CREATING OPEN SOCIETIES

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Introduction

Throughout the world, countries are looking for ways to shift from one social and economic system to another – whether it is a shift from agriculture to industry, communism to markets, or from industrial to post-industrial societies. When faced with similar shifts over the past fifty years, the state has often been nominated as the single most important actor in directing change. However, in the wake of the collapse of the former communist economies, the state's role as the great social engineer is being seriously questioned. As Karl Popper wrote in the 1940s about the attempt of states to redesign society in all its aspects: "Social life is so complicated that few men, or none at all, could judge a blueprint for social engineering on a grand scale…" (Popper, vol. 1, p. 159, 1952 edition)

In the place of the state as the Grand Social Engineer, there is now a new hope: the Open Society. And yet, it is not entirely clear what this Open Society looks like, or how it might be created today on the foundations of earlier – more closed – social and political systems. Can we simply imitate the institutions found in the West and trust that Open Society will thereby be created? Or is some other process required? Is there anything to be learned from understanding how Open Societies have developed at other times in history?

This article is an attempt to understand the process of creating Open Societies in the past and in the present. It first draws extensively on the work of three writers: Karl Popper, Robert Putnam and Ernest Gellner[1], who have described the origins of Open Society, or Civil Society[2], in three different cultures and historical periods: classical Greece, medieval Italy, and the early English industrial revolution. It then summarises what these three histories might teach us about creating Civil Societies today.

One conclusion in particular stands out: however beneficial once formed – Open Society is, first of all, not an end that can be pursed in itself but rather the by-product of other activities to achieve other aims. In that sense, Open Society is an historical accident, one that is repeatedly shaped by circumstance and the contemporary needs of the society where it evolves.

Karl Popper: *The Open Society and Its Enemies,* 1945

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[1] Karl Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, I: The Spell of Plato, 1952 edition, Ernest Gellner, Conditions of Liberty, 1996, and Robert Putnam, et. al., Making Democracy Work, 1993.
2 While Karl Popper uses the expression "Open Society", the other two writers refers to "Civil Society" in their work. The principal difference between them seems to be that Popper is exploring a philosophy that creates distinctive social forms. In contrast, Gellner and Putnam are more concerned with the nature of pluralistic social organisation itself and less with the philosophical roots of the phenomenon. All three writers share an implicit definition of Open/Civil Societies as ones which welcome critical discourse and have pluralistic centres of activity and power. In this article, I shall use the expressions "Open Society" and "Civil Society" interchangeably.

When Karl Popper wrote *The Open Society and Its Enemies* in the 1940s, he began with an attack on Plato. Popper describes Plato as a man who turned against democracy to promote the 'natural order' of a society ruled by its oligarchy of leading families. Popper sees Plato's defence of the hierarchical simplicities of a closed, tribal society as reducing the individual to an instrument of higher collective will. For Popper, this reduction is the essence of the totalitarian state and he condemns Plato for providing it with philosophical justification.

In contrast, Popper quotes Pericles, (495-429 BC), whose rule defined the golden age of Athenian democracy.

'Our city is thrown open to the world; we never expel a foreigner. .. An Athenian citizen does not neglect public affairs when attending to his private business. .. We consider a man who takes no interest in the state not as harmless, but as useless; and *although only a few may originate a policy, we are all able to judge it.* We do not look upon discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of political action, but as an indispensable preliminary to acting wisely. ..' (Popper, Vol 1., p. 186-187)

Popper's philosophical arguments are of less interest here than his much more incidental comments on why democracy, and the habits of an Open Society, began to develop in Greece at all. He traces the breakdown of organic, closed societies in Greece to population growth among the ruling class. In their attempts to manage this growth, new colonies were started which led to increased contacts with other cultures. In turn, this led to the rise of "commerce, and a new class engaged in trade and seafaring", all of which undermined traditional society. By the sixth century, BC, the old ways of life had begun to dissolve and Greece had entered a period of political revolutions and reactions, including, as Popper puts it, "that great spiritual revolution, the invention of critical discussion." (Popper, Vol. 1, p. 176)

Origins of Athens' Open Society

Over-population among elite in Greek city states

Establishment of colonies

Exposure to other people's & cultures
+
Growth of trade & personal initiative

Forced questioning of one's own habits & beliefs
+
Need to tolerate the of habits & beliefs of others
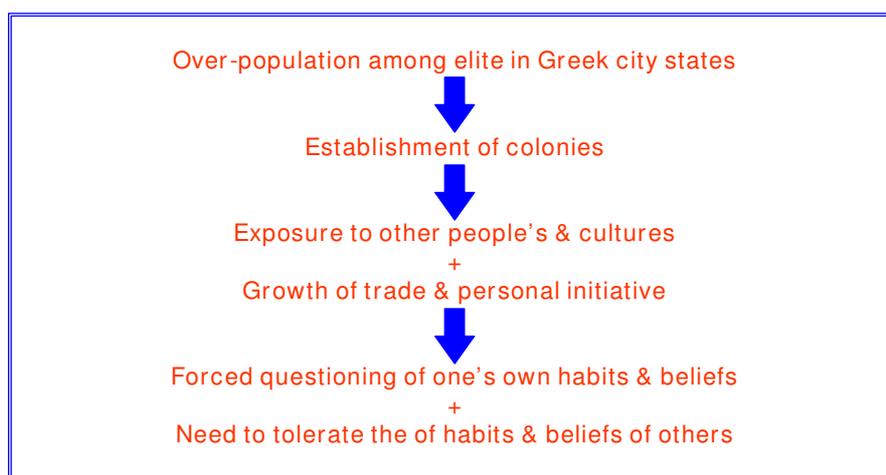
Karl Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, I: The Spell of Plato, 1952 edition, p. 176-177

Popper presents two reasons why the growth of seafaring and commerce should lead to an Open Society. First, as anyone who has left his home culture to work in another can testify, exposure to other ways of doing things puts the home culture in a new perspective. Home habits that seemed natural and necessary are

often ignored by people who have their own ways of doing things. This exposure to alternative habits stimulates a critical doubting of what might otherwise be accepted without question. Equally important, however, Popper notes that "trade, commercial initiative, appears to be one of the few forms in which individual initiative and independence can assert itself, even in a society in which tribalism still prevails." (Popper, Vol. 1, p. 177)

Popper's emphasis on the rise of individual initiative is important because the quality of the individual – rational, free, tolerant and altruistic, someone who accepts responsibility and accountability – is one of the cornerstones of the Open Society Popper supports. Popper quotes Democritus to illustrate the centrality of the virtuous individual and his capacity for tolerance:

> 'Not out of fear, but out of a feeling of what is right should we abstain from doing wrong. .. Virtue is based, most of all, upon respecting the other man.' (Popper, Vol. 1, p. 185)

Popper says little more about how Open Society was created in ancient Greece, but his observations suggest that the first Open Society in the world was probably not created for its own sake. Rather, it arose in response to other needs: the need to support the development of trade and commerce, and the need for independent individuals to manage that trade. The quality of those individuals – men of independence and initiative, tolerant and publicly engaged – was then critical to the birth, success and survival of the Athenian democratic state.

Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty*, 1996

Ernest Gellner, writing in the 1990s about the development of Civil Society in England, makes a number of points that parallel Popper's observations about Grecian democracy. Like Popper, Gellner contrasts Civil Society with traditional society. He also links the rise of Civil Society to the development of industry and commerce, and he too puts the quality of the individual close to centre stage.

One of the most interesting chapters in Gellner's book is chapter eight about Adam Ferguson, a Scotsman who published *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* in 1773. Gellner highlights Ferguson's observation that the citizens of the 18th century were more concerned with production than martial honour, thereby ceding to the state the sole monopoly of legitimate violence and coercion in society. Ferguson worried that this development might lead to a time when "'... the pacific citizen ... must one day bow to the person to whom he has entrusted the sword ..'" (Gellner, p. 67) However, Gellner observes that this did not happen; Civil Society, with its pluralistic balancing of power arose instead, leading Gellner to postulate why and how this happened.

17th Century Origins of Civil Society in England

Adam Ferguson's fear that the "warriors" would take over commerical and industrial nations, did not materialise. Why not?
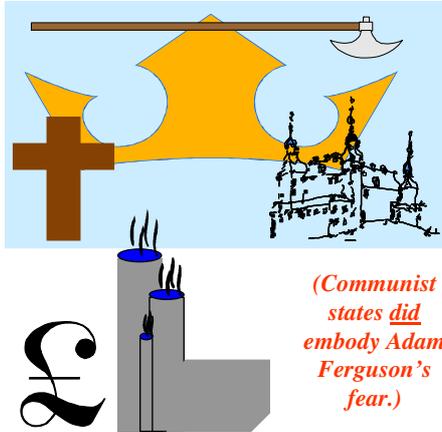
(Communist states did embody Adam Ferguson's fear.)

Political **stalemate** (Crown v Republic) + Ideological stalemate (Puritans v C. of E.) => invention of tolerance

Self-policing: "virtue freely practiced by consenting adults …"

Modular man with mobile skills

"Perpetual & exponential **growth**" => "Social Bribery Fund"

Production better than domination for creating **wealth**

Europe was **multi-state** system

Ernest Gellner: Conditions of Liberty, 1996

Gellner's argument is difficult to simplify. Nor can it be readily reduced to a short digestible list of the origins of Civil Society in England. However, there are two historical accidents in English history which stand out in Gellner's discussion – the English Civil War, and the Industrial Revolution. Many of the factors involved in both of these events also contributed to the development of Civil Society in England and can therefore help to illuminate the process of creating Open Societies.

Roots of Civil Society in England

English Civil War (1640-60)
==> Ideological & political stalemate

Perfection of rule of law

Privatisation of virtue

Industrial Revolution
creates "perpetual & exponential growth"

"Social Bribery Fund"

Production, not domination ==> wealth

New division of labour

European multistate system ==> 'natural selection'
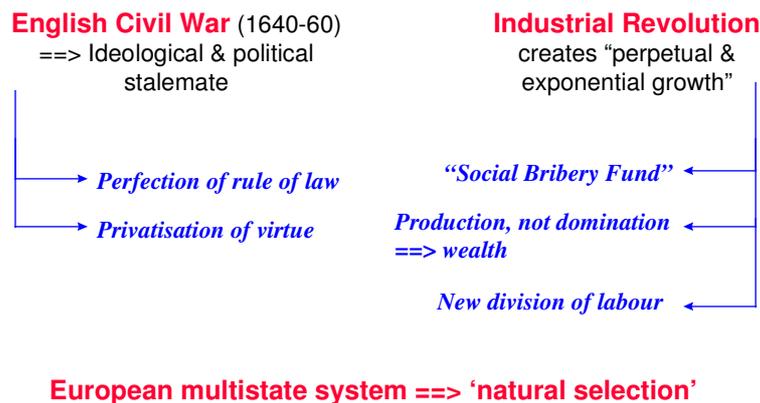
Ernest Gellner, Conditions of Liberty, 1996, Chapter 8: "Adam Ferguson"

Like all great violent arguments, the English Civil War (1640-1660) pitted many causes and interests against each other. There was a quarrel over religious authority in the country, as puritanical Protestants and Scottish Presbyterians sought

greater control over the spiritual and moral life of the nation. There were also linked quarrels about the position of Scotland in Britain. There were, in addition, very fundamental arguments about the limits of the King's power and the degree to which Parliament was obliged to finance the King's projects even when Parliament did not agree with what he was doing. All of these factors, and many others, locked and interlocked in often violent fashion as the English Civil War proceeded.

In Gellner's opinion, the Civil War was crucial to the development of Civil Society in England because no one was able to win. For most of the 20 years of conflict, the Protestant leader, Oliver Cromwell, ruled the country with the backing of his army. During that time, the King was executed and his son, Charles II, escaped into Scotland. However, when Cromwell died in 1658 the country was on the verge of chaos, and Charles II, backed by Scottish armies, returned to London to be restored to the throne by Parliament. In short, what had begun as a violent quarrel over who was to lead the country, ended in an *ideological* stalemate between competing religions and a *political* stalemate between the Crown and Parliament, with tolerance coming in as the necessary but unsung successor to the war.

Tolerance had several important consequences. First, when no religious group was able to define the nature of morality and virtue for all of society, each individual was left in command of his own conscience, a situation Gellner describes as "the privatisation of virtue". This result was further reinforced by the arguments of the Protestant Reformation in Europe which, as Gellner writes, "laid on each individual the enormous burden of being his own priest and internal judge." (Gellner, p. 193) Like Popper, Gellner put the virtuous individual at the centre of Civil Society:

> Virtue as the aim of state or public policy is probably disastrous for liberty. Virtue, freely practised between consenting adults, may be a great boon to Civil Society, or even its essential pre-condition. (Gellner, p.77)

The political stalemate which had generated a "blend of monarchy and republic" had an additional consequence central to the success of all Civil Societies we know: the perfection of the rule of law. Gellner does not explain how this happened, but its importance for the development of Civil Society is clear since an independent judiciary not only represents the king's word, it is another site of power and decision-making in society. As such, it pluralises and decentralises rule, creating a balance of power. This is the essence of Civil Society, in Gellner's opinion. "What distinguishes Civil Society … from others is that it is <u>not</u> clear who is boss." (Gellner, p. 193)

The rule of law also supported the second critical development in British society: the Industrial Revolution. In Popper's description of ancient Greece, traditional closed society is contrasted to the sea-faring commercial society that became democratic Athens. However, as Professor Mayer noted[3] there were many very impressive trading cultures in antiquity that remained closed societies, notably Corinth, Carthage and Etrusca. This argues that trade facilitates the development of Open Society, but is not sufficient to bring it about or even to preserve it over time. Gellner, however, makes a distinction between the development of commerce (which was well advanced in Europe by the 17th and 18th centuries) and the developments of the Industrial Revolution.

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[3] Personal communication with Professor Roland Mayer, Classics Department, Kings College, London.

According to Gellner, the Industrial Revolution introduced an entirely new system of production which both created and relied upon an equally important Scientific Revolution. The Scientific Revolution, with its empiricism and critical debate, not only facilitated the development of Open Society habits, it "ensured an unending supply of innovation and an apparently unending exponential increase in productive powers." (Gellner, p.73) As Gellner makes the case:

> This meant that the new social system was in the end endowed with an unlimited Social Bribery Fund. It could eventually bribe its way out of any external or internal threat. In any case, its technological superiority dispensed it from the need to pay any Danegeld to barbarian outsiders. The Gatling gun could see to that. (Gellner, p.77)

The Industrial Revolution also fundamentally altered the rules of wealth and power. For the first time, production – not domination – led to wealth. One did not need to have friends at court to advance in life, but could get there through independent economic activity.

> The economy is where the action is, and it is possible to indulge in economic activity without attending too much or even at all to problems of power.   … It is possible to prosper while simply attending to one's business.   … Wealth leads to power, more than the other way around. This is both remarkable and exceptional. (Gellner, p. 74-75)

As the Industrial Revolution developed, a different kind of social organisation emerged. In this, individuals were no longer defined by the social castes into which they were born, but by their skills and professions. As Gellner describes it, the "division of labour assumes a completely new form". (Gellner, p. 75) In this new division of labour, there are more distinct and separate jobs, reflecting the greater complexity of the systems of production, learning and trade. At the same time, the skills required to do these jobs are modular – the ability to read, write and calculate being amongst the most basic. These generic skills are also mobile; people can take their skills from one job into another, using them to learn whatever new skills and specialisms are required.   Moreover, specialisms often interlock –depending on one another to succeed. Equally important, people can move across boundaries, in and out of different assignments, leaving the army to enter business and later working in government or academia or another business. In short, even though the state still held the monopoly of legitimate violence, it did not hold the monopoly on jobs, which were pluralistically defined.

There is one final aspect to the development of Civil Society in Europe that Gellner identifies as important: Europe was a multi-state system. If Britain, for example, had been part of a greater centralised state, it is possible that the British political experiment might never had developed. Instead, the country would have been obliged to follow the rules of the centre. But this was not the case. There were many states and many political forms in Europe, each one testing different ways of meeting social and political goals. This allowed those countries in Europe which were, by accident, moving in the direction of Civil Society to continue their experiments in relative peace. As time went on, these political experiments were tested against other political forms – such as the Counter Reformation, the Napoleonic empire, the Bolshevik Revolution and the German fascist state. To quote Gellner again:

> … it was possible to throttle Civil Society in some places, but not in all of them: and the Civil Societies which did survive then demonstrated their economic, and even military, superiority … (Gellner, p. 74)

So what do we learn from Gellner's discussion of Adam Ferguson and the origins of Civil Society? Once again it would seem that we are indebted to historical accident. If, for example, there had been no ideological and political stalemate following the trauma of the English Civil War, the habits of tolerance, the "privatisation of virtue" and the perfection of the rule of law might have developed more slowly. Even without the Civil War, however, there was still the considerable driving force of the Industrial and Scientific Revolutions which not only encouraged the use of critical discourse, but offered the prospect of earning greater wealth without needing to negotiate first with established hierarchical powers. A point that Gellner does not emphasise, but which was an additional factor in the British Industrial Revolution, is that there was a long tradition –dating back in some cases to the 13th and 14th century – of encouraging the spread of basic literacy and education among the general population. This not only helped to create the kinds of modular skills Gellner describes, it made possible a wider public discussion of contemporary issues, and the more rapid spread of learning required in any shift from one productive system to another.   Finally, the pluralism of states in Europe created room to experiment with different social and political styles.

Robert Putnam, _Making Democracy Work_, 1993.

In his 1993 book, Making Democracy Work, Robert Putnam explores a different story. It is one he uncovered by accident while working with two Italian colleagues on a study of government effectiveness following the decentralisation of Italian local government in the 1970s.   As they tracked the performance of regional governments over twenty years, they discovered that all local governments became more effective with decentralisation, but some became much more effective than others. When they looked for an explanation, they discovered that the regions with the most effective governments also had the highest number of civic associations, such as choral societies, savings clubs, boy scout clubs, and professional associations.

<u>What Is Civil Society?</u>

"Choral Societies"	_"Maypoles"_
The experience of trust in networks of civic engagement	**Patrons & clients in networks of dependence**
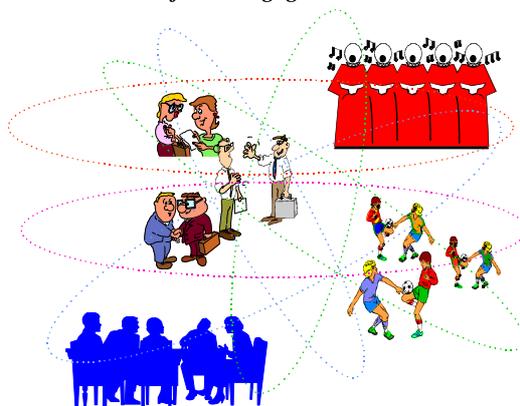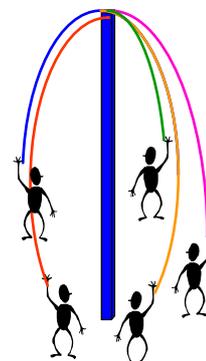
Robert Putnam: ideas from _Making Democracy Work_, 1993

In trying to understand why a greater number of civic associations would create more effective provincial governments, Putnam reasoned that people came to

know and trust each other in the course of shared civic activities. He also found that they gained considerably by co-operating, and ran the risk of losing those benefits if they lost the trust of their associates. When individuals went from one group to work with another, the habit of trust and co-operation went along, as well as a flow of information about the trustworthiness of other individuals. As the experience and success of co-operation deepened, it encouraged a cultural norm of co-operation that could survive durably through many different conditions and times. Finally, Putnam postulates that the experience of trust in civic associations, encouraged higher levels of trust and effectiveness in government itself.

Putnam contrasts this experience of civic engagement, which characterises public life in Northern Italy, with the less effective political system of Southern Italy. The Southern system is based on patrons and clients where clients are highly dependent on the good will of their patrons and compete with others for the patron's attention, hoping he will protect them and give them jobs. The social relationships here are vertical, between unequal partners, and require a direct reciprocity – 'he owes me a favour' – rather than the more diffused returns of networked co-operation among equals. Information is often used manipulatively, secretly, in a climate of distrust. In this system, silence, together with loyalty and obedience to authority, are more valued that open discourse and critical discussion. Putnam uses the metaphor of a "May pole", in which everyone dances around the patron attached by a single ribbon, to describe this system. He contrasts it with networks of civic engagement, exemplified by the image of "Choral Societies", where voluntary association is the rule.

Of the three authors discussed in this article, Putnam's work is the most empirically based on contemporary political phenomena. However, he also returns to the past to explain the origins of these two very distinctive forms of public life, in particular to the 12th century, a time of "widespread violence and anarchy … [when] the imposition of social order was the supreme issue of governance." (Putnam, p. 122)

Origins of Civil Society in Italy

The 12th Century

a time of banditry...

& political inventions

The Kingdom of Sicily & Sardinia

Tower Societies of Mutual Aid
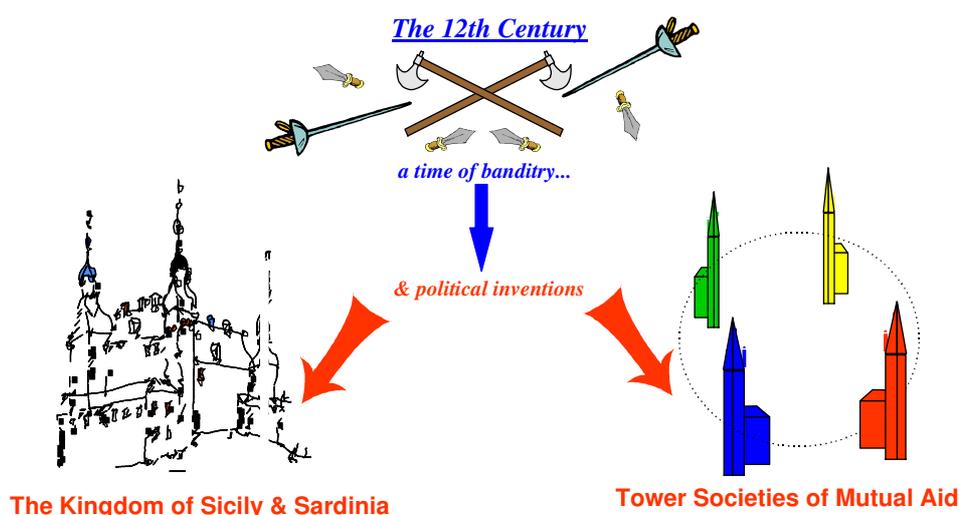
In response to the need for social order in the 12th century, two unique political inventions developed on the Italian peninsula. The first was a new regime

established in the South by Norman mercenaries from northern Europe who united Sicily, Apulia and Calabria in 1130 under the rule of Roger II. His successor, Frederick II, consolidated the kingdom and in 1131 issued a new constitution codifying administrative practice for the first time in 700 years. This constitution established the monarch's monopoly of justice and of much of commercial life, while granting important privileges to the nobility. It was a tolerant kingdom and allowed freedom of worship, while also encouraging a great flowering of arts and culture. "'By the end of the 12th century, Sicily, with its control of the Mediterranean sea routes, was the richest, most advanced, and highly organized state in Europe.'" (Putnam, p.123, quoting <u>The Times Atlas of World History</u>)   It was, however, autocratically centralised and monopolistic.

The second political experiment evolved in the towns of central and northern Italy where, to an unprecedented degree, "'men were able to take part in determining, largely by persuasion, the laws and decisions governing their lives.'" (Putnam, p. 124, quoting Frederick Lane, historian) Like the Norman kingdom in Sicily, these republican experiments were a response to the violence and mayhem of the times. However, rather than relying on a strong leader to resolve their problems, people created voluntary associations of mutual support, taking personal oaths to assist each other in times of trouble and engage in economic co-operation. While Putnam observes that these communes "were not democratic in our modern sense, for only a minority of the population were full members" (Putnam, p.124) the level of popular participation in public affairs was astonishing.

> … Siena, a town of roughly 5000 adult males, had 860 part-time city posts, while in larger towns the city council might have several thousand members, many of them active participants in the deliberations. … (Putnam, p. 125)

Putnam sums up these two histories as follows:

> Thus, at the very moment when Frederick II was strengthening feudal authority in the South, political power in the North had begun to diffuse well beyond the traditional elite. … The practices of civic republicanism provided a breadth of popular involvement in public decision making without parallel in the medieval world. (Putnam, p. 125)

Unlike Popper and Gellner, who emphasise the role of commercial enterprise in creating Open Societies, Putnam finds the 12th century origins of Italian Civil Society in the reaction to political chaos and disorder[4].   It is revealing that Frederick II's kingdom was a great Mediterranean trading nation, but did not create a Civil Society. Instead, the fundamental autocracy of his constitution, which included a near monopoly on trade, destroyed any opportunities for Civil Society to develop.

Nothing like that happened in the northern republics where tower societies were created for mutual defence. There, the return of peace allowed for the renewed growth of commerce and the expansion of trading networks, while the prosperity of trade further strengthened civil institutions which continued to evolve to strengthen trade. Out of this evolution came an economic institution which Putnam believes was vital for the unfolding of the Industrial Revolution – the institution of *credit*. Noting that the etymological roots of the word 'credit' are in the Latin word *credere*, 'to believe', Putnam links credit to networks of civic association:

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[4] There is an interesting parallel in the creation of the Delian League of Ancient Greece. This federation of Greek city states was founded in 478 BC after a failed Persian attempt to invade Greece. It is said to be the first alliance of independent states and lasted for more than 100 years, until it was defeated in 338 BC by Philip of Macedon.

> Banking and long-distance trade depended on credit, and credit, if it were to be provided efficiently, required mutual trust and confidence that contracts and the laws governing them would be impartially enforced. … the institutions of civil republicanism, the networks of associations, and the extension of solidarity beyond the bonds of kinship that had emerged in the northern communes were crucial for this trust and confidence to flourish. (Putnam, p. 128)

Putnam is too rich a thinker to reduce his argument to a statement that civic associations were a precursor to the Industrial Revolution. However, his presentation of Italian history reinforces the view that strong civic institutions enable societies to evolve new systems of production which in turn provide the wealth which increases confidence in civic institutions themselves.

Putnam's work poses one major difficulty for people struggling today to establish Civil Society: he found that both of the 12th century political innovations – Frederick II's autocracy and northern republicanism – were remarkably durable.

> This civil equilibrium [of the northern republics] has shown remarkable stability … The contrasting, Hobbesian equilibrium in the South has been even more stable, though less fruitful. (Putnam, p. 181-182)

This suggests that societies are doomed by their own histories and cultures to be either open or closed, and that nothing can alter that fate. As a reforming regional president in Italy said in reaction to Putnam's work, "'This is a counsel of despair! You're telling me that nothing I can do will improve our prospects for success. The fate of the reform was sealed centuries ago.' " (Putnam, p. 183)

Creating Open Societies

Putnam's observation that the roots of social behaviour run deep is nothing new to people who have lived and worked in several different parts of the world. There is a remarkable persistence to human cultures that defies most attempts to alter them, however well-meaning such attempts are. That may not mean, however, that societies which have been highly autocratic and closed cannot become open pluralistic Civil Societies capable of the rapid learning and social evolution today's conditions seem to demand. In fact, several points that come out of this review of Popper, Gellner and Putnam that may be helpful.

Creating Open Societies

"Give it time …"
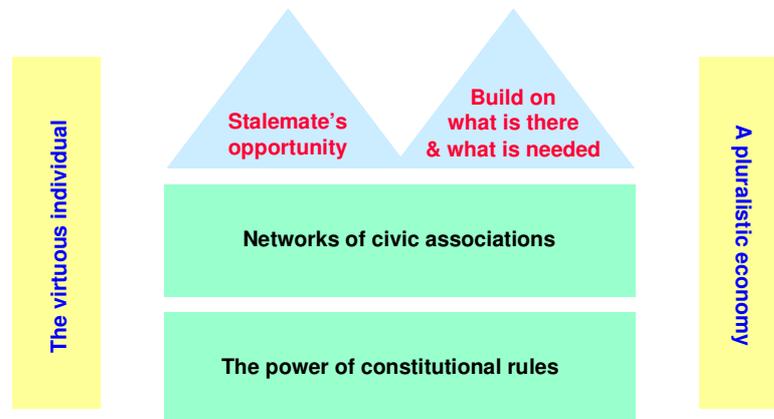
1) **Time:** The first observation is that establishing a Civil Society takes time. While the historical process can be described in a few pages, it actually summarises human endeavours that lasted decades or centuries. Even given the accelerated pace of change in today's world, building new social institutions is slow and careful work, full of mistakes, setbacks, small victories and invisible success. So the first conclusion to be drawn is: *Give it time.*

2) **Stalemate's opportunity:** The second observation that can be made, drawing on Gellner's work, is that the present ideological and political stalemate seen in many countries today can be an opportunity. What destroyed Civil Society in Southern Italy was not political confusion, but the overweaning autocracy of a central ruler who was later replaced by powerfully armed and equally autocratic local barons. For many people today, the political stalemate of disorganised oppositions and weak governments is a disaster. However, stalemate creates both the necessity to practice tolerance and absence of coercion which makes tolerance possible. Therefore, the second conclusion is: *Seize stalemate's opportunity.*

3) **Build on what is there & needed:** The third conclusion is that Civil Societies are grounded in local experience and local needs. It is not enough to observe a good idea in another country and import it wholesale into a new location. Rather it is more important to observe one's own society closely and design

institutions, associations and co-operative ventures that meet those needs well. In a recent discussion about Open Society, participants were asked to identify the roots of co-operative Civil Society in their own cultures.[5] One example, initially dismissed as insignificant, was that of farmers left with a legacy of large Soviet tractors to cultivate much smaller, privatised fields. In adapting the larger equipment to their small fields, farmers began inventing new co-operative solutions. This is a good example of the third conclusion: ***Build on what is there and what is needed.***

4) Networks of civic association: A fourth, very central conclusion comes from Putnam's work and is summed up in the expression "Only democracy teaches democracy." In building on what is there, Putnam's model of civic association can be very powerful. Many of the societies seeking to become more open today are doing so in cultures which respect paternalistic authority, obedience and popular passivity. As established leaders in such cultures are easily threaten by anything that seems to defy their authority, considerable skill is needed to develop more questioning, pluralistic institutions. Putnam's work has shown, however, that civic skills can be learned in many places – a parent/teachers association, a bird-watching club, a soccer league, a book club where participants gather to read books and talk about what they have learned. These are apolitical associations in which people learn the skills of organising groups, establishing communications and keeping the honest accounts that encourage trust. Not all associations need to be political; they can take many useful or simply entertaining forms. Our fourth conclusion, therefore, is to ***Build up civic networks around useful & enjoyable activities.***

5) The virtuous individual. All of the writers we have reviewed here, either directly or implicitly point to the importance of the individual in Civil Society. The qualities of this individual are quite different from those in more authoritarian places. There is the willingness to take personal initiative (and the absence of fear that such initiative will be punished). There is tolerance for other points of view and a range of mobile modular skills that can be adapted to many different needs and circumstances. But where do these skills come from? Our three writers provide a variety of answers. For Popper, the enquiring, tolerant individual learns to question himself and tolerate others through exposure to other cultures and societies. For Gellner, similar qualities are born in religious ethics, basic education, and participation in commercial, industrial society. For Putnam, the route to these qualities comes through the practice of civic engagement and co-operation to achieve shared goals. What they share is an implicit reliance on practice: virtue is not an abstraction, but a daily event learned in everyday activities and engagement with others. Therefore, our fifth conclusion is: ***Strengthen and support the individual with activities, not exhortations.***

6) A pluralistic economy: Another lesson that comes from all three writers is that the development of Civil Society and Open Society is intimately linked to the development of the economic system. There has been a prejudice in some discussions of Open Society that business is not a legitimate concern for Open Society activists. However, many of the institutions which enable capitalist economies to evolve and grow are the basic institutions of Civil Society. The joint stock company, for example, evolved quite naturally from the civic and credit associations invented in northern Italy. As they strengthened, they created an alternative centres of power to the state, pluralising society is a healthy way. Similarly, professional associations of stock brokers, accountants, lawyers and doctors are both economic and civic institutions. The very existence of published

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[5] See Appendix A for the questions that participants were asked to answer in order to identify local roots of Civil Society.

and accurate company accounts, of independent and public shareholder registers, reflect yet others task invented by independent citizens working to improve their economic institutions. Examples like these can be multiplied many times over, but all point to our sixth conclusion *Use civic tools to strengthen economic actors and make them more accountable.*

7) The power of constitutional rules: Another conclusion from Putnam is also important. Although much of his book explores the role of civic institutions, the research done by him and his Italian colleagues also concluded that decentralising Italian administration improved government in all regions. The power of basic constitutional rules should therefore not be forgotten. In developing such rules there are several principles that emerge from the authors we have examined. Popper would point to the need for tolerance and critical discourse, represented in the American constitution by many of the amendments in the Bill of Rights. Gellner's work, however, points to the need to respect pluralism and balances of power. His observations reflect the multiplicity of English institutions – such as the courts and legal profession, the many different kinds of religion in Britain, the multiple financial and business organisations. Their right to exist is enshrined in Britain in an unwritten constitution and the habits of many years. Putnam, finally, highlights another conclusion: avoid monopolies, whether owned and managed by the national state or owned and managed by others. It is arguable that the substantial monopoly of commercial life given to the king of Sicily and Sardinia by his 12th century constitution, thwarted the development of independent economic centres and with it the development of an Open Society. So, our final conclusion is the *Respect the power of constitutional rules to create the basis for openness and pluralism.*

Conclusion

There is little more to be said without writing a long book. What is clear, is that Civil Societies and Open Societies develop in the context of their times against the background of specific histories and customs. They grow piece by piece, episode by episode, person by person, place by place. For the moment, all Open Societies look alike, because they stand against the very different traditions of those closed societies which remain around us. However, the pressure of international communications and rising education, the spread of industrialisation, and the emerging challenge of creating institutions capable of adapting to the ecological limits of our planet, all argue that the customs of civility, openness and pluralism will expand and diversify as time goes on.

Bibliography

Ernest Gellner, <u>Conditions of Liberty</u>, Penquin edition, London, 1996.
Karl Popper, <u>The Open Society and Its Enemies, I: The Spell of Plato</u>, 1952 edition.
Robert Putnam, <u>Making Democracy Work</u>, 1993.

Appendix A

Describe the seeds, roots, foundations of civil society in your part of the world.

Cooperation: Who works with whom to accomplish what? How do they work together? Are they patrons/clients or association of equals?

Trust: Who trusts whom? How is trust created?

Information: What are the sources of information? How is information used?

Respected people: Who is most respected? By whom? Why?

Social services: How are social services (health, education, pensions and saving, care for the sick and elderly) organised? By whom? How is it financed?

Business life: Who set standards in commercial life? How are they enforced?

Social order: How has social order been established? How is it maintained?

Qualities of the individual: How is personal behaviour controled? Based on what values? What is the role of self-policing, by the virtuous individual?

Personal skills: What skills are needed in today's society and economy? How are they being developed?

Personal mobility: How mobile are individuals – between places, between jobs?

Social values: What common values exist? How are they created & sustained?

(Length of whole text: 5,633 words)