

**Floating Civil Society**

**Legitimation Practices and the Social Positioning of Yemeni Civil Society in the  
Context of Development Aid**

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Master's Thesis  
Democracy and Global Transformations- Politics  
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May 2018  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis discusses Yemeni civil society in the context of development aid using Bourdieu's social theory. It examines the hypothesis that Yemeni aid-civil society comprises a distinct social class in the Bourdieuan sense. It is an analysis of restrictive and asymmetrical structures and the possibilities for social movement and repositioning.

Often times Yemeni civil society is studied through a strictly local lens and is pinned down in normative terms; does it represent a popular base, is it donor-driven, is it democratic -in other words, does it fit into the pre-cut mould of civil society as envisioned by development aid or by society at large? Instead this thesis studies aid-civil society as a social class and attempts to understand how this social class is constituted by its members and how, in turn, it constitutes its members. The thesis also presents an initial attempt to broaden the framework and shed light on the position of Yemeni aid-civil society in relation to broader civil society trends and shifting relations between state and society - a phenomenon that is not exclusive to Yemen.

The analysis of the social space is done in three stages; the first is through determining the perceptible distinctions that mark the outer boundary of the social space from other social groups; the second is through analysing legitimation practices articulated in the form of putative roles and functions of aid-civil society; and the third is the relational tensions and hierarchies which lead to the clustering of practices in different fields within the social space. Together these three dimensions provide an outline of the social space and allow for a discussion on the possible forms of social movement through which agents assert their subjectivity.

**Keywords:** aid, civil society, Yemen, Bourdieu, legitimation practices, grounded theory method, NGOs, development, donors

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisors Sergei Prozorov and Susanne Dahlgren who readily gave me valuable feedback even on the shortest of notices. Any shortcomings or errors in the thesis are entirely my responsibility. I am thankful to the University of Helsinki for making it possible to manage between my studies and raising two young children. Thanks to my parents and brother for keeping my children well fed and entertained so I can get more hours to write and to my husband for listening enthusiastically to all my ideas and supporting me with much love.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

If you pick up any current development report the chances that you find a reference to civil society are almost guaranteed. The World Bank and United Nation development and humanitarian agencies began to mainstream civil society engagement in their activities since the 1990s<sup>1</sup>. Civil society engagement<sup>2</sup>, as it is often referred to, came to embody notions of bottom-up governance, inclusion, citizen-driven development, local community engagement and other similar concepts. In other words civil society engagement presented a human face in development as opposed to the dismal bureaucracies of nation states and large multilateral organizations. This gave civil society an air of innocence.

No time was this more noticeable in Yemen than in the summer of 2014. Yemen had joined the wave of the 2011 Arab uprisings and after over 9 months of sit-ins and public squares demonstrations the Gulf Cooperation Council brokered a power transfer deal that ended –at least officially- the 33-year reign of president Ali Abdulla Saleh. The deal stipulated specific points of action to be implemented within a tight timeframe to be concluded with a new constitution and general elections (UN, 2011). Paradoxically proponents and world leaders lauded the period after the 2011 uprising and prior to the outbreak of the war in 2014/2015 as a success model to be emulated (see Friedman, 2013), but many close observers remained sceptical as grave fault lines were apparent from the outset (Alwazir, 2013; Alasarar, 2013). Nevertheless during this time donors and international NGOs were pulling all that was up their sleeve to keep up with the fluidity of the situation. Civil society organizations proved a key component in this improvised rescue plan.

I had grown up and lived most of my life in the capital Sana'a where I also worked in development aid and cooperation until 2010. Work led me on multiple occasions to civil society organizations, either through assessment exercises or trainings and workshops. Soon this sector and its actors became rather familiar to me. Civil society

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<sup>1</sup> See World Bank - Civil Society Engagement Review for reports, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/partners/civil-society#5>

<sup>2</sup> See UNDP [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/civil\\_society\\_engagement.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/civil_society_engagement.html)

was no doubt the buzzword of the 2000s and it seemed to be gaining more prominence in the period following the 2011 uprising.

Historically Yemeni civil society in its many forms played a decisive role in key moments. In the 1950s in the South social clubs and various unions formed and served as spaces for covert political organizations against the British occupation (Dahlgren, 2010a). In the North similar organizations led the early stages of state building following the overthrow of the monarchy and the founding of the Republic (Carapico, 1998).

The South was under British rule until 1967 followed by over three decades of socialist rule and the North was a theocratic kingdom until the 1962 republican revolution. The first law permitting voluntary associations in the Northern republic was passed in 1963. In 1968 a set percentage of the public budget was allocated to local development cooperatives and voluntary self-help associations, spelling the early stages of the institutionalization of civil society. The ensuing years witnessed a “large number of international donors” pledging support. (Carapico, 1985, p. 211) However, political pluralism was banned and the separation between some of these organizations and the state was ambiguous. The socialist South under one-party rule had strong state structures and received support from the Soviet Union. In the North state structures were relatively weak and the state relied on local cooperatives to build basic infrastructure. Both in the South and the North remittances from Yemeni workers in the oil rich Gulf States made up a an important part of the economy until the 1990 when a diplomatic falling out with the Gulf states resulted in the deportation of almost a million Yemeni worker (Clark, 2004a; Ayubi, 1995/2008).

In 1990, in the wake of the end of the Cold War and under unfavourable conditions the South and North were rushed into unification. This was not a stable union and repercussions of this instability echo strongly today with a persistent Southern secessionist movement demanding independence from the North (Dahlgren, 2010b). That being said, the association laws in post 1990 unified Yemen were relatively relaxed and permissive. Lauded as “the most enabling law governing civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Arabian peninsula” (ICNL, 2017). Although overtly political activity that was deemed too threatening to the regime was unequivocally crushed and incidents of forced disappearances, assassinations and arbitrary

detentions were not uncommon. In 2009 the government proposed amendments to the associations' law in relation to anti-terrorism laws that would have restricted associations from receiving foreign funds. Civil society organizations resisted these proposed amendments and presented alternative proposals to the law. In this eclectic environment that was both permissive and authoritarian approximately 12,000 associations were registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (ICNL, 2017)<sup>3</sup>.

This surge of institutionalized civil society was in line with global trends as NGOs in development began to gain traction in the late 1970s (Wagner, p. vii). By the end of the Cold War and in the wake of the democratization wave, institutionalized civil society had undergone a full resurrection in what became known as the NGO decade (Opoku-Mensah, 2007; Banks, Hulme & Edwards, 2015).

Civil society either in the form of NGOs funded by OECD<sup>4</sup> donors or charity and social services organizations led by Islamic revivalist movements linked to the Muslim Brotherhood came to dominate the Yemen scene in the 1990s –this was in line with the general trend in other Arab countries (Clark, 2004a). With a heavy normative and ideological signification certain forms of civil society were distinctly targeted in development programs and hailed as a promise for bottom-up democratization and political participation (Alagappa, 2004; Drabek, 1987; Keane, 1998; Makuwira, 2014; and Van Rooy, 1998/2000). This hailed the beginning of a particular type of civil society activated through development aid. *Through this research I examine the hypothesis that this form of civil society comprises a distinct social class.*

According to Opoku-Mensah (2007), there were virtually no references to NGOs in development in the 1970s and early 1980s. Literature on NGOs in development became significantly noticeable in the 1990s. However, much of it was in the form of white papers, reports and publications by academics commissioned by development consultancies. This resulted in an abundance of “largely normative” and “action

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<sup>3</sup> World Bank (WB) estimates in 2013 suggest over 8000 registered associations and 4000 unregistered ones (WB, 2013)

<sup>4</sup> OECD is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development made up primarily of high-income countries.

oriented” analysis (Opoku-Mensah 2007, p. 13), leaving much room for thorough academic investigation.

To some scholars the unholy union between civil society organizations and development aid of the post-Cold War era cast a shadow over them. They were viewed as a manifestation of Cold-War political manipulation and Western hegemony as evident in this quote from Carapico (2014), a leading scholar on Yemeni and Arab civil society: "civil society promotion came of age in the neo-liberal era as a tool for dismantling centralized Soviet-style ‘command’ economies" (p. 155). Similarly, other sceptical voices warned of the retreat of the state and degradation in the relationship between state and citizens (Roniger and Günes-Ayata, 1994; Tvedt, 2007).

There was and continues to be much debate about what civil society means or should mean. Some saw that the indeterminacy of the term left it vulnerable to co-optation by all sorts of agendas (Honneth, 1993). Cogitation on the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the term is characteristic of the literature on civil society, leading to difficulty in distinguishing between definitions of civil society and definitions of what it ought to be according to some imagined ideal (see Tester, 1992). There were also pragmatic types of definitions, which were not empty of ideological preconceptions, such as in this United Nations definition: “Civil society is the ‘third sector’ of society, along with government and business. It comprises civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations” (UN)<sup>5</sup>. Scholars debated whether this conflation of civil society with NGOs led to the marginalization of other manifestations of civil society (Van Rooy, 1998/2000; Banks et al., 2015) and whether this exclusion was strategic and ideologically motivated (Carapico, 1998, 2014).

More particular to Arab civil society were the debates on whether the definition should include kin and faith-based groups (Alsalahi 2008; Bishara 2012; Khachib and Weshnan 2016). Consequently, civil society was judged in boxed classifications traditional, modern, secular, religious... etc. However, regardless of these classifications it was clear that the majority of institutionalized civil society hailed from an educated middle class (Bishara, 2012; Clark, 2004a). This led some to suggest that civil society connected to aid represented a “shadow” middle class or a

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<sup>5</sup> UN, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/resources-different-audiences/civil-society/>



“local ‘globalized elite’” as in the work of Hanafi and Tabar (2004) particularly with regard to Palestinian civil society. However, analysis of Yemeni civil society connected to development aid had largely been confined to national or regional contexts and I have not found any work that attempted to link it in a deliberate way to broader civil society trends.

Precisely because much of civil society in development had been discussed in normative language, I set out to map what these articulations of putative roles and functions were and what they might mean for the prospects of civil society in the development context of Yemen. I refer to the specific kind of civil society that was activated through its relation to development aid -whether directly or indirectly- as *aid-civil society*. I chose this term for a number of reasons; I wanted to avoid adding one more acronym to the list of seemingly infinite acronyms (see Carapico, 2000). I also reckoned that referring to it in acronymic technical terms would imply detaching this type of civil society from the general Yemeni civil society, which they very much identified with. I am also not fond of words that define a thing by its negative such as non-governmental or non-profit. I debated whether to keep the prefix “aid” because it may be overstating the transactional relation. Alternatively I thought of using “development” or “advocacy” as prefix but I feared that they might predetermine the function of aid-civil society. So, I settled for the not ideal but workable term, aid-civil society. I left out the word organization because I wanted to allow some room to imagine non-institutionalized civil society. This is because sometimes a single personality figure leading the organization would be its defining factor rather than the other way around. Therefore, when relevant I used the term aid-civil society and when I was referring to institutional forms I used aid-civil society *organizations*.

The data was comprised of official government and donor documents and two-dozen interviews with people connected to the field of development in Yemen. The time when this data was collected -summer of 2014, represented a critical juncture situated at the end of the power transfer period stipulated by the GCC deal and shortly before its complete collapse and the outbreak of the war, which continues to rage until today. It was a period of uncertainty but also optimism on behalf of those who were involved in the broader power transfer process. Through direct or indirect participation in what was called that National Dialogue Conference (NDC) including all the activities on its

margins. Granted, this was a small portion of the population and mostly comprised of urban elite but it was nevertheless a dominating event in the capital city where donors and aid-civil society were concentrated (See Murray, 2013 for analysis of NDC composition and decision-making process).

In reference to the previously mentioned general hypothesis about aid-civil society comprising a distinct social class, my aim in this research is to demonstrate the relational complexity that tied more powerful development actors with seemingly less powerful ones without diminishing the agency and subjectivity of the less powerful ones nor overstating the coercive powers of the dominant ones. Thus, **my research question of three parts** is:

*What are the practices that legitimate aid-civil society? What are the distinctions that mark aid-civil society from other social groups? How do these practices and distinctions position aid-civil society in a common social space?*

As this entails analysis of how identity is negotiated and enacted under structural social constraints, I found Bourdieu (1977; 1986; and 1991) to provide a useful framework. Relevant to my research are concepts of *symbolic social space*, *legitimation practices*, *field*, *capital*, *habitus* and *distinction* as well as Bourdieu's analysis of the educational system. Through this I hope to demonstrate how the objectivity of the *structures* of the *social space* and the subjectivity of the *agents* within the *social space* are inseparable and mutually constituting<sup>6</sup>.

Using qualitative analysis methods from Grounded Theory -specifically Charmaz's constructivist version, I began by mapping out putative roles and functions of aid-civil society as articulated in the data. These were drawn out in the form of categories and sub-categories and that were then approximated to Bourdieu's notion of *legitimation practices*. I laid out my categories and sub-categories, which represented the legitimation practices, and based on how they were reasoned and justified in the data I identified links and tensions and mapped them in, what Corbin and Strauss (1998) called, an *integrative diagram*.

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<sup>6</sup> This approach to place the subject in the context of seemingly oppressive structures was well demonstrated in the anthropological work of Susanne Dahlgren on Southern Yemeni society (Dahlgren, 2010a).

In the following chapters, I will present my theoretical framework followed by my research method and scope. In chapter four I present the findings of the data in simultaneous dialogue with the reviewed literature. This is the longest chapter of the thesis and it is divided into two main parts, in the first part I define the boundaries of the social space through an analysis of *distinctions*, and in the second part I list and discuss legitimation practices and their linkages. The final chapter contains my conclusion, a discussion on research limitations and future research.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The application of Bourdieu's theory of class and legitimation practices on civil society is not a novel idea. Alsalahi (2008) used it to describe the connection between Yemeni civil society and the building of a politically conscious middle class.

Dodworth (2014) applied legitimation practices in an empirical study on Tanzanian NGOs' relation to the state.

The key contribution of Bourdieu's model to my analysis is that it allowed me to on the one hand, delineate the outer border of the *symbolic social space* that aid-civil society occupied and on the other hand, understand how putative practices helped define it from the inside. All the while evading the pitfall of essentialist language that would lay claim on what qualified or didn't qualify as civil society.

Legitimation practices are especially pertinent in the heavily normative language of civil society and a discussion about legitimation is bound to be political. After all according to Bourdieu (1977) legitimation and politics are one and the same: "political science" takes for its "object the sphere of legitimate politics" (p. 189). As such through the analysis of legitimation practices, which are in Bourdieu's model deeply relational, I will shed light on the political dimension of my subject matter. Additionally, I found that Bourdieu's model complicated subjectivity and objectivity in a way that helped me take a step back from the two analytical frameworks which I found to dominate discussions of civil society; the one which single-mindedly focuses on issues of co-optation and coercion especially in relation to development aid, and the other which uncritically lauds civil society's vague promise of progress and inclusion through bottom-up development. The complication of subject and object in Bourdieu is clearly described by Morgolis (1999) who explained that *agents* are not "automatically following rules or autonomously exercising existential freedom" and in the same vein, *actions* are not "obedience to the rule" but rather an internalized understanding of what is realistically possible within the given structures (p. 65). Throughout Bourdieu's works members of the social class are referred to as *agents* not only because they are consciously and unconsciously renegotiating their position within the *social space*, but also because when they do that they simultaneously reinforce the structures that constraint them.

The social space contains within it different fields. According to Hardy (2008/2012) the use of the term *field* by Bourdieu connotes two things, a “battle field” representing the struggles within the social space and a “playing field” representing the rule of the game in Bourdieu’s famous phrase “having a feel for the game” (p. 230). The social space contains the structures of the fields, the relational positioning of its members, the practices and dispositions and all the possibilities and impossibilities in between. Hardy (2008/2012) simplifies it in a useful way by saying that the social space represents in mathematical terms the “universal set” while the field represents a “subset” (p. 231). He adds that a member can be active in more than one field and can reposition him or herself in a particular field depending on the member’s accumulated capital and the value of that composition of capital in a given field (ibid).

Social positioning is dictated to a large extent by an agent’s capital (volume and composition). Bourdieu (1986) lists various forms of capital, *economic*, *social*, *cultural* and *symbolic* (Bourdieu 1986) as well as “linguistic capital” (Bourdieu 1991 pp. 52-57). The conversion value between them is contingent on the field itself and varies across fields within the social space. As the agents of this social space are products of the same homogenous conditioning they systematically behave, act and entertain a life-style that is perceptibly identifiable as belonging to this social space and/or a given field within it (Bourdieu, 1986). This model posits a break with the notion of a “rational, interest-maximizing individual” (Dodworth 2014, p. 24) and places agents within dense social structures socially constituted and socially constituting.

In spite of a degree of homogeneity established by the common social conditioning it cannot be said that the social space is defined by a single criterion, such as material wealth or profession. This reflects the disparity in capital distribution in terms of volume and composition. Denoting that the group is not “unitary” and the social space is laden with hierarchies and tensions (Bourdieu 1986, p. 106). Hierarchies determine the social positioning of an agent but movement within the social space and to a lesser extent across fields is possible. According to Bourdieu (1986), the *field* and *habitus*- the objective *structures* and the subjective *dispositions*- are mutually constitutive. The field *conditions* agents and as they internalize norms, power relations and manners they develop dispositions. They act on these dispositions and reinforce the field in a

cycle of privilege or disadvantage. Here Bourdieu outlines a realistic and perhaps grim picture of how oppressive social structure can be while also demonstrating how they are socially generated.

Thus, habitus is the internalization of structures. As this internalization translates into manners, tastes and way of speech they develop into dispositions, marking perceptible distinctions in relation to other social classes. According to Bourdieu (1986) these distinctions are at times incidental (p. 31) and at other times deliberate (p. 474). Distinctions play a key role in defining and marking identity in relation to a broader social context. When agents have adequately internalized the rules of the field; that which is taken for granted (*doxa*), the symbolic social space is rendered familiar and easy to read and navigate. As such it is crucial to point to the enabling, “intelligible and necessary relation” between “practices and situation” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 101). In other words, once agents internalize the rules of the social space they are able to act and react in a predictable manner that would not make them stand out as outsiders. By doing so they also reflect not only that they have internalized, but also accepted, the arrangement of the social space.

Therefore, to understand the concealed structures of the “symbolic space” it is key to study the unifying practices and the “generating” practices. This will illuminate the “internalized class condition” and the “conditioning” that it entails (Bourdieu 1986, p. 101). In this sense, practice is a broad term; it is the sum of the objective *field*, subjective *habitus* and power relations which manifest in *capital* and through capital conversion, i.e., “(habitus) (capital) + field = practice” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 170). Accordingly, practice represents the juncture between the agency of the subject and the oppressive constraints of the objective structures.

Practices are conditioned in a formalized and routinized way through repetition (Bourdieu 1977). There are different forms of conditioning, of which I am interested for the purposes of my research in the educational system and language acquisition as key forms of cultural capital. Education in its ability to standardize and routinize posits a powerful social conditioning tool. In the context of this research the educational system corresponds with predominant development practices of capacity building and the various forms of knowledge production. Aid-civil society members are enrolled in classes that then certify their newly acquired competencies. Those who

reach a certain level then become “trainers” and enrol in “training for trainers” programs. Capacity building activities entail extensive reading, drafting of documents, reports, petitions...etc. The capacity building process also includes practical competencies where aid-civil society organizations are offered at first small grants to implement some activities. If performed well the grants grow in size and a well-established organization can eventually manage and disburse grants to smaller organizations on its own accord. This demonstrates how scholastic competencies (*cultural capital*) are converted into *economic capital* to then be converted to *social capital*. These processes also include much repetition and routine. This is what Bourdieu (1977) calls *officialising strategies* (pp. 38-43). The educational system, linguistic competence and the interaction with others in the field form modes of “manner acquisition” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 65). These manners “–dress, bearing, pronunciation” are necessarily perceptible; “by definition, only exist for others” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 95) and as such they convey the distinct image of the field and those who belong in it.

These long-winding processes are necessary for establishing a position within the social space as agents begin to acquire legitimate mannerisms and learn -what Bourdieu (1977) calls, “the rules of the game” (p. 58). The challenge of course is that to claim a position in the social space an agent must have *capital* that is valued in the particular field within the social space. This indicates that the social space is not open; not everyone is included. This is demonstrated in an example from a USAID (2007) assessment where some aid-civil society organizations based farther away from donors’ offices complained that they simply had no way to access donors or begin to even know how to apply for grants or make contact. Therefore, the educational system is not just what it offers in terms of technical knowledge or a definite function, it is also the “enterprise of legitimate ‘*autodidacticism*’” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 24). This process of self-learning happens at all stages and it is both a means and a goal in itself. It is one of the practices of conditioning and given its standard form it “unites” its pupils and “distinguishes” them from others (Bourdieu 1986, p. 56). Today, it may be that information technology facilitates the challenging task of self-education. However, it remains that actual conditioning and the acquisition of cultural and social capital happens when aid-civil society interact with others and begin to unconsciously internalize and project the governing norms.

Together the language and the mannerisms provide cultural and social capital which can make way for economic capital (donor funding), which in turn can be converted to cultural and social capital and so on. The value of each depends on what is valued in a particular field and this depends on social “recognition” (Crossley 2008/2012, p. 86). For example, cultural and social capital may be more valuable to the donors as they seek local organizations to implement projects or participate in activities, while economic capital may be more valuable to newly forming aid-civil society organizations.

The ability to convert capital and influence practices of legitimation results in an ability for social repositioning. However, this does not imply that there exists a free-flowing easy social mobility as Bourdieu (1986) warns (p. 131). This is a structure-bound system and many factors determine who is included and excluded. Social movement is more commonly “vertical” than “horizontal” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 132). Vertical movement entails change in the volume of capital –increase or decrease. On the other hand horizontal or “traverse” movement across fields is less common and it signifies a change in capital composition- from one type to another (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 131-132). Horizontal movement happens when, according to Bourdieu (1986, 1977), a degree of *practical mastery* is reached lending an agent a level of *social and/or cultural pedigree*. These are agents with the “greatest functional weight” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 107). They have high competence and a valuable configuration of capital, which enables them to position themselves in such a way as to have a bigger say in the reproduction of the legitimation practices. They become an integral part of the regenerative practices of the system.

Language in particular is a distinctive feature, it “yield[s] profit in distinction” and “profit in legitimacy” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 228), which is the ultimate profit. Therefore, it is constitutive and generative and it can obscure the lack of material capital. Moreover linguistic competence equips agents of a given field with a readiness to express their political opinion as a matter of fact. For example, it seemed rather natural when the 2011 uprising began that many professional aid-civil society members took to the squares and gave public speeches. It was also a common scene to tune to a news broadcaster, especially in times of acute political crisis, and see a familiar face from aid-civil society speak and analyse general political matters. As



Bourdieu (1986) suggests, there is a readiness for members of a field that deploys official/formal language to approximate their own personal experience into general political discourse (p. 417). It is no surprise then to find social media pages of members of aid-civil society (although not exclusive to them) with both personal and public posts that receive comparable types of reactions and equally trigger public discussions.

Official language as it has the capacity to generalize and universalize, it also distances personal experience and presents it in a “prefabricated” form with a loss to intimate meaning (Bourdieu, 1986). This is the “experience” and “expression” duality. When political and hence, universalistic language is utilized it allows people to “speak without thinking what they speak” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 462). By doing so, it also “neutralizes” and creates a distance with those who undergo the experience but do not master the language (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 433). Resulting in a sense of suspicion from the classes that deploy the formal language on their behalf and revulsion of that very language. This tension demonstrates the distinction between those who give primacy to *form*, the symbolic, and those who are excluded and as a result of this exclusion reject the form and the symbolic and instead value “substance” and “an honest face rather than a smooth tongue” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 465).

Finally, the concept of social trajectory is useful for my research because it helps me position aid-civil society in and across fields. Bourdieu’s symbolic social space is not static but rather regenerative, “conditions of acquisition persist” and the values of different types of capital change. For an agent, it is crucial to not stagnate but to keep up with regeneration practices. Agents must be constantly attuned to changes otherwise they risk devaluation of whatever capital they have and the consequent loss of what legitimates their membership in the field. This is what forms the social trajectory. The social trajectory is the repositioning of members in social space as the power relations within its fields shift and change and new legitimation practices dislocate older ones. This is not “random” repositioning; it follows the logic of the social space (Bourdieu 1986, p. 110). At the same time this social trajectory is not deterministic, it is within the “field of the possibles”. The narrowing down of these possible trajectories into one is determined by various factors, external as well as internal. However, how these events affect an agent within the field depends very

much on the agent's "social positions and dispositions". These were shaped by the 'modal trajectory'; the result of the agent's previous positioning due to previously accumulated capital.

So an agent can foresee their social trajectory depending on their initial positioning and disposition within the modal trajectory and can attune accordingly but could not control the trajectory. Here, it is important to note that Bourdieu (1986) differentiates between the individual social trajectory and the collective trajectory. The individual trajectory is unstable while collective trajectory could go steady for longer periods with no apparent change. The individual trajectory could also go in opposite to the collective trajectory without leading the individual agent to exit the group. So again, it is not a deterministic relationship. The group is not completely unitary. There is a particular logic to the social space that is determined by a "system of factors fundamentally defined by its structure" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 112). These structures are governed by the "relationship between class and practice" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 113). Making an analytical linear-model inapplicable because it cannot explain the determining factors of such events, nor account for the individual being not in full control but at the same time not fully controlled by the structures of the field. Offering perhaps the most realistic portrayal of a subject embedded in dense social structures not fully of its own making.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### Starting point and personal positioning

The research began prior to the development of the research topic. I visited Yemen, where I am originally from, in 2014 for a short consultancy with a firm called GRM International<sup>7</sup>. GRM commissioned me to explore the NGO sector with a focus on transparency and political participation. It was a brief assignment for the purpose of informing a project management bid. During this exploration trip I met with 24 key informants from Yemeni NGOs, multilateral agencies, one donor, one international NGO and a few public officials. First I began with a couple of personal contacts from my previous work in the development sector in Sana'a, Yemen, and then I snowballed to get more interviews. The connection with GRM International facilitated my access; I may not have been able to get these interviews in my capacity as a Masters research student. I also attended a steering committee meeting and a lecture at a local think tank; these were included in the data set. As these interviews were unstructured and only recorded on rough notes, which I then summarized, I decided that they couldn't stand as primary data on their own. Nevertheless, the interviews were candid and some went on for over an hour. Rich ideas were emerging and when I returned to Helsinki some of the discussion were replaying in my mind and I decided that this merited further exploration. This is how I chose my research topic. I used the summaries of these interviews, one meeting and one lecture together with 6 official documents to build my primary data set. I also used 6 documents selectively as secondary data.

When I collected the data in the summer of 2014 the political and security situations in Yemen were challenging, which meant I could not conduct any interviews outside the capital because road travel was unsafe. Shortly after my return the capital fell in the hands of an armed group and Yemen, which was already witnessing violent clashes in various parts, entered a complete state of war. The aerial space was closed for commercial flights. The situation changed drastically after that and it was no

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<sup>7</sup> GRM International is a development management company specialised in the provision of project design, management expertise and technical assistance to development projects for bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, governments and corporations. It has since changed into Palladium Global Impact Firm. GRM International granted me permission to use the data collected during this exercise for my thesis in a personal email communication dated: 17 September 2014.

longer feasible to do a second round of interviews even online or by phone because I felt it insensitive to inquire about civil society and aid when people were still coming to grips with the new reality on the ground.

My personal positioning was undeniably involved. I had worked for a few years with the United Nations Development Programme and prior to that I was a part of a team that made an assessment of NGOs in different parts of the country. So, I was familiar with the aid-civil society environment in Yemen, I had observed interactions between donors, multilaterals, government officials and NGOs and participated and organized capacity building trainings. I knew I was exploring a topic whose practices were all too familiar and it was going to be difficult to shake off my preconceptions.

Principally, I was dissatisfied with two opposing and dominant outlooks of aid-civil society. One was embedded in development and it conflated NGOs with civil society and even social movements and strategically deployed ideas of empowerment, public participation and democracy. This outlook dominated development reports and white papers produced or commissioned by donors and multilateral organizations. The other outlook was embedded in academia and although it varied, much of what I was reading at the beginning of my research were critical accounts of donor-driven NGOs and the oppressive technical and formal processes of development projects as well as concerns with depoliticization and co-optation. I was searching for an analytical framing that would help me interpret the complexity I saw during the interviews. So, I could say that the process of writing this research entailed defamiliarizing myself with the topic and then putting it back together and in the process I believe I learned something of value which I hope I will demonstrate in this thesis.

## Scope

My research is limited to the 2-year period between the signing of the power transfer deal brokered by the GCC end of 2011 and the outbreak of war end of 2014. The power transfer deal stipulated precise action points within a limited timeframe that would lead up to a referendum on a new constitution and general elections (UN, 2011). Following the signing of the GCC initiative a group of the main development

donors involved in Yemen, referred to as ‘The Friends of Yemen’ (FoY)<sup>8</sup> met and agreed to pledge over USD8 billion to assist in responding to the critical humanitarian need, stabilizing and presumably ushering Yemen to its democratic dawn. The pledge was contingent on an agreement between the transitional government of Yemen and the donors that outlined their respective responsibilities during the next two years, this was titled the Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF). One of the conditions of the MAF was to suspend on going development plans and national plans and redirect all development cooperation towards a new 2-year plan titled the Transitional Programme for Stabilization and Development 2012-2014 (TPSD). Moreover a new independent bureau called the “Executive Bureau for Acceleration of Aid Absorption” (EB) was established by a presidential decree for the purpose of overseeing the implementation of the MAF and to absorb and disburse the donor pledge according to the agreed points in the framework. Mid-way through the 2-year transition and in accordance with MAF, a key document was produced by a United Nations supporting body called the Emergency Capacity Development Facility. This document was titled the “Partnership Framework Between the Government of Yemen and Civil Society Organizations” (Partnership Framework) and it was by far the most pronounced expression of the envisioned role and function for Yemeni aid-civil society. Moreover, during the same period donors were reviewing their strategies to re-align them with these emerging documents. I chose three donor strategies of key OECD donors, the UK, the US and the Netherlands. I collected the data between 18 June, 2014 and 25 August, 2014 in Sana’a, Yemen. The interviews were all conducted with people who were based in the capital city.

The focus on this 2-year period in between the uprising and the ensuing war had its implications on the data and the types of issues that emerged. The transitional government was under strong international and domestic pressure, which made it less resistant to demands from donors and aid-civil society. Criticism of the former regime was stated openly in the official documents and the problems that the donors saw

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<sup>8</sup> Friends of Yemen is a group co-chaired by the UK and Saudi Arabia and contains 39 countries including the countries of the GCC, UK, EU, US, World Bank, and the UN. The group was established in January 2010, prior to the uprising, initially mandated to oversee “counter-terrorism” effort. In 2011 following the uprising it shifted its mandate towards supporting the implementation of the GCC initiative mechanism. In 2012 Friends of Yemen met in Riyadh and pledged approximately USD8 billion towards the “The Transitional Plan for Stabilization and Development (2012-2014)”. (DFID 2013b)

were openly expressed without the previously used euphemisms. There were parts for example that directly accused the regime of corruption and bad handling of resources. This time was also seen as an opening to usher an institutionalized role for aid-civil society in decision-making. Therefore, while this period may not be generalizable because it was different from what preceded it and what followed but it was a time where the envisioned role of aid-civil society was laid out in straight terms and without holding back.

## Data

The data set is divided into two parts, primary and secondary data. The primary data is composed of three official documents mentioned above, the Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF) (GoY & FoY, 2011), the Transitional Plan for Stabilization and Development 2012-2014 (TPSD) (GoY, 2011) and the Partnership Framework Between the Government of Yemen and Civil Society Organizations (GoY, 2013). To compare the official documents with another set of documents I used three donor development strategies, the UK Department For International Development ‘Yemen Operational Plan 2012-2015’ (DFID, 2013), The US, United States Agency of International Development ‘Yemen Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2014-2016’ (USAID, 2014) and the Netherlands ‘Multi-Annual Strategic Plan 2014-2017 Yemen’ (Netherlands, 2013). In addition to these documents I had 24 unstructured interviews with NGOs, the UN, public officials and one donor project. One steering committee meeting which included public officials, donors and NGOs and one lecture at a local think tank. This set of data was analysed in detail.

The secondary data supported to validate emerging categories from the primary data. They were however not analysed in depth but only selectively used when relevant. These included an EU draft document titled “Civil Society in Yemen, a National Participatory Review” (EU, 2010), a USAID report titled, “Yemen Civil Society Sector Assessment” (USAID, 2007) and the “Joint Social and Economic Assessment for the Republic of Yemen” (WB, EU, UN, Islamic Development Bank and GoY, 2012), a conference report titled, “Partnership for Development Knowledge Conference” (WB, 2014), two project documents from the United Nations Development Programme titled, “Capacity Development for National NGOs” (UNDP

& GoY, 2014) and “Assessment of Formal and Informal Governance in Yemen” (UNDP & GoY, 2013). (see Appendix 1)

The interviews ranged between 30 minutes to 2.5 hours. They were to a varied degree quite candid and it may have helped that I was not audio recording. I had a few inquiry points that gave me general guidance to these interviews. The purpose was to get a feel of what the working environment was with regard to civil society and what projects were going on and who was involved.

## Method

This research began with a basic idea to explore the NGO sector in Yemen and understand its context. I did not know how I would go about exploring this. Initially, my research question was “How does donor aid shape civil society in Yemen?” and it is still a relevant question but the focus shifted from the “shape” or form to the more general social class and positioning of aid-civil society. Having read one of the known works on the political economy of civil society in Yemen written by Sheila Carapico in 1998 and feeling disillusioned with the development hype around NGOs I was inclined at first towards a critical theory approach. The long duration between the early stages of developing the idea until the time of writing -one and half years of maternity leave included- meant that for many months the idea was dormant in my mind. I was reading articles, listening to academic lectures and thinking about it but not in a targeted way. During this time I did an internship with a Finnish foundation and it entailed surveying and interviewing a large number of NGOs mostly in South Asia and East Africa, I saw many parallels and this revived my interest in the topic. I read through the data more than once but remained unsure how to proceed with it. I was also interested in early theories of civil society, mainly Hegel. It was challenging to bring the data close to the theory. I could not make the data speak to Hegel’s civil society perhaps because Hegel was focused on civil society in relation to the state. At that point I was beginning to entertain the idea that the aid-civil society sector had quite visible markers about it that one could begin to think of it as a new type of social class. Eventually, I came across Grounded Theory method and more specifically Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT). I had used it experimentally for a short assignment in a course and developed an affinity for it. First I suspected that it might be too ambitious for a master’s thesis, but as I was analysing the data I was

mentally referring back to techniques from CGT and found them to be useful. They made the data approachable and opened it up for me in new ways. There was flexibility and tolerance for cyclical processes that worked well with my personal way of doing things. The conceptual coding allowed me to take the data beyond a descriptive account and pushed me to find links and contradictions within the data. Finally I decided to take the risk and go with this ambitious method as a technique rather than a general methodology.

CGT is often thought of as a general methodology that provides a lens to look and interpret the data as well as provide a theoretical framework but it could also be used as a method; a technique (Cho and Lee, 2014). Grounded Theory (GT) was first developed in 1967 by Strauss and Glaser within the discipline of sociology at the University of Chicago as a response to the contemporary positivist and scientific trends in sociology (Dey, 2004/2008; Charmaz, 2006/2014; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011/2013). Strauss and Glaser were looking for a methodology that would facilitate theory development that is grounded in data. In 1987 Strauss broke away from his collaboration with Glaser and altered the methodology. This was further developed in 1990 in a book Strauss wrote in collaboration with Corbin. In the 1990s Charmaz developed yet a third version called Constructivist Grounded Theory method (Dey, 2004/2008). The three variations had both epistemological and ontological differences. The early version presented a post-positivist paradigm, Strauss and Corbin's version was within the interpretivist paradigm and Charmaz's version was in the constructionist paradigm (see Levers, 2013; Kenny and Fourie, 2015 for more on the ontological and epistemological differences between the three versions of the method). Nevertheless, they all entailed a cyclical process tied together through constant comparison to yield data-driven conceptual codes and categories that are constantly revised and pushed into further abstraction.

The terminology overlaps heavily with Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA); open coding, memoing and categorizing. Both GT and QCA share open sampling and encourage immersion into the data. For this reason, I find it suitable to clarify the difference between the two and why I chose GT instead of QCA. GT is perhaps more conscious of epistemological questions compared to QCA which Drisko and Maschi, (2015) suggest remains unclear about whether it fits in the positivist or constructivist



paradigm. Moreover, Schreier (2012) suggests in her QCA practice book that the key difference between them is in the process; linear QCA and cyclical GT, and this has implications on what one aims to retrieve from the data. QCA applies reductive coding while GT applies conceptual coding. The former serves descriptive purposes; it is a tool to interpret and describe the data including manifest and latent meaning and it is good to understand context, while GT applies coding for conceptual purposes through comparing across the data and codes constantly: “between data and concepts, between concepts, and between data” and it is good for analytical research questions (Schreier, 2012, p. 39). Another difference is that in QCA the codes and categories develop at the early stages of analysis (Schreier, 2012; Drisko and Maschi, 2015). The categories are mutually exclusive and given that they emerge through a linear-process categories are developed and applied in two separate steps. They then form the frame for analysing the rest of the data. In GT the categories are not mutually exclusive and given that they emerge through a cyclical process, applying them and revising them is a continuous process and does not take place in separate steps (Schreier 2012; Cho and Lee 2014). Categories in GT can continue to be revised even at later stages in the analysis while this is not encouraged in QCA.

The reason I used GT is that in my analysis I went through various stages and I constantly compared the data in a process that was inherently cyclical rather than linear. The categories emerged at different intervals and were revised multiple times through a process of comparison and entertaining different possible hypotheses. The main step where the method comes to life is in the *integrative diagram* (Diagram 2), which is when I map out the relational links between subcategories. However, I could not claim that I was able to develop conceptual categories. Some were descriptive and some were low-degree conceptual. In this sense I used GT as a technique rather than a general methodology and I relied on a theoretical framework to develop my empirical categories into theoretical ones.

The principles of GT are open sampling and data immersion followed by theoretical sampling (Dey, 2004/2008). In other words, approaching the data with an open mind and searching for leads from the data using an open coding technique. After which the researcher can either expand or contract the data based on emergent codes and categories. In my case, the open sampling was applied on the set of interviews. I then

developed early-stage categories that helped me choose from the pool of documents I had collected over a few years, this represented the theoretical sampling. This process also released me from the need to select a representative sample, because the samples are chosen on the basis of the emerging categories. In this sense they assist in further developing the emerging ideas rather than testing their validity by applying them to a broad representative sample, for example I did not use any documents from NGOs, while I had some I saw that they were not going to change my categories much.

Different stages of the analysis entail a deductive or an inductive process. According to Dey (2004/2008) the early version by Glaser and Strauss rejected induction and deduction categorically. However, Dey details how it is rather impossible to escape deduction and induction at different stages of analysis. The CGT version accepted induction and/or deduction as part of the process towards *abduction* (Hennick et al., 2011).

Abduction was first described by Charles Peirce in 1878 (Charmaz, 2006/2014; Dey, 2004/2008) and it was his method of dealing with “puzzling” findings according to Charmaz (2006/2014). (p. 200). Basically, it starts with a conceptual framework from which some observations are deduced (resembling data-driven hypotheses) of which the most plausible one is chosen. This process could begin as inductive, starting with data, which lead to data-driven hypothesis followed by abducting the most plausible one. The end result is not a generalization from the data but an altered, and preferably deeper, new interpretation (Dey, 2004/2008, Drisko and Maschi, 2015). I appreciate about GT that it is cyclical and the comparisons were very useful in teasing out meaning from codes and categories. I also appreciate that it kept me aspiring for conceptual coding although I was not always successful at this.

There are certainly some criticisms to this type of coding and categorization because it involves a lot of subjective judgements from the researcher to decide which parts of the data fit in which categories. The researcher applies what Lakoff (1987) calls “idealized cognitive models” (as cited in Dey (2004/2008, p.88). Sometimes data fits only partly in one category and it is up to the researcher to include it or not. This is part of the interpretative process and CGT demands that the researcher positions him or herself in the data and is self-aware that they are constructing the data as well as interpreting it. GT method was also criticized for putting data before theory and

assuming that theories that the researcher had been previously exposed to do not play a role in the early stages of the research, although CGT came to respond to this limitation by emphasizing the constructivist element in the process (Alvesson & Kärreman 2011, Silverman 2005).

From the documents, I kept in mind one main generic question, “what is the intended role of these documents?” This is a guiding question from CGT (Charmaz 2006/2014). As I was thinking of the possible role of the documents, I began to see articulations of the roles of aid-civil society spelled throughout the data. If it is any indicator the word ‘*role*’ was repeated 124 times in the data. It seemed apparent that the role of the documents was in big part to state the role of aid-civil society and institutionalize it. This is how the first set of categories came to represent what was seen as the *envisioned* role of aid-civil society.

For a big part of the data I did line-by-line or by paragraph coding. Sometimes these codes were descriptive summaries but when possible I tried to develop action codes as per (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006/2014). When I began to see patterns that were making sense I developed some categories. I then chose what to keep and what to omit from my data set and went on to do focused coding. The first set of categories was rather exhaustive and there were too many to navigate across. I saw I could collapse some and in the process I was comparing the codes and categories and looking for an overarching meaning or a core category. I experimented with a few and revised the categories further. This stage was rather challenging. I had five categories and 17 sub-categories. Reaching a bottleneck I thought it was a good idea to consult an established theory. Initially I had thought of one core category, which was legitimacy. I found Bourdieu’s ideas on legitimation practices very useful and I may have been unconsciously thinking about them while developing the categories as I had earlier entertained the idea of aid-civil society representing a distinct social class. As I went on with the analysis I found the legitimation practices to be overarching rather than a core category and for the core category I chose “knowledge production and language acquisition”. At this stage, I went back through my data analysis and literature review to incorporate it into Bourdieu’s theory on distinctions and legitimation practices which became my theoretical framework. This perhaps

represents the cyclical nature of my research writing. It made the process long-winded but this already had its roots at the early research design.

The data was organized at first according to the source, but as I went on with the coding there was very little difference between the language used and the issues that were brought up. In the interviews there were variations in the personal opinions of people but this was not necessarily reflective of their role. Sometimes roles blurred, for example one public official was politically active in a new independent group that formed out of the 2011 public squares and was looking to register as a new political party. Another public official was the founder of one of the NGOs that I also happened to interview. In a similar way, government documents were prepared closely with donors and so did not sound very different from donor strategies. This meant that labelling according to presupposed categorizations based on source was not a good idea.

Thinking how aid-civil society's role was *envisioned* became my sensitizing concept. A sensitizing concept is a lead I kept in mind as I scanned the data and it helped to accelerate the analysis process a bit. Here are two examples from my coding process sensitized to the *envisioned role*, note that sometimes in the data the overemphasis on an issue points to a deficiency that they set out to correct such as in *example 2*:

← Category	← Sub-category	← Focused coding	← Open coding	← Original text
<i>Example 1</i>				
<i>Making of a partner</i>	<i>Flexible, adaptable</i>	<i>Social inclusion of actors who will make Yemen resilient and adaptable, systemic approach.</i>	<i>Rebuilding a system to reduce risk in the face of the major challenge of a fragile context--enhance adaptive capacity, inclusion. --intervene at economic, political and social leverage points for critical change at every level, individual, household,</i>	<i>The major challenge is to build systems and assets so as to simultaneously reduce risks, enhance adaptive capacity, and facilitate inclusive growth. The approach is to intervene at economic, political, and social leverage points for critical change at every level, i.e., that of the individual, households, communities, and the state to foster greater inclusion,</i>

			<p><i>community, state. (Tacitly includes civil society also evident in later text)</i></p>	<p><i>provide better adaptive capacity to crises, and to mitigate and reduce risks. Most fundamentally, the aim is to reduce chronic vulnerability; maintain a foundation and conditions upon which development and more inclusive growth can occur; and, ultimately, to build the asset base of the individual, household, and community in order to catalyze a more positive dynamic of investment, enhanced productivity, and rising incomes.</i></p>
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*Example 2*

<p><i>Public good</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Also connected to Cat. 2, representation: donor mediating between government and civil society organizations. Tacitly acknowledging that CSOs do not enjoy good public reputation. Government responsibility but that this is important if they were to be representatives of citizens</i></p>	<p><i>Civic leader</i></p>	<p><i>Improve CSO public image (by Government), public good.</i></p>	<p><i>Give CSOs a platform in public media to showcase to the public the importance of their role -- i.e. Government responsibility to improve the image of CSOs to the public.</i></p>	<p><i>Executing intensive and systematic awareness campaign through a strategic communication plan using different outlets to introduce the importance of CSOs' role as the government's partner. Space shall be allocated in official media outlets to allow the organizations to highlight their diverse roles in serving society and to increase the support of public opinion for this role.</i></p>
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The following steps demonstrate my mental process during the research. Note that memo writing was a constant process throughout.

- ↓ An intuitive hypothesis (initial drafts)
- ↓ Data exploration
- ↓ Immersion, open coding of interviews
- ↓ Theoretical/targeted sampling (choosing and omitting from my data set)
- ↓ Focused coding and categorizing
- ↓ Comparison of codes and categories
- ↓ Emerging higher categories
- ↓ Comparison/reduction of emerging categories
- ↓ A few possible core categories and possible hypotheses
- ↓ Reading related literature empirical and theoretical, making sense of my categories and choosing core category
- ↓ Choosing one plausible interpretation from the possible hypotheses (abduction)
- ↓ Revising of categories and sub-categories
- ↓ Struggling with final degree of abstraction
- ↓ Searching for an established theory that fits emergent hypothesis
- ↓ Revise analysis to apply theory on categories and sub-categories
- ↓ Finding parallels within reviewed literature
- ↓ Coherence through defining core category
  
- ❖ Insight/conclusion

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion

According to Bourdieu's theory of social class the concepts: *field*, *habitus* and *capital* together form *practices*. These delineate the symbolic *social space*. The outer boundaries of the social space are marked by distinctions, perceptible distinctions point to who is in and who is out. Given that the social space is not unitary and is laden with hierarchies and tensions it is subdivided into fields. Legitimation practices differ across fields but as aggregate they define the social space's inner workings.

While for conceptual purposes distinctions could be assumed to mark the outer boundary of the social space and practices define the qualities within the space, it is key to point that distinctions are not practically separate from practices. Distinctions are mirrored in perceptible practices inside the social space and practices are the culmination of what has been internalized by agents as they negotiate their identity and social positioning. So, while distinctions delimit the outer boundaries of the social space they also play a role in shaping the tensions between different fields within the social space. That being said, discussing distinctions allows for a reflection on the broader context in which aid-civil society operates.

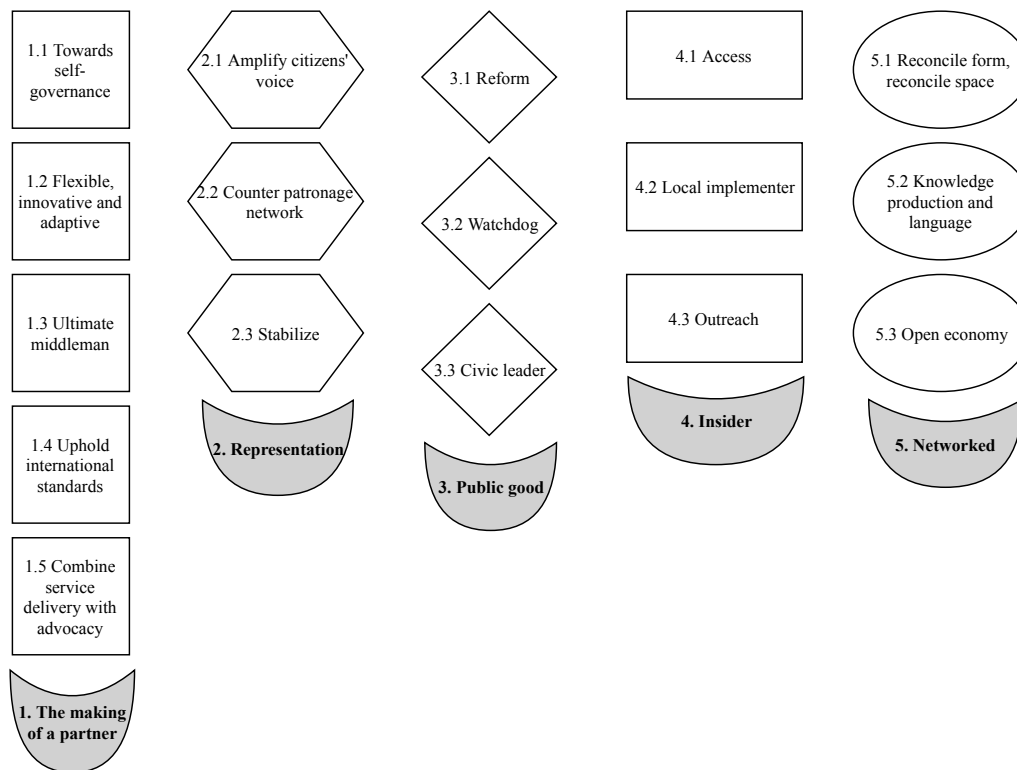
Two types of movement define repositioning within the social space, the first is vertical and the second is horizontal. Movement necessarily entails change either in the *volume* or *composition* of the various types of *capital* that *agents* in the social space have acquired. Vertical movement, which according to Bourdieu is more common, spells a change in capital volume but not composition. For example, an aid-civil society organization increases its competency and expands from a limited service delivery organization to advocacy and service delivery. This is a vertical movement within the field. This however does not entail a change in relational power. Horizontal movement entails a change in composition and as such it has implications on power relations. For example, an aid-civil society converts its social and cultural capital to economic capital (aid) and implements projects that allow it to gain further social and cultural capital thus allowing for multiple conversions of capital. This ability to strategically convert capital and change its configurations results in movement across fields and lends an agent a bigger say on the legitimate practices of the social space.

For this reason Bourdieu (1986) calls this particular field where horizontal movement occurs, *the field of power*. An example would be, an aid-civil society that reached a level of *practical mastery* (Bourdieu 1977) and established an unmatched niche for its self, for example, by providing rare access that is valuable to donors it thus, shifts its capital composition and raises itself closer to the dominant classes. This is a power relational shift and it is horizontal because it crosses fields within the social space. It is important to note that movement (social trajectory) is not random according to Bourdieu. It remains within the realm of possibilities of the objective structures of the social space, the accumulative positioning of an agent. Bourdieu (1986) is careful not to confuse this movement with optimistic notions of social mobility, which he finds to be naïve. There are oppressive structures at play and they set the possible social trajectories. It is also key to understand that prior to achieving any kind of positive horizontal movement (meaning a change in capital composition), it is key to first go through the social conditioning that would internalize the rules of the social space. These are the practices and unquestioned notions and positions of power that are taken as natural-the *doxa*, must be well mastered. This internalization is the *habitus* and it happens unconsciously. It is passed on from others in the social space and taught in a standard educational apparatus - in the process language is acquired. However, it is according to Bourdieu (1977) an extreme case for *habitus* to perfectly correspond to *doxa*. *Doxa* is resisted and negotiated so are the objective structures of the fields. In a nutshell, the dynamics between, agents and structures, habitus and field, subject and object, spell out the social theory of Bourdieu.

Emerging articulations of putative roles and functions of aid-civil society were arranged in categories and sub-categories (Diagram 1). The data occasionally provided hints as to whether a particular role had not been adequately fulfilled. For instance there would be an over-emphasis on directing institutional and/or legal reforms to remove presumed social or structural hindrances that prevent aid-civil society from actualizing that particular role. However, the data did not provide direct information on whether these putative roles were practiced or not. Therefore, these putative roles (sometimes real sometimes imagined) help us understand what is considered to be legitimate within the social space but not what actually happens. The data is in dialogue with some of the numerous literature of case studies on aid-civil society from different parts of the world and I refer to this literature to draw parallels



and find similarities. This is justified because international development aid follows similar trends worldwide.



**Diagram 1: Empirical categories**

In the first stage categories and sub-categories I extracted from the data, which I call the *empirical* categories, were grouped in a thematic way, for example those pertaining to outreach, communication, access were grouped together and so on. The second stage and, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the key moment in theoretical development is when empirical categories are put in an *integrative diagram* (Diagram 2) and relational links between them are drawn. At this stage, links I drew between sub categories seemed to cluster them in a different logic than the thematic grouping done in the previous stage. Here, I applied Bourdieu's concepts to determine the links and connections and make sense of them. This process resulted in three clusters with interlinks in between them as well as clear tensions, such as for example the tension between formal and informal structures. In between these three emerging clusters were some subcategories that did not readily fit in any field- I left them suspended. These three clusters then became the *fields* in the social space.

*Field 1*, represented formal and “officialising practices” (Bourdieu 1977). This was where formal language was acquired and practices were reiterated. This field represented the formal and institutional functions of aid-civil society. The requiring and acquiring of technical and standard knowledge such as administrative practices, implementing basic activities, drafting reports, systematically monitoring public budget, drafting legal reforms, lobbying practices and so on. This was where aid-civil society organizations demonstrated that they had acquired an adequate level of knowledge from capacity building trainings. On the basis of which they were able to articulate their work sometimes this was referred to in the data as *international standards* -understood to mean principles enshrined in international treaties and conventions and global development trends. This is generally a *doxic* field. Aid-civil society organizations learn the rules of the game and try to establish themselves as competent and legitimate agents in the social space. They are not questioning or challenging *doxa* at this stage rather they are learning how to acquire economic capital and convert it to social capital through implementing basic project activities and disbursing donor grants according to donor standards.

*Field 2* is characterized by informal practices, *dialect* language instead of *formal* language (Bourdieu 1991). This field is not technical but communal and social. Community representation is a valued practice for aid-civil society, but it is challenging because it lies in direct tension with the practices in *Field 1*. This field represents what was originally viewed as aid-civil society’s comparative advantage (Drabek 1987), which was defined as their direct link to communities, delivering basic services, conducting local awareness campaigns, building social cohesion and so on. These practices are in conflict with the modes of social conditioning and thus, are weak.

*Field 3* is the *field of power*, it is when some aid-civil society have reached a level of *practical mastery*, they have understood the rules of the game and understood how to negotiate them and play them to their advantage. Horizontal movement is more likely here. Some aid-civil society have established a niche role for themselves and expanded their networks- social capital. In the diagram this field is not bounded by any lines because it can borrow and cross over from other fields.

*The core category* lies on top of Diagram 2 and represents the practice of knowledge production and language acquisition. This is a key practice for conditioning but also for affecting change in legitimation practices. It is represented in basic capacity building trainings as well as more advanced technical courses, customized trainings, opportunities to practice, self-learning, participating and learning from others in conferences and workshops, participating in solidarity campaigns and matters that are no longer necessarily bounded by the national context. This core-category is linked to all three fields which results in a degree of homogeneity within the social space to the extent that the agents are products of the same conditioning (Bourdieu 1986). However, agents' positioning in the different fields is also defined by capital, which, as indicated earlier, is unevenly distributed. This category determines what agents internalize in their realm of possibilities. Education gives aspirations to agents as to what they can do but also limits them as they internalize what is possible and impossible within their field (Bourdieu 1986, p. 25).

Tvedt (2007) discusses a similar but slightly different model. He takes a systems outlook, although according to him not a systems theory approach, where donor states and development NGO form a system bounded by aid flows. He calls this the DOSTANGO system. Tvedt (2007) suggests marking those who are in and those who are out by whether they directly or indirectly get development aid. What I propose here is similar in ways and different in other ways. I propose that it is a social class made up of social agents rather than a system rolling on its own accord. According to Tvedt this is essentially a global system. However, what I suggest is rather a social space defined by both national and transnational structures. It could not be understood only within the national context but at the same time could not be removed from it. Ultimately aid-civil society actors draw their causes and activities from national or local reality. Additionally, my model of the aid-civil society symbolic social space is not bounded by aid flow *only* as it is in Tvedt's (2007) model. Aid *-economic capital-* in Bourdieu's terms, is just one type of valued capital and indeed without capacity to convert it into social and cultural capital it is of no value to this social space. There are agents within the social space who acquire little material capital but have highly valuable social or cultural capital that impacts legitimation practices. Such as a prominent, networked aid-civil society personality who, alternates between public office, head of NGO, policy influencing and policy making and has thorough

knowledge of local contexts, is much better positioned than a donor with only economic capital. It is common to find such big personalities with high social and cultural capital dominating aid-civil society organizations (see Bonnefoy and Porier, 2010). So, Tvedt's (2007) choice to put aid as the central mover in the system underestimates other movers. According to Tvedt's (2007) logic, which gives centrality to aid flow, any actor or institution that lies on the path of this aid flow is included in the system. While, I found that it is not possible to decide who is in and who is out on these terms. The practices and distinctions are what define who is in and who is out because ultimately inclusion requires recognition from in-group members. For instance, not all aid-civil society actors are able to position themselves in the social space even if they have been affected by aid flow. If they don't understand the language, and the rules of the game, they will not acquire much convertible capital to be agents of the social space. Similarly, some public officials have worked in the social space long enough to acquire knowledge of the practices and be conditioned by the same conditions of others in the social space, they could be in it if recognized by others as such.

There are also those who are unable to keep up with shifts and changes in legitimation practices and find themselves with a devalued composition of capital, a horizontal movement nonetheless but a negative one in relation to the social space. Leading to that agent getting dropped out of a field. This points to the dynamism of the structures; the power configurations are not static. To this effect, Bourdieu (1986) reminds us that although the structures of the field are objective, they are socially constructed and constantly negotiated by social agents with a certain level of *social pedigree*. Therefore, high competences of agents could dislocate legitimation practices and install new ones.

The practices are the manifestation of objective and subjective forces and this is why examining legitimation practices is useful for my research as I want to challenge the idea that on the one hand aid-civil society lacks autonomy and is donor-driven and disconnected from local communities and national causes, and on the other that they are idealized as torchbearers for liberal democratic values and they represent an expression of a notion of societal authenticity. I argue that aid-civil society agents are bounded by very real structural limitations that are nevertheless socially produced.

First I will discuss in the next section how those who occupy the aid-civil society social space are distinctly marked from other social groups. According to Bourdieu (1986) distinctions are key identity markers and they reflect what members have internalized and mirrored through their perceptible dispositions. Following that I will detail legitimation practices.

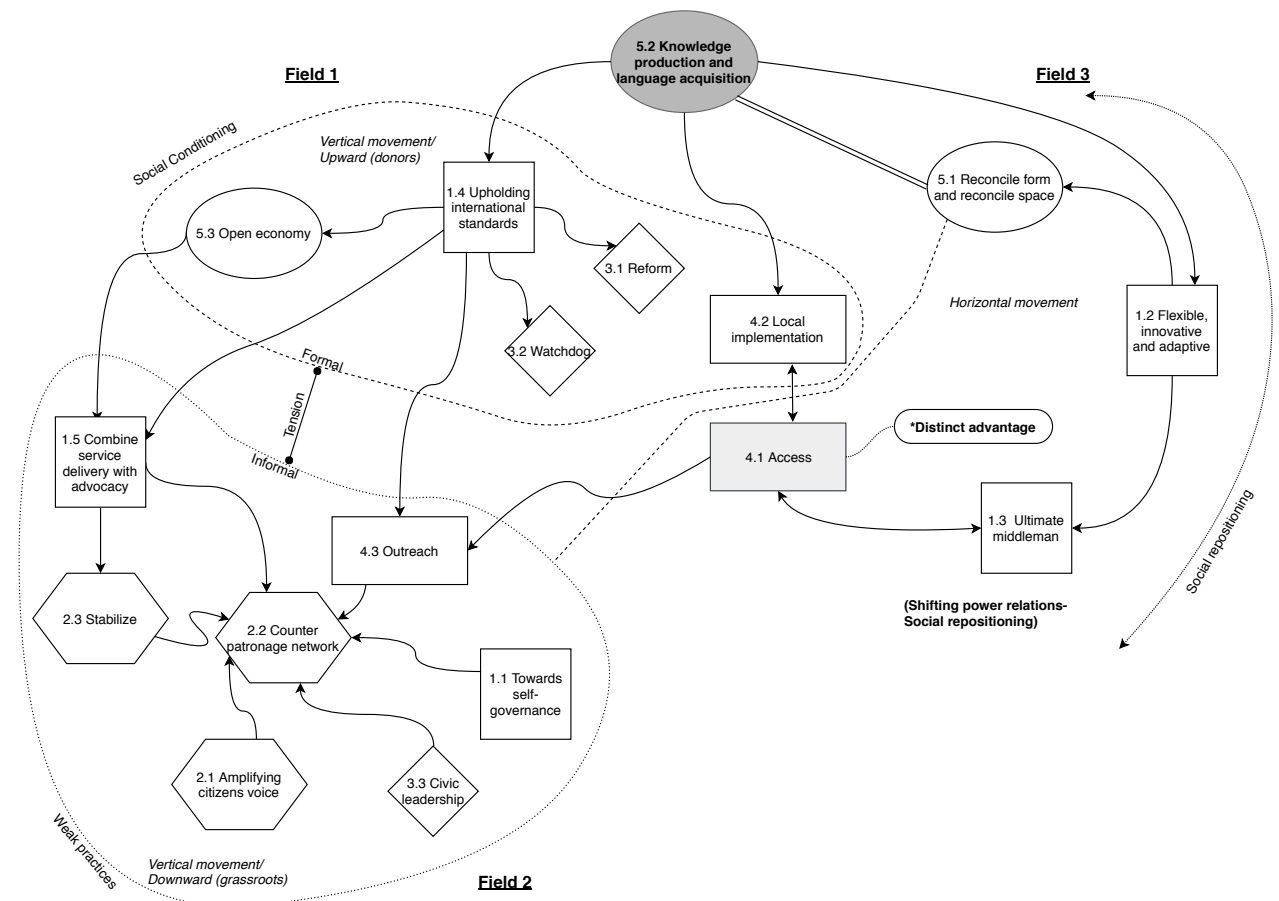


Diagram 2 Integrative diagram

### Part 1: Distinctions

#### The “other” civil society.

These distinctions were drawn from the data and, when applicable, inferred from the general development/NGO literature that I consulted in my research. They are distinctions that agents in the aid-civil society social space either *deliberately* make or fall into *incidentally* as a result of their conditioning or due to field structures. As an example, it is likely that the distinction between aid-civil society and what is commonly referred to in the data as *communities* was incidental. It happened in spite of aid-civil society’s efforts to appear close and connected to a popular base and this

could be attributed to field structures that gave primacy to formal institutions and formal language. While the distinction with what was regarded as corrupt and incompetent state bureaucracy was likely a deliberate one. Another deliberate distinction may be with seemingly traditional structures such as kin or faith-based civil society. It is noteworthy to mention that these deliberate distinctions are not always actualized. Often times the lines are blurred between, for instance the perceptible practices of state bureaucracy and aid-civil society. This is evident in a perceptions survey conducted in Yemen, which found that NGOs were perceived as highly corrupt (Transparency International, 2013). Another example of blurred distinctions is when aid-civil society attempts to portray its work as embedded in modern values of civic volunteerism while in it may be perceived as co-opted by the state or coerced into activities driven by donors.

These distinctions spell out an uneasy tension between structures that are formal and informal, notions of modern vs. traditional, urban vs. rural, and grassroots vs. intermediary. These were detectable throughout the data with not much explication. Perhaps an early distinction marker could be attributed to the different connotation in Arabic -as well as in English- between civil society and community associations. In Arabic civic/civil, often referred to as *madani*, connotes urbanism and by extension modern institutional forms it could also imply non-affiliation with the military or a religious order. While other forms of community associations, commonly referred to as *ahli*, connote communal, rural, parochial and some argue “primordial” (Carapico 1998, Bishara 2012). This distinction already set the ground for the tension between *field 1* and *field 2*.

According to Alsalahi (2008) who favours that modern and traditional be kept apart, civil or *madani* organizations have the undertone of an institutional and formal relation with the state and thus reflect a processes of a deliberately negotiated “social contract” (p. 21). While *traditional* civil society, which he defines as kin or faith-based “involuntary” associations, represent the antithesis of modern state building. This view is challenged in Carapico (1998) who mapped out the long tradition of associational activity in Yemen prior to the 1990’s NGO trend. Similarly, Almutawakil (2008) opined that kin and tribal links are also “voluntary” associations

established by people who *chose* to share a geographic space with each other. Adding that it is a misconception that tribal links are through blood (p. 356).

Nonetheless, this distinction continued to mark the identity of aid-civil society. According to Carapico (2014) this was a strategic choice by hegemonic development aid actors to filter out forms of civil society that did not ideologically correspond with theirs. Suggesting that this reduced the rich and diverse Yemeni civil society to the single classification of NGO which was then defined by donors and governments "bureaucratically and ideologically" - especially that their organizational existence was contingent on acquiring a legal status from the government and registries of multilateral organizations (p. 154). It was also an ideological choice by what she called "secular intellectuals" who, according to Carapico (1998), stipulated that "what is *ahli* cannot also be *madani* or constitute a component of *al mujtama' al madani*. Nor does there seem to be any potential for the dialectical transformation of *al mujtama' al ahli*, say a primordial civic realm, in the direction of civil society" (p.7). A debate about this raged on in an edited book that contained essays by leading Yemeni and non-Yemeni academics and intellectuals who met in a conference in Sana'a in 2006 to discuss Yemeni civil society. I am inclined to think that this debate will not be resolved soon as it is not a debate about what *is* but about what *ought* to be included or excluded.

Notably, for these very distinctions *madani* civil society was perceived by the state to have a political orientation and was often viewed with suspicion and suffered stricter handling from the state while *ahli* associations were considered to be unthreatening and philanthropic (Bishara 2012). Unsurprisingly, development aid actors had a preference for *madani* associations leading to the exclusion of an integral part of Yemeni civil society (Almutawakil 2008). All the while, *madani* civil society, mostly in the form of NGOs, was targeted with intensive institutional and technical trainings leading to their professionalization and a degree of homogeneity to fit the new narrowly defined institutional classification.

One of the main distinctions was with institutions that were seen as belonging to a reactionary movement or under the influence of political parties (Alsalahi 2008; Ghalioun 1992 & Jaber 1993 as cited in Bishara 2012) such as some religious revivalist civil society associated with the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The economics lecture I attended was presented at a local think tank that was perceived to be affiliated with the Yemeni version of the Muslim Brotherhood. There was no attendance from other aid-civil society and the think tank setting and type of language used did not indicate that it was involved with development aid.

Clark (2004a) estimates that 70 percent of associations are “religiously motivated” (p. 12) this is reflected in the USAID (2007) study which found that the majority of civil society organizations were faith-based and these were linked with charity work and basic service delivery. Aid-civil society and Islamist civil society -without going into too much historical detail- came to embody to some extent the Arab nationalist movements and religious revivalist movements of the 1950s respectively. Both emerged from a common historical struggle for liberation and began to mutually differentiate themselves from one another in the post-independence era (Bishara 2012). Secular-leaning civil society was a recipient of development aid to the exclusion of Islamist-leaning civil society, which led the latter to accuse aid-civil society of servitude to neo-imperialist agendas (Bishara 2012). In turn Islamist civil society was viewed by aid-civil society as reactionary and opportunistic, exploiting people’s needs to advance its political interests.

The work of Clark (2004a,b) on Arab and Yemeni Islamic activism detailed the methods of meticulously combining formal organization and informal community building. In particular Clark’s (2004b) analysis of women’s *nadwa* (informal sermon) reflect one successful method of embedding values through existing social practices such as women’s social gatherings. Resulting in gradual but effective social expansion and the building of loose network of sympathizers and potential recruits. Aid-civil society on the other hand idealized communities (this is apparent in the data) but kept a *disposition* that was perceptibly distinct from them and this was perhaps most obvious in the type of language used by aid-civil society or what is pejoratively referred to as “NGO speak” (Tvedt 2007). According to Bourdieu (1991) “all linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices” (p. 53) and it cannot escape anyone the technical jargon that dominates development language. This language helps generalize and universalize but as it does that it also codifies and neutralizes lived experience (Bourdieu 1986, p. 462). A tacit acknowledgement of this ‘misjudgement’ that resulted in the exclusion of informal civil society was apparent in



the data. The underpinning logic in the data –especially the donor documents, was that informal civil society must be brought on board so as to achieve two key things, dislocate and offer an alternative to *patronage networks* connected to the former regime, and reduce the appeal of religious groups (USAID 2014, DFID 2013).

Another distinction is between aid-civil society and first generation civil society organizations associated with the period preceding the 1990s political liberalization, such as cooperatives and to large extent labour unions and professional syndicates. Starting in the 1940s and gaining momentum in the 1950s independent newspaper, social clubs, women societies and labour unions were forming and organizing in the South against the British rule (Dahlgren 2010a). There were no formal organizations in the North during that time but some disgruntled youth escaped to the South and on to Egypt and began organizing secretly against the monarchy (the imamate) that was overthrown in 1962 when the North declared itself a Republic. Following the 1962 republican revolution in the North local development associations played a pivotal role and received support and encouragement from the state (Carapico 1985). Both in North and South of Yemen labour unions, agricultural and fishery cooperatives and various local development associations took part in early state building activities; building schools, health centres as well as raising political awareness and demanding civil and labour rights (Alsalahi 2008; Carapico, 1998). According to Ayubi (1995/2008) these were to a large extent democratically elected and relied on donations from massive remittances from Yemenis abroad. This was a moment where the state was itself reliant on civil society to lead local development. However, there were no clear lines that separated state from some unions and cooperatives. From as early as the 1970s in the North the newly elected president of the Republic was chosen as head of the cooperatives union (Almutawakel 2008). During the 1980s the government in the North centralized its control. In the South between 1967 and 1990 the ruling socialist party banned political activity outside party lines although syndicates and unions continued to operate and advance their cause (See Dahlgren 2010a on the activism of the Women Union). That being said, unions, syndicates and cooperatives to a large extent became seen as “state-directed” (Clark, 2004a; see also Alsalahi, 2008 and Carapico, 1998; Ayubi, 1995/2008).

Notable here is the ambiguous position labour unions occupy in the general context of international development aid and not only in Yemen. According to Banks et al. (2015) unions are marginalized because they do not fit neatly in the new NGO arrangement of the post 1990s. In Annex 4 of the Partnership Framework (GoY 2013) there was a curious statement about labour unions:- “It has become common knowledge that the existence of unions in the public sector can expand the concept of civil society”. This was followed by a specific proposal for legislative reform of labour unions. The gist of it was to align the law with the standards of the International Labour Organizations to ensure union pluralism. Asserting that the joining of labour unions in the Partnership Framework was contingent on the proposed legislative reforms:

In order for unions to contribute and enter into partnership, many countries have moved to bring the legislation governing unions into line with international standards for union freedoms. [...] [The current law] is in conflict with union pluralism according to International Labour Organization (ILO) standards and with the idea of freedom and democracy. -Proposal: Abandon the principle of having one union and enshrine union pluralism at the level of committees, organizations and union federations (GoY 2013, Annex 4).

This proposed legislative reform seemed to aim towards ensuring that union branches were not under the central command controlled by the state. According to Bishara (2012) labour unions continue to be the associations with the biggest potential for politics because they are defined by their claims of representation --their membership base is clear. However, as they stand today they are excluded from aid-civil society social space.

### **The state (bureaucracy and patronage network).**

More particular to Yemeni aid-civil society there are two forms of distinction with the state, a) the formal institutions and state bureaucracy that are seen as incompetent and corrupt, and b) the informal *patronage network*, which is a term used in the data interchangeably with *traditional elite and traditional patronage network*. This appears to refer to the expansive informal network of political elite that the regime

operated through and alongside to consolidate its power. Members of the patronage network were primarily engaged in their informal capacity as representatives of an exclusive power elite with their marked spheres of influence (See AIDhaeri 2008, Hasan 2008, Longley Alley 2010 and Phillips 2011).

With the state bureaucracy the need for distinction was clear, the *comparative* advantage of aid-civil society was in *comparison* with the state bureaucracy, which was seen as impersonal and rigid. In the case of Yemen it was also corrupt and incompetent. However, much of the work of aid-civil society entailed heavy interaction and close collaboration with the state. As indicated earlier the bureaucratic forms and perceptions of corruption applicable to both state and aid-civil society blur these distinctions (see Transparency International 2013; YPC, 2012). More general to the development aid is the close working relationship between professional aid-civil society and the state. As aid-civil society institutionalizes itself in the government system it begins to share responsibilities with the state and participate in key decision-making meetings. Alagappa (2004) in an expansive study encompassing 12 South and East Asian countries found that indeed the boundary between state and civil society was “porous” (p. xii). He found that they were conceptually “distinct” but in practice they were “spheres” that were open up to each other through various means (ibid, p. 37). Bank et al. (2015) reports similar trends in Kenya with regard to highly professionalized civil society. In the data the Partnership Framework set out 60% representation for “civil society organizations” in the institutional body that was foreseen to overlook the implementation of the framework - public development planning included in its mandate (GoY, 2013).

Although it is often articulated in the language of “complementarity” and “sharing the burden” with the state, donors persistently encouraged institutional building either in the form of public independent institutions or in civil society in the form of NGOs. This insistence on formal institutional building can be explained by what Cleaver (2001) described as the link between "evolutionism" and the idea of progress embedded in development aid. He suggested that it's reasoned as a "progression from traditional (implicitly 'weak') forms of management to modern (by implication 'strong') forms (Cleaver, 2001, p. 42). This continues to be a strong trend in

development aid; three of the independent public institutions whose members I interviewed were established by pressure and direct funding from donors.

It is important to emphasize that the separation between formal and informal is not sharply defined particularly -but not exclusively, in the case of Yemen. Cleaver's (2001) findings from his field research suggest that while donors insisted on "crafting institutions" he noticed that the most important decision making was taking place in informal settings guided by pre-existing power relations which led him to think that many of these donor-driven institutions were effectively "empty shells" (p. 44). To this effect, Seif (2011) argued that in Yemen, formal institutions may exist at all levels but decision-making takes place outside of their scope. Bishara (2012) called this double system the "junior state" and the "senior state" (p. 326). Both the state and the citizens know the point of access and communication, to get through to the "senior state" and these are not through formal institutions. Sometimes these very institutions turn into personal assets of the power elite as argued by Phillips (2011). Suggesting that "neither power nor wealth is generated or transmitted predominantly through the state's formal institutions" (Phillips 2011, p.37). So it's a false assumption to think that well managed formal organizations will come to replace informal institutions or badly managed formal institutions. Often times formal and informal structures develop a mutually beneficial working dynamic by which they can both operate parallel to each other -citizens get caught up in this formal and informal duality. According to Seif (2011) this results in fragmented communities dismantled to the level of the individual whose only access to services and state is through this labyrinthine model of emasculated public institutions and opportunistic networks connected to the regime.

Specifically in view of this ill repute of the former regimes' practices alternating between formal and informal, the distinction from the state in general was strategically critical for the positioning of aid-civil society in their social space. This is what Bourdieu (1986) refers to as a distinction which would "demand that certain things be brought together and others kept apart" (p. 474). This distinction lent aid-civil society legitimacy to counter these informal corrupt networks on the one hand and to fill the gaps of the incompetent state institutions on the other hand.

The concept of *patronage network* has become more commonly used in official donor documents following the work of Longley Alley (2010). In the data it is not clearly explained but it is interchangeably used with traditional power elite and is discussed in the context of tribal divisions and power elite competition. It is clear that this is in relation to “traditional” leaders operating too close to the centre of power. Ayubi (1995/2008) uses a broader term to explain the underpinnings of power consolidation deployed by post-independence Arab states: corporatism. Rather than a patron/client relationship corporatism refers to the array of arrangements and channels of power that the state opportunistically builds and sustains to stay in power. This blurs the lines between categories such as “state sector” and “private sector”, and the focus then becomes on rivalries and coalitions (p. 216). In the Yemeni corporatist model Ayubi (1995/2008) speaks of the state’s strategy to re-traditionalise society (p. 241). This entailed introducing tribal influence in urban centres that were generally not tribal. The South under socialist rule underwent to a varied degree a public policy of de-tribalisation (Ayubi 1995/2008 citing Lackner 1985) which witnessed active reversal after unification. This was not only the strategy of the state but also Saudi Arabia, the regional hegemon, which put numerous tribal leaders in Yemen under its payroll.

Brandt (2017) however, warns of the tendency of some observers to throw a cover of both mystique and dread by using an indeterminate term such as tribes in the context of Yemen without explicating what is meant. Tribes are not conflated with traditional leaders per se, nor are tribal customs unitary throughout Yemen or equally powerful or relevant for that matter. Similarly, Al-Dawsari (2012) points to the fact that some tribes have been weakened for historical reasons or due to corrupting loyalty money from the state. It is inaccurate to present tribes as unitary static structures, as Brandt (2017) suggests, rather they “are open entities that maintain lively relations with their (tribal and non-tribal) environments” (p. 19). On the other hand and as way of avoiding the use of this “loaded term” some began using terms such as “indigenous people” or “local communities” (Brandt 2017, p. 17), which are equally indefinite.

This is indeed evident in the data where at times aid-civil society was presented as a counter force to *traditional elite* and at times they were seen to be the link to informal civil society and *local communities*. Meanwhile, if quantity is an indicator, there were

123 references to the word community in the data either in the context of rural areas of grassroots. This projects on the one hand an idealization of *local communities* invoking a notion of authenticity or purity and on the other hand the vilification of *traditional leaders*-conflated with tribes and regime cronyism. This view also removes the notion of a community from the urban setting and places it in rural areas. Bishara (2012) warns against this dangerous leap because it leaves urban Arab citizens atomized in the face of the naked violence of the authoritarian Arab state.

That being said, aid-civil society are ultimately a part of this general socio-political system and as Hasan (2008) argued, the kin-based relations whether tribal or familial – constitute the informal social structures that filled the gaps of a fragile Yemeni state and penetrated the everyday life of many Yemenis either by their proximity or distance from these informal channels of power. To this effect, Bishara (2012) suggested that aid-civil society was also benefiting from this “hybrid structure” (p. 304). While they claimed modern and universal values they relied on informal networks for protection and to ensure the continuation of their operations. During my interviews some of the interviewees and some people I contacted but could not secure meetings with were prominent personalities. Granted this was also related to the fact that I was interviewing in the capital city so it was no surprise that some aid-civil society steered to close to channels of power. However, it is undeniable that this form of *social capital* allows some aid-civil society a large margin for manoeuvre. It becomes clear that if one investigates the binary categories taken for granted in the data, such as civil and traditional or formal and informal it becomes clear that they are not stable. Parallel modes often meet not only through the state, which is by now common knowledge, but also through aid-civil society actors themselves. This also means that aid-civil society without this social capital and no alternative guarantees for protection could face the naked violence of the state and be subjected to forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions this is especially the case for aid-civil society that operate in the margins of power channels.

To this end some argued that another source of protection -*social capital*- is on offer from multilateral organizations and influential donors. Reflecting a radical change in the positioning of some aid-civil society and arguably a shift in power relations between them and their national government. Roniger (1994) argued that this is an

inherently asymmetrical exchange between donors and NGOs establishing a typical patron-client relationship that is potentially coercive. Thus Roniger (1994) presents a challenge to the view that aid-civil society is inherently voluntary and by doing so he brings us back a full circle to the kin and faith-based associations that aid-civil society was careful to distinguish itself from on the basis of their involuntary nature.

This leads to a final form of distinction with the state, but here it is with the donor states. This was not reflected in the documents but in some of the interviews where it was clear that some aid-civil society actors attempted to distinguish themselves from the practices of donors and multilaterals. For example there were complaints about donors's favourable treatment of international NGOs who were seen to be crowding out national and local NGOs and competing with them over learning and funding opportunities. Additionally, one interviewee expressed serious concern with donors inadequate understanding to the contexts within the national context. As well as the trend of offering numerous generic capacity building trainings borrowed from the private sector, which did not necessarily correspond with actual training needs. There was also concern that they were pushing for the establishment of too many networks within the same sector leading to fragmentation and competition rather than solving the problem of uncoordinated work. Finally, one interviewee said that her NGO rejected a contract because it appeared that it was motivated by the idea of getting access to certain parts of the country that had security and military significance. These are examples of aid-civil society critically evaluating the performance and know-how of donors and distancing themselves from what they saw as misjudgements to the extent possible. To stress that this happens only to the extent possible, one interviewee (2.5) said admittedly that in spite of the fragmentation that was happening due to the proliferation of new donor-driven networks he nevertheless signed up his NGO to as many as he could so as not to lose on potential opportunities.

In this section I demonstrated the national and local context that aid-civil society actors draw their distinctions from and by doing so they construct their identity. However, once these distinctions are interrogated it becomes clear that they are not clear-cut.

Hence, distinctions from other social groups represent how aid-civil society organizations negotiate their identity in Yemen. But legitimation practices reinforce

the social space and the position of agents within its *fields*. As previously stated, distinctions also form part of the legitimation practices, but on their own they do not help us understand the possible positions of agents with the fields of the *social space*. Distinctions resemble terms that define a concept by its negative, such as non-governmental or non-profit but they do not help us begin to understand beyond the stated negation. However, the tensions and contradictions stated in the distinctions section above manifest themselves in the social space and the tensions between its *fields*.

## Part 2: Legitimation practices

Mapping the legitimation practices provides a glimpse of the extent that the role of aid-civil society generally, and in Yemen in particular, has expanded and become all encompassing. Early evidence to this is in Drabek's (1987) article where she listed some of the discussion topics from a landmark symposium on the roles and functions envisioned for aid-civil society: "shapers of social movements" and at the same time capable of "instrumentalizing" the momentum of social movements, providers of social security, peace makers in the face of conflict and war, as a sector they would proactively integrate women and most importantly link to rural areas and communities. This predicted what I found to be an exaggerated expansion of the putative role of aid-civil society especially in 2014 when I was collecting the data -so much so that the success of the power transfer deal process seemed to depend on aid-civil society.

*Note: Throughout this section I summarize in grey boxes the reasoning of each sub-category as interpreted from the data and include direct quotes from the data.*

### Core category.

**Knowledge production and language acquisition** is the core conceptual category because it is constitutive of the 3 fields. Nevertheless, it plays out differently in each one of the fields. In *field 1*, knowledge production and language acquisition play an integral part in initiating emergent aid-civil society members and organizations into the social space. Critics such as Carapico (2014) identified these knowledge production and capacity building practices in the following terms:



International regimes share distinctive catchphrases, templates, and standards via conferences, training, documentation, web-links, and institution-building activities. They constitute 'epistemic communities' of knowledgeable specialists to generate and disseminate the 'reasons, habits, expectations, and compelling arguments' for cosmopolitan processes and policies (Carapico 2014, p. 9).

This is to a large extent correct, the data and interviews reflect just how central capacity building trainings are to the entire paradigm of aid-civil society engagement. Makuwira (2014) also concedes that capacity building connotes both "ability" and "competence" but it does not give any indication as to what this capacity is and for what purpose it is being *built*. Most importantly is that it "implicitly acknowledges a "gap," a deficit or a lack of something. It is an idea not only with political connotations but also hegemonic in its posture. (p. 66) Interviewee 1.3 said that the majority of these trainings were generic. Much of them borrowed from the private sector and capacity needs were assessed by individual donors according to undisclosed criteria. Her view was that there were no indicators to measure the results of such massive amounts of trainings and no way to know what their intended outcomes were. Indeed according to Bourdieu (1986) education hardly ever serves its intended rational function but its unifying standard application results in similar conditioning across the social space. It also sets what is possible and impossible within the space, what agents should and could aspire to and on what basis. To this end, Carapico (2014) reported that a development expert proclaimed that most of the development aid goes in the form of knowledge transfer and production. Additionally, pointing to a rather important issue, which is that capacity building trainings offered to public officials were different from those offered to aid-civil society. According to Mosse (2001) these trainings seep to rural communities who quickly learn to decode and echo what donors expect. Leading to participatory approaches that primarily serve the purpose of legitimizing donor interventions. There are numerous discussions in the reviewed literature regarding the role of knowledge production and capacity building in development specifically pertaining to its depoliticization effect. However, this educational system provides the skill that, once acquired and mastered, offers aid-civil society much leeway in *field 3*. There and through the use of the formal technical language of development aid-civil society agents are able to renegotiate their position.

Notably, in *field 2* this category hinders and weakens other legitimation practices as it begins to reveal the disconnect between aid-civil society and general civil society groups.

Sub-category 5.2<sup>9</sup>: Knowledge production and language acquisition

- Problem: How to build the capacities of NGOs to ensure they fulfil their envisioned role as *competent* and *effective* development partners?
- Reasoning: NGOs have varied capacities, however, there is a willingness to learn and join trainings. There is also a need for NGOs to conduct studies to inform policy and this requires a level of substantial and technical competency.
- Solution: Support a waterfall model of training where more advanced NGOs can train emerging ones. Build a training unit to train and certify NGOs on project management modules. Conduct large-scale capacity building both standard and customized.

*[Pillar VI Civil Society Empowerment and Partnership] Provide financial and technical assistance to enhance the capacities and empowerment of civil society organizations to become effective development partners. (GoY & FoY 2012)*

*The most important areas for capacity building are: team building and management skills, communication skills, negotiation skills, fundraising and development, project implementation, community research and surveys, M&E, advocacy and mobilization, strategic planning and networking (GoY 2013)*

## Legitimation Practice 1: Knowledge production and language acquisition

### Field 1.

**Uphold international standards**: One of the political justifications for targeting sections of civil society with aid and capacity building was to complement formal representative democracy:

*The constitution shall explicitly provide for participatory democracy to be integrated with representative democracy in a manner that ensures freedom of representation and freedom to vote so as to embody real community participation (GoY 2013)*

Sub-category 1.4: Upholding international standards

- Problem: What could be done to pressure the government to follow through with its

<sup>9</sup> The number of the sub-categories is not in order of appearance in the discussion chapter, rather these were the numbers given at the empirical coding stage and for the continuity of the analysis process I kept them as they are.

international commitments (ratified international treaties and conventions). What is the alternative to government officials' incapacity to draft national plans and project proposals that meet donor standards?

- Reasoning: Building the capacity of the government to meet international standards" may be futile as there was no real political will to adhere to international standards especially that it was viewed that NGOs were more interested in advancing the rule of law than the government.
- Solution: NGOs have a record of advancing and lobbying the government to commit to ratified international treaties. NGOs should receive mentorship from international NGOs and pass on the acquired capacity to other smaller NGOs and even government officials (GoY 2013). Institutionalize the participation of NGOs in planning, implementing and monitoring public policy and drafting proposals that meet "international standards".

*The main problem for disbursement is that the Government of Yemen (GoY) does not have many well prepared project proposals that are ready for foreign funding [...]The implementation of the Dutch programme is therefore less dependent on proposal preparation by the GoY. (Netherlands 2013)*

### Legitimation Practice 2: Uphold international standards

While normatively, formalized civil society was viewed compared to the state to be more dynamic and open to experiment with innovative approaches for political and social inclusion (Banks et al 2015), there was a search for an *additional* partner besides the aid recipient state. Robert Chambers, a leading academic in participatory approaches, proposed during the symposium discussions summarized by Drabek (1987) the concept of "additionality" to refer the potential contribution of aid-civil society. This *additionality* entailed the expansion of NGO operations, developing new technologies and spreading them in development circles to inform donor policies and initiate a form of knowledge creation and exchange which would result in a general "gaining and disseminating [of] understanding about development" (as cited in Drabek 1987, p. ix). In other words, civil society conditioned by international development standards and practices was envisioned to be the ambassador or the torchbearer of all these ideals leading to a bottom-up transformation of societies and states into imagined prosperous democracies. This is reflected in sub-category 1.4, 'Upholding international standards'. In the data at least 14 references were made to "international standards" particularly with regard to legislative reforms but also regarding civil society code of conduct and standards for political inclusion practices.

**Local implementer:** In practical ways, scaling-up aid-civil society in developing countries or what is often referred to in the development literature as Southern NGOs would mean a possibility to scale-down the work of multilateral organizations and international NGOs and arguably reduce cost. At the same time it was presented as an opportunity to enhance the capacities of southern NGOs so they can assume what was portrayed in (Drabek 1987) as their natural role to implement projects in their own countries. This spelled out the very common role of “local implementer”, even though this was often rephrased as a *partnership* connoting a mutual exchange and benefit.

This role is critical in that it made it a prerequisite for aid-civil society to organize in predictable recognizable forms -such as in NGO form -and demonstrate minimal administrative capacity that would allow for standard operational processes that can be measured and monitored. It also required a level of technical knowledge that would allow them to draft proposals, write interim reports and produce documents in the language and ways of reasoning intelligible in development aid language. This practice is perhaps the most important reason why aid civil society was caught up in a big web of technical and standardizing processes to which scholars attribute a common concern: depoliticization (Van rooy 1998/2000; Cleaver 2001, Banks et al. 2015 and Carapico 2014). Aid-civil society is also critical of this practice. In an interview a head of an NGO noted that – and I paraphrase, *both donors and INGOs should work with local CSOs as real partners and not mere implementers as this weakens the civil society sector and turns it into subcontractors of international aid projects* (interview 2.6).

#### Sub-category 4.2: Local implementation

- Problem: How can project implementation go uninterrupted, be cost-efficient and with low security liability?
- Reasoning: Donors and development international NGOs had restricted access and could not be present on the ground, much of the activities had to be channelled through local organizations. This is also an opportunity to improve project-management capacities of national and local NGOs.
- Solution: Projects run by donors and multilateral organizations to include various size grants to NGOs to implement some of activities depending on capacity. Simultaneously project management training will be conducted in different phases through a mechanism that allows smaller NGOs to receive training from larger ones.

*By commissioning local partners to undertake this work, and by pairing them with international organisations to train and mentor the local implementers, we will build up*

*national capacity (DFID 2013).*

*We will seek to spread the risk as much as possible, whilst ensuring that we use partners who have the institutional capacity to deliver results. Our choice of partners is also informed by the organisational assessments identified in the Multilateral Aid Review (MAR) and where organisational weaknesses are identified, we will seek to mitigate these through programme design, and influence our partners to address these weaknesses. (DFID 2013)*

### Legitimation Practice 3 Local implementation

This activity that requires managing donor funds and implementing activities is institutionally formative for aid civil-society organizations. Banks et al (2015) discuss the homogeneity in both organizational form and activity across aid-civil society. Tvedt (2007) refers to this as *organizational sameness*. This trend is perhaps best argued by DiMaggio and Powell (1988) in their concept of organizational *isomorphism*. Organizational isomorphism happens in different ways, there is what they call “mimetic processes” which is when an organization strategically models itself as another more established one in the field (p. 82). Another form occurs when there are legal constraints that coerce organizations to adopt a certain model, for example, the common requirement by donors to have monitoring and evaluation processes integrated in the aid-civil society organizational model. A third form is called “normative isomorphism” which is when a new entrant into the field mirrors others in order to gain recognition and be included in the ranks of other organizations. I believe the three isomorphism processes are at play here leading to much lip-service in the way of innovations, local knowledge and empowerment while aid-civil society organization become preoccupied by how to gain *capital* by being more like the other higher status organizations.

**Watchdog:** The role of a government watchdog is seen as restoring the political nature of aid-civil society so they would not be reduced to mere subcontractors of donors and international NGOs. The idea was that with the access and substantial knowledge the aid-civil society acquires by implementing projects -part of which is instating sound monitoring and evaluation systems, they also learn to monitor the government performance. The role of aid-civil society as a government check is frequently cited in the reviewed literature and it is pertinent in the data. In fact the Partnership Framework between the government and civil society organizations has at its base the principle of civil society participating on all level of public financial

management from planning to implementation and monitoring. Notably, the Executive Bureau in 2014 was preparing a simplified form of “citizen’s public budget” to inform and involve the public in this matter. Four of the NGO representatives interviewed said they were actively working on this and that it was one of their strong competencies (Interview 2.1; 2.8; 2.4; and 2.6). While the interview with the project manager of a community empowerment project said that involving communities in governorate-level planning and monitoring was a principle activity in their project (interview 1.4).

#### Sub-category 3.2: Watchdog

- Problem: How to curb state corruption and ensure transparency and accountability of public financial management and even resource distribution?
- Reasoning: Top-down development allowed for corruption to go without the adequate scrutiny from those who are impacted the most. Public funds were badly managed and did not trickle down to the larger population.
- Solution: Involve citizens (mostly through NGOs) and institutionalize their participation at all level of public financial planning.

*Monitoring of implementation including benchmarks should be established to enhance accountability and sustainability and the monitoring should include citizens’ representatives. (GoY & FoY 2012)*

*CSOs shall become part of the official monitoring mechanism for monitoring the performance of government institutions. (GoY 2013)*

#### Legitimation Practice 4: Watchdog

**Reformer** is linked to aid-civil society’s role as a watchdog. Reformer is perhaps a diluted term compared to *activist* for example. Although the term activist appeared in the official documents in the data it was in limited occasions and in passing. Reform is more commonly used to describe both the aims of development aid and the roles of aid-civil society. The roles of reformers and government watchdog remain in *field 1* in spite of their seemingly political undertones. Van Rooy (1998/2000) argued that aid-civil society had been removed from any notion of power politics even when donors were directing aid to intrinsically political issues such as democracy promotion, human rights and political participation. These political terms were diluted into managerial, apolitical rhetoric and a likely reason could be that these practices are articulated within the technical and administrative capacity building activities that also emphasize *cooperating, collaborating, partnering* and *complementing* the state

rather than resisting or confronting it. In the interviews (1.1; 1.3; 1.4; 4.4) there was a view that it was best to avoid confrontational and adversarial relations with state bodies. I paraphrase from interview (1.1), *Focusing on monitoring and accountability but through partnership and cooperation and not adversarial methods and confrontation may be more effective*. Similarly interviewee (1.7), was concerned that the government continued to view aid-civil society as an adversary rather than a partner.

#### Sub-category 3.1: Reform

- Problem: How to support “progressive” reformers and strengthen their cause and at the same time avoid antagonizing the state in a confrontational or competitive manner?
- Reasoning: Gradual reform rather radical and confrontational relationship. Support based on values, i.e. what is seen to be progressive.
- Solution: Emphasize partnership and complementarity between NGOs and the state, help raise the status of those members who are seen to be advocates of progressive values.

*Supports participation and inclusion to empower reformers, as well as institutional strengthening for more inclusive and accountable methods of political and economic governance (USAID 2014)*

*On the basis of CSOs' recognition that their role is complementary to the role of the state in achieving sustainable development and that it can only exercise this role through a practical partnership with the Government (GoY 2013)*

#### Legitimation Practice 5: Reform

It is not difficult to see why this is the case from both formally registered aid-civil society and from donors and other foreign development actors. Aid-civil society relies on its legal status to continue to operate, receive and disburse funds, implement activities and be included in government decision-making. At the same time donors and multilateral organizations practice a degree of self-restraint when it comes to overtly expressing their support for certain political change due to their diplomatic mandate. Therefore, the deployment of neutral language by all those involved serves a strategic purpose. It does not necessarily mean that activities are apolitical or that aid-civil society actors are not politically motivated, but rather neutral and technical language provides needed cover for their work. Deploying what Banks et al. (2015) call, "stealth over contestation" (p. 712). Similarly in Drabek (1987) there was

emphasis on the need to avoid antagonizing the state saying that their role was limited to tasks that "governments cannot or will not do" (p. xiii). This was argued by Alagappa (2004) as civil society's function to both *bring* and *prevent* political change. In this sense aid-civil society was viewed as political thermostat, defying social withdrawal from politics but also avoiding radical demands for change. This could explain why it is common to read opinion pieces that express disillusionment with the seemingly absent role of aid-civil society in big moments of crisis such as the piece by Arwad Alkhatib (2018) titled "A Diminished Attendance Under the Ruins of War".

**Conclusion of field 1:** These four key legitimation practices represent the process of learning and internalizing the *rules of the game*. As Bourdieu (1986) suggests *dispositions* are only relevant when they are perceptible in mannerisms and dispositions. Therefore, in this field aid-civil society agents have to demonstrate that they have internalized what is viewed as valuable in *field 1*. The acquisition and deployment of formal language and reiterating practices is a key *officialising strategy* for those who do not have a dominant status in field (Bourdieu, 1977). In this field the key process is converting *social capital* to *economic capital* (aid) and back to *social capital* and build a rapport with other agents in the social space. However, the relations remain *doxic*, i.e. *habitus* to a large extent corresponds with *doxa*. In this field *form* takes primacy over *substance* (Bourdieu 1986) and formal language allows for generalizability and universality, elevating agents discourse from personal and micro to universal and macro by relating it to broader values. The sort of activities that take place here are technical and administrative, legislative reforms, drafting reports and proposals, successfully competing for aid, implementing activities and incorporating what is referred to in the data as "international standards" into working language.

**Open economy (Connector category from field 1):** As this is a field within the broad aid-civil society social structure it is connected to other fields. I propose based on my data analysis (see Diagram 2) that *field 1* is connected with *field 2* in three key ways, the first is through subcategory 5.3 "open economy" -the term "open economy" is borrowed from DFID's (2013) operational strategy in Yemen. This is articulated in the data through micro-finance projects and supporting small and medium size



enterprises. The rationale is that a youthful Yemeni society needs opportunities and this is necessary to stabilize the country and improve growth and employment at the local level (DFID 2013, USAID 2014, GoY 2011). Moreover, involving the private sector in development aid -as a yet additional partner to the state and aid-civil society- was rationalized on the basis that private sector could provide direct investments at the local level and offer opportunities to market local products and open up communities to other economies (Interview 4.4, GoY & FoY 2012).

Sub-category 5.3: Open economy

- Problem: How to involve the private sector in development and link it to communities to build new opportunities and lift people from poverty?
- Reasoning: Encourage an “open economy” and “open society” (DFID 2013) and support a “market-driven model” (USAID 2014) of development. NGOs being dynamic, involving young people, networked and knowledgeable about development issues would make good partner with the private sector.
- Solution: Bring the private sector on board through engaging it in the planned Supreme National Council that will oversee the implementation of the Partnership Framework between the government and civil society organizations.

*Working with the local communities is most promising, linking investment with improved governance. (TSPD)*

*Expansion and development of key value chains with a focus on creating sustainable economic opportunities within micro, small, and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs) offer the best potential for job growth. (USAID 2014)*

### Legitimation Practice 6: Open economy

The micro-finance network was established in Yemen relatively recently in 2009 with the support of UNDP and the Social Development Fund (YMN)<sup>10</sup>. In some of the interviews the moment appeared to be ripe for a more institutionalized involvement of the private sector in development (4.4; 4.3; 1.5; and 2.6).

The separation between civil society and the private sector is being challenged in practice and in academic circles. Keane (1998) took issue with theorists who adamantly separated between civil society and the private sector. Suggesting that ample exchange happens between civil society and the private sector, as the market needs civil society to create a social order where it can embed itself and civil society demands social change that would manifest in the market for example, employment or

<sup>10</sup> Yemen Microfinance Network, <http://yemennetwork.org/en/general-drief/>

quality services. Keane (1998) citing Karl Polanyi (1945): "Where there are no markets, civil societies find it impossible to survive. But the converse rule also applies: where there is no civil society, there can be no markets" (Keane 1998, p. 19). This view is in line with the views expressed in the donors especially the Transitional Programme for Stabilization and Development (GoY 2011) and the Mutual Accountability Framework (GoY & FoY 2012). It becomes rather clear in this point the connection that some scholars make between the common link between the support for civil society in development aid and advancing neoliberal policies. However, this sub-category remains in the *doxic* field and it is not clear to what extent it translates in other fields in the social space, it is inaccurate to reduce the work of aid-civil society to this sub-category.

## Field 2.

Field 2 perhaps contains the most value-laden legitimation practices. It also contains the most number of legitimation practices but they are weak practices that haven't been embedded in the social space. Ample lip-service is paid for these practices but formal mechanism and *officialising strategies* are lacking.

**Outreach** is the first connector to field 2. Drabek's landmark article in 1987 dubbed by Opoku-Mensah (2007) as the "locus classicus' of NGO literature" (p. 9) proclaimed that the primary "function" of NGOs, as envisioned by the landmark development symposium participants, was to form a "direct link with grassroots" as a conveyer of the needs of the "poor". This was presented as their *raison d'être* dubbed in the article as NGO's "comparative advantage" (Drabek 1987, p. ix). The data in aggregate suggested that donors, government and NGOs are acknowledging the importance of bringing on board other forms of civil society not included in the NGO sector. To this end the narrative revolves heavily around the 2011 uprising and the role of social movements and informal civil society activity. Official documents suggest that 2011 represented an opportunity to break away from involvement with the *patronage network* of the former regime and counter it by activating civil society at the community level (USAID 2014, DFID 2013). This was envisioned to happen through two sub-categories according to my data analysis. The first is 4.3 Outreach, which is transferring knowledge and development principles to the communities

through awareness raising campaigns, public hearings and community engagement in public development plans.

Sub-category 4.3: Outreach

- Problem: How to build and sustain communication channels with citizens on “sustainable development”, public budgeting and issues related to governance and rights?
- Reasoning: One of the state failures that led to the political crisis was seen to be the inability and/or unwillingness to understand and address the needs and aspirations of citizens. There is also a notion that citizens do not know their rights.
- Solution: Support NGOs’ innovative use of media to conduct awareness campaigns and general outreach. Pressure government to use public media channels to improve the public image of NGOs and raise awareness of their role.

*The Development Partners confirm to: Assist the government with communication outreach to citizens nationwide (GoY & FoY 2012, p. 4)*

*Introduce extensive and systematic awareness campaign through a strategic communication plan using different outlets to introduce the importance of CSOs' role as the government's partner. (GoY 2013)*

### Legitimation Practice 7: Outreach

**Combine service delivery and advocacy** is the second connector. This featured heavily in the data and in the interview with the expert from the Emergency Capacity Development Facility who said –I paraphrase,

*Any work with community-based organizations should tackle service delivery if it wants to be effective. CSOs are important because they have better access to communities that the government can't get through to. However, donors continue to focus on political participation and accountability but they should work more on linking that to service delivery. (Interview 4.3)*

Sub-category 1.5: Combine service delivery with advocacy

- Problem: How can NGOs’ work be respected and better regarded when people feel no tangible change in their lives and cannot appreciate the impact of NGO’s advocacy work on their day-to-day lives? How best to respond to critical humanitarian needs after the political crisis following 2011?
- Reasoning: If people don’t feel a positive change in their lives they will continue to be suspicious or indifferent about NGOs advocacy work.
- Solution: NGOs to combine advocacy work with service delivery, share the responsibility and resources with government to deliver services and fill the urgent needs of the population.

*The complexity of the development challenge dictates broad programmatic scope across the spectrum of political, social, and economic dimensions to include interventions at the national level to support inclusive political transition, and at the local level to facilitate improved and responsive governance, service delivery, and economic opportunity. (USAID 2014)*

*[CSOs] Engaging with the government to achieve the desired objectives of sustainable development and to respond to the numerous and increasing needs of the community, especially as the government's capacities to achieve these objectives on its own is very limited (GoY 2013, p. 3)*

### Legitimation Practice 8: Combine service delivery with advocacy

This idea was pronounced in the documents as well. The Partnership Framework (GoY 2013) reiterates the role of civil society organizations to “shoulder the burden” of service delivery with the state. Banks et al. (2015) referred to a case study of Kenyan civil society that found that the most successful collaboration with the state was in service delivery. This legitimation practice suits both the state and local communities that have been suffering of a critical humanitarian situation.

**Counter patronage network** is the practice into which all other practice in the field pour. The other practices may have been important prior to 2011 but after 2011 countering the *patronage network* became a central issue. The following table sums up the reasoning from the data as to what the patronage network may be and how aid-civil society by working through and with communities would counter it and present an alternative community-based network.

#### Sub-category 2.2: Countering patronage network

- Problem: How to counter and dislocate the “patronage network” which the former regime built to consolidate its power in parallel with formal state apparatus?
- Reasoning: Due to the exclusive and self-serving nature of the patronage network the population was excluded to political participation. 2011 may be an opportunity to dislocate this patronage network and insert NGOs and activate informal civil society as a counter force.
- Solution: Strengthen formal institutions as sites of political decision-making while at the same time activating informal civil society and self-governance.

*Poverty, inequality and patronage continue to threaten and undermine social cohesion. Many*

*of these problems are rooted in the government's lack of accountability to Yemeni citizens. (DFID 2013)*

*The transition presents the opportunity to better distance reformed structures of governance from traditional networks of patronage, giving these structures greater ability to address broad development challenges such as redressing the political, legal, economic, and social exclusion of certain demographic groups, especially women. (USAID 2014, p 13)*

*This [power] elite have lost some of its power during the unrest of 2011, which was mainly an occurrence of intra-elite fighting. The struggle between factions within the ruling elite (i.e. the Saleh clan versus the Al-Ahmar clan) opened up space for new political players, such as civil society, women and young people. They have capitalised on this opportunity by capturing positions in the NDC and by decisively influencing the debate within the Conference. (Netherlands 2013)*

- Sub-Problem: How can support to informal civil society be integrated into development aid activities given the accountability and transparency constraints of engaging informal bodies?
- Reasoning: distinguishing between informal structures associated with the traditional power elite and informal structures that govern communities and could empower them.
- Solution: Connecting informal civil society to NGOs through networks. Add networks to the associations law classification so as to give them a legal status and allow for transactional and substantial exchange with development aid.

*USAID will seek to help build formal governing capacity but will also strengthen existing systems of communal organization and self-governing citizenship where appropriate. Programming will build on existing indigenous forms of civil society (USAID 2014, p. 16)*

### Legitimation Practice 9: Countering patronage network

**Towards self-governance:** A myriad of practices were envisioned to pour into this complex issue and reinforce the solutions. Based on the prospect that the 2-year period of power transfer will conclude in a referendum that most likely will lead to a federal system of several regions. Development aid actors and the “transitional government” were preparing for the expected power devolution that would follow. During the period of my fieldwork most of the activities going on seemed to focus on supporting local governance to prepare for this transition even though the specifics of the federal division were not clear. UNDP shared with me a report they commissioned in 2013 on possible federal scenarios titled, “Options for future form of Government and Decentralization in Yemen Policy Options in times of Change” and a project was underway to assess “formal and informal governance”. This was the direction that

donors and multilateral organizations were taking and by extension justifying the other connected practices, **Amplify citizens' voice, Support civic leaders, and Stabilize:**

Sub-category 1.1: Towards self-governance

- Problem: How to decentralize power and support self-governance (connected to the concept of building resilience) after decades of centralized power and disenfranchisement of the majority of the population?
- Reasoning: 2011 viewed as a manifestation of the cumulative dissatisfaction with the centralization of power and the uneven development and resource destruction across the country. The state failed to take national decentralizations strategy seriously. Self-governance empowers communities and builds resilience.
- Solution: State should no longer be the primary development “partner” but share with NGOs and other “partners”. NGOs should be present in key decision-making bodies as “citizen representatives”. Devise mechanism to involve “informal” civil society in the NGO category (i.e. networks, coalitions, community outreach) and link with local governments.

*Will seek to help build formal governing capacity but will also strengthen existing systems of communal organization and self-governing citizenship where appropriate. Programming will build on existing indigenous forms of civil society (USAID 2014)*

*The role of civil society has become more important following the 2011 revolution; this revolution gave people new space for freedom of expression, as well as opening the way for emerging civil society organizations to engage in formal and informal civil society activities (GoY 2013, p. i Opening remarks by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation)*

### Legitimation Practice 10: Towards self-governance

Sub-category 3.3: Civic leadership

- Problem: (connected to sub-category 2.2, counter patronage network) How to empower communities and release them from the sphere of influence of the patronage network of the power elite connected to the former regime?
- Reasoning: There is a subtle difference between civic leadership and sub-category 3.2, Reform. The latter is thought of as a local leader, charismatic and with popular support while the former represents what is viewed to be progressive and middle class values advocated by urban NGOs with generalized causes.
- Solution: Empower civic leadership to fill the role of leaders connected to the patronage network and be the organizing force of communities.

*This moment of transition is the opportunity for broader and more meaningful participation of women, young people, and rural populations as they seek to become a larger part of the political system and to be more visibly involved in civil society. Activist associations and networks merit attention and support, as do new leadership figures who have surfaced among*

*women, youth, and emerging parties. (USAID 2014)*

*USAID will facilitate civic leadership on issues of importance to the local community (USAID 2014)*

### Legitimation Practice 11: Civic leadership

#### Sub-category 2.1: Amplifying citizens' voice

- Problem: How can NGOs support in amplifying citizens voice even if they are not direct representatives of communities?
- Reasoning: It is accepted knowledge that most development NGOs are based in urban centres and have weak grassroots links, however, if empowered and given the appropriate tools it is seen that NGOs can better represent citizens' voice.
- Solution: Engage informal civil society activities through networks linked to a wide range of NGOs to aggregate citizen's voice. 60% representation of NGOs at the planned Supreme National Council which will be overlooking the Partnership Framework between the government and civil society organizations.

*The constitution shall explicitly provide for participatory democracy to be integrated with representative democracy in a manner that ensures freedom of representation and freedom to vote so as to embody real community participation. (GoY 2013, p. 5)*

*Promoting and developing CSOs to play an effective role in the partnership and to support its role in developing local and national policies given that they represent the voice and needs of the community. (GoY 2013, p. 3)*

### Legitimation Practice 12: Amplifying citizens' voice

#### Sub-category 2.3: Stabilize

- Problem: How to overcome social divisions, which were exacerbated by poverty and lack of opportunities and distrust of the government and resulted in current instability and unrest?
- Reasoning: Social cohesion is undermined due to social and structural problems in addition to corruption and lack of accountability.
- Solution: Sensitize development projects to causes of conflict and engage civil society (NGOs included) in state building to promote social cohesion and stabilize the country. Engage the private sector and civil society to provide new opportunities for youth. Capacity building to civil society as well as service delivery are linked to state building and stability.

*The programmatic emphasis is inclusion, social cohesion, and the construct of a sound foundation for growth and development. The hypothesis is that growth and equitable development alleviates causes of conflict. (USAID 2014)*

### Legitimation Practice 13: Stabilize

**Conclusion of field 2:** These legitimation practices idealized aid-civil society in Yemen and the reviewed literature reflect a general trend in international development aid practices. Aid-civil society organizations were being pulled in multiple directions, they were supposed to link to the micro level as well as expand and keep with international institutional standards, remain attached to a popular base all the while avoid antagonizing public officials. It was beginning to appear that the envisioned role was everything and nothing in particular. Leading some scholars to suggest that a more achievable function for aid-civil society or NGOs would be to function as intermediaries. This is a tacit acceptance that the *substance* is really in the grassroots and aid-civil society only represents the *form* but did not translate into practice as envisioned (Van Rooy, 1998/2000). Similarly Banks et al (2015) saw that the problem with NGOs was that they did not have a popular base to hold them accountable which led them to steer too close to donors. Mosse (2001) and Makuwira (2014) saw that there was a serious legitimation deficit because the development aid practice led to “upward” accountability towards donors and higher development actors rather than “downwards” towards presumed community, similarly Roniger (1994) saw that the only way to challenge donor/NGO patron/client relationship is through grassroots. However in this literature as well as in the documents the term community and grassroots were used without much explication as to what they mean. Leading to what Cleaver (2001) calls the “community myth” (p. 44). This is referred to in the previous section on distinctions. It is a mystification of community as a unitary apolitical group that awaits representation or an invitation into the development aid scheme. The data reflects the extent that donors attach to this at least in discourse.

This mystification of local communities is also seen, to a lesser degree in academic scholarship (Blumi 2011). Wedeen (2008) also criticizes this tendency in Yemeni analysis: “The tendency to take groups as the fundamental unit of analysis turns categories into substantial entities” (p. 166).

Both the data and the reviewed literature project a general acknowledgment that aid-civil society is weakly rooted in communities and the answer has often been, bring communities in but the mechanisms revert back to the same formula of capacity building, empowerment and participation practices. What I see is structural



limitations between *field 1* and *field 2*, which point to aid-civil society being not only a sector but also a social class and a social class is relatively exclusive and is driven by the motive of sustaining itself and lifestyle.

Both Bishara (2012) and Clark (2004a) suggest that the homogeneity seen in the aid-civil society sector in the Arab world is attributed to their origins in the old middle classes of the national movements era. According to a study that Clark (2004a) cites, the majority of Yemeni formal civil society is middle class, this is also the case in Arab-wide studies. Bishara (2012) suggests that this led to largely homogenous and elitist organizations with a disposition to keep within their intellectual circles and pontificate on matters and in language that is elitist and not inductive to the building of a popular base. While the historic origin might provide partial explanation it does not tell why this continues to be the case in spite of the relatively relaxed association laws in Yemen that allowed the proliferation of thousands of registered associations.

A complementary explanation to why formal civil society may appear similar in practices and disposition is related to the structures of development aid in general which are imposed on the social space. The constraints of development aid make working outside of formal organizations a liability. Donors are answerable to their electorate and must present measurable indicators and account for public funds that go towards Official Development Aid (ODA), multilaterals are huge bureaucracies that must safeguard their operations from corruption and non-transparent activity especially given that much of ODA is channelled through them. In turn aid-civil society must organize into NGOs and acquire a legal status to even begin to be able to make contact with donors. In the steering committee meeting I attended (5.2) where the draft of a toolkit to assess civil society organizations was discussed the only focus was on institutional building. The *form* indeed prevailed because according to Scott (1998) organizations “render legible ‘community’ and codify the translation of individual into collective endeavour in a form that is visible, analysable and amenable to intervention and influence” (as cited in Cleaver 2001, p. 40). In the data most talk of supporting communities reverted back to civil society organizations which would take up the task of establishing expansive networks and reconcile formal and informal civil society. These networks would then be given a legal status which would render

them formal entities and make transactional interaction possible. As Cleaver (2001) suggests, the main focus then becomes on “organizing the organizations” (p. 39).

Bourdieu’s model suggests that dominant classes give primacy to form over substance, the formal language allows for universalization. The formal language alone is enough to alienate the classes that are supposedly represented by aid-civil society as their personal experience becomes depersonified and unfamiliar. At the same time this is the exact language that formal civil society is required to learn and use to constitute itself in the aid-civil society social space *cum* class.

### Field 3.

As explained previously, movement in fields 1 and 2 is possible but limited to *vertical movement*, that is movement that changes the volume of capital but not its configuration. A change in power relations is associated with a horizontal movement. This is a movement across *fields* within the social space and it entails a smooth conversion of capital and not just an increase or decrease in the volume of capital. While aid-civil society negotiates its subjectivity throughout the social space, in field 3, and when it had reached a level of *practical mastery*, their bargaining power increases and they can influence what is defined as a legitimate practice. Contrary to fields 1 and 2, field 3 is difficult to mark clearly because it entails crossing over the fields. The capital in field 3 is accumulated from their positions in relation to primarily field 1, which is where the early conditioning happened. To a lower degree field 2 is connected to field 3 through networking practices that result in a degree of reconciliation between different forms (informal and formal) and different spaces (local, national, transnational). The legitimation practices in field 2 are weak as I argued earlier they have not been embedded in the social space.

Notably the arrows in *field 3* are not flowing in one direction, which indicates fluidity in movement, that being said it is still largely conditioned by sub-category 5.2 Knowledge production and language acquisition.

**Access:** Sub-category 4.2 Local implementer (field 1) and sub-category 4.3 Outreach (field 2) gave aid civil society organizations a particular type of access. There is no question in the data that aid civil society organizations provide much needed access

this is especially pertinent in the context of heightened security risk in Yemen, which significantly limits donor and international NGO movement in the country. It is also related to budgetary constraints (see Netherlands 2013).

Access is also cultural not only geographic. Competent aid civil society organizations are often commissioned to conduct baselines studies and surveys to inform donor strategies and project designs. There is also access to donors and international NGOs (and their funds), which some public officials suggested was a privileged access. Although it is also known that it is exclusive to certain types of organizations that are in close proximity to donors' offices and who have the competencies to be recognized in the social space as a legitimate agent. Aid-civil society also has access to the government. Some alternate between a public position and their position in an organization. Well-established organizations are often present in government meetings and have direct access to public officials in relevant ministries. Access is an unmatched social capital that neither donors nor government has. This access is what prompted the state to co-opt some of these organizations and the same could be applied to donors.

#### Sub-category 4.1: Access

- Problem: How to ensure predictable, cost-effective and low security liability access to towns and villages across the country given the rugged terrain and heightened security risks for international development NGOs and donor staff to access?
- Reasoning: Access is key to implement activities, conduct baseline assessments and surveys that are important for policy planning. Access also means sensitivity to diverse local cultures. The state through local governments has access, but often times the relationship with communities is tense and the state does not reach some remote areas. Further, the centralized power in the capital undermined local governments decision-making powers. There is also an acknowledgement of rural/urban divide.
- Solution: NGOs have relatively high mobility and some have developed adequate skills to conduct studies. NGOs can provide cost-effective access across the country and with low security liability. The wide networks that some NGOs have are an advantage.

*[CSO] Diversity of areas of expertise: organizations are now involved in political and social development as well as service delivery, awareness-raising, advocacy and monitoring and evaluation, etc. Moreover, they are widely spread through different governorates, including remote areas, which has enabled them to have easy access to target groups and to establish good relationships with these groups. (GoY 2013)*

#### Legitimation Practice 14: Access

**The Ultimate Middleman:** This access is argued by some to have changed power relations. In Drabek (1987) the path was set for this drastic change. She cited an OECD (1986) document saying:

To release local groups' potential for innovation and action, it is essential to move from participation in aid projects to responsibility for their own programs. Once this move has been made successfully, the group can enter into discussions with the government and aid agencies on how jointly selected projects can best be cofinanced and negotiated on a proper footing. [...] It also means dealing with new partners, no longer considering the key actors as executants and beneficiaries, and recognizing that negotiation will be an ongoing, broader process (OECD 1986 as cited in Drabek 1987, p. xv).

This reflects a deliberate move to establish an uninterrupted link between donors and aid civil society, while in the past aid was generally channelled through national governments or multilateral organizations, which are restricted in their mandate with their host governments. This arguably allowed donors and multilateral organizations to act as a "buffer between NGOs and their governments" (Drabek 1987, p. xiv). Different factors played into the shifting relationship between aid-civil society and donors as well as the relationship between the state and its citizens (see Banks et al. 2015). Aid-civil society, and through them, donors embedded themselves as intermediaries between communities and the state (sub-category 1.3). This was the most salient shift in relations in the context of aid-civil society. The new arrangement led aid-civil society to be preoccupied with keeping the donors as allies –not only for financial support (*economic capital*) but also as advocates and protectors (*social capital*).

The point of engaging civil society organizations as direct aid partners was, as discussed earlier, justified on the basis of their "comparative advantage" to link to the communities. Carapico (2014) argued that this was a way to outsource state functions through "unofficial non-inter-state channels" (p. 156). It presented what she called a "quintessential part of a 'neo-liberal mode of transnational governmentality' that replicates expert knowledge to establish graduated layers of rule different from the Westphalian conventions of sovereignty" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002 as cited in Carapico 2014, p. 156). As I demonstrate throughout this research, it may be so that

aid-civil society was supported to serve the purposes of a neoliberal world order but as agents in a complex social space it is not possible to reduce them to that notion. Indeed, Bishara (2012) argued that aid-civil society actors were already politically engaged and were in search of an alternative professional track in politics by engaging in aid-civil society work. Particularly after the disillusionment of the post-independence era culminating in political parties going either bankrupt after the end of the Cold War or turning into tools in the hands of authoritarian regimes. Bishara (2012) questioned whether dependence on donor aid automatically implies that aid-civil society is obediently implementing donors' agendas or even sticking to the pre-designed work plans. Economic capital is only one type of capital in the social space. The reduction of aid-civil society to neoliberal co-optation tells a limited side of the story.

That being said, power relations changed in a drastic way and this culminated in donors frequently bypassing the national government altogether to channel funds to aid-civil society. Given what was discussed earlier with regard to access to the micro level, this direct link to the aid-civil society encouraged aid-civil society to insert itself in between formally unorganized *communities* and states. This was also possible in Yemen because the national government was never able penetrate communities in all the territory. In turn donors also inserted themselves between national governments and aid-civil society organizations as lobbyist and protectors (Diagram 3).

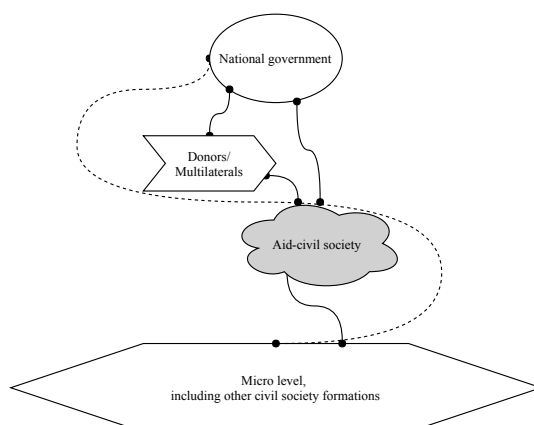


Diagram 3 Buffers

### 1.3 The ultimate middleman

- Problem: How to improve coordination and flow of information to and from communities and improve response to people’s needs and grievances?
- Reasoning: NGOs can capture community needs, are mobile and can move across administrative levels and across development actors.
- Solution: Support NGOs to act as a buffer between communities and state, between state and donors and in between NGOs of varying competencies.
  - Sub-Problem: How to ensure NGOs’ independence from political influence to be accepted as honest intermediaries?
  - Reasoning: If left to their own accord and protected from the meddling of power-seeking actors (here conceived as political parties or the state), NGOs lean towards being independent, i.e. not self-interested and not advancing the agenda of others.
  - Solution: The government should “recognize” the independence of NGOs and legal and institutional protections be put in place to ensure this.

*CSO partnership with the Government regulated by law and protected against political and partisan influences. (GoY 2013, p. 2)*

*Technological development and the information revolution have allowed CSOs to benefit from international experiences and lessons learned. It has also facilitated communications with other similar organizations, locally and internationally, so as to exchange information and expertise in community action (GoY 2013)*

### Legitimation Practice 15: The ultimate middleman

According to Tvedt (1995) aid civil society serving as a “buffer” between people and governments “segregate[d] a social problem from the government’s responsibility and install[ed] what has been called a ‘tyranny of structurelessness’” (as cited in Opuku-Mensah, Lewis & Tvedt, 2007 p.43). Suggesting that this new arrangement led social problems to become dispersed over a large unstructured sector with no one to hold accountable and no one with a mandate to claim responsibility. According to Tvedt’s reasoning this made aid-civil society behave in a strategic and calculating manner for the purpose of sustaining itself and by extension the status quo, which it had inserted itself into. According to this reasoning aid-civil society became not only a mild political force evading confrontation, but also an unreliable alternative to the unsuccessful governance of the state. Unlike what Alagappa (2004) argued aid-civil society is not only a political thermostat it is in effect *freezing* politics and keeping things in a state of limbo. This is in my opinion a plausible critique and it is attributed to the fact that aid-civil society has no core to hold it except the protection of its social space. Crossley (2008/2012) argued that for the social space to be a social class it is

not enough that it reflects certain dispositions or common identity markers, it must have the capacity to organize and mobilize for its own interest and have “real social and historical effects” (p. 86). That being said, it is with this drastic shift in relations, which Tvedt (2007) referred to as a historic innovation characteristic of social revolution with global repercussions, I suggest that this conjuncture under subcategory 1.3 The ultimate middleman is the point of shifting power relations marking the entry of some masterful aid-civil society organizations into *field 3*.

Sub-category 1.2: Flexible, adaptive and innovative

- Problem: How to plan in a fragile and fluid environment and uncertain prospects?
- Reasoning: No long term plans are possible at the moment, thus, shift focus towards actors who can be flexible, adaptive and innovative while at the same time cost-efficient. Compared with state bureaucracy or multilateral organizations, NGOs are smaller and more adaptable and as such are more responsive to capacity building activities. Further, in spite of known low continuity record of NGOs (YPC 2013) working with them is seen as more sustainable than centralized state institutions that may become obsolete after the new constitution is passed.
- Solution: Focus work through NGOs, they are more adaptive and suited for the fluid situation and the uncertain future ahead. They are quick to adapt their work plans to contextual changes. Through encouraging NGOs to build wide volunteer networks work can be scaled-up when needed with minimal costs.

*[Advantage of CSOs] Ease and flexibility of decision-making in comparison with government agencies. Moreover, CSOs can draw from a pool of volunteers working with a number of organizations enabling them to undertake their activities and their roles at a lower cost. (GoY 2013)*

*[T]he major challenge is to build systems and assets so as to simultaneously reduce risks, enhance adaptive capacity, and facilitate inclusive growth. The approach is to intervene at economic, political, and social leverage points for critical change at every level (the first leverage point was listed as “civil society and political inclusiveness”) (USAID 2014)*

### Legitimation Practice 16: Flexible, adaptive and innovative

**Flexible, adaptive and innovative:** Chambers as cited in Drabek (1987) hailed civil society’s potential for technical and social innovation. More so now than in the 1980s innovation has become a buzzword. However, this innovation according to some was arrested under the oppressive of the aid development system, which led to a level of homogeneity and predictability in aid-civil society worldwide (Banks et al., 2015). This may be true to a large extent, but innovation was beginning to take shape in the ability of aid-civil society to adapt to the fluid and rapidly changing environment of

the aid-civil society social space and its surrounding context. A case in point is Yemeni aid-civil society, which in the face of a devastating war following the failure of the power transfer deal continued and adapted in a remarkable way.

The scope of my data and research does not include the time following the failure of the peace transfer deal and the break out of the war end of 2014. But an analysis of aid-civil society's activities during this period would shed light on a key issue and that is, how did aid-civil society sustain itself and continue to be mobile and adaptive after the collapse of the state and arguably the shattering of the notion of a national community?

**Reconcile form and space:** This is linked to a key activity (sub-category 5.1 Reconcile form and space) which I also suggest is connected to *field 2*. This is embedded in the practice of networking. Initially prompted by donors to expand networks these networks took a life of their own. Supporting network building is a blueprint of development aid. It was argued for as early as 1987 when Drabek wrote her piece. The data mentioned the word *network* and *coalition* 87 times. In the data the rationale was to support coordination and limit competition but more importantly it was a solution to the dilemma of incorporating informal civil society in the heavily formalized development aid processes. Some interviewees argued that donors imposed these networks and that there were too many within one sector, resulting in more competition rather than less. It was also argued that many were inactive in spite of the heavy funding they received (interview 1.3; 2.6).

The way that these networks were going to reconcile the formal and informal aid-civil society was that a network coordinated by a board composed of registered organizations would then include an array of civil society forms. The formal board with its legal status would make working with the network members possible regardless of their individual legal status. Thus providing a framework for more diverse civil society. I cannot determine if this was actualized in the way it was envisioned. But as a practice networking allows for renegotiating formal practices prevalent in *field 1*.

This sub-category also reconciles tensions between space, loosening the practices that try to pin down aid-civil society within its national boundaries leading to much



regional and transnational exchange. Nefissa (2008) reports a growing trend in Arab civil society to build regional and transnational solidarities that are beginning to present a narrative of their own as opposed to merely echoing a form of “Western or US” narratives (p. 16). Nefissa (2008) argues that this mobile and networked civil society is an expression of an intellectual Arab elite capable of engaging in a globally relevant discourse. Similarly, Martens (2007) argued that at the transnational level repoliticization takes place as a large web of global civil society manifests through solidarities and common activities. This idea complicates the earlier discussed notion of depoliticization that many scholars argued was happening to civil society when it got in contact with development aid. Martens (2007) argued that at a transnational level organizations are sometimes able to “bypass oppressive state structures” and seek friends and allies who will lobby for them and pressure their governments in what is commonly referred to as the “boomerang pattern” (p. 59). This roundabout way of pressuring national governments is evident in the MAF (GoY & FoY 2011) and the Partnership Framework (GoY 2013) where the government of Yemen is directly addressed with demands to make legal and structural changes to accommodate aid-civil society. Solidarities are not limited to donors, they more crucially manifest at a horizontal level when as Nefissa (2008) suggested peer organizations build solidarities and rally for a common cause. Leading from the depoliticization which occurs in *field 1* to repoliticization which occurs in *field 3* through a non-linear and indeterminate process that is neither free flowing or emancipatory as it remains to be bound by the objective structures of the social space.

Sub-category 5.1: Reconcile form and space (networks)

- Problem: How to bring on board and incorporate informal civil society with NGOs and other forms of development institutions without compromising sound operational requirements (accounting systems, standard processes, monitoring and evaluation systems)?
- Reasoning: There is a tacit acknowledgement that informal civil society in the form of grassroots social movements and social initiatives were not included in the development aid scheme. There was also a realization that this may have contributed to the limited number of NGOs present at the local district and sub-district levels and to a big portion of the population without an alternative to the patronage network of the former regime. However, it remains challenging to work directly with informal structures because donors and multilateral organizations have obligations to channel funds through transparent channels that could be monitored.

- Solution: Encourage the building to wide networks which include a diverse array of NGOs and civil society, moreover, reform the associations law to include a new classification for *networks* and *initiatives* so as to grant them a legal status.

*Proposal [associations law]: Remove the word 'federation' (ittihad) mentioned in Articles 59-66 concerning federations and replace it with the phrase network based on sector, gender or geography'; and break the link between networks acquiring legal personality and their obtaining a registration certificate, except at the national or governorate level. It should be sufficient to notify the Ministry or its offices, because the founders are originally from associations or organizations that are legally registered. (GoY 2013, Annex 4)*

*This task is designed to strengthen public participation by empowering CSOs to create coalitions and networks between each other, and to play wider and more effective role in persuading the Government of its development agendas (GoY 2013, p. 10)*

### Legitimation Practice 17: Reconcile form and space

## Chapter 5: Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

As I began this research there were many looming questions regarding what civil society was especially in the form of NGOs. There were uncomfortable questions pertaining to authenticity and legitimacy. Can NGOs be called civil society when they have no popular base? Can they be thought of as national when their agendas are heavily influenced by foreign donors? Are they meeting the *ideal type*; linking communities and amplifying citizen voice or are they another form of bureaucratic enterprise parallel to the state? These questions either explicitly or implicitly dominated the reviewed literature but they also surfaced in the interviews. There was a view that too much attention was given to urban NGOs while the “real” civil society was ignored. Public perceptions reflected in the YPC (2012) survey of human rights NGOs –seen as more linked with development aid than other types of NGOs, 18% thought that NGOs belonged to “foreign bodies”, 39% said that the work of NGOs has no impact on their lives and 31% said that NGOs are means to obtain donor funding (p. 28). This points to a serious a legitimacy deficit if we continue to analyse aid-civil society in functional terms.

However, as I demonstrated in this research legitimation practices are taking place in earnest, but they are legitimation practices that do not follow this functional logic rather the logic of a self-perpetuating generative social class. Given that the formal process and language of field 1 and field 3 remain strongest in comparison to practices in field 2 and given also that field 3 has its own power appeal for being the field of power and the place for renegotiating social positioning. It is plausible to think that the collective social trajectory is drawn in the direction of the practices of field 3. Moreover, because these practices - such as reconciling form and space, flexibility and adaptability, intermediary and access are expansive practices, they are not pinned down to a particular nation state or domestic society they pull aid-civil society towards the transnational level (see McIlwaine, 2007). This is not to say that they are disconnected from the national and the local because the causes and substance of their activities continue to be drawn from local and national realities, but that they are not pinned down strictly to these realities and this lends them the name on the title, *floating civil society*. In the YPC 2013 assessments of civil society organizations, 94% of respondents from civil society organizations said that they are

looking to expand their geographic area (YPC, 2013). Perhaps not all succeed in doing that or even share that aspiration, as Bourdieu suggests it is possible for an individual social trajectory to go in the opposite of the collective social trajectory without the individual being dropped out of the social space.

To answer if aid-civil society could comprise a distinct social class, from the findings of this research I think it is a plausible hypothesis. In Bourdieu's sense, it is not a class defined by profession or means of production but by practices and distinctions. In that sense, aid-civil society fits the model rather neatly. To this effect it is not uncommon in popular language to hear Yemenis mock some of aid-civil society's class identifiers.

Finally, as the findings here point to, the distinctions and practices require a high level of social conditioning that one could question whether an agent preserves his or her subjectivity afterwards. However, in reality I people are resourceful and this came across very clearly in my interviews. There is perseverance and continuity even after the state has collapsed which I believe clearly point to agency and subjectivity in spite of the structural constraints.

My research has been limited in a number of ways, first of all in scope and second in the diversity of data. Most importantly I could not determine from the data precise links between field 2 and field 3; the informal community orientation field and the unbounded field of power. Although I suspect that there are more links than what meets the eye. Yemeni social movements are learning to strategically enter into global networks to mobilize for their causes, this is evident in the Southern secessionist movement for example, however, it is not clear from the data how this happens. The data provided a good opening to map out the practices and the fields. If it weren't for the limited scope of this research and time limitations I would have gone back to my informants and discussed the various legitimation practices. This would have given more insight into this and perhaps would have corrected some of my own errors and misconceptions. However, research is a process and this is a starting point.

There has been some interesting research expanding on analysis of civil society. Specifically works that utilized formal network analysis to study the flows and network activity, density, and horizontal vs. vertical flows within the global civil

society such as in the work of Katz (2005). Katz (2005) worked and was mentored by one of the leading scholars on global civil society, Helmut Anghier, who has since 2002 been editing the global civil society yearbook<sup>11</sup> which covers over 75,000 organizations. Katz's (2005) basic idea was that we needed to step out of nation-state confined analysis to understand the extent and nature of network flows that happen between "non-state actors" globally. This is according to him a phenomenon belonging to global transformation trends and should be understood as such. While, his findings from the network analysis he conducted suggested that flows were not levelled, he also found that Southern NGOs were "more global in the sense that their peripheral position requires them to seek links to better-connected organizations in the North" (p. 55). Additionally, while hegemonic forces are at play and they limit the integration of NGOs "across issues and places" (Castells 2010) there is resistance to co-optation of what he calls "hegemonic forces" and attempts to either modify or counter them. In fact and borrowing from Castell's theory of social network, resisting localism, the confinement to a place, is key to resisting co-optation and hegemony (Katz 2005). Expansion as a practice can in itself be a form of resistance to the attempts to pin down civil society to the local level. His findings suggest that while hierarchies and uneven flows dominate the global civil society network there is no systematic isolation of Southern NGOs overall. His conclusion is that global civil society network is in transition. His work led me to another similar research by Marshall and Staeheli (2014). Who found limitations in formal network analysis and combined it with ethnographic methods in two case studies of civil society in Lebanon and Bosnia. They used formal social network analysis as the infrastructure, to provide the visual map and delimit the boundaries of the network to then facilitate for the ethnographic studies. The network analysis provides information about density and direction of flows, while an ethnography will provide information about what causes actors to link and partner with each other, it provides information beyond the formal interactions of funding and official meetings.

These were interesting directions for this type of research that I think go in the direction of unpinning civil society from the localized analytical framework.

Throughout the data and much of the literature there were persistent attempts to pin

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<sup>11</sup> Global Civil Society Year Book: [https://uia.org/yearbook?qt-yb\\_intl\\_orgs=3#yearbook\\_page\\_yb\\_faq-4](https://uia.org/yearbook?qt-yb_intl_orgs=3#yearbook_page_yb_faq-4)

down civil society, dictate up on it what it should be and when it does not fulfil this imagined function and does not fit the pre-cut mould it is dubbed as a failure, as in need for reform or as having lost its autonomy. Yemeni civil society, as is the case for other civil society in developing countries, appears peripheral and inconsequential that it seems difficult for anyone to imagine analysing it outside of their local context. But this tendency to localise civil society and specifically that of the periphery is not only a limitation of the nation-centric analytical framework but it imposes hegemonic ideas that try to isolate seemingly peripheral civil society from the broader transnational and global phenomenon in which they are a part of, constituted by and constituting of it. As Harvey (1989/1990) argued that those who dominate time and space represent the dominant social classes. Castells (2010) argues that localising a movement within the space of places rather than the space of flows isolates it. It is thus, not only an analytical limitation but also it reinforces the hierarchical arrangement that isolates the periphery from the centre. I think research combining formal network analysis and ethnography will provide insights on how to begin to understand all types of civil society as part of a broader transnational and global trend.

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## Appendix

### List of Data

#### Primary Data

<b>Official government documents</b>	
The Partnership Framework between the Government of Yemen and Civil Society Organizations + Annexes and summary	GoY 2013
The Mutual Accountability Framework	GoY and Donors 2012
The Transitional Programme for Stabilization and Development 2012-2014	GoY 2011
<b>Donor strategies</b>	
DFID Yemen Operational Plan 2012-2015	DFID 2013
USAID Yemen Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2014-2016 (public version)	USAID 2014
Netherlands Multi-Annual Strategic Plan 2014-2017 Yemen	Netherlands 2013

#### Interviews and meetings

	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>Set # 1</b>	<b>Public institution</b>	
1.1	Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption SNACC	Head of Training Centre
1.2	Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption SNACC	Head of Civil Society Organization Sector
1.3	Social Fund for Development	Senior Project Officer, Training and Organizational Support Unit
1.4	Social Fund for Development	Project Manager, Al-Tamkeen Community Empowerment

1.5	The Executive Bureau for the Acceleration of Aid Absorption and Support for Policy Reforms, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	Policy Specialist in charge of Business Environment Policy Reforms, Policy team
1.6	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	General Manager of Bilateral Cooperation with Arab and Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations
1.7	General NDC Secretariat	Head of Community Participation, National Dialogue Secretariat and Youth representative, State-Building group
<b>Set # 2</b>	<b>NGOs</b>	
2.1	Resonate Yemen	Project Officer
2.2	Humanitarian Forum	Programme Manager
2.3	National Dialogue Support Programme (Political Development Forum)	Advisor
2.4	Network for Social Accountability, ANSA	Head of Yemen Branch of ANSA
2.5	All Girls for Development	Founder
2.6	Studies and Economic Media Center SEMC	Chairperson
2.7	Civic Democratic Initiative Support Foundation (CDF)	Executive Director
2.8	Youth Leadership Development Forum YLDF	General Manager +Executive Manager
2.9	Human Rights Information & Training center HRITC	Trainer
2.10	Transparency Team Yemen	Head of programmes
<b>Set # 3</b>	<b>Research-based</b>	
3.1	Yemen Polling Center (Civil Society	Researcher

	Forum)	
3.2	Media Gate Foundation	Chairperson
3.3	Yemeni Center for Strategic Studies in Sana'a	Lecture of public financial management
<b>Set # 4</b>	<b>Donor (Bilateral/Multilateral)</b>	
4.1	UNDP	Governance team, Programme Specialist
4.2	UNDP	Conflict Prevention & Recovery Team, Programme Analyst
4.3	UNDP -Emergency Capacity Development Facility	Strategic Communications Expert, Emergency Capacity Development Facility
4.4	UNDP	Governance team, Programme Analyst
4.5	Counterpart (USAID Funded)	Responsive Governance Project
<b>Set # 5</b>	<b>Other</b>	
5.1	Personal contact, former project manager of human rights project with UNDP-has knowledge of Yemeni civil society and NGOs	Personal contact
5.2	Social Fund for Development	Unified CSO assessment tool, meeting with CSO, government and donors

### Secondary data (Documents)

Civil Society in Yemen, a National Participatory Review	EU, 2010
Joint Social and Economic Assessment for the	WB, EU, UN, Islamic Development Bank and

Republic of Yemen	GoY, 2012
Civil Society Assessment	USAID 2007
Partnership for Development Knowledge Conference	WB, 2014
Assessment of Formal and Informal Governance in Yemen	UNDP & GoY, 2013
Capacity Development for National NGOs	UNDP & GoY, 2014

Rough interview guide:

- What kinds of activities are going on with a focus on civil society and social accountability?
- Talk about relations with the government/ministry/NGOs/donors?
- What's happening with networks?
- Where are the need gaps? What is being done well and what is not done well?
- Involvement in the National Dialogue and the transition process?