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Title of Session: Transforming Institutions through Agency: Is Civil Society Possible?

Name of Session Convener(s): Dr. Timothy D. Levonyan Radloff

University/Organization incl. City: State University of New York at Fredonia
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Chair: Dr. Timothy D. Levonyan Radloff

University/Organization incl. City: State University of New York at Fredonia

I) Title of Selected Paper: Political Orientation and Susceptibility to Ethnic
Mobilization in Fiji

Name/s of Author/s: Erik Larson

University/Organization incl. City: Macalester College, St. Paul, MN

Abstract: What social and institutional factors are associated with the resonance of ethnicity-based attempts at political mobilization? How can institutionalized ethnic orientations be transformed? In this paper, I develop theory about how institutionalized political orientations may increase the susceptibility of individuals to ethnic appeals. I then apply this theory to Fiji, a country in which the interim government is attempting to overcome a history of ethnicity-based politics through its Peoples' Charter initiative. Based on in-depth interviews with a sample of citizens from across Fiji, I conclude that distinct political orientations characterize different parts of the population. Based on the variations within these different segments of the population, I find distinct processes that have led to the resonance of ethnicity-based appeals. Using this evidence, I conclude that institutional-level changes could transform the basis of ethnic mobilization.

II) Title of Selected Paper: Mobilization for morality - another word is possible

Name/s of Author/s: Lauren Langman

University/Organization incl. City: Loyola University of Chicago, Chicago

Abstract: For New Social Movement Theory, the central factor fostering social mobilization and in turn social transformation has been identity, a narrative of self that embraces a notion of the future and how different kinds of identities are possible. Often overlooked in this literature has been the extent to which identity and morality have been

so intertwined. Whether the Freudian notion of the super ego/ego ideal, or the symbolic interaction notion of the “me” of the social self, identity has always been sent in terms of moral stances, positions and goals. This has been a central theme of the global justice movements that have moved from interest politics to life style politics of meaning. In general, these mobilizations would empower the alienated, democratize social relationships as well as governance, and extol egalitarianism and freedom from domination so that the person might flourish. Understanding the relationship of morality and social mobilization does suggest that another world is possible.

III) Title of Selected Paper: Building Transnational Civil Society: Experience and Strategies of the World Social Fora

Name/s of Author/s: Gabriele De Angelis

University/Organization incl. City: New University, Lisbon

Abstract: Born as a counterpart of the World Economic Forum, the World Social Forum (WSF) not only survived the decline of the latter, it also turned into the major periodic event in which civil society organisations, transnational NGOs, and social movements participate with the aim to elaborate on policies alternative to neoliberalism. Meant as an open space in which all organisations sharing a relatively succinct list of principles are allowed to participate, the WSF is neither a movement nor an organisation, but aims to bind organisations and movements into a web of communication out of which alternatives to neoliberal policies and politics should emerge. Instituted as an explicit attempt to counterbalance the economic and political action of transnational non-state actors such as multinational corporations, the WSFa also claim the specific importance of civil society in re-building international politics. Global inequality, politics of rights and global political representation all play a central role at WSF debates. Although the plethora of participating organisations would make it seem difficult to outline unifying characteristics, the WSF has nevertheless developed a proper identity around the link between global issues and new forms of representation, displayed in the documents drafted by the organisers, in the symbolism they use, and in the literature and studies they collect on the WSF website. The paper presents the results of a research conducted on this material and highlights the role that political language plays in shaping the political identity of the WSF. By means of frame and content analysis it will show how recurring frames concerning global civil society and political representation play throughout the bulk of the documents produced at the WSF and made available through their site.

IV) Title of Selected Paper: A Top-Down and Bottow-up Sociological Construction of Race and Citizenship

Name/s of Author/s: Timothy D. Levonyan Radloff

University/Organization incl. City: State University of New York at Fredonia

Abstract: Forthcoming

V) Title of Selected Paper: Civil Society

Name/s of Author/s: Dr. Antonio Putini

University/Organization incl. City: University of Rome “La Sapienza”

Abstract: The general aim of this paper is that to analyze how civil society, and the organisations which sociologically and historically are linked to this massive concept, can act towards a useful implementation of a new model of governance based upon the “so called” Participatory Budgeting process. After the rising of the “post-democratic” paradigm, based upon formal practices but substantially led towards a neo-populist/neo-élitistic government, an increasing number of practices whose main objective is been to change this unwanted path was implemented. These practices come directly from the contents of participatory and deliberative sociological theories. By comparing the role acted by social agencies in two different contests, like the Brazilian and the Italian ones seems to be, we will underline not only the seminal importance of civil society for a renewed post-industrial government system, but also its close linkages with the more general political culture represented by the societies in which these experiments took place. The actors involved, such as politicians, civil society organisations, administrative bureaucracy and citizens, are all seminal parts of a huger model from whom the local governance depends. Our paper will show this kind of interactions trough a description of the main behaviours of their protagonist, and focalising the attention upon the part played by organisations. Outcomes and general improvements in the qualitatives and quantitatives governance models depend, in fact, on the different ideal types in which these same actors can be depicted.