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Transnational Debt
Campaigning: Advocacy
Approaches

Jean Somers

Equality Studies, UCD School of Social Justice



1. Outline of Presentation

- Debt movements: historical overview
- Strategies: factors which influence
- Relationship between civil society and states
- Concluding comments



2. Debt Movement : Schematic Overview:

- ❑ 1980s: Radical framings, national and international mobilisations
- ❑ 1990s (early): Rise of global governance, promoting participation of civil society. Move to engagement
- ❑ 1990 (late) - early 2000s: Jubilee 2000. Mobilisation v important – human chains at G7 Summits and petition (24 mn signatures from 166 countries)
- ❑ 2004/5: Make Poverty History/Global Call to action in 2004/5. Huge mobilisations



3. Strategies: Factors

- ❑ Reading limits of the possible within political and ideological environment;
- ❑ Degree of change sought – tackling policy, or tackling power inequalities;
- ❑ Civil society's greater leverage in public arena, as perception is that they are not pursuing their own self-interest, unlike powerful decision-makers (Risse 2000);
- ❑ Engagement keeps supporters motivated;
- ❑ Radical and mainstream approaches: interaction to change centre of gravity of campaign;



4. Civil society/state relations

- Civil society and states became intermeshed due to
 - Campaigns aligning their positions with those of the most progressive decision-makers
 - Reverse lobbying by governments/international bodies
 - Governments claiming some of legitimacy created by huge debt mobilisations
- Danger: blurring of boundaries between civil society/state
- Rebalancing tensions exist: civil society and states have different powers. States have power to make decisions; civil society have ‘the numbers’ to put pressure.



5. “A Smothering Ally”?

“I come tonight not as chancellor but as a fellow marcher in the campaign for justice for the poorest of world...let us as a world community cut the debt....Let us resolve to stand together and work together, churches, political leaders, people of Britain and from everywhere in the world” (Gordon Brown 1999).



6. Summary

- Power of mobilisation was more important than the ‘power of the better argument’ (Habermas 1984) in getting change
- Radical and mainstream civil society interacted to radicalise policy debate. Advocacy shouldn’t be seen from an overly consensual perspective
- Civil society not just a weak actor in danger of co-option by powerful state. Power asymmetries exist but both sectors have different forms of power.