Literature

Avbelj, Matej, Letnar Černič, Jernej, Justinek, Gorazd, 2020. The Impact of European Institutions on the Rule of Law and Democracy in Slovenia. Oxford: Hart.

Blokker, Paul, 2012. New democracies in crisis: a comparative constitutional study of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. New York: Routledge.

Krygier, Martin, 2018. Why the rule of law matters, Jurisprudence 9 (1):146–158.

Letnar Černič, Jernej, 2018. Impact of the European Court of Human Rights on the Rule of Law in Central and Eastern Europe. Hague Journal on the rule of law. 10 (1), 111–137.

Letnar Černič, Jernej, 2018. Slovenija na razpotju: geneza varstva človekovih pravic v slovenski družbi. Kranj: New University, Faculty of Government and European Studies.

Uzelac, Alan, 2010. Survival of the Third Legal Tradition? Supreme Court Law Review. 49 (2), 377–396.

Civil society between pluralism and cultural hegemony

Igor Bahovec [16]

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the issue of civil society in contemporary society, specifically the civil society–democracy relationship. We present the state of civil society in Slovenia, especially looking at the politically interested part of civil society organisations. Developments in recent years reveal that different understandings of civil society exist. The way in which a significant number of CSOs have operated before and after the 2022 parliamentary elections points to a need to rethink the two approaches to civil society: pluralist and hegemonic. Another question refers to an avant-garde self-understanding of part of civil society. The paper concludes by describing three challenges for future research and/or social action.

2. About civil society

2.1 What is civil society?

There is no universally agreed theoretical understanding of civil society (Kaene 1998; Jobert and Kohler-Koch 2008; Gawin and Glinski 2006). We follow an approach that places civil society between the state and families or friendship groups and outside the for-profit sector of the economy.

Many consider that voluntary associations and organisations are a central part of civil society. According to Slovenian legislation, civil society includes voluntary associations, private institutes and foundations (with NGO status), humanitarian organisations, professional

---

[16] Assistant Professor at the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy and Psychology and Sociology of Religion at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Ljubljana and Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Developmental and Strategic Analysis.

chambers, trade unions, religious and youth organisations, social movements, advocacy groups and civil society initiatives.

The civil sphere is not limited to organised forms of associations, organisations or movements: it also encompasses initiatives like temporary and loosely organised networks and activities (campaigns, events, social actions) and the area of civil action based on individual engagements such as active citizenship and volunteering.

2.2 The function of civil society

Barber notes that civil society is a sphere of freely associating people. Structurally, an important aspect is the mediation between individuals and the state. Freedom enables a pluralism of identities. The richer and more diverse civil society is, the better it is for the state. Others stress the importance of civil society for the democratic character of society.

When it comes to civil society, some authors emphasise civility, i.e., the values of civility or civic virtues, as a quality of civil society. Among them, Selznick (1992) mentions diversity, autonomy, potential conflict, and critical thinking. Others also include pluralism, tolerance, respect, trust and justice. Selznick stresses in particular the complementarity of the values of civility and piety: the latter includes patriotism, friendship, parental love, and institutional participation. The whole is made up of both civility and piety: in a good society complementarity prevailed, and not the exclusion of civility or piety.

2.3 Models of civil society

According to Wollebeak and Selle (2008), there are "two dimensions on which civil society perspectives differ fundamentally"; first, between a conflict and a consensus orientation, and second, between an individual and a collective orientation.

	Individual	Collective
Conflict	**Pluralism**	**Public sphere theory**, comparative associationalism, social movement
	Civil society (CS) as competition between interests	CS as competition between ideas and values
	The most valued organisations: interest organisations (e.g., unions, advocacy grounds)	The most valued organisations: critical organisations
Consensus	**Social capital**	**Communitarianism**
	CS as socialisation	CS as social cohesion
	The most valued organisations: service organisations (e.g., culture and leisure groups, cooperatives)	The most valued organisations: community organisations (social and humanitarian associations, neighbourhood associations)

Table 1: Approaches to civil society

While this typology provides some insight into the diversity of civil society, as we show later, it nevertheless misses another aspect of the approach to civil society. This model assumes a liberal democratic pluralist society of the Western type. However, as we shall show, there is also a different approach to civil society in Western society whereby civil society acts as a vehicle for homogenisation.

3. Civil society in Slovenia

Many approaches to civil society stress that voluntary associations are perhaps the most important part of civil society. Data from the European Values Study show that the proportion of Slovenian adults who are members of voluntary associations has increased considerably in the last few decades. The proportion of people who are members of different voluntary associations has increased from around 58% in 2008 to 73% in 2017. Most people are active in sport and recreation, religion, education, art and culture, and humanitarian organisations.

Other research shows similar results. According to data from 2010, for example, the "civil society organisations ("CSO") are predominantly active in cultural, art, sports, recreational and leisure activities (41% of Slovenian CSOs)" (Fink-Hafner and Novak 2017: 134). Many are also involved in the area of social services (5.4%). In 2012, over half of volunteer hours were recorded in the field of social work (ibid. 133). Around 13% were in the field of Human Rights and Civil Liberties, as well as in the fields of education, recreation and art and culture (totalling 20%).

These data may allow one to conclude that civic life is quite vibrant and active. Yet, other data suggest the situation is more complex. The sheer numbers of voluntary associations or members do not reveal their ‚quality' or ‚civility', i.e., the role they pay in the democratisation process, nor how much they contribute to social cohesion and to the common good of society.

In a study of civil society following 20 years of democracy in Slovenia, Cepin, Kozoderc and Kronegger (2014: 27) conclude that Slovenia is one of the success countries in terms of political and democratic development and market liberalisation. Still, according to USAID data for 2009 (the NGO sustainability index) Slovenia scored last among the ten countries that joined the EU in 2004 and lower than most of the ex-communist Balkan countries. The latest data provide a slightly better picture (United States Agency for International Development 2023). In 2021, Slovenia's overall CSO Sustainability Index was the same as for Slovakia (3.0) and only slightly worse than for Poland (2.9). All three Baltic States and the Czech Republic had an index that was significantly better (by 0.5 or more).

According to Our World in Data (2023) in 2022, Slovenia only ranked 27th among European countries in the Democratic Culture Index. It performed slightly better on the Deliberative Democracy Index (2022: 19) and the Civil Liberties Index (2022: 23). In terms of civil rights (2021), it ranked lowest among the Central European post-communist countries.

3.1 The development of civil society in Slovenia: trends and dilemmas

With regard to the development of civil society, Fink-Hafner and Novak (2017: 138–139) highlight four trends, two of which directly pertain to the relationship between civil society and political parties.

(1) The first trend is the growing role of CSOs in the provision of social services (covering certain services that once were functions of the state), including pressing the government on the issue of migrants and human rights.

(2) The second trend relates to the funding of CSOs. A decrease in public funding causes the "marketisation, projectisation, and precarisation of CSOs". Many CSOs are forced to spend much of their time "searching for additional funding, either on the market or by applying for grants from various EU project calls and programmes".

(3) As concerns the links between political parties and CSOs, "the trend toward CSOs and political parties exchanging resources has become evident since the transition period". In Slovenia, there have been clear/noticeable ideological-political coalitions among particular parties and like-minded CSOs. "Party-CSO linkages can, to some extent, also explain why particular groups have better access to certain EU-related funding distributed by national political elites. The significance of party-CSO linkages is unlikely to disappear in the near future."

(4) "The fourth trend is the low and declining inclusion of CSOs in policymaking. Although the number of CSOs in Slovenia is one of the highest per capita in Europe, and although the social partnership has been institutionalised, the overall political participation and inclusion of CSOs in policymaking remains lower than in older democracies."

These trends highlight some of the problems of the transition of civil society in Slovenia.

Several of these problems are quite similar to problems experienced in other countries. For example, on one hand we have CSOs that are very close to the ideological or value orientation of a particular party or group, a phenomenon also very evident with the 2022 elections. Whether civil society groups are an 'extended arm' of a political party or whether the influence is in the opposite direction is hard to determine because a pattern of some kind of symbiosis is often involved.

The link between civil society and a specific political party exists in many countries, of course, and is not limited to either the left or right part of the political spectrum. In fact, the problem is even broader and not solely related to political parties. As Berger and Luckmann (1995) showed, for example, some civil associations of the intermediary sphere represent an ‚extended arm‘ of social macro-structures, political parties, lobby groups, narrow ideological groups, religious organisations or international social movements.

3.2 Types of relationship between civil society and political issues

We have identified three distinct approaches in the civil society–political engagement relationship in terms of content and working methods.

1. Part of civil society functions in a politically and ideologically 'neutral' way; it wants to operate at a distance from ideological divisions. It works for the individual and common good of society. This attitude may be seen in most humanitarian associations, many (by no means all!) professional associations, many sports and cultural organisations, as well as some specific areas (e.g., children's rights, large families, parents of school-age children etc.).

2) A different type of civil society holds a particular ideological orientation or expresses adherence to a given (political) ideology. This part of civil society is divided into two sub-groups. Some link the pluralism of political parties in a democracy with the view of civil society as a space of pluralism. Despite their differences, they are aware that there is frequently a need to establish a balance between competition and cooperation, and that on some issues of importance to society there is a need to come together, to find some kind of agreement. This was the prevailing mode of action of the key actors of this part of civil society organisations in the transition period from communism to democracy.

This was the modus operandi of the key actors in this section of civil society organisations during the transition from communism to democracy.

Still, it is important to remember that this was not only the way in which the very ideologically diverse democratic CSOs and political parties operated – to some extent, it was also the way in which some post-communist CSOs and parties operated. The result worked to the benefit of the whole of society (e.g., independence). This seems to be the best way to address the key challenges and problems of a society. Some problems may be solved differently, but society remains divided. The question is whether the synergies needed for development and social cohesion can be unleashed in such a society. The Slovenian case does not show this.

3) Different again are the ideologically narrow groups of civil society which impose their views without somehow entering into any real dialogue with others who think differently. While such groups exist everywhere in democratic countries, in Slovenia they seem to be relatively more prevalent. This is a mode of acting that does not support real pluralism but in fact strives for a socio-cultural "hegemonisation" (Mouffe in Adam 1987).

4. Civil society, socio-cultural hegemony and pluralism

Given what has been stated thus far, we believe it is reasonable to ask about the transition of civil society in Slovenia, or better, to what extent is the socialist concept of civil society still present in Slovenia.

During the last decade of socialist Yugoslavia, it was evident that the development of civil society was moving in two directions. The path

of the dissidents of socialism entailed the development of a pluralist civil society, while the socialist-oriented part of society viewed civil association as a component of socialism.

In this context, the statement by C. Mouffe is relevant: "Gramsci's conception of hegemony is not only compatible with pluralism, it presupposes it. But it is a pluralism that is located within the hegemony of the working class" (in Adam 1987: 14). In the Yugoslav situation in the 1980s, this meant within the hegemony of communism or socialism.

But, does such type of civil society exist in contemporary Slovenia? I think it does. It seems that a part of civil society and NGOs has maintained something of this attitude after three decades of democracy. This should not be that surprising. In this sense, Lev Kreft's (1987: 84) words at the 1987 Symposium on Civil Society are typical: "the conversation about civil society ... must become a conversation about strategy and tactics, about the organisation of a new political alliance", in other words, it must move towards a new type of socialist alliance.

4.1 About actual situation: engagement of politically interested civil society

At the parliamentary elections held in April 2022, The Freedom Movement Party won by a large relative majority (34% of the vote, 46% of all seats in Parliament). How is it possible that a party formed just a few weeks before the elections could win so convincingly?

It is true that a strong reason was the opposition to Janez Janša and the disappointment with the 'old' parties of the centre-left political group. Nonetheless, it is still surprising that centre-left voters trusted the newly formed party given that three previous attempts of relying on new parties reveal that such parties only managed to hold office for a single term. We think that what is in play is the combined effect of several factors.

Regarding civil society, an important factor was the Friday anti-government protests – riding around some politically symbolic points on bicycles in Ljubljana. The initiative's main goal was to bring an end to the centre-right government, although this was not achieved. However, as the protests were strongly supported by the mainstream mass media during the 2-year period, they had a considerable impact on public opinion.

Probably the most important result of the protests was the establishment of the civic initiative the Voice of the People (Glas ljudstva) in 2021 whose central purpose was to influence the (parliamentary, local, presidential) elections in 2022. The Voice of the People civic initiative "brings together more than 100 civil society organisations and thousands of individuals from all sectors of social life from all over Slovenia" (Glas ljudstva 2023).

Alongside many Slovenian NGOs, such as the Peace Institute, Umanotera (Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development), the 8th March Institute, the Legal Network for the Protection of Democracy, the Cultural Workers' Aktiv, Amnesty International Slovenia and Greenpeace Slovenia are also involved, as well as the United Nations Association for Slovenia.

Even though they are not a political party, the mentioned initiative organised "various rallies, meetings, advocacy actions, campaigns, online internet tools, etc." before and after the elections. Prior to the elections, the Voice of the People formulated a list of 138 expert demands in 11 key areas. The parties of the then opposition and the newly formed Freedom Movement – the parties that together form the new government – made several joint public appearances with leading representatives of the Voice of the People. They agreed with these parties that if they were to form a government they would work more closely with civil society and implement 122 of their demands.

4.2 Some notes on Gramsci's concept of civil society

According to Katz (2006), the premise of Gramsci's hegemonic model of civil society is the acceptance that there is a certain dominant way of thinking and way of living in society. It includes values and norms, social practices, and social relationships. »It results from a combina-

tion of coercion and consent, the latter achieved through the hegemonic cooptation of groups in civil society. /…/ Elements of civil society are coopted by the state and used to secure acquiescence of the dominated classes and identification with the hegemonic world-order. In this state of affairs civil society becomes part of an extended state, utilized by the ruling class to form and maintain its hegemony by transformismo, or cooptation, through which the ruling class assimilates ideas that it sees as potentially dangerous, and thus creates cultural and political consensus« (Katz 2006, 335).

Nonetheless, according to Gramsci, civil society can also work in the opposite direction to hegemony. The path to a thoroughgoing change of society leads via the establishing of a creative space in which different groups, „encouraged by intellectuals, can coalesce, form a historic bloc, and engage in a counter-hegemonic war of position to alter society". As regards global capitalism, Katz argues that global civil society can be the avant-garde in a „process of consciousness, organisation, and protest" against global neo-liberal capitalism.

The first condition for such action is the creation of a counter-hegemonic „historic bloc", i.e., a coalition of different groups united by a shared opposition to global capitalism. The second is awareness of the role of the avant-garde, also as a vehicle for a new social order or social foundations for a new regime.

We contend that it is this aspect which is important for understanding civil society in Slovenia. In view of the above, a considerable share of the politically interested civil society in Slovenia actually follows the concepts of Gramsci's approach to socialist civil society. However, to what extent the self-understanding of the avant-garde role of this part of civil society tends to assert a new hegemony is an open question. This aspect would call for a broader analysis of what has happened since the elections, which we cannot do here due to space constraints. Still, there are many signs of the strong presence of the tendency of avant-garde action towards socio-cultural hegemony.

5. Conclusion: what role can civil society play?

Slovenian society today is characterised by a lack of social cohesion, disagreement on the common core values (necessary for cohesion), a combination of strong nihilism and narcissism, widespread social anomie, and considerable polarisation (a phenomenon not only found in Slovenia). What can the role of civil society be in such social circumstances? We believe the answer includes three aspects:

1. Civil society can work towards pluralism or hegemony, for the common good or for the exclusive interests of one part of society. The challenge: how to arrive at the right discernment of the role played by different civil organisations, and how to raise awareness of this?

2. There is clearly a growing cultural conflict that is fostering social polarisation – can this be addressed effectively? How to reduce the power of polarisation?

3. In a period of growing anomie and individualism, as well as a growing social crisis, civil society has an important, probably irreplaceable role as a vehicle for providing meaning and social cohesion. At the same time, it might be part of the problem, not the solution. How to strengthen the positive role of a plural civil society?

Literature

Adam, Frane. 1987. O treh pristopih k pojmu ‚civilna družba‘. Družboslovne razprave, 4., (5.), pp. 5–15.

Adam, Frane (ed.) 2007. Social Capital and Governance: Old and New Members of the EU in Comparison. Berlin: LIT.

Bahovec, Igor. 2020. Religion, civil society, and charitable activity in Slovenia. In Glatzer Miguel and Paul C. Manuel (eds.). Faith-based organizations and social welfare: associational life and religion in contemporary Eastern Europe. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 159–175.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1995. Modernity, Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning: The Orientation of Modern Man. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation.

Bežovan, Gojko. 2004. Civilno društvo. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus.

Cepin, Matej, Danilo Kozoderc and Sašo Kronegger. 2014. Has Our Dream Come True? 20 Years of Civil Society in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Socialna akademija & Salve.

CNVOS: Slovenian Center for Information Service, Co-operation, and Development of NGOs. 2023. https://www.cnvos.si/nvo-sektor-dejstva-stevilke/povzetek/.

EVS: European Values Study: data for Slovenia: Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov: Slovensko javno mnenje (SJM): EVS 1992: SJM 1992/1; EVS 1999: SJM 1999/3; EVS 2008: SJM 2008/1; 2017: SJM2017/1. https://nesstar2.adp.fdv.uni-lj.si/webview/?language=sl.

Fink - Hafner, Danica and Meta Novak. 2017. Country report: Slovenia. In: Vandor, Peter (ed.). Civil society in Central and Eastern Europe: challenges and opportunities. Vienna: ERSTE Foundation, 126–141. ERSTE Stiftung studies.

Gawin, Dariusz and Piotr Glinski (eds.). 2006. Civil Society in the Making. Warsaw: IFiS Publishers.

Glas ljudstva (the Voice of the People). 2023. https://glas-ljudstva.si/pogosta-vprasanja/.

Hagai Katz, Hagai. 2006. Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks. Voluntas, 17, 4: 333–348.

Jobert, Bruno and Beate Kohler-Koch (eds.) 2008. Changing Images of Civil Society: From protest to governance. London: Routledge.

Keane, John. 1998. Civil society: old images, new visions. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kreft, Lev. 1987. Civilna družba in socialistična zveza. Družboslovne razprave. 4., (5.), pp. 81–84.

Our World in Data. 2023. Deliberative Democracy Index: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/deliberative-democracy-vdem?tab=chart; Democratic Culture Index: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/democratic-culture-index-eiu?tab=table; Civil Liberties Index: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/civil-liberties-index-eiu?tab=table; Civil rights score: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/civil-rights-score-bti?tab=table.

Selznick, Philip. 1992. The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and The Promise of Community. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

United States Agency for International Development. Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. 2023. 2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. 25th edition – January 2023. Updated March 2023. https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-europe-eurasia-2021-report.pdf.

Wollebeak, Dag and Per Selle. 2008. A social democratic model of civil society? In: Jobert, Bruno and Beate Kohler-Koch (eds.) Changing Images of Civil Society: From protest to governance, 47–69. London: Routledge.

The Dilemmas of Open (Citizen) Science

Frane Adam[17] and Maruša Gorišek[18]

1. Introduction

The contribution is addressing the concepts of 'open science' and citizen science in a broader socio-political and socio-scientific context. It discusses the dilemmas, ambivalence and a (perhaps) ideologised perception of the importance and role of openness in science and participation of general public in scientific research. It is clear that this kind of participation and collaboration can be beneficial, however, limits exist and a radical form of openness can lead to a loss of identity of science as autonomous social subsystem (Weingart. Joubert, Connoway, 2021).

The notion of open science refers to a number of aspects, from greater public accessibility of scientific publications and data to the openness of scientific research in terms of cooperation with the general public. In this sense, the concept of citizen science has become more popular in recent years, being heavily advertised „*as a recognized, promoted and funded approach, which fosters scientific literacy and democratization of science*" (ECSA, 2023). It is promoted by several international organisations and associations, notably the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) and the European Commission which emphasizes that the general public should be able to make significant contributions and be recognised as a valid European producer of scientific knowledge (European Commission, 2023).

Furthermore, these approaches are not only a part of an EU (or global) campaign, but are becoming the subject of legislative implementation in many EU countries. They go beyond recommendations and strategic directions and are becoming mandatory instruments despite uncertainties and controversial interpretations with

---