary focus).
- The nature of the state and regimes ranges from totalitarian that do not even recognize the idea of civil society and exercise statist-ideological hegemony over the entire civil space, associations and unions to systems that enjoy a space of freedom that allow a margin of freedom for CSOs and practice less severe forms of restrictions.
- The nature of the legislation that governs the work of the media, freedom of the press, public freedoms (expression and assembly), and the laws regulating the work of trade unions, associations, civil organizations range from liberal (notification) or restricted (prior authorization), along with some degree of restrictions. The practical application of laws is also problematic.
- Social, economic, and cultural characteristics of the country in question (large/small, population density, social and political history, education level, national, religious, sectarian, or ethnic diversity).
- Characteristics of civil society (history of associative work, experiences, networking experiences and previous work, self-capabilities, issues of interest, degree of independence or dependence on the state, political parties, donors or international organizations, internal management of associations and unions, the level of democracy, institutionalization, personality cults).

Figure 10: Factors affecting civic space and the relationship of the civil and political



Difference in characteristics between countries leads to a variety of combinations of these influencing factors, resulting unique civic spaces in each country and at each stage. The national papers published in the Civic Space Report dealt with several practical experiences and answers, which can be viewed in detail. The regional paper included a comparative analysis of points of similarity and distinction between countries. The report illustrates the content of the points contained in this theoretical paper.