

Theme 3 – Multi-Level Governance and Organized Civil Society

Coordination: Carlo Ruzza (cinefogo@soc.unitn.it)

Theme three is concerned with relations between non-state actors belonging to civil society and political institutions and actors involved in decision-making activities.

We take a broad definition of civil society, which includes public interest organizations, social movement organizations, churches, NGOs, and promotional associations. We are mainly interested in non-business organizations, but, when relevant, will consider business organizations, industrial lobbies and other economic associations in their interaction with other non-state actors and with state actors in policy-making activities.

We are particularly interested in the transition from government to governance and the related dispersion of political authority across territorial levels, and with reference to the broadening of the range of actors involved. This therefore implies a specific attention to relations between local or regional levels of government and supra-national and transnational sources of political influence. We would then study the consequences of Europeanization on the impact of civil society, normative influence from transnational regimes, the role of social movements and various other activist networks in international organizations, etc.

We will pay particular attention to the structure and functions of the institutional settings in which participation takes place. This means examining rules of inclusion, the allocation of competences, the formal and informal relations with representative institutions, the outcomes of participation and mechanisms of selection and channelling of civil society organizations. We welcome comparisons across policy sectors, levels of governance and countries.

We are interested in broader terms in the agenda-setting impact of civil society. This can occur through forms of influence different from interaction with representative institutions, such as the impact of civil society on the public spheres, political pressure from social movements, strategic use of the judicial system, etc. We also welcome theoretically informed work which, for instance, considers different normative models of civil society and their institutionalisation in the democratic process.