THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN NITERÓI, BRAZIL

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Abstract: In the context of urban poverty in Brazil, this article considers the national context of civil society starting in the 1950s through to the approval of the Statute of the City in 2001. Focusing on a case study of Niterói, Rio de Janeiro State, I unpack the perception of a declining civil society in that city. Rather than taking a retraction of civil society at face value, I make the case for alterations within civil society and the role of the political context.

In the wake of a twenty-year dictatorship, social movements in Brazil gained force in the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in a robust urban reform movement (Avritzer 2007; Gay 1994; Mainwaring 1987). The process of redemocratization led to the promulgation of a new "citizens" Constitution in 1988, which included, for the first time, a specific chapter on urban policy. In 2001, the movements' efforts saw the enactment of the Statute of the City, an important urban law that provides tools for cities to use to achieve social justice, the "right to the city," and overall to apply the urban reform movements' proposals (Fernandes 2011). During this time, Brazil underwent rapid urbanization—its urban population climbed from 44.6 percent in 1960 to 84.3 percent in 2010—along with growth in inequality and socio-spatial segregation (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, IBGE, 2010).

Situated in this formidable context, this article considers the perplexing fact that civil society grew in Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s, yet according to observers in one city, it seemed to decline following the approval of the Constitution and the Statute of the City. Indeed, I found that an unexpected development was the perception of a declining role of civil society in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro State. Because civil society plays a decisive role in promoting democracy and implementing the urban reform movements' proposals, this article seeks to understand what is driving this perceived decline in Niterói, as others have noted a decline of civil society in Brazil more generally (Encarnación 2003; Pickvance 1999).

In this article, I consider the national context of civil society in Brazil starting in the 1950s and the role of social movements in the approval of the Constitution, and later the Statute of the City. Next, using a case study of Niterói, I explore the perception of a decline of civil society among interviewees in that city. I unpack what is driving that perception and make the case for a more nuanced understanding of the alterations within civil society that result from a changing political context.[1]

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[1] The data cited in this article come from interviews conducted in 2010 and 2011 in Niterói. For a list of interviews, see table 2. In addition to interviews carried out in Niterói, I also conducted interviews in São Paulo, Brasília, and Rio, which are not cited here.

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CIVIL SOCIETY, LATIN AMERICA, AND THE STATE

The civil society literature makes a strong case for patterns of association in improving the quality of democracy and contributing to the construction of democratic ways of governing (Pateman 1970). Until the late eighteenth century, *civil society* was used synonymously with *the state* or *political society*, in contrast to the "uncivil" condition of humanity (Kumar 1993). Exemplified as a social contract by thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, there was no distinction between civil society and the state. It was only with Hegel that the idea of civil society came to involve the relation between the state and society as distinct spheres. For Hegel, civil society was the sphere between the family and the state, the realm of differentiation in which free individuals pursued their self-interest (Cohen and Arato 1992). Gramsci (1995), however, is credited with placing civil society in its own category, where it is understood as a sphere of free associational activity outside the market, the state, and the family.

While the term *civil society* largely vanished from the political lexicon between the mid-nineteenth century and the end of World War II, the work of Eastern European dissidents in the late 1980s to theorize the struggle against authoritarian regimes helped revive the concept of civil society (Calhoun 1993). In Latin America, civil society's revival occurred in the mid-1970s as resistance against oppressive states; with the return to democratic rule, the idea of civil society helped reinforce the prospects of the transition to democracy. Used by social movements and later elaborated by academics (Avritzer 1997; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Weffort 1984), civil society was conceived of as social movements and associations able to organize independently of the state and the market. The context, however, of high levels of inequality combined with societies' failure to deal with such problems—in addition to cultural heterogeneity, informal markets, and a liberal democracy "that is characterised by an enormous distance between political elites and institutions" (Dagnino 2010, 24)—frames the concept of civil society in Latin America.

While social movements have developed in close interaction with the state (Foweraker 2001), the idea of state-society synergies emphasizes how states encourage strong associations, while such associations may also promote strong state programs (Abers 2000; Evans 1997; Ostrom 1996). Such synergies help us to understand the interactive relationships between the state and civil society, to go beyond state-centered and society-centered work (McCarney 2003). Although civil society as a sphere separate from market and state has long been recognized, there is a need to recognize that the boundaries of these realms often blur as actors interact in complex ways (Donaghy 2013; Tendler 1997).

In studies of Brazil, patrimonialism, or the private appropriation of state resources by public servants, politicians, and the private sector, has been used by academics broadly in contrast to an ideal separation between the state and the market (Faoro 1975; Schwartzman 1973). Indeed, much work has documented the role of the state in co-opting civil society groups, which leads to contradictory results. For example, one contradiction of participation in the policy process is co-optation, which occurs when community members are included in the policy process in order to control them (Abers 2000; Wallerstein et al. 2011). This process has often been referred to as state corporatism, in which political power is used to co-opt the public (Schwartzman 1975; Vianna 1976). Foweraker (2001, 845) distinguishes clientelism, a dominant characteristic of Latin American political systems, from corporatism, although "corporatist institutions in Latin America are often imbued with and strengthened by patterns of clientelism."

Corporatism and patrimonialism may converge through patron-client relationships, nepotism, and unfair advantages in certain sectors (Sorj 2000). Indeed, clientelism—a political system based on the unequal exchange of favors—occurs in Brazil at many scales, including the local (Diniz 1982; Hagopian 1996). In Brazil's context of complex state-society relations, residents' associations and local governments have engaged in patronage politics through deals made in exchange for access to public services or neighborhood improvements (Auyero 2000; Gay 1994, 1999). Such interactions thus frame the study of civil society in Brazil.

THE CONTEXT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN BRAZIL

Neighborhood associations began in the 1950s in Brazil as vehicles of political support for populist governments, mobilizing support for clientelistic politicians (Abers 2000). During the 1960s, discussion in academic circles focused on the idea of urban reform, questioning Brazilian urbanization from a Marxist perspective and calling for greater social justice in cities (Maricato 1996; Monte-Mór 2007). However, the 1964 military coup ended this activism, and neighborhood associations declined dramatically. Community mobilization was kept alive during the dictatorship through Ecclesiastical Base Communities and pastoral activities, which helped neighborhoods organize and disseminated ideals of equality and citizenship that challenged problems of land, housing, and the legal position of favelas, inspired by an urban and collective experience of marginalization and abandonment (Caldeira and Holston 2005). The transition to democratic rule in Brazil began in the mid-1970s. While repression gradually eased, a growth in popular mobilization suggested a partial erosion of the military's ability to control civil society (Mainwaring 1987).

During the rapid urban expansion on cities' peripheries, many groups emerged with a focus on favelas and living conditions. Establishing federations of neighborhood associations from the mid-1970s, they formed networks of organizations challenging the vertical ties of clientelism. Popular mobilization through organized social movements began in earnest in the 1980s, yet "the swell of popular mobilization in the early 1980s differed quantitatively and qualitatively from anything the country had witnessed before" (Gay 1990, 103). Social movements were recognized as new forces on the political scene; as they grew stronger, they gained a new political dimension, and the state came to be viewed as the main addressee of the claims (Caldeira and Holston 2005). Grassroots movements were responsible, in part, for the mobilizations of 1984 that eventually led the military government to allow a civilian president to assume office in March 1985, bringing to and end twenty-one years of military rule.

The urban reform movement (Movimento Nacional de Reforma Urbana, MNRU) was initiated in the early 1980s, a result of criticism of the unsuccessful technocratic planning model that had prevailed to that point (Ribeiro and Santos Junior 2001). The MNRU was formed in 1982 by popular movements, neighborhood associations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, and professional organizations to develop a proposal for urban reform during the National Constituent Assembly, a congressional assembly charged with crafting a new democratic constitution for the country. For the MNRU, urban reform meant structural social reforms with a spatial dimension and a focus on reforming the institutions regulating urban space to achieve social justice, by combining alternative land policy, community upgrading, and participatory planning (Souza 2005).

Formulated, discussed, and signed by social organizations and individuals participating in the MNRU, the popular amendment on urban policy was eventually submitted to the Constituent Assembly in 1987. The MNRU fought to include instruments to establish the social function of property in the process of the construction of Brazilian cities and the "right to the city" in the overall conception of urban planning policy. Following the approval of the Constitution in 1988, the MNRU's precursor, the Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana (FNRU), was guided by three principles (Grazia 2003): first, the right to the city and citizenship, a new logic for universalizing access to urban services, just urban living conditions, and the participation of urban dwellers in determining their own destinies; second, democratic city management, a way to plan, produce, and govern cities, with popular participation as a priority; finally, the social function of the city and of property, and a common interest regarding individual property rights, which implies a socially just and environmentally balanced urban space.

Between the establishment of the new Constitution in 1988 and the enactment of the Statute of the City in 2001, Congress debated the enabling legislation required to define the concept of social function more precisely and the mechanisms for its implementation. The Statute resulted from a process of intense negotiation among the urban reform, social, and environmental movements, as well as the real estate sector, the municipalities, the states, and federal government institutions dealing with housing and the environment. The bill that eventually became known as the Statute of the City was Bill 181 of June 28, 1989, proposed by Senator Pompeu de Sousa. After the bill's approval, the political struggles grew stronger between the conservative sectors and the urban reform movements (Bassul 2005; Grazia 2003). Although the conservative sectors tried to remove the participatory elements from the bill, the movements were successful in incorporating some of their agenda into the bill, including the right to the city as a conception of urban law (Avritzer 2009). Following thirteen years of discussion, the Statute of the City was enacted on July 10, 2001.

THE CASE OF NITERÓI, RIO DE JANEIRO STATE

Niterói sits across Guanabara Bay from Rio de Janeiro (see figure 1); with a population of 487,562, its entire area is considered urban (IBGE 2010). Until 1975, Niterói was the capital of the state (formerly Guanabara State), whereas the city of

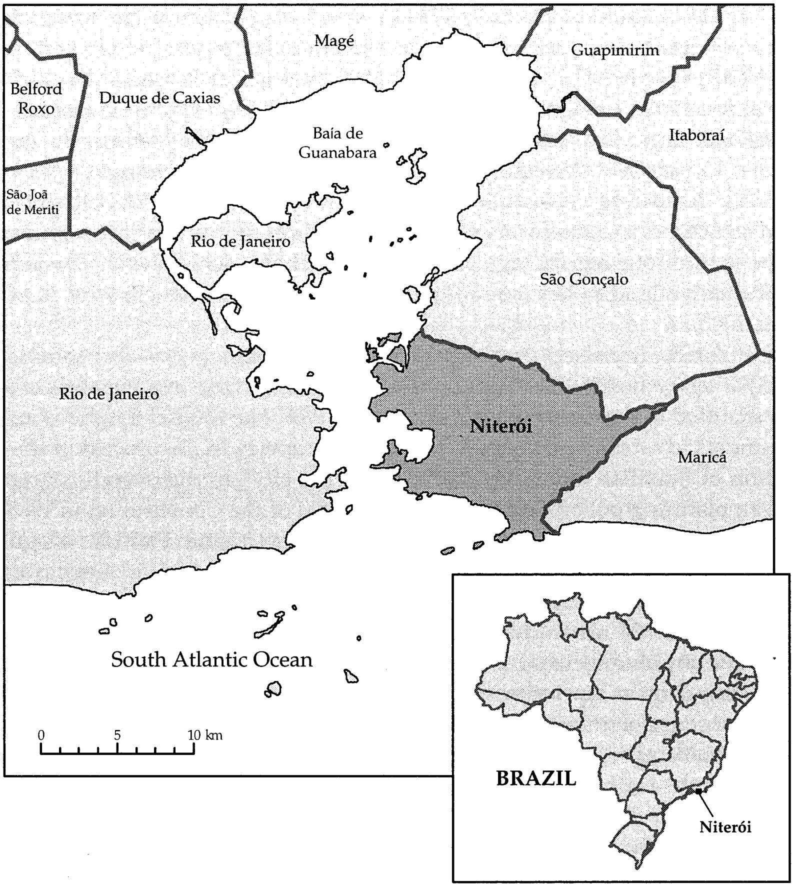
Magé
Guapimirim
Belford Roxo
Duque de Caxias
Baía de Guanabara
Itaboraí
São Joã de Meriti
Rio de Janeiro
São Gonçalo
Rio de Janeiro
Niterói
Maricá
South Atlantic Ocean
0 5 10 km
BRAZIL
Niterói

Figure 1 Niterói in relation to the State of Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro was a separate federal district. A former state capital, Niterói enjoys a privileged position in Rio de Janeiro State, ranking third in Brazil's national human development index and first in the state (Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento 2000). Niterói is also the city in Brazil with the highest percentage of economic elites (30 percent) (Neri 2011).

Despite these shining figures, Niterói suffers from similar problems as other Brazilian cities: socio-spatial segregation, negative environmental impacts, violence, and informal development. Regardless of the fact that Niterói is often considered a middle-class city, like other Brazilian cities, it has also suffered from an "intensification of slums, increased violence and the progressive occupation of the slums by drug trafficking" (Bienenstein 2001, 155). The city shares problems common to large urban centers in Brazil, including "gentrification and densification of core infrastructure, slum areas close to these, and growing peripheralization" (Prefeitura Municipal de Niterói 2006, 14). Niterói has also experienced a

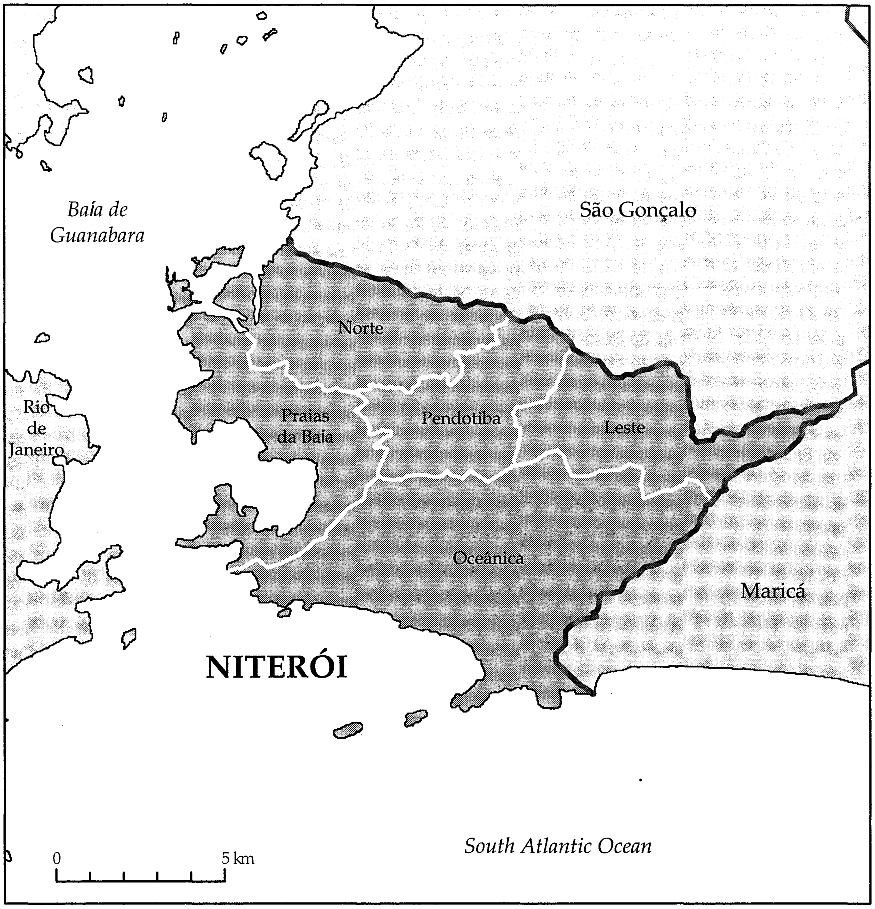
Baía de Guanabara
São Gonçalo
Norte
Rio de Janeiro
Praias da Baía
Pendotiba
Leste
Oceânica
Maricá
NITERÓI
0
5 km
South Atlantic Ocean

Figure 2 Niterói's five administrative planning regions

significant increase in favelas; the national census counts 14.3 percent of Niterói's population as living in favelas (IBGE 2010).

THE RISE OF ASSOCIATIONS IN NITERÓI

Between the 1940s and 1960s, hundreds of neighborhood associations were established in the Rio metropolitan area; in Niterói, only two of these associations survived the military coup of 1964 (Mizubuti 1986). Neighborhood associations became stronger in the late 1970s and early 1980s with migration to Niterói, specifically to the Pendotiba region (see figure 2). This intense migratory flow was caused primarily by a high supply of jobs in the construction of the Rio-Niterói bridge (inaugurated in 1974), the Rio subway, and Niterói's fishing industry (Silva 2011). Urban peripheralization throughout the city occurred, based on migration

Table 1 Niterói mayors

1977–1982	Wellington Moreira Franco	MDB
1983–1988	Waldenir Bragança	PDS
1989–1993	Jorge Roberto Silveira	PDT
1993–1997	João Sampaio	PDT
1997–2001	Jorge Roberto Silveira	PDT
2001–2002	Jorge Roberto Silveira	PDT
2002–2005	Godofredo Pinto	PT
2005–2008	Godofredo Pinto	PT
2008–2012	Jorge Roberto Silveira	PDT

Note: Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (MDB), the predecessor to the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB), is a centrist party; the Partido Democrático Brasileiro (PDS), a party on the right, functioned between 1980 and 1993 and no longer exists; the Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT) is a populist social democratic party; the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) is a left-wing party.

from the north of Rio State and the Brazilian Northeast. In the 1970s, Niterói began to attract high-income populations; this intensified in the 1980s with the densification of Icaraí neighborhood (Praias da Baía region): luxury real estate, mansions, and private clubs were a stark contrast to the favelas developing in other parts of the city (Miranda 2004). Residential expansion to the Oceânica region in the 1970s and 1980s—until then largely uninhabited—was led by developers, who attracted both high- and low-income residents (Biasotto 1995). Niterói thus gentrified, "attracting people with greater purchasing power and 'expelling' those with less purchasing power" to favela areas disdained by the market (Salandia 2001, 110).

The rebirth and rise of popular social movements in Niterói started in 1978, under Mayor Wellington Moreira Franco of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, MDB), the only viable opposition party of the time (see table 1).[2] The movements beginning in Niterói in the 1970s were guided by demands focusing on the achievement of basic rights (Mizubuti 1986; Silva 2011). As former mayor João Sampaio noted in a personal interview (PI), "Many of the questions were specific issues of demand, the so-called collective consumption goods" (March 18, 2011).

The description of associations in Niterói guided by demands fits within an approach based on mediation, which refers to "conduits along which demands and claims travel in ways that invariably transform the demands" (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011, 32). Mediation shapes the collective identities of civil society actors, involving a transmission between actors and sites, and between civil society and the state. Mediation involves communication between several disconnected groups, involving the conciliation of group identities; it often takes the form of clientelism to guarantee access to scarce goods or services in exchange for votes or political allegiance (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011; Mische 2008). Second, mediation may be carried out by collectives of associations, or umbrella organizations. Conceived as alternatives to clientelistic forms of mediation, these organizations "were spaces of negotiation that articulated joint platforms that were then presented to the authorities" such "that particular demands come to be related to each other" (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011, 32).

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[2] The MDB later became the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, PMDB). While the MDB was considered an opposition party of the time, it had close ties to the military and was dominated by clientelist politicians tied to Chagas Freitas (Diniz 1982; Hagopian 1996).

These two forms of mediation vary in the extent to which they enhance democracy, conceived as a spectrum of two opposing points and those in between. Where clientelism establishes inequalities among actors, mediation through democratic associations promotes horizontal relationships, equivalence of demands, and a sense of publicness. Between the two extremes, mediation exists on the part of individual social movement activists, or single organizations (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011).

In Niterói, the movements of the 1970s and 1980s developed with some level of organizational efficiency, most frequently with commissions preceding the formalization of residents' associations (Mizubuti 1986). Following the establishment of a residents' commission in Pendotiba, in 1977, the Union of Residents' Associations of Pendotiba, Piratininga and Itaipu (União das Associações de Moradores de Pendotiba, Piratininga e Itaipu, UNAMPPI) emerged with demands for the territorial organization of the Oceânica region, given increased migration and land conflicts in the region (Silva 2011). In 1979, evictions in the Oceânica region "marked the start of the movement, which was able to mobilize, coordinate and organize the squatters" (Bienenstein 2001, 247). This movement gained strength as new associations joined UNAMPPI; land struggles ensued, which promoted the creation of the Federation of Associations of Residents of Niterói (Federação das Associações de Moradores de Niterói, FAMNIT) in 1982. Both UNAMPPI and FAMNIT fit into the category of associations of associations described by Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva (2011).

The "renaissance" of these movements in the late 1970s is attributed to several factors. First, a long period of silence imposed on the popular movements by an authoritarian regime that had demobilized them in the 1970s. Second, the election of Moreira Franco in 1976 of the MDB opened a space for the participation of the "popular" classes through municipal health programs. This questioning of everyday issues politicized the organized movements, surely "one of the key levers of a substantial part of the associationalism that animated the inhabitants of Niterói in the late 1970s" (Mizubuti 1986, 271).[3] Third, the electoral victory of the MDB in the mid-1970s raised public awareness. Fourth, the growing participation of civil society entities and the Catholic Church stimulated community organizations. Fifth, the degradation in the quality of life of the majority of the population, including the middle classes, as a result of rising inflation and low salaries. Finally, a common aspiration for restored citizenship, starting with the movement for direct voting (Mizubuti 1986).

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[3] Despite Moreira Franco's key role in this opening, he was a centrist, pro-business politician but not especially democratic, particularly from the perspective of security policy and human rights as governor of Rio State; he ended his term with high rejection rates (Ferreira 2006; Soares and Sento-Sé 2000).

In the 1980s, while the struggle continued to be localized, the movements gained a long-term vision, aiming to define housing and urban land policies at the national and state levels. FAMNIT took up the flag of a struggle for land and shelter, uniting the associations facing problems related to land ownership in Niterói (Bienenstein 2001; Nascimento 2006).[4] According to one interviewee, the movement defending the right to land in Niterói "was an example for Brazil" (PI, April 12, 2011). The 1980s was a period of mobilization of Niterói's residents' associations, which continued to fight for improved living conditions (Silva 2011). One of FAMNIT's primary goals was to "struggle permanently with municipal, state and federal governments in defense of the interests and necessities of the population of Niterói to achieve health, education, sanitation, housing, security and the conditions of life in general" (Mizubuti 1986, 254). This objective positioned FAMNIT as an "interlocutor of demand struggles" and a mediator (Mizubuti, 1986, 255; Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011). The struggle focused on land tenure and shelter upgrades, supporting residents' associations at three levels of government and pressuring the municipal government on land issues. Nationally, FAMNIT participated in the MNRU, the urban reform movement (Bienenstein 2001).[5]

Many interviewees noted the strength of civil society during the 1980s, compared to contemporary movements: "When the dictatorship was ending, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, [civil society] began to have a larger expression" (PI, March 18, 2011). Civil society mobilization in Niterói also experienced highs and lows (Mizubuti 1986). One interviewee referred to the movements' "comings and goings" that shifted with each government (PI, April 12, 2011). In Mizubuti's (1986) analysis in Niterói's peripheral neighborhoods, the residents experienced internal conflicts, almost always reflecting political partisanship based on the Democratic Labor Party (Partido Democrático Trabalhista, PDT), the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT), and the Brazilian Communist Party (Partido Comunista do Brasil, PC do B). During FAMNIT's formation, there was a constant presence of political party militants to rally activists for the parties' ranks (Nascimento 2006). However, FAMNIT was never able to translate the associations' demands into policy change, although the means of participation were more restricted during the 1980s without the legal clout of the Constitution and the Statute of the City.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN NITERÓI

Since the late 1990s, the critical mass of Niterói's civil society has resided with additional groups: the Community Council of the Orla da Baía (Conselho Comunitário da Orla da Baía, CCOB) and the Community Council of the Oceânica Region (Conselho Comunitário da Região Oceânica, CCRON).

CCRON came together in 1989 because of a perceived lack of services in the newly expanding Oceânica region. One CCRON director noted that the problems started in Cafubá, a subregion of Oceânica, with a lack of land titling and piped water: "We found that the Oceânica region, not just Cafubá, depended on many services to be done, principally basic sanitation. So the neighborhood associations came together and created CCRON. . . . It was necessary to have a larger group of people to have bargaining power and claims with the government" (PI, March 29, 2011). The Oceânica region was developed in the 1970s and lacked infrastructure, including paved streets, sanitation, and piped water. As a result, parts of Oceânica's population have been active in demanding infrastructure for the region.

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[4] In 2011, FAMNIT had about 130 affiliated residents' associations, as noted by Silva (2011) and other interviewees.

[5] FAMNIT is a member of the Federation of Residents' Associations of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAMERJ), the federation of middle-class residents' associations. Niterói's residents' associations are not part of the Federation of Favelas of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAFERJ).

CCRON represents seventy-six residents' associations, as well as condominiums and clubs in the Oceânica region, with the purpose of improving the region's quality of life. CCRON is highly organized, with elections for directors, assemblies, and special elected delegates for specific issues. Yet according to a member of an affiliated residents' association, "They don't know the reality . . . of where they live" (PI, January 25, 2011). An informant aware of the dispute between CCRON and the associations notes that this is natural because the interests of the middle and upper classes and the poor population are contradictory. Nevertheless, CCRON is active in Niterói's local politics, especially in the Oceânica region, with many years of work and engagement. CCRON focuses on the preservation of the environment in the region. Regarding CCRON's approach to involvement, the organization is more technical than activist, including professionals such as engineers and architects. According to one of CCRON's directors, "We try to do things as technically as possible and with this we manage a greater intimacy with the state" (PI, April 27, 2011). However, CCRON operates according to the "idea of classical citizenship"; it is a middle-class group and is "very correct and very active, but within a given [professional] profile" (PI, November 8, 2010). The ample dialogue between CCRON and the municipality provides many opportunities for discussion and deliberation. Finally, CCRON is a nonpartisan organization.

A second community council, CCOB, was founded in 2001 to legitimize discussions of the new master plan (Menezes 2011). According to a former planner, CCOB emerged when the government "closed" and the population came together (PI, January 13, 2011). CCOB's objective is to "congregate civil associations" and to "defend the homogeneous and common interests of its affiliates" in the Praias da Baía region (CCOB n.d.). Based on interviews and interactions with CCOB members, CCOB appears to be a radical and highly critical, left-wing, conflictual organization; because it is radical, it has not formed governmental alliances. CCOB often takes issues to the Public Ministry instead of discussing them with the *prefeitura* or local government.[6] The directors consider CCOB a nonpartisan organization, like CCRON. Indeed, another reason for CCOB's creation was to oppose FAMNIT, which it considers allied with the government. CCOB represents the entire Praias da Baía region, although the directors note that this is "compli-

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[6] The Ministério Público (Public Ministry) refers to Brazil's collective body of collective public prosecutors, an important legal institution independent of the three branches of government, charged with defending society and the law. I use the Portuguese *prefeitura* to refer to the administrative entity of city hall, which includes the executive and the mayor's office.

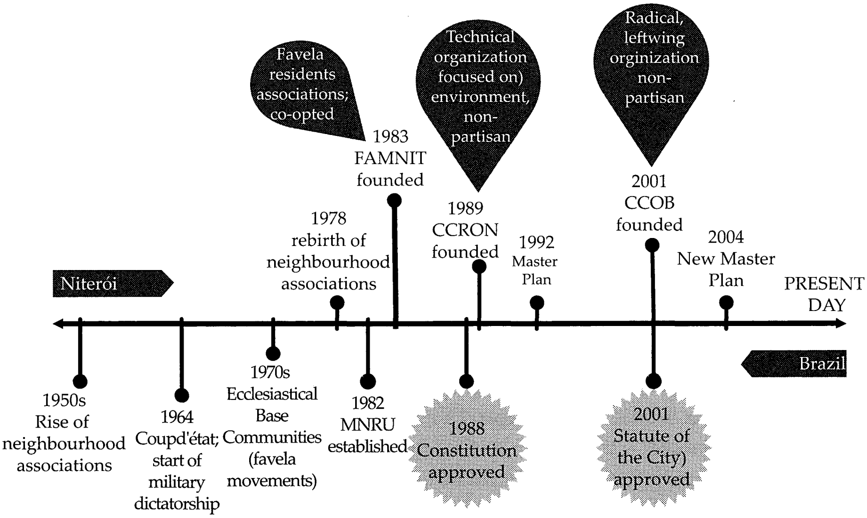
Niterói
Favela residents associations; co-opted
Technical organization focused on) environment, non-partisan
Radical, leftwing orginization non-partisan
1983 FAMNIT founded
1978 rebirth of neighbourhood associations
1989 CCRON founded
1992 Master Plan
2001 CCOB founded
2004 New Master Plan
PRESENT DAY
Brazil
1950s Rise of neighbourhood associations
1964 Coupd'état; start of military dictatorship
1970s Ecclesiastical Base Communities (favela movements)
1982 MNRU established
1988 Constitution approved
2001 Statute of the City) approved

Figure 3 Civil society in Niterói and major dates in Brazil

cated," and some interviewees expressed doubt about CCOB's representativeness, as it covers such a large area.

While CCRON's approach is technical, some interviewees noted that CCOB's tactic is "going to the streets," although it often lacks concrete proposals. By contrast, CCRON takes a more elitist approach. Both groups work to different levels with FAMNIT. Although CCRON has a friendlier relationship with FAMNIT than CCOB does, they do not work collaboratively. CCRON and CCOB are dominated by the middle classes. Finally, because they have different ideologies, they clash over how to respond to issues, such as planning visions for particular neighborhoods in Niterói (Carvalho, Comarú, and Teixeira 2009). Figure 3 shows civil society in Niterói over time.

EVIDENCE FOR DECLINING CIVIL SOCIETY IN NITERÓI

Interviewees in Niterói perceived a decline in civil society. Moura (1993) and Mizubuti (1986) refer to a phase of discrediting and decay of Niterói's associations in the late 1980s, with retracted participation.[7] According to a city bureaucrat, civil society in Niterói declined, becoming more passive than it had been at its peak in the 1980s: "The community movement has lost a lot of strength. It was much stronger in the 1980s. . . . [I]t had more strength, was much more representative, much more active" (PI, January 14, 2011). Many interviewees noted the difference between civil society's strength during the 1980s and today, pointing to a lack of autonomy and representation among civil society in Niterói. A former planner

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[7] For Moura (1993), the years between 1978 and 1983 involved amplification and consolidation of the associative movement in Niterói and the period 1983–1986 was one of continuity.

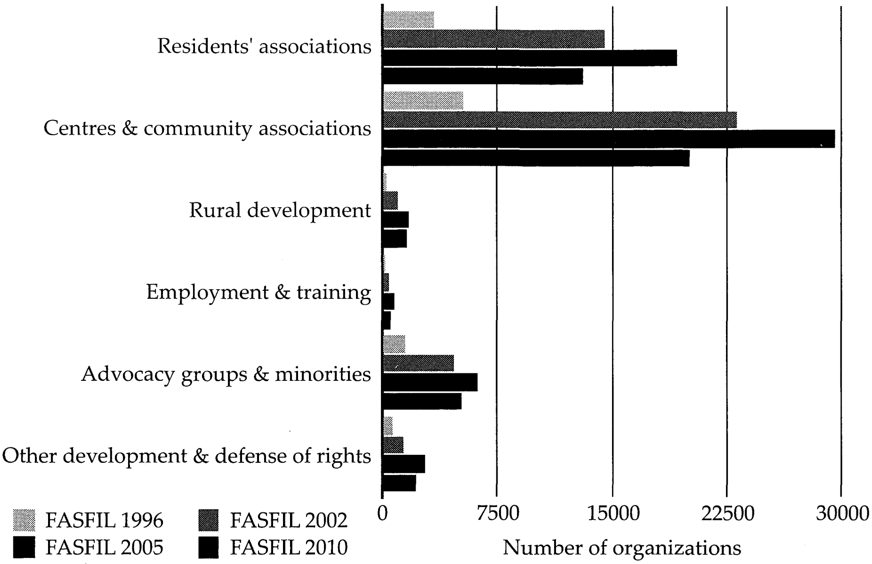

Figure 4 Development and defense of rights, by subcategory, 1996–2010 (IBGE 2004, 2008, 2012)

noted that civil society "is still very much tied to the space that the local government opens for it . . . [but] society alone cannot press the government to the point of occupying this space. . . . This shows a lack of autonomy of society to occupy its space for participation" (PI, December 20, 2010).

The perception of a decline in Niterói's civil society is supported by evidence from the FASFIL survey (Private Foundations and Nonprofit Foundations, Fundações Privadas e Associações sem Fins Lucrativos) measuring private foundations and nonprofit associations for 1996, 2002, 2005, and 2010.[8] The FASFIL survey lists ten categories of organizations.[9] Here, development and defense of rights, including residents' associations, is the most relevant. The FASFIL data show an increase in organizations between 1996 and 2005, and a small decline in 2010, which I include in the "development and defense of rights" category (figure 4).[10] In the early 1990s, data from the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies found 219,000 nonprofit organizations in Brazil (Landim 1993b), slightly more than FASFIL's numbers for 1996.

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[8] For more information, see the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics' (IBGE) website at http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/economia/fasfil/2010/. FASFIL is carried out by the IBGE.

[9] Development and defense of rights includes "activities of political organizations and other related, unspecified activities" including residents associations, community centers and associations, among others (Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies 2010, 8).

[10] Total numbers of FASFIL organizations in Brazil reflect a similar trend. In 1996, there were 107,332 organizations; by 2002 that number had risen to 275,895. In 2005, the total number of FASFIL organizations rose to 338,182 and slightly dropped to 290,692 by 2010 (IBGE 2004, 2008, 2012).

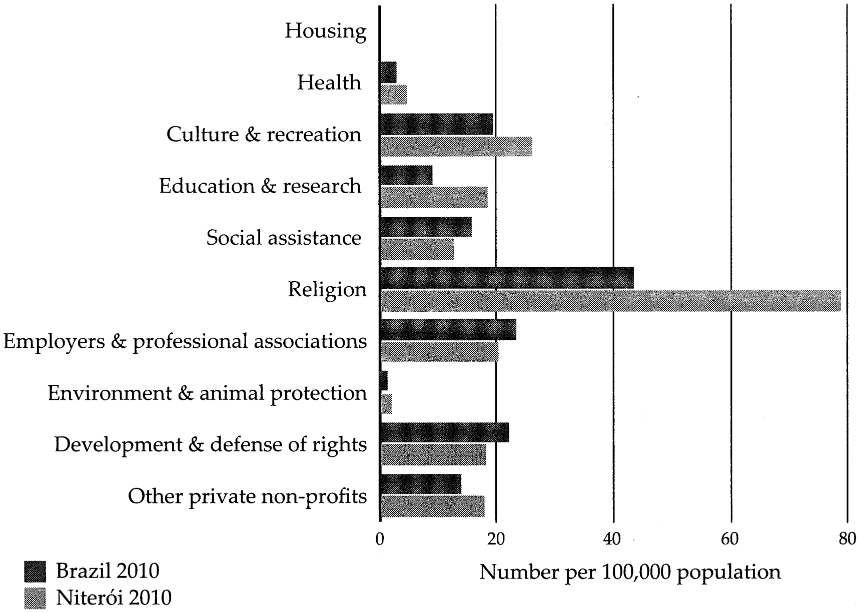

Figure 5 Brazil and Niterói FASFIL 2010 survey data by category, number per 100,000 population (IBGE 2004, 2008, 2012)

I follow Donaghy (2013), who uses FASFIL data to measure civil society density. Using FASFIL data for Niterói in 2010, the number of organizations for development and defense of rights per 100,000 people is higher nationally than in Niterói (see figure 5). The data are limited by the fact that they do not include data for residents' associations and are only available for 2010. Yet quantitative evidence of organizations working in the defense of rights in Niterói is remarkable, as associations in Brazil are often informal, which makes quantifying the associations difficult, especially over time (Landim 1993a). Despite limitations, the data support the narrative of a decline in some parts of civil society, such as residents' associations in Niterói.

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

For Encarnación (2006), in Latin America, the return to democracy led to a retraction of civil society. For some observers, the decline of civil society in democratizing countries appeared to be an irreversible part of democratization, the result of major international and national changes (Hipsher 1996; Pickvance 1999). As Lavalle and Bueno (2011, 416) note, "After the celebratory diagnosis of a new civil society revival in the 1990s, . . . scholars became either more cautious, skeptical, or overtly critical."

Indeed, the perception of social movement decline in the 1990s occurred in other parts of Brazil. Hochstetler (2000) has recounted how the grassroots mobilizations of the 1970s and 1980s collapsed after the campaign for *diretas já* (direct elections of the civilian president in 1985). While this was "the crowning moment of oppositional protests," it was also "their last year" (Cardoso 1990, 169). From that point, more traditional political actors regained control, and social movements faced "new dilemmas and internal conflicts" (Mainwaring 1989, 169).

Various reasons have been suggested for this decline. One is a range of economic problems including unemployment, inflation, and capital from international funding partners (Encarnación 2006; Foweraker 2001). In this era of reduced investment in social programs, a declining labor market, and the economic policies adopted during the 1980s and 1990s by the federal government, "people started to adopt individualistic behaviour, trying to keep afloat in the maelstrom that draws all to the common pit of misery" (Bienenstein 2001, 328–329). Others have suggested that following the return to democracy, there was no authoritarian state to energize oppositional movements. Landim (1993a) noted that the polarization of civil society and the state decreased following democratization and the increasing diversity of associations. Another explanation is that social movements lost steam following the return to democracy while others sought out more permanent forms of institutionalization (Alvarez 1993).

Several specific factors contributed to perceived changes in Niterói. First, in the 1990s, interviewees and the media (Figueiredo 2009) reported lower participation in residents' associations, because of the co-optation of leaders in political positions; some were linked to PT, but most to PDT, which had exerted a strong influence in politics and the nonprofit sector in Niterói and Rio State since the late 1980s (Baiocchi 2002).[11] Referring to FAMNIT's co-optation, a municipal technocrat noted, "All the community leaders, in one form or another have become employees or assumed other positions in the municipality or with councillors" (PI, January 14, 2011). According to sociologist Renato Figueiredo (2009), "With the passage of time and the appointment of several leaders by the parties, came decay." For many observers in Niterói, FAMNIT exhibits co-optation by state and local governments and the politicization of its leaders. With the co-optation of community leaders and the politicization of Niterói's associations, civil society came to depend on resources and institutional favors (Silva 2011). Indeed, clientelistic ties to traditional party machines added to the demobilization of grassroots movements (Foweraker 2001).

According to Souza (2006), neighborhood associations are often clientelistic, serving as structures for political bargaining on the part of the poor or used by drug traffickers, especially in large cities like Rio or São Paulo and, to some extent, in Niterói, which has experienced a migration of violence from Rio (Marinho 2010; Nascimento 2006). In Rio, Paiva (2000) showed that in recent years, a retraction of social movements created a space for drug traffickers; Arias and Rodrigues (2006) have noted that the influx of drugs into these communities destroyed communal structures such as residents' associations.

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[11] Leonel Brizola founded PDT in the 1980s, following the political opening of the military dictatorship. A center-left party, PDT has a labor base with ties to residents' associations and unions in Rio State, a PDT stronghold (Baiocchi 2002).

Many interviewees blamed PDT for co-opting the residents' associations, yet the use of co-optation in Niterói was initiated during an earlier Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) municipal government (then MDB). For one interviewee, the associations were created "to control those neighborhoods" (PI, November 8, 2010). According to a political aide to Marcelo Freixo, a progressive state deputy, clientelism is at the heart of Brazilian politics: "The favelas end up getting inserted into these traditional relations of Brazilian politics. . . . In Rio de Janeiro State there is a tradition relating to this co-optation politics that we can see in the government of Jorge Roberto Silveira, who is from PDT and Leonel Brizola. . . . The favela started to be seen more as having power, political power" (PI, May 12, 2011).

When the PDT government assumed power in 1989, it created a secretariat of community issues and brought residents' associations to be co-managers in the Family Doctor Program (Médico de Família), a neighborhood-based health-care model developed in Niterói in the early 1990s (Mascarenhas and Almeida 2002). This co-management role "revived the political role of these associations" but failed to result in their regained strength (Oliveira and Mizubuti 2009, 75). Indeed, under Silveira, there has been close interaction with residents' associations.

According to interviewees, clientelism occurs via the Family Doctor Program: leaders often fear retaliation for voting against the government. Nascimento (2006) showed that clientelism often occurs when association presidents seek benefits for their friends and family, which contributes to the discrediting of residents' associations. According to a former planner, many FAMNIT members "do not want to speak against [the government] because they have an interest and have family employed" in the *prefeitura* (PI, January 6, 2011). This interest refers to the Family Doctor Program and to the fact that many FAMNIT members, or their families, have positions in the *prefeitura*. As a FAMNIT member noted, "They end up voting with the government because it's an imposition of the government on them and they respond in this way. There's no freedom for a collective interest to exist. . . . It's the fear of government retaliation" (PI, April 12, 2011).

Second, when civil society's demands are achieved to some extent, there is less need for an active and independent civil society. In reference to demands for land tenure, one interviewee noted, "It was an achievement. But this achievement, in a way, demobilized people, because the gains are already won, so this is no longer a problem. So I don't have to mobilize more to ensure that I will have possession of the land. . . . Land tenure, land ownership, this is no longer a demand of the population" (PI, January 14, 2011). Similarly, another interviewee noted that civil society in Niterói was strong in the past; however, "when it made achievements the movement fizzled out, it was a demand-making movement" (PI, January 18, 2011).

Relatedly, through the democratization of institutions at a national level, the state began to both centralize and guarantee full rights. Where formerly there was a risk of losing possession of land, the 1988 Constitution guaranteed access to land. However, in this process, social movements stopped being the generators of these rights as the state began to take on this role in proposing the rights previously claimed by the social movements, thus uniting disparate demands in a single language of rights, as Foweraker (2001, 849–850) has noted: "The state restored the universal promise of individual rights, as the question of citizenship moved to the constitutional sphere, and so answered the rights demands of many of the grassroots movements. Without recourse to the language of rights, their objectives lost focus, and their political energy began to dissipate."

Civil society in Niterói is still structured around making demands, yet those demands are for public services rather than land tenure and housing. Thus, survival in the city became the focus of grassroots demands (Foweraker 2001). Overall, demands for housing and land (i.e., rights-based demands) mobilized civil society in Niterói: "What really mobilized the establishment of residents' associations was land possession. This is no longer an issue" (PI, January 14, 2011). These social movements "need to incorporate in their agenda rights which are not fully realized, but which are historically defended in Brazil" (PI, March 21, 2011).

Third, although demands for rights were achieved legally (at the national level), another factor in the demobilization of civil society in Niterói was a frustration that the *prefeitura* had not responded to specific demands made by civil society after many years. While demands for public services mobilized civil society in Niterói, the municipality's failure to deliver such services caused frustration and a retraction of civil society. Thus, "the failure to obtain some kind of material response has nearly always [in Latin America] led to demobilization" (Foweraker 1995, 78). As noted by an engineer involved in the city's governance for many years: "I think there was also a demobilization, to the extent that there was frustration. . . . Insofar as they mobilized and demanded, and the municipality did not respond, there was a frustration, it generated a lot of frustration" (PI, January 14, 2011). Thus, for some interviewees, the dearticulation of Niterói's civil society was a result, in part, of the *prefeitura*'s lack of action.

Finally, according to several sources, there were not enough leaders to sustain civil society's autonomy. According to Bienenstein (2001), fewer leaders in the land tenure movement meant that it was unable to occupy the many fronts available for participation after the 1988 Constitution.[12] Few leaders knew the nuances of planning and were able to conduct large assemblies and discuss issues publicly. Similarly, Nascimento (2006) has pointed to fewer leaders of associations in the early 1990s and less renewal of the movement. Many interviewees noted that the Statute's language is too complicated and technical for citizens to understand, thus preventing the engagement of civil society.

The discussion of the decline of social movements, however, is considerably more nuanced than this reading suggests. Although these changes may "create the conclusion of some observers that social movements have declined in Brazil" since the return to democracy, the perceptions, such as those in Niterói, are the result of changes in civil society rather than an overall decline (Hochstetler 2000, 170).

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[12] According to the Constitution and the Statute, cities are required to carry out participatory planning through public policy councils and other fora (Santos Junior and Montandon 2011). Although such activity is challenging, participation in organized channels does function in Niterói (Friendly 2013).

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

For Hochstetler (2000), the most negative conclusions about Brazilian social movements have been drawn by observers of the urban popular movements; the perceived decline is related to past hopes for those movements. Rather than decline, though, the movements adapted and changed. Any perceived lost prominence results not from civil society's weakness but from changes in civil society (Foweraker 2001; Lavalle and Bueno 2011). As "the grassroots movements become less rooted in the people they grew up to serve," there has been a shift resulting in more organizations (e.g., NGOs), institutionalization, decreasing autonomy, and less mobilization (Foweraker 2001). The organizations such as CCOB and CCRON discussed previously are clear examples of this type of institutionalization and organization.

In addition, Lavalle and Bueno (2011) have shown that neighborhood associations in the postdemocratic period are less significant or more peripheral; new civil society actors have taken a more central role, indicating changes in civil society. Civil society has modernized through new actors, including NGOs, coordinating bodies, and fora, along with traditional actors such as neighborhood associations, committees, community associations, and service-oriented nonprofits. According to Lavalle and Bueno (2011), there has been a functional diversification of civil society, which has allowed for new roles for actors, including shaping policy priorities. The development of specialization "brings about different and complementary repertoires of strategies and skills purposely developed for influencing policy and politics" (Lavalle and Bueno 2011, 417). The authors showed that any perceived lost importance of social movements in Brazil was related to "restricted protagonism": popular organizations acquired stable positions in a more diversified civil society; they were no longer embedded in an authoritarian state, and they had new methods of influencing the state.

Similarly, Hochstetler (2000) has argued that after the mid-1980s there was a change in social movement organizing in Brazil; movements launched a new cycle of movement protest that reflected a changed political context: "Individual social movement organizations are notoriously ephemeral and specific issues also move on and off the political agenda" (Hochstetler 2000, 163). Some social movements in Brazil have indeed declined while others have endured. This argument is based on the idea of a cycle of protest (Tarrow 1994), which assumes a rise-and-fall dynamic in which mobilization recedes. Through these cycles, new movements emerge in new political openings, thus creating new strategies of contention. Despite these changes, traditional social movements persevere with less visibility: "They are always there for an observer who knows where to look for them and are as active as ever, with smaller demonstrations, numerous gatherings, and clear positions on the issues of the day" (Friedman and Hochstetler 2002, 31).

Rather than a decline, civil society in Niterói changed and adapted on the basis of the political context. As Krantz (2003, 231) has noted, "The political context influences the degree of institutional reform, which results in particular governance structures, which then have particular effects on civil society, which in turn act back upon the political context and the governance reform process." Following Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva's (2011, 136) relational approach connecting people, power, and organizations, this points to the "malleability of civil society over a relatively short time span." I also build on the political opportunity approach, whereby movements respond to external opportunities and resources to sustain social action (Edelman 2001; Meyer 2004; Tarrow 1994). Giugni (1998) acknowledges the need to account for the political context in which movements operate and for the role of the broader political context in facilitating the movement's mobilization and outcomes. Connecting the emergence and decline of protest cycles with political, institutional, and cultural changes, this approach describes a real configuration of laws, institutions, and policies (Foweraker 1995).

A tendency toward clientelism and co-optation within FAMNIT was informed by the political context, thus leading to the perception of civil society's reduced prominence in Niterói's political life. As laws codify the claims made by the movements (e.g., land tenure), civil society no longer makes those demands, which ultimately become institutionalized (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011). As a result, the political context affects civil society actions, mobilization, and interactions with the state, thereby producing a changed landscape of civil society action in Niterói. Fitting within other work emphasizing the importance of political society in the participation of civil society (Avritzer 2009), this article has called attention to the nuances that can occur through the political environment.

CONCLUSION

This article has described the decisive role of the urban reform movements in the approval of the Constitution and the Statute of the City. The proposals made by the urban reform movements in Brazil calling for alternative approaches to deal with urbanization challenges are situated within parallel movements elsewhere, especially in Latin America (Castells 1983). These movements emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s around democratization efforts in authoritarian contexts. The role of civil society in struggling for the right to the city demonstrates that grassroots movements may produce policy change with the potential to affect the social fabric of urban life.

Referring to Niterói, Bienenstein (2010, 14) notes that the urban reform project depends in part on local actors: "There is the need for a powerful movement stemming from civil society in a way to redefine the role, aims and size of the state." Yet in contrast to the important role of civil society, this article has explored the perception of a declining civil society in Niterói. More broadly, Maricato (2009, 207) has noted that civil society is "simultaneously fragmented and divided, treating parts as the whole and ignoring concerns for the future of society. Such movements have abandoned the search for alternative social change."

Following work on political opportunities and relational views of civil society and the state (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011; Meyer 2004; Tarrow 1994), I have shown that civil society changed and adapted on the basis of the political context. Therefore, the perception of a declining civil society in Niterói is more nuanced even than interviewees in Niterói suggested. This calls attention to the changes that have occurred between civil society and its environment, as well as the relationships with actors within the realm of urban politics.

Table 2 Interviews

Sector	Organization	Date of interview(s)
Civil society	Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil, IAB	3/12/10
	Conselho Comunitário da Orla da Baía, CCOB	30/3/11; 24/3/11; 21/1/11
	Conselho Comunitário da Região Oceânica, CCRON	15/3/11; 29/3/11; 24/4/11
	Federação das Associações de Moradores de Niterói, FAMNIT	17/12/10; 25/1/11; 21/12/10; 12/4/11; 2/5/11; 22/3/11
	Fórum Popular do Orçamento de Niterói	5/4/11
	Movimento de Defesa dos Proprietários de Imóveis em Terras da União	3/12/10; 12/4/11
	Viva Niterói	16/3/11
Government	Formerly in Niterói local government	20/12/10; 30/5/11; 13/1/11; 6/1/11; 11/1/11; 4/5/11
	Secretária de Habitação	20/12/10
	Secretária de Urbanismo	6/4/11; 24/1/11; 23/3/11; 16/11/10; 16/3/11; 14/5/11; 6/5/11; 13/4/11; 24/2/11; 29/4/11
	Empresa Municipal de Moradia, Urbanização e Saneamento (EMUSA)	21/3/11
	Niterói Transporte e Trânsito (NITTRANS)	2/3/11; 14/1/11
	Other	18/3/11; 11/11/10
	Elected officials	2/5/11; 10/3/11; 19/4/11
	Advisers to elected officials	12/5/11
Public ministry		11/4/11
Private sector	Águas de Niterói (water company)	6/4/11
	Associação das Empresas do Mercado Imobiliário de Niterói (ADEMI)	18/4/11; 21/12/11
Academia	Architecture and Urbanism; Geography	18/1/11; 12/4/11; 13/12/10; 25/4/11
	Sociology; Law	11/4/11; 8/11/10; 28/4/11

Reiterating Mizubuti's (1986) point about the highs and lows of the movement, a professor and adviser to FAMNIT on land tenure issues used the analogy of waves to describe the mobilization and demobilization of civil society: "Just as with any movement, it does not hold for long, there are waves. And because of this I think that soon there will be a reversal" (PI, April 12, 2011). Indeed, in June 2013, demonstrations in São Paulo against a rise in bus fares spread throughout Brazil and came to include other issues, such as various public services and the 2014 World Cup. In Niterói, protests surrounded a parliamentary inquiry into the city's transportation system and appeals to end the concession for the company responsible for the Rio-Niterói ferry. Reflecting on this increased collective action among civil society, Raquel Rolnik noted, "Since the Constituent Assembly, the right to the city for all was on the agenda. The people demanded it in the streets, but this rupture has not happened. Now it is possible that it will happen" (Sprejer 2013). Such renewed action in Brazil represents the possibility of positive change, emphasizing the importance of civil society action at the local level.

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