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Civil Society and Civic Participation in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

This study defines the space of civic participation based on a differentiation between the terms “civil society” and the “third (non-governmental) sector”. Establishing this terminology and theoretical framework appears to be key, as these two terms are often confused. Notwithstanding its long tradition and topicality, the term “civil society” is somewhat abstract and is today used mainly in theoretical and conceptual contexts, whereas the “third sector” is more practical and concrete, as it offers the possibility of factual definition, and therefore, it is mainly used in empirical research. The key factor in the theoretical and empirical connection between the terms “civic participation” and “civil society” is the fact that a democratic political system is based on the opportunities that citizens have to participate in and influence public affairs. This study also defines civil society historically and attempts to conceptualise civic participation in the Czech Republic. Consequently, by determining the role of non-governmental organisations and through a description and analysis of the character of the non-governmental sector, the study aims at defining the borders of the civic sector and civic participation in the Czech Republic.

Keywords

civil society, civic participation

Občanská společnost a občanská participace v České republice

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Abstrakt

Text nejprve na základě rozlišení pojmů občanská společnost a třetí sektor definuje prostor občanské participace. Vytvoření pojmového aparátu a teoretického rámce se jeví jako klíčové, protože pojmy občanská společnost a třetí (neziskový) sektor bývají často směřovány. Pojem občanská společnost je přes svou dlouhou tradici a dnešní aktuálnost velmi obecný a je využíván především teoreticky a konceptuálně, zatímco pojem třetí sektor je praktický a konkrétní – nabízí možnost přesného vymezení, a je proto využíván při empirickém zkoumání. Pro teoreticko-empirické spojení pojmů občanská participace a občanská společnost je klíčový fakt, že demokratický politický systém je postaven na možnosti občana přímou participací ovlivňovat věci veřejné. Text historicky vymezuje pojem občanská společnost, a na jeho základě definuje a konceptualizuje občanskou participaci v České republice. Následně pak na základě vymezení role neziskových organizací, deskripce a analýzy charakteru neziskového sektoru se příspěvek snaží definovat bariéry občanského sektoru a občanské participace v České republice.

Klíčová slova

občanská společnost, občanská participace

Die Zivilgesellschaft und die Bürgerliche Partizipation in der Tschechischen Republik

Petra Rakušanová

Abstraktum

Der Text definiert zuerst auf Grundlage der Unterscheidung der Begriffe „Zivilgesellschaft“ und „Dritter Sektor“ den Raum der bürgerlichen Partizipation. Die Begründung eines Begriffsapparates und eines theoretischen Rahmens zeigen sich als Schlüsselproblem, denn die Begriffe der Zivilgesellschaft und des dritten (gemeinnützigen) Sektors werden häufig miteinander vermischt. Der Begriff der Zivilgesellschaft ist trotz seiner langen Tradition und der gegenwärtigen Aktualität sehr allgemein und wird vor allem theoretisch und konzeptionell verwendet, während der Begriff des dritten Sektors praktisch und konkret ist – er bietet die Möglichkeit einer genauen Abgrenzung und wird deshalb bei empirischen Untersuchungen verwendet. Für die theoretisch-empirische Verbindung der Begriffe „bürgerliche Partizipation“ und „Zivilgesellschaft“ ist die Tatsache entscheidend, dass das demokratische politische System auf der Möglichkeit des Bürgers basiert, durch direkte Partizipation öffentliche Angelegenheiten zu beeinflussen. Der Text definiert den Begriff „Zivilgesellschaft“ historisch und konzeptualisiert und definiert die bürgerliche Partizipation in Tschechien auf seiner Grundlage. Anschließend versucht dieser Beitrag, auf Grundlage der Definition der Rolle gemeinnütziger Organisationen sowie der Beschreibung und Analyse des Charakters des gemeinnützigen Sektors Hindernisse für den bürgerlichen Sektor und die bürgerliche Partizipation in Tschechien zu definieren.

Schlüsselworte

Zivilgesellschaft, bürgerliche Partizipation

Introduction

Civic participation is an important function of civil society that contributes to the integration of society. The key factor in the theoretical and empirical connection between the terms “civic participation” and “civil society” is the fact that a democratic political system is based on the opportunities that citizens have to participate in and influence public affairs.

The following study defines the space of civic participation based on the differentiation between the terms civil society and the third sector. Establishing this terminology and theoretical framework appears to be key, as the terms “civil society” and the “third (non-governmental) sector” are often confused. Notwithstanding its long tradition and topicality, civil society is a somewhat abstract term and is used today mainly in theoretical and conceptual contexts, whereas the third sector is a more practical and concrete term, as it offers the possibility of a factual definition, and therefore it mainly used in empirical research.

The study also defines civil society historically and attempts to conceptualise civic participation¹ in the Czech Republic. Consequently, by determining the role of non-governmental organisations and through a description and analysis of the character of the non-governmental sector,² the study aims at defining the borders of the civic sector and civic participation in the Czech Republic.

The concept of civil society is a very common one and is used in professional literature, the media and in private life. However, it is very difficult to define – in theoretical literature, the term has been used for centuries,³ but during this period it has gone through conceptual and connotative changes, which have been widely discussed by specialists⁴ (Keane 1988; Gellner 1991; Seligman 1992;

1 Civic participation is here understood in general terms; its further classification is given in Table 1.

2 The analysis is based on the following data and sources: analyses of documents, secondary analyses of data, expert interviews, focus groups and an empirical survey conducted as part of the project “The Methods and Effectiveness of Interest Mediation between Individuals, Social Groups and the State”, supported by the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs under the programme Modern Society and its Transformations – MS 5. A detailed description of the types of information and data collection is provided in the chapter “Empirical Surveys Organised in the Project” by J. Vinopal in the book by Z. Mansfeldová and A. Kroupa (eds.) *Participation and Interest Group Organisation in the Czech Republic*, Prague: SLON (in print).

3 Theoretical literature places the origin of the term “civil society” – *societas civilis* – in antiquity (Cohen and Arato 1990: 84-86, also Müller 2001: 3).

4 The concept is a very vivid one, which can be demonstrated by the fact that the definitions and concept of civil society are subjects of professional discussion, e.g. between Christoph Bryant and Krishan Kumar in *The British Journal of Sociology* (Kumar 1993, Bryant 1993, Kumar 1994, Bryant 1994, Neocleous 1995).

Alexander 1997; Walzer 1998; Habermas 2003) and which have led to political battles⁵ (Green 1997). Beside theoretical attempts aimed at defining the notion, there have also been empirical attempts at its conceptualisation – in the Czech Republic, a so-called *civil society map*, which was prepared by civil society actors within the framework of the international research program Index of Civil Society, has recently been used (Vajdová 2004a).⁶

Notwithstanding its long tradition and topicality, the term “civil society” is rather abstract and is used today mainly in theoretical and conceptual contexts, whereas empirical research related to civil society uses the practical and concrete concept of NGOs, which are an institutionalised form and, as a subset of civil society, a part of civil society. The non-profit sector and its synonyms – civic sector or third sector – overall denote NGOs.⁷ Some of the issues resulting from the current inaccurate use of the term civil society have been identified, for example, by the American sociologist Jeffrey Alexander (Alexander 1997).

In addition to these terms, there are several others used in the Czech Republic, such as non-governmental non-profit organizations (NNOs – this term is used above all by the Governmental Council for NNOs and other governmental legislative bodies). The Czech Statistical Office uses the terms “non-profit organisation” and the “sector of non-profit institutions serving households” in its national reports. These terms are broadly defined and their definitions are based on different criteria (e.g. funding methods) and go beyond the third sector. On the other hand, in some respects the definitions are narrower because, owing to the emphasis placed on legal aspects and funding methods, some organisations, within the scope of this definition, are classified under other sectors (cf. Šilhánová et al. 1996; Brokl et al. 1997 Brokl 2002; Green 1997; Müller 2001; Müller 2002; Gabal Analysis 2003; Pospíšil, Rosenmayer 2004a, 2004b; Vajdová 2004b; Dohnalová 2005; Škarabelová 2005).

Particularly during the empirical research in the field of civil society and civic participation, the terms civil society and the third (non-profit) sector are often confused or even erroneously interchanged. It is therefore very important to clarify the terminological usage and the theoretical framework, which could help to differentiate these terms. This study attempts to define the term “civil

5 The discussion about the character and the role of civil society in a democratic political system at the beginning of the 1990s, which has a global character, was immensely influenced by a dispute between the then president Václav Havel and the current president (and at that time prime-minister) Václav Klaus. The core of the dispute was the intermingling of civil society and politics, i.e. the question of whether civil society actors at the macro-level should try to actively influence politics. Whereas Václav Havel (and also Petr Pithart) is considered to be in favour of the active intertwining of civil society and politics, Václav Klaus stands at the opposite end of the pole in this discussion. In his view, not only does civil society have negative connotations, but in fact the liberal understanding of society makes an active participative civil society superfluous because participation is already guaranteed by elections (Klaus 2005). The substance of the dispute is more complicated: it is the definition of the relationship between the state and civil society, which especially in post-communist countries is considered to be essentially inconsistent; based on historical experience, civil society is regarded as the opposition to state power (Arato, Cohen 1988 in Kumar 1993). According to Seligman, civil society has often been the only ideological alternative to foreign hegemony in Central Europe (Seligman 1992, similarly cf. Walzer 1998, Nardin 1998).

6 Based on regional consultation with the actors in civil society in selected Czech regions, the study defines civil society (its institutionalised part) in terms of the legal form that it takes, its non-profit setting, and the sphere of its activities (open vs. closed, and the provision of public services).

7 The Italian political scientist Amitai Etzioni introduced the notion of the third sector, i.e. the sector between the state and the economic spheres, in the 1970s to refer to a set of private organisations providing public services sponsored by the state (Etzioni 1973).

society” historically, using this definition to specify and conceptualise civic participation in the Czech Republic. In order to better clarify the above-mentioned terms, the relationships between the terms civil society, the third sector and NGOs are presented in Diagram 1. Consequently, by determining the role of non-governmental organisations and through a description and analysis of the character of the non-governmental sector the study aims at defining the borders of the civic sector and civic participation in the Czech Republic.

Diagram 1. The relationship between civil society, the non-profit sector and NGOs

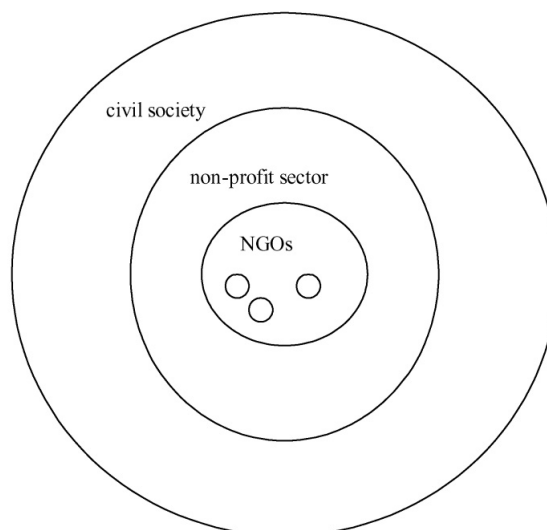


Table 1. Classification of civic and political participation

Participation	
Civic participation Conventional participation Non-conventional participation	Political participation Aggregated participation Individual participation

Source: Author.

In the following text, a distinction is made between political and civic participation, and in the Table 1 the following classification of both types of participation is proposed for the further analysis provided in this text: civic participation is differentiated as conventional participation – which is understood as being a member of an NGO in the social, health care, religious, community, children and youth, sports, women or education sectors – and non-conventional participation – which is further differentiated into *legal* (petitions, official rally and/or strike, threat of strike) and *illegal* (wildcat strike, illegal strike, sit-down strike). In the category of political participation, a distinction is made

between aggregated forms of participation – *membership and participation* (also passive, e.g. financial support) in *traditional political organisations* (trade unions, professional associations, political parties) and *membership and participation* (also passive) in *new political organisations* (NGOs – aimed at active policy making – ecological and environmental groups, peace movements, organisations for the protection of consumers, animals, human rights and aid organisations targeting the developing world).

Another category of political participation is “individual participation”, i.e. participation in elections and referenda. The study focuses on conventional civic participation and aggregated political participation in new political organisations.

1. The History of the Concept “Civil Society“

The idea of civil society is closely related to the basic topics and undercurrents in the Euro-Atlantic intellectual tradition. Despite the fact that different authors provide different definitions, it combines the attempt to “articulate a questionable relation between private and public – individual and community interests, private longings and public need ...” (Seligman 1992: 3). The British anthropologist Ernest Gellner also adverts to often negative or confrontational definitions of the term “civil society” (Gellner 1991, 1995). The term itself is the Latin translation (lat. *societas civilis*) of the Aristotelian term *politike koinonia* – a universal social system, which omits only natural relations from the definition of society (Cohen and Arato 1990: 84-86).

Another shift in the definition occurred in the Middle Ages when the original definition was restricted, and the term was applied to a medieval city and defined in opposition to the rulers. As in the 1980s, when civil societies both in Eastern and Western Europe were being considered as a possible solution to the erosion of the nation state, in the 17th and the 18th centuries this concept was perceived as the way out of the crisis of the social order. Until the end of the 18th century, the term civil society was in turns confused with a state or political community (e.g. Locke) (Müller 2001).

Thomas Hobbes tried to give back the term civil society its original breadth; however, developments supported Locke’s distinction between political and civil society and their delimitation in relation to the state, and the subsequent differentiation between society and government. The Scottish Enlightenment thinkers were the first to ask about the relationship between the private and the public spheres – categories that are not antagonistic but on the contrary are interrelated. The Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, led by Adam Ferguson, also introduced a normative aspect into the concept of civil society, wherein civil society is not just a space for interaction between individuals but is a space for the creation of positive values, a space for human solidarity, whose cohesion is indeed guaranteed by common values and natural affection (Seligman 1992: 32-33).

David Hume summarised contemporary arguments in his definition of the origin of civil society as the result of the constraint and compulsion between the spheres of individual and public interests. Tester regards Hume’s definition as the first to incorporate distinctly sociological elements (Tester 1992: 46). Montesquieu further elaborated on this division of spheres and established a theory of two social contracts, in which, on the one hand, political laws regulate the relationship between the rulers and the ruled and on the other hand social rules regulate the relations between individual members of the society.

Immanuel Kant was the first to reconcile this internal antagonism between the private and the public – Hume’s public sphere, based on compliance with the law in order to pursue individual interests, and the private moral sphere. For Kant, civil society and the state are not antagonistic but interrelated. Only a critical citizen may achieve, through participation, liberation from existing restrictions (Seligman 1992: 39-42).

The German philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel synthesised the majority of the 18th-century intellectual currents, classified the national development of civil societies in individual European countries, and was the first to incorporate the term civil society into a broader theoretical concept of social order. Hegel negatively defined civil society as an ethos, in which the dualities of subject versus object, law versus obligation, rationality versus values reappear (Cohen and Arato 1990: 95). Hegel succeeded in integrating the term by defining civil society in relation to the nation state on the one hand and to the family as a traditional community on the other. For Hegel, civil society (*bürgerliche Gessellschaft*) is the space of the middle class. For Karl Marx, who builds on Hegel, it is a space for class antagonism. The result of the attempt to unify the spheres of legality (public) and morality (private), is Marx’s model of civil society (and in his later works of society as such) defined as a conflict between individual interests, which have to be reconciled through social unity (Seligman 1992; Neocleous 1995; *The Criticism of Hegel and Marx*: Keane 1988; Kumar 1993, 1994).

The contribution of Alexis de Tocqueville, who considered civil society to be the basis of democracy, because it creates democracy as “a state of society”, is regarded as an important asset to the sociological concept of civil society. For Tocqueville, the state sphere, civil society (which is according to him a space for economic activity and individual interests) and the political community go hand in hand. Gramsci – for whom civil society is not a part of the sphere of economic activity, as it is for Marx, but like Tocqueville’s political community is rather part of the state – fuses the concepts of Marx and Tocqueville (Kumar 1993: 381-382).

With respect to the development of the sociological theory, the work of Parsons, who like Gramsci built on Hegel’s idea of civil society, is of particular importance. Within the framework of his renowned classification of social systems into four basic elements that are at the same time the functions of this system, he created one of the fundamental categories, i.e. the societal community, whose role is to integrate society on the basis of the institutionalisation of cultural values and their transformation into generally accepted social standards. At the same time, this classification makes it possible to differentiate civil society from the economic sphere.

Further development of the term was influenced by Emile Durkheim, Karl Popper and by other major contemporary theorists, e.g. Charles Taylor, John Keane, Jeffrey Alexander, Michael Walzer, Edward Shills and Jürgen Habermas.⁸ Müller differentiates two main categories of intellectual currents in the understanding of civil society – the socio-cultural approach (according to the approach to the concept, these are further categorised into generalists, maximalists and minimalists), and the economic (reductionist) approach (Müller 2001: 4-6).

⁸ Habermas views civil society as pluralistic mediations of interests. Its main function is to broaden and aggregate the interests of, in particular, disadvantaged individuals and groups. Habermas’s concept of civil society is also rather exclusive; it excludes the subjects related to political and economic spheres (Habermas 2003).

We have explained the different definitions of civil society. Based on these definitions we can conclude that civil society is a term that delineates the area between the private interest sphere and the state. It is an area of voluntary association outside the spheres of market, state and private lives, in which we realise how interrelated our world is. According to Jean Cohen, modern civil society is formed and reproduced by means of varying forms of collective activities and is institutionalised on the basis of law and particularly by subjective rules, which play an important role in stabilising social differentiation (Cohen 1998: 37).

As the sociologist Radim Marada explains, “the idea of civil society – as a symbol of certain types of social and public sensitivity, approaches, behaviors and thinking, or ethical reasoning – does not aim at criticizing the institutional basis of NGOs. ... the idea of civil society as the sphere of a civilized behavior of free, moral and rational individuals may (and probably should) pose limits to these spheres“ (the author has in mind the spheres of market and family; note by the author) (Marada 1997: 20; cf. Kumar 1993).

The existence of civil society is the result of a democratic political system based on the direct participation of citizens who can influence public affairs.

2. Research on Civil Society and Civic Participation in the Czech Republic

Both civil society and NGOs have deep roots in the Czech Republic, with their origins dating back to the period of the National Revival, when different cultural, artistic and educational associations and societies were important actors in Czech civic life. Massive developments in the non-profit sphere were witnessed after the establishment of an independent Czech state in 1918 (Müller 2002) and again after 1989 (Brokl 2002; Frič 1998; Frič et al. 2001; Mansfeldová et al. 2004; Potůček 1997).

More recently, the third sector has been researched by numerous Czech and foreign specialists and institutions involved in projects, such as those of the Non-profit Sector Agency (Activities and Needs of the Non-profit Sector, Non-profit Sector and Public Life in the Czech Republic, Donorship and Volunteerism in the Czech Republic), the project of Masaryk University in Brno led by Radim Marada (Social Sources of Volunteerism and Non-profit Organisations), or even most recently a project from the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society led by Tereza Vajdová (Civicus). An important state initiative is the Report on the Non-profit Sector in the Czech Republic initiated in 2004 by the Governmental Council for NNOs (RNNO) and drafted by an expert task group led by Tereza Vajdová (Vajdová 2004c). International comparative studies, such as the comparative study by the American Agency for International Development (NGO Viability Index in Central and East Europe and Eurasia) or a project by the Johns Hopkins University (Comparison of Non-profit Sectors), constitute a separate category.

3. The Role of NGOs

Having defined civic participation and conceptualised civil society we will now define the role of non-profit organisations in society. In modern democracies, NGOs play a most important role or, more precisely, roles. The first is its participative role. By means of participation in non-profit organisations, citizens try to express their common interests and needs; they create associations with the aim of addressing their common issues. This way, citizens can participate actively in the decision-making process of, for example, a community, region, or state, and at the same time they assume their share of responsibility for the decisions taken by public authorities.⁹ Such cooperation between the non-profit sector and state administration or local governments is beneficial for both parties, as NGOs are often much closer to the reality on the ground and therefore may be helpful in identifying what problems need to be addressed. Apart from that, in NGOs there are specialists, whose expertise and comments in the public debate over the issue also contribute to perfecting proposed solutions. The activities of citizens in NGOs also enhance the capabilities of the citizens in their role of *homo politicus*. Citizens learn how to express their views, how to discuss issues and make an appearance before the public; they improve their organisational skills, and they add to and shape their social and cultural capital.

Another important role of the non-profit sector is its service role. NGOs provide their services in particular to those groups of people who are not able to satisfy their needs elsewhere. NGOs thus in fact make up for the gaps in the availability of services provided by the state or the community. Services provided by the non-profit sector are usually very efficient and less expensive because NGOs are not forced to generate profit from their activities, which would subsequently be redistributed; any generated funds are used to cover expenses and any possible surplus is invested into improving the provision of services. The services are usually more targeted because they address the real needs of their clients. By providing services NGOs also contribute to employment, particularly in the service sector. Last but not least, they institutionalise the traditional phenomenon of people providing one another with assistance, for example, within the framework of volunteerism, and they contribute to social integration.

Through participation in NGOs various marginalised social groups can also express their interests and needs. Given that they are different in nature, NGOs are indispensable in creating the plurality of ideas and providing alternative solutions to varying problems. In different areas of social interests, NGOs aggregate, select and satisfy the interests of citizens. This process of interest mediation

⁹ The participation of civic organisations in planning activities relating to community development or a protest as against environmentally harmful projects planned in the community can serve as examples.

frequently involves addressing both individual and group interests, which at present are primarily defined as the domain of the state. For example, in the fields of social assistance and the protection and promotion of health, including care for the disabled, oftentimes NGOs are not just an alternative, but are the only source able to satisfy the interests of citizens (care for the elderly, care for mentally or physically disabled children and adults, halfway houses, hospices, etc.). According to Weisbrod (1975: 182), NGOs complement the function of the state and provide an alternative to the private sector.

4. The Character of the Third Sector in the Czech Republic

The third or non-profit sector in the Czech Republic was not created from scratch in 1989. On the contrary, it was built out of a rich tradition, the roots of which date back to the period of the National Revival, in particular out of a range of cultural, artistic, and educational associations and societies, which were important components of Czech civic life. A positive impulse for the development of civil society was provided by the creation of an independent Czech state in 1918 (e.g. Müller 2002). On the other hand, the Second World War and the year 1948, when based upon legislative restrictions put on the right of association of citizens a number of organisations were dissolved, were a dramatic change in this respect. According to Potůček, the number of NGOs dropped from 60 000 in 1948 to 683 organisations, which were then incorporated within the National Front¹⁰ (Potůček 1997). The state also gained control and organised a range of leisure time activities for children, youth, adults and the elderly. A further significant strengthening of the remaining associations was experienced in the 1970s in response to the Prague Spring.¹¹

The report on the non-profit sector in the Czech Republic defines four stages in the development of the non-profit sector in this country (Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic) after 1989 (Vajdová 2004c 10-11). These stages may be characterised as follows:

Stage 1 (1990-1992): Revolutionary enthusiasm was reflected in a liberal state policy towards the non-profit sector; the Endowment Investment Fund¹² was established; foreign donors arrived and there was a massive influx of international financial resources for the development of the non-profit sector.

Stage 2 (1993-1996): This stage may be referred to as the period of hesitation; discussions between Václav Havel and Václav Klaus occurred over civil society; the state took a reserved stance towards

10 The National Front (*Národní fronta*) was an umbrella organisation, in which all political parties and social organisations were included; no organisations could participate in public life outside its scope.

11 Prague Spring was the period when the pro-reform faction of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) headed by Alexander Dubček made an attempt to achieve the political liberalisation of Czechoslovakia (January – August 1968) under the motto “Socialism with a human face”, an end to which came with the military intervention of Warsaw Pact troops.

12 In the Endowment Investment Fund (NIF), the Government earmarked 1% of revenue obtained from privatisation to finance the foundation sector; its aim was to promote the financial independence of foundations and enable them to participate in the development of the non-profit sector.

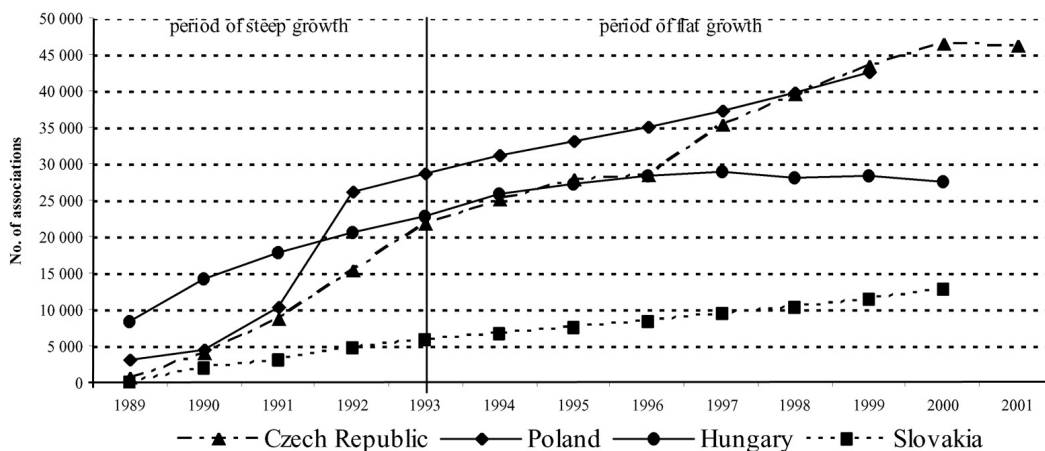
the non-profit sector; on the one hand there was stable state support, and on the other hand a reluctance to distribute NIF financial resources.

Stage 3 (1997-2001): The state closely monitored legislation regulating the non-profit sector (foundations, religious legal entities; stricter rules for ministerial subsidies; distribution of the first NIF financial means).

Stage 4 (2002-2004): The decentralisation of state administration has had an impact on NGOs in the regions; after EU accession foreign donors withdrew (a temporary solution being provided by the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe), and EU accession urged the enforcement of the partnership principle and the use of EU Structural Funds.

Graph 1 shows the development of the non-profit sector in the four Visegrad countries. The Graph divides the years 1989-2001 into a period of rapid development in 1989-1993 and a period of rather slow development in the following years. Whereas in Hungary and Slovakia this division is correct and after 1993 no substantial increase in the number of civic organisations can be seen, in Poland and the Czech Republic the development shows increases also in the following period.

Graph 1. The establishment of non-profit organisations in the four Visegrad countries in 1989-2001



Source: Poland: Ministry of Justice (quoted Nałęcz, 2003), Hungary: Bocz et al., 2000, Czech Republic and Slovakia: Albertina Firemni Monitor, 2001. Quoted from Mansfeldová et al. 2004. The graph shows an increase in the number of civic organisations.

Table 2 shows the number of NGOs in the Czech Republic in the period between the years 1997 and 2003. In addition to the absolute figures on the number of organisations, the Table also shows the dynamics of NGO development – slow development in 1997-2000 is followed by a more rapid

increase in the number of NGOs later on. If we look closely at the individual types of NGOs, we can see that the dynamics of the increase in the number of NGOs and their organisational units follows the basic trend. One interesting observation is the non-linear development in the number of public service companies, but there are no adequate data to provide a detailed explanation for this.

On the other hand, it is possible to explain the significant decrease in the number of foundations between 1997 and 2000, which had slowed the dynamics of the development of non-profit organisations in this period. After the unsatisfactory 1992 legislation on the management of foundations, the Act on Foundations and Endowment Funds¹³ was adopted in 1997, which strictly defined the rules governing the registration and management of foundations: foundations must declare in advance what percentage of their costs will be taken up by administration, and they cannot be involved in business on their own behalf (there are though exceptions to this rule), they also have to prepare and maintain annual reports, which should assist in the internal and public control of foundations (however, according to the results of a study performed by the Non-profit Sector Research Centre in Brno, the majority of foundations do not comply with this obligation).¹⁴ Based on the changed legislation, some foundations dissolved and some were transformed into endowment funds.

The last group of organisations described in Table 2 is comprised of churches and religious organisations (religious legal entities). The free establishment and functioning of these entities is provided for in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. However, the establishment of churches has not been in fact regulated and a certain legislative vacuum led to the free establishment of charities and other religious legal entities without any state interference, which, as in the case of foundations, resulted in the need to adopt certain legislation.¹⁵ However, after a ruling from the Constitutional Court, part of the Act was rendered ineffective, and at present a new bill is under preparation.

Table 2. The development of the number of NGOs in 1997-2003

Name	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Civic organisation, including organisational units	57 377	64 090	65 987	73 205	76 076	78 779	79 682
Public service company	60	199	539	642	726	530	609
Foundation	5 274	4 901	3 324	323	304	314	322
Endowment fund	–	71	610	736	761	781	799
Religious establishments	322	187	40	152	126	103	102
Religious organisations	3 600	4 194	4 205	4 809	4 964	4 847	4 822
Total NGOs	66 633	73 642	74 705	75 058	79 867	85 354	86 336
Increase in %	100	10.5	12.1	12.6	19.9	28.1	29.6

Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office) Data Processing Department, Department of NGO Statistics, Brno.

Note: Data on the number of endowment funds have been collected since 1998.

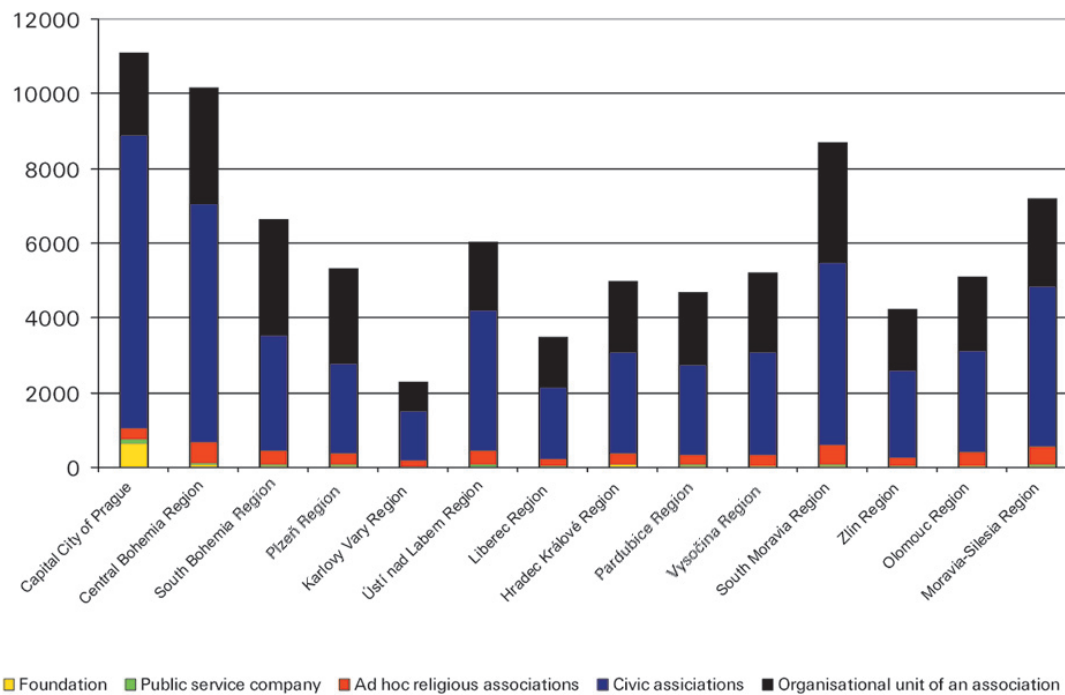
13 Act No. 227/1997 Coll., on Foundations and Endowment Funds.

14 A more detailed description of legislation on this is provided in “Some Legal Aspects of Czech Interest Representation after 1989” by P. Kolář and J. Syllová, a chapter in the book by Z. Mansfeldová and A. Kroupa, (eds.) *Participation and Interest Group Organisation in the Czech Republic*, Prague: SLON (in print).

15 Act No. 3/2002 Coll., on Churches and Religious Societies.

Graph 2 shows the number of NGOs in individual regions of the Czech Republic. Another view is also provided in Table 3, which shows a regional breakdown of NGO membership by NGO type. Probably the most interesting point is the information about the most common civic organisations among NGOs. However, it is necessary to point out that approximately 15-20% of civic organisations are not active and that there is a certain degree of centralisation; whereas in Prague and other large cities there is a greater number of civic associations, in other regions there is a larger number of organisational units of (civic) associations.¹⁶ Nevertheless, taking into account Prague's population, the most active regions in this respect are the Capital City of Prague, the Central Bohemia Region, and the Vysočina Region, and the least active are the Moravia-Silesia Region and the Zlín Region.

Graph 2. The number of NGOs in the Czech Republic as of 14 March 2003, broken down according to regions and types of NGOs.



Source: Government Council for NNOs.

16 An organisational unit of a civic association is a (regional) branch of a civic organisation.

Table 3. The average number of citizens per individual types of NGOs (breakdown by region)

	Founda- tion	Endow- ment fund	Public service company	Ad hoc religious associations	Civic associa- tions	Organisa- tional unit of an associa- tion
Capital City of Prague	1 834	5 530	9 172	3 840	148	519
Central Bohemia Region	18 116	38 732	31 200	1 992	176	364
South Bohemia Region	21 530	9 182	13 008	1 683	203	201
Plzeň Region	16 149	23 872	21 962	1 700	228	217
Karlovy Vary Region	33 704	21 667	33 704	1 850	232	379
Ústí nad Labem Region	45 499	38 999	19 046	2 105	219	447
Liberec Region	32 852	30 506	20 337	2 043	223	325
Hradec Králové Region	9 622	10 348	36 564	1 769	205	283
Pardubice Region	13 696	14 905	19 491	1 891	211	257
Vysočina Region	23 536	14 794	39 830	1 767	189	242
South Moravia Region	26 729	11 455	23 886	2 273	230	348
Zlín Region	49 035	8 388	37 498	2 560	276	388
Olomouc Region	24 715	10 592	23 726	1 648	219	297
Moravia-Silesia Region	34 162	18 319	31 600	2 655	294	540

Source: Government Council for NNOs (2003).

Table 4 shows the number of NGOs broken down according to their main sphere of activities. The largest number and percentage is found among sports and recreational organisations (this category includes the Czech Association for Physical Training (Český svaz tělesné výchovy a sportu)¹⁷ and Sokol,¹⁸ and also leisure-time associations such as fishing, angling and hunting societies, and hobby associations, etc.). Organisations providing social services, which will be dealt with below, also play an important role in the non-profit sector. Organisations dealing with cultural, artistic, scientific and research issues are also widely represented. The least represented are charity organisations. In this context it should be pointed out that registering only one main field of activity has led to some distortion in the overall image of activities; most of the NGOs operate in several different fields at once.

17 The Czech Federation for Physical Training is one of the largest NGOs in the Czech Republic in terms of membership, with currently more than 1 450 000 members.

18 Sokol is one of the oldest NGOs in the Czech Republic, founded in 1862 for the purpose of organising sports and cultural events, while putting a strong emphasis on patriotism. Banned several times in its history, it now has around 200 000 members organised in regional and local units throughout the country.

Table 4. The number of NGOs according to the main sphere of activities (%)

Main sphere of activities	%
Recreation, sports and PE	17
Social services	15
Culture and arts	14
Education and research	13
Environmental protection	9
Health	8
Community development and housing	5
Civil rights advocacy and counselling, human rights protection	4
Religion, church	3
International activities	3
Trade unions, professional and business associations	3
Charity	2
Other	5

Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office) Data Processing Department, Department of NGO statistics, Brno and Governmental Council for NNOs.

5. Membership in NGOs and People's Perceptions and Evaluations of NGOs

Unlike data on the number of NGOs, which are recorded in individual registers, membership in NGOs is not recorded and may only be assessed by means of surveys.¹⁹ Therefore, the data on membership provide information about the size of NGOs and the number of their supporters. According to the most recent data, obtained in 2003,²⁰ almost 56% of Czech adults are members of an NGO. Most commonly survey respondents indicated they were members of sporting clubs (21.8%), shared interest groups (18.9%) and community societies (13.0%). On the other hand, there is little reported membership in ethnic organisations (0.4%) and social and environmental movements (0.7% and 2.2% respectively). A comparison with a survey of NGO membership conducted five years ago provides interesting information (Frič 1998; Frič et al. 2001). In that survey, 29% of respondents said they belonged to an NGO. The difference may be partially attributable to the fact that during the five-year period the Czech population gained a greater awareness of NGOs.

An analysis of socio-demographic characteristics indicates that women are more engaged in NGOs than men are, as are inhabitants of smaller cities (a population of 5000-14 999), small communities (a population of 800-1999), and large metropolises (a population over one million – only Prague), and high-school and university graduates. The most active are those respondents who said that they voted for the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) or the Communist Party (KSČM) in the 2002 elections to the Chamber of Deputies. The most engaged are people of working age, i.e. aged 45-59 and 30-44 years.

The least active are people in the Moravia-Silesia Region, the North Bohemia Region, and the South Bohemia Region (NUTS 2 analysis²¹), inhabitants of large cities (a population of 80 000–999 999)

19 Again, data distortion is attributable to various sources: people need to understand what questions they are being asked in a survey (what is an NGO or a voluntary organisation), and they may provide false information or forget certain things.

20 A survey by the Public Opinion Research Centre at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, which was carried out as part of the project HS 05/03 "The Methods and Effectiveness of Interest Mediation between Individuals, Social Groups and the State", supported by the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs under the Modern Society and its Transformations programme- MS 5.

21 NUTS 2 is a unified European spatial classification. Within the European Union NUTS 2 refers to subnational units – districts; for more details see EUROSTAT or the Czech National Office.

and the smallest communities (fewer than 799 inhabitants), secondary school graduates without a school-leaving certificate and people with just primary school education. People who are less active are also those who did not participate in the elections (the respondents who said that they did not take part in the 2002 elections to the Chamber of Deputies), and the respondents who said they voted for the Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) in the elections. The least active are people over 60 years of age.

According to the survey, the general knowledge about the basic terms in this area is relatively high: 95% and 96% of respondents said that they were familiar with the terms “third sector” and “volunteerism”, respectively. Approximately 10% fewer people said that they were familiar with the term “civil society” (84.5%). In all these cases, positive answers comprise all the following answers: “Yes, I know exactly what the term means” and “Yes, I am familiar with the term but do not know exactly what it means”. We get a different picture if we focus on those who responded that they knew exactly what the term means – 85% of respondents were familiar with volunteerism, 71% were familiar with the third sector, and only 45% were familiar with civil society. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that while the terms “volunteerism” and the “third sector” are known and familiar to respondents, who are able to associate them with a particular dimension, and the more abstract term of “civil society” is not exactly clear to the Czech public.

Familiarity with NGOs was studied *inter alia* using the question of whether respondents had provided assistance to any NGO during the past year. Altogether, 35.4% of respondents gave a positive answer to this question.²² Approximately one-third of respondents (almost 32%) indicated the name of a specific NGO. The Catholic Charity, Red Cross, the League against Cancer, People in Need (People in Need o.p.s.) and Help the Children (a project under the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society) were among the most popular ones cited. With regard to the methods of supporting NGOs, the most common was financial assistance (almost 87%). More than 48% of respondents said that they had made a donation, and more than 28% of respondents had been involved in the work of an NGO. More than 5% of respondents stated that they had provided some other form of assistance, without specifying any further.

According to people’s evaluations, NGOs contribute to solving social issues in general (more than 54% of respondents indicated this) and particularly in their communities (more than 33% of respondents). More than 46% of respondents consider NGOs in the Czech Republic to be well organised and efficient in their respective fields of activity (this view was opposed by 21.7% of respondents and almost 32% said they did not know). However, approximately 27% of respondents said that NGOs serve more the interests of individuals. This answer was given mainly by respondents with a lower level of completed education (primary education, vocational education, and secondary education without a school-leaving certificate) and by older men (over 45 years of age) from South-Eastern or South-Western Bohemia or Central Moravia.

22 This a control question, because it is used not only to provide information about attitudes towards NGOs but also about their particular knowledge.

6. The Third Sector as the Space for the Articulation of Interests

NGOs are a means of mediating varying interests and are usually categorised in different ways. One categorisation method used, for example, by the Governmental Council for NNOs to map how NGOs are financed is the classification of NGOs into ten categories according to their sphere of activity: (1) the provision of social services, (2) the protection and promotion of health, including care for the disabled, (3) environmental protection, sustainable development, (4) cultural development, the conservation of cultural heritage, (5) preparation for EU accession, participation in EU programmes, (6) the development of sports and physical education, (7) the promotion of equal opportunities, (8) the rights of ethnic minorities, (9) care for marginalised and problematic groups of people, (10) consumer protection and the protection of relations between tenants and landlords.

At this point, I would like to present my own classification of the actors in civil society based on the following criteria: the NGOs' self-classification, funding, types of cooperation with other actors (Box 1). The frame of reference was established on the basis of a theoretical principle of accountability: (1) the vertical level of accountability, where it describes the relationship between unequal actors – in my research it was applied both to the relationships between supranational foundations, which distribute funds to individual countries, and Czech foundations, and also to the relationships between the state and NGOs; and (2) horizontal accountability, describing the relationship between NGOs.

Box 1. Classification of NGOs

Client type of NGOs

- Low administrative skills (insufficient skills to administer grants – often necessary to return parts of projects wrongly accounted for),
 - Personalised management (concentration of managerial and decision-making powers in one person)
 - The transfer of personalised ties into the relationship with other NGOs and the state (often on the verge of or beyond clientelism)
 - Insufficient or non-existent communication with donors and/or a target group
-

Modern type of NGOs

- Highly developed administrative skills (success in being awarded and administering grants, including EU grants)
 - Clear management structure (division of competences, functioning communication within the organisation, further training of employees)
 - Prepared for the new conditions ushered in after the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU (long-term cooperation with foreign organisations in the particular sphere of activity and adopting contemporary models of functioning)
 - Regular communication with donors
 - Flexible reactions to changing interests
-

On the vertical level, the relationship between foreign donors and Czech beneficiaries has been consolidated; successful models of cooperation and mutually beneficial relationships have been established. Czech beneficiaries implemented foreign donors' projects, and often long-term cooperation was established during the transfer of the modern model of organisational culture. Foreign funding of NGOs in the Czech Republic is diversified, but significant shifts are being seen in this area. The Czech Republic is considered to now be a consolidated democracy, and therefore, after the EU accession a host of foreign donors announced and executed a transfer of their activities further East, in particular to the countries of the former Soviet Union and South-Eastern Europe.²³ To see things through the temporary period until the Czech Republic and other countries began to manage to make successful use of new sources (e.g. Structural Funds and other EU-funded programmes),²⁴ in June 2002 a group of major American Foundations established the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe. The following are the members of the alliance: Atlantic Philanthropies, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Open Society Institute and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The alliance pledged to invest USD 75 million in 2000-2010 to promote the development of civil society in this region.

23 Some organisations began transferring their activities to these countries as early as the mid-1990s, reflecting the positive economic growth in Central Europe (and the accession of some countries to the OECD); however, a significant number of donors considered the EU accession to be a turning point.

24 Pre-accession EU programmes included Phare, Sapard and Ispa. The Structural Funds, for which the Czech Republic qualifies as an EU member state, include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG). The Cohesion Fund (CF) is somewhat different in nature.

It is generally expected that in the future NGOs in this region will primarily use financial resources from EU sources (e.g. Structural Funds). However, discussions with NGO representatives have made it clear that Czech NGOs do not yet have the administrative capacity to deal with the technically and financially complex, time-consuming preparation of “European projects”. At the same time, some of the organisations classified as Client-type NGOs (based on the above-mentioned criteria, i.e. the model of functioning, funding and cooperation with other actors) are not ready to cope with the administrative burden and management of Czech projects. We have also been able to witness many cases where the organisations are even unable to account for their existing grants correctly. A typical feature of the Client-type organisations (see Box 1) is the personalisation of management, i.e. the concentration of managerial and decision-making powers in the hands of one person, and this type transfers the same model of cooperation to other NGOs and the state.

In addition to the Client type, there is also the Modern-type NGO in the Czech non-profit sector. These are organisations that are aware of the changes related to the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU. These organisations have been involved in the active preparation for the change in circumstances and for long-term cooperation with foreign organisations in their sphere of activity, and they have adopted modern models of functioning. However, it must be stressed at this point that the classification of NGOs proposed above refers to *ideal types* from a sociological perspective; for example, these two groups form two endpoints on a continuous scale, between which NGOs oscillate, resembling more or less one or the other.

The classification of Client- or Modern-type NGOs also expresses itself in the field of communication with the state and other NGOs. One of the characteristics of the Client-type NGOs is a clan-cooperative type of coexistence, derived from a model of a tight, cohesive relationship with the state authorities (see Box 2).²⁵ A similar model is found for example in Hungary, where greater cohesion between the state and NGOs has recently been experienced (Stuart 2002: 80).

These close contacts between the non-profit sector and politics are seen especially in cases where one NGO gains a preferential standing over others. For example, a representative of several organisations stressed in an interview the importance of personal contacts with the highest representatives of the city council. In particular, he pointed out the role of these contacts in obtaining financial assistance both from the city and entrepreneurs who are aware of the close relationship. These NGOs thus promote the interests of individuals or a small group of people rather than the interests of people in general.

The relationship between NGOs and politics can of course also be positive. NGOs are often a natural recruitment base for future politicians, because they gather active citizens who are interested in public affairs. In this way a synergy of the efforts of civic and political representation is created. According to Olsen, active political participation is based on non-political participation, which facilitates the development of the following signs: a broadened sphere of interests, the establishment of various networking types, and increased awareness (Olsen 1997: 11).

25 One respondent gave his view of how successful cooperation with state authorities is, saying: “The Regional Office has no interest; cooperation with it is very limited. I cooperate only with the Regional Department of Environmental Protection where I know some people.” (INT-K1).

Box 2. Characteristics of different types of coexistence of NGOs

Clan-cooperative type of coexistence

- Relationship to the state: a tight cohesive relationship with the state authorities and their representatives, often on the verge of clientelism
 - Relationship to other NGOs: cooperation based on personal networking among their representatives aimed at promoting the interests of a small group of people
-

Competitive type of coexistence

- Relationship to the state: professional, within the framework of existing rules
 - Relationship to other NGOs: competition in the field of represented interests and for funding necessary for their implementation
-

On the other hand, Modern-type organisations show signs of a competitive type of coexistence; they are involved in competing with other NGOs in the field of represented interests and competing for funding obtained from donors (both Czech and foreign, large NGOs and the state – communities, regions and ministries) necessary for implementing their activities. Modern-type organisations communicate with their competitors, and cooperation is promoted with regard to sharing the spectrum of performed activities so that the society's articulated interests are fulfilled.

7. Barriers Confronting the Civil Sector in the Czech Republic

Consistent with the approach to NGOs as important actors in interest mediation this study also looks for answers to several questions: Can NGOs work effectively in mediating the interests of people and social groups? Are there any obstacles hindering communication between NGOs and the state? The answers to both these questions may be positive. NGOs frequently complement or even substitute the activities of the state. Their main advantages involve flexibility and speed in providing concrete solutions to particular social problems. Their services are often less expensive because they are not forced to make a profit from their activities that would subsequently be redistributed.

Communication between NGOs and the state has not been sufficiently developed in the Czech Republic. The corresponding partner is missing on the part of the state; for example, to fulfil the vertical links of the Partnership principle²⁶ ministries could involve NGOs more in their agendas, but only if there is a sectoral umbrella organisation (Gabal Analysis 2003). In the regions, the situation is similar. At this level it would be advantageous to establish an umbrella organisation or some other formalised and coordinated form of communication between NGOs, and even between the region and the non-profit sector. The first good example of such cooperation is the recent signing of a cooperation agreement between the Liberec Region and the Association of NGOs of the Liberec Region. In this respect, the approach of some regions (e.g. Zlín Region, Vysočina Region) that have established a post of NGO coordinator is very positive. The same approach is also found in larger cities.

Another shortcoming is the low level of association within the Czech non-profit sector itself. At the state level, repeated efforts have been aimed at establishing an inter-sectoral umbrella organisation, but they have yet to be successful. In this context, some authors point out that the non-profit sector is afraid of excessive centralisation and monopolisation (Vajdová 2004c). At present, it is estimated that there are 80 sectoral umbrella organisations. The most important is cooperation within individual sectors (e.g. the Network of Mothers Centres; the SKOK Association, which is active in the social and health care fields; the Association of Information Consulting Centres (APIS); the Association

²⁶ This is one of the main principles of the EU policy, which at the vertical level involves close cooperation between the European Commission and respective bodies at the national, regional and local levels, identified by each member state for all stages of the implementation of a measure, from its preparation to final implementation, and at the horizontal level involves partnership at national or regional levels, where the stress is put on the need for cooperation between state administration, local authorities and civic initiatives.

of Civil Consulting Centres; the Association of Consumer Organisations; the Czech Council of Humanitarian Organisations; the Donors Forum, etc.).

Generally, it may be concluded that, with regard to its short-term development, the non-profit sector in the Czech Republic has achieved a relatively good level of development, despite shortcomings, in creating the necessary legal environment. Based on the re-codification of the Civil Code (which is, however, expected to come into force only after 2006), it may be expected that the situation will further improve in this respect.

The most complex issue in the Czech non-profit sector is funding. The issue is not the amount of financial resources for projects, grants and subsidies from the state, community and lately also regional budgets, which are relatively sufficient, as are the financial resources for EU programmes, etc. The problem is the strong degree of centralisation of these funds compared with other countries in the region.

Another issue is how to obtain funds for the operation and administration of NGOs. Clearly, most of the donors want their financial means to be spent on public services through NGOs, but only a fraction of these donors are ready to contribute financial resources to the management and operation of the NGOs. In both cases it is a question of “connected vessels”. Probably, the biggest problem in this field is the ever-larger gap between the successful NGOs, which manage the majority of funds, and the other NGOs, which depend on the voluntary work of their members.

The financial issue is closely related to the question of corporate donorship. So far not many companies in the Czech Republic have shown themselves willing to support public non-profit-making objectives. This must have something to do with the corporate culture of Czech businesses, because foreign companies have supporting these activities for decades (a current example is the Siemens campaign in the press). They recognise that a successful company’s good reputation must also be based on charitable activities. Furthermore, corporate donorship is tied up in the somewhat philosophical question of corporate responsibility for the quality life in society. In this respect, the top examples are corporate foundations, e.g. the Eurotel Foundation, which is one of the cell phone operators in the country and specialises in the personality development of children and young people in the Czech Republic.

The accession of the Czech Republic to the EU brought about unprecedented changes in the Czech third sector that, in addition to advantages, also resulted in a negative impact on the non-profit sphere. EU accession put an end to all pre-accession EU programmes (e.g. Phare), which were used by many NGOs to obtain funding. In lieu of these, they may apply for financial resources from the Structural Funds and the *Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe* but it is far more difficult to obtain funding from these sources, because projects that are to be supported from, for example, the Structural Funds are in the order of millions of Euro, and NGOs are not able to come up with the necessary resources for co-financing.²⁷

²⁷ The Structural Funds provide EU finance for 50-70% of the funding of projects; the remaining amount must be provided by the implementing body.

EU accession also led the rise of another issue, i.e. the transfer of major foreign donors from the Czech Republic further to the East. Donors believe that the Czech Republic's admission to the EU signifies that the country has demonstrated a sufficient degree of democratisation, and that they are no longer needed in the country. This may have a negative impact on watchdog organisations, which are involved in independent democratic inspection, advocacy and monitoring activities, and in defending and protecting public interests, etc.²⁸ Their very nature as independent monitors means that these organisations may not and do not want to be financed from the state budget. Thus far their operations have mainly been supported by foreign donors, which, as mentioned above, are now transferring elsewhere. These organisations cannot use the financial resources of the Structural Funds because these funds are not intended for such activities. At present, the Open Society Institute in Brussels has supported the idea of creating a fund that would provide funding for these organisations in the new EU member states for a certain period of time.

The decentralisation of financial resources intended for NGO support from the centre to the regions is another important issue. Various ministries have provided subsidies to NGOs as part of their ministry programmes. At present, some of these activities are being transferred to the regions, which seems to be a reasonable move, because the regional authorities are much closer to the needs of their citizens. However, it is difficult to "make" the regions use these funds to provide support to NGOs, instead of using them for something else. The state cannot interfere in the autonomous powers of the regions.

The last major issue that the Czech non-profit sector is currently dealing with are the unrealistic "redemptive" expectations related to so-called tax assignation, which allow a tax payer to assign a certain percentage of his/her tax (usually 1%) to a particular organisation. This system has already been introduced, for example, in Slovakia (last year, tax assignation even increased to 2%), Poland, Hungary, etc. However, it has been in place for too short a time to be able to provide any well-grounded information about its impact on the non-profit sector (and the revenue of the state budget). However, international experience hints at the covert threats inherent in this solution – if NGOs get money from taxes they will get less from the state. Current experience also reveals that the use of media publicity by NGOs to attract these donations is expensive, and therefore not affordable for all NGOs. However, NGOs have made some attempts to introduce the practice of tax assignation in the Czech Republic.²⁹ Generally speaking, tax assignation is not a panacea; it is charity to the poor, and as such it is a means of teaching people in post-communist countries to regularly contribute to charity. Another possibility is regular individual donorship, which has been practiced by many NGOs (Children at Risk Fund, People in Need, etc.).

28 For example, Transparency International, Amnesty International, etc.

29 The opponents of this proposal generally argue that tax assignation violates the principle of taxes paid as a payment without a clearly indicated purpose. The question also arises of whether it is desirable to burden the already overly complicated Czech tax system with more exemptions.

Conclusion

The study aimed first at outlining the historical development of the term civil society, defining the space of civic participation, conceptualising civic participation in the Czech Republic, and determining the role of non-governmental organisations. It described and analysed the character of the non-governmental sector and defined the boundaries of the civic sector and civic participation in the Czech Republic.

The analysis examined the relationships between NGOs themselves and between NGOs and the state. With regard to the latter the study concluded that, although there has been considerable positive development, there has yet to develop an effective channel of communication between NGOs and the state, and with regard to the former relationships the research revealed an evident weakness in the relationships between NGOs and a limited degree of internal association within the Czech non-profit sector. Despite these shortcomings, it is possible to sum up that the non-profit sector in the Czech Republic has managed to reach a relatively good level of development.

Two major barriers to the sector's future development were indicated – the legal environment and funding. It appears that the issue of the legal environment will be overcome once the re-codified Civil Code is introduced, but the issue of funding is more complicated and involves the following aspects: the centralisation of (state) funds, the limited availability of funds to cover operational and administrative costs, underdeveloped corporate and private donorship, the departure of foreign donors after the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, and the high expectations placed on tax assignments.

How can we evaluate the development of the non-profit sector in the Czech Republic so far and the participation of the people? In this respect it is important to know what the Czech non-profit sector is being compared to; clearly, it may be described as less developed than in Western Europe, but relatively well-developed within Central Europe (Mansfeldová et. al. 2004, Mansfeldová and Rakušanová 2004). If we compare the situation in Central Europe with that in Western Europe it is possible to identify significant differences in the contributions that the non-profit sector makes to the functioning of the social state. NGOs in Central Europe still lack acceptance as a major partner, both in the provision of social services and in policy making.

A specific feature of the Central European non-profit sector is the relatively high degree of centralisation and bureaucracy and the sector's traditional demarcation against the state, which is personalised through political parties. In the post-communist countries this situation has been further reinforced by the experience of opposition and dissent movements (civic participation as a historical form of opposition to the state, cf. Note 3). Close links between the political sphere and the non-pro-

fit sector, as exemplified in the cases of Austria and the Czech Republic, are another feature of the non-profit sector in common among the countries of Central Europe. On the other hand, in Poland and Slovakia, the non-profit sector has closer relations to the private sector.

Marc Howard provides two primary explanations for the lower degree of development of the non-profit sector and civic participation in post-communist Europe. His pessimistic view is that the low degree of organised participation is an indicator of the shallow, procedural and formal character of democracy in the region. In the future, it may be expected that the system, which possesses strong potential for the development of anti-democratic attitudes and ideologies, will be unstable. A more optimistic variant says that the absence of a developed civil society will not hinder the development of democracy, and compared with the current trends in Western Europe it could be argued that post-communist countries skipped the phase of participative democracy. The low level of participation is not, however, an indicator of the instability of democracy; instead it shows how complex the relationship between the people and the state actually is (Howard 2003).

The post-communist citizen is somewhat passive and indifferent in his relationship to the non-profit sector, and this is a result of his negative memories of the experience of forced organisation and participation. However, post-communist society is not comprised of atomised individuals in a state of anomy, and there are people who still believe that social networks, subjectively regarded as a part of the private sphere, are important, and they may be considered an alternative to civil society. This tendency is significantly reinforced by factors such as the degree of secularisation and urbanisation in society, and it is supported by the findings of this research, which, comparing different regions of the Czech Republic, confirmed both the variability between Czech regions and the effect of the size of communities and regions on the participation of people in public life.

In the regions with a low level of participation³⁰ (Moravia-Silesia Region), people in difficult situations rely on the state and on their own activities; the traditional community (in the sense of *Gemeinschaft*) has mostly eroded and is increasingly engulfed by a passive outlook. This is confirmed not only by the data on the number of inhabitants per NGO in these regions but also by empirical analyses. In such regions the development of the non-profit sector has been slower. Nevertheless, it is still very important, because it provides an alternative to the growing amount of passivity.

On the other hand, in the regions with a more developed network of NGOs (South Moravia Region) – in smaller communities supplemented by social networks – and in the more individualistic Prague, where, apart from the non-profit sector, a more distinctive role is played by an individual's own activities and, according to respondents, people tend to rely least on the state. In these environments NGOs are a natural supplement to traditional relations. Social networks continue to play a major role and the church and religious not-for-profit associations are important actors in the non-profit sector. In this respect the South Bohemia Region seems to represent a sort of average, as people rely both on the state and on social networks.

A high degree of dependence on social networks indicates that there is a strict dividing line between the private and the public spheres, which may be identified as a legacy of the

³⁰ The degree of participation was measured by means of a complex indicator, which also incorporated the number of inhabitants per individual type of NGO, electoral turn-out at the local and state levels, etc.

grey zone. Networks of friends are considered to be a part of the private sphere and are resistant to public mobilisation. According to some authors, however, this activity is important for the legitimacy of democracy, which also strengthens public confidence in institutions (Sztompka 1999, Dekker, Uslaner 2001) and has the potential to increase participation in the public sphere (Habermas 2003).

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Summary

The main objective of the text is to evaluate the development of civil society, non-profit sector and civic participation achieved so far in the Czech Republic. First of all, the text delineates the space for civic participation, provides a historical definition of the term *civil society*, and defines and conceptualizes civic participation in the Czech Republic based on this definition. Subsequently, based on the definition of the role of NGOs, the description and analysis of the non-profit sector, the text tries to define the barriers of the civil sector and civic participation in the Czech Republic within the context of Central Europe.

We may say that the non-profit sector in Central Europe bear some common characteristics: a relatively high degree of centralization and bureaucracy and its traditional demarcation against the state, frequently personalized through political parties. This situation is further strengthened in post-communist countries by experience related to opposition and dissent movements (civic participation as a historical form of the opposition against the state). Close links between the political sphere and non-profit sector, as is the case of Austria and the Czech Republic, are another common denominator of the non-profit sector in Central Europe. On the other hand, in Poland and Slovakia, the non-profit sector has tighter relations to the private sector.

In his relation to the non-profit sector, the post-communist citizen is rather passive and indifferent, which is the result of negative memories of forced organization and participation. However, the post-communist society does not represent a set of atomized individuals submitted to the state of anomy, rather, some people still believe that social networks, subjectively regarded as a part of the private sphere, are important and thus they may be considered as an alternative to the civil society. This trend is significantly strengthened by factors such as secularization and urbanization degree and has been supported by the findings of our research, which, comparing different regions of the Czech Republic, confirmed both the variability of individual Czech regions and the effect of the size of communities and regions on participation of people in the public life.

In the regions with a low degree of participation (Moravian-Silesian Region), people in difficult situations rely on the state and on their own activities – the traditional community (in the sense of *Gemeinschaft*) has mostly eroded and is increasingly taken over by a passive approach. This is confirmed not only by the data about the number of inhabitants per one NGO in these regions but also by empirical analyses. In such a region, the non-profit sector has a slower development; nevertheless it is still very important because it provides an alternative to ever-increasing passivity.

On the other hand, in the regions with a more developed network of NGOs (South Moravian Region) – in smaller communities supplemented by social networks – and in more individualized Prague where, apart from the non-profit sector, a more distinctive role is played by an individual's own

activity, people tend to rely on the state the least according to the respondents. In these settings, NGOs become a natural supplementation of traditional relations. Social networks continue to play a major role and the church and religious not-for-profit associations are important actors in the non-profit sector. The South Bohemian Region seems to be average in this respect – people rely both on the state and social networks.

A high degree of dependence on social networks indicate that there is a strict division line between the private and the public spheres, and may be specified as a grey zone heritage. The networks of friends are considered to be a part of the private sphere and are resistant to public mobilization. According to some authors, however, this activity is important for the legitimacy of democracy which also strengthens confidence in institutions and has a potential to increase participation in the public sphere.

Shrnutí

Hlavním záměrem textu je zhodnocení dosavadního vývoje občanské společnosti, neziskového sektoru a občanské participace v České republice. Text nejprve definuje prostor občanské participace, historicky vymezuje pojem občanská společnost, a na jeho základě definuje a konceptualizuje občanskou participaci v České republice. Následně pak na základě vymezení role neziskových organizací, deskripce a analýzy charakteru neziskového sektoru se příspěvek snaží definovat bariéry občanského sektoru a občanské participace v České republice v kontextu střední Evropy.

Můžeme konstatovat, shodné rysy neziskového sektoru ve střední Evropě – řadíme sem poměrně vysoký stupeň centralizace a byrokratizace neziskového sektoru a tradiční vymezování se vůči státu, mnohdy personalizovanému politickými stranami. To je v postkomunistických zemích ještě posíleno zkušenostmi z opozičních a disidentských hnutí (občanská participace jako historická forma opozice proti státu). Dalším společným jmenovatelem neziskového sektoru ve střední Evropě je propojenost politické sféry a neziskového sektoru, jak je tomu především v Rakousku a České republice. V Polsku a na Slovensku je naopak neziskový sektor blíže ke sféře soukromé.

Postkomunistický občan je ve vztahu k neziskovému sektoru spíše organizačně pasivní a lhostejný – čelíme negativní vzpomínce nucené organizovanosti a participace. Postkomunistická společnost však nepředstavuje množinu atomizovaných individuí vystavených stavu anomie, naopak, část občanů stále považuje za významné sociální sítě, které jsou subjektivně vnímány jako součást soukromé sféry, a můžeme je považovat za alternativu občanské společnosti. Tento trend je výrazně posilován faktory jako je míra sekularizace a urbanizace a potvrzují ho i zjištění našeho výzkumu, který v rámci komparace regionů v ČR potvrdil jak odlišnost jednotlivých regionů v České republice, tak vliv velikosti sídla a regionu na participaci občanů ve veřejném životě.

V regionech s nízkou mírou participace (Moravskoslezský kraj) se občané v obtížných životních situacích spoléhají na stát a vlastní aktivitu – tradiční společenství (ve smyslu *Gemeinschaft*) zde převážně erodovala a na jejich místo nastupuje ve zvýšené míře pasivita. To potvrzují nejen údaje o počtu obyvatel připadajících na neziskovou organizaci v těchto krajích, ale také empirické analýzy. V takovém regionu se neziskový sektor rozvíjí pomaleji, přesto je však velmi důležitý, protože nabízí alternativu narůstající pasivitě.

Naopak nejméně se na stát spoléhají občané v regionech s rozvinutou sítí neziskových organizací (Jihomoravský kraj) – v menších sídlech doplněné o sociální sítě – a v individualizovanější Praze, kde vedle neziskového sektoru hraje podle respondentů větší roli vlastní aktivita jednotlivce. Neziskové organizace se tu stávají přirozeným doplněním tradičních vztahů. I nadále zde hrají velkou roli sociální sítě a důležitým aktérem v neziskovém sektoru je církev a církevní organizace neziskového

charakteru. Jihočeský kraj se v tomto ohledu jeví jako průměrný – občané zde spoléhají jak na stát, tak na sociální síť.

Vysoká míra, s jakou občané spoléhají na sociální síť, poukazuje na silné rozdělení mezi soukromou a veřejnou sférou a můžeme ho označit za dědictví šedé zóny. Síť přátel a známých jsou vnímány jakou součástí soukromé sféry a jsou rezistentní vůči veřejné mobilizaci. Podle některých autorů je však i tato aktivita důležitá pro legitimitu demokracie – dochází k budování interpersonální důvěry, která posiluje i důvěru institucionální a má potenciál ke zvýšení účasti ve veřejné sféře.

Zusammenfassung

Das Hauptziel des Textes ist die Bewertung der bisherigen Entwicklung der Zivilgesellschaft, des gemeinnützigen Sektors und der bürgerlichen Partizipation in Tschechien. Der Text definiert zuerst den Raum der bürgerlichen Partizipation, grenzt den Begriff „Zivilgesellschaft“ historisch ab und konzeptualisiert und definiert die bürgerliche Partizipation in Tschechien auf seiner Grundlage. Anschließend versucht dieser Beitrag, auf Grundlage der Definition der Rolle gemeinnütziger Organisationen sowie der Beschreibung und Analyse des Charakters des gemeinnützigen Sektors Hindernisse für den bürgerlichen Sektor und die bürgerliche Partizipation in Tschechien im Kontext Mitteleuropas zu definieren.

Wir können übereinstimmende Merkmale des gemeinnützigen Sektors in Mitteleuropa feststellen – hierzu gehören die relativ hohe Stufe an Zentralisierung und Bürokratisierung des gemeinnützigen Sektors und die traditionelle Abgrenzung gegenüber dem Staat, der oft durch politische Parteien personalisiert wird. Dies wird in den postkommunistischen Ländern noch durch die Erfahrungen aus der Oppositions- und Dissidentenbewegung verstärkt (bürgerliche Partizipation als historische Form der Opposition gegen den Staat). Ein weiterer gemeinsamer Nenner des gemeinnützigen Sektors in Mitteleuropa ist die Vernetzung zwischen der politischen Sphäre und dem gemeinnützigen Sektor, die es vor allem in Österreich und in Tschechien gibt. In Polen und in der Slowakei ist im Gegenteil dazu der gemeinnützige Sektor näher an der Privatsphäre angesiedelt.

Der postkommunistische Bürger ist in der Beziehung zum gemeinnützigen Sektor eher organisatorisch passiv und gleichgültig – man sieht sich hier der negativen Erinnerung an Zwangsorganisationen und -teilnahme gegenüber. Die postkommunistische Gesellschaft stellt jedoch keine Menge atomisierter Individuen im Zustand der Anomie dar, sondern im Gegenteil, ein Teil der Bürger hält soziale Netzwerke, die subjektiv als Teil der Privatsphäre wahrgenommen werden und die man als eine Alternative zur Zivilgesellschaft sehen kann, immer noch für bedeutend. Dieser Trend wird stark durch Faktoren wie das Maß der Säkularisierung und Urbanisierung verstärkt und auch durch die Ergebnisse unserer Untersuchung bestätigt, die im Rahmen des Regionenvergleichs in Tschechien sowohl die Unterschiede der einzelnen Regionen in Tschechien als auch den Einfluss der Größe des Wohnortes und der Region an der Teilnahme der Bürger am öffentlichen Leben bestätigen.

In Regionen mit niedriger Partizipation (Region Mährisch-Schlesien) verlassen sich die Bürger in schweren Lebenslagen auf den Staat und eigene Aktivitäten – die traditionelle Gemeinschaft ist hier vorwiegend erodiert und wurde von einem erhöhten Maß an Passivität ersetzt. Das bestätigen nicht nur die Angaben über die Anzahl der Bewohner pro gemeinnütziger Organisation in diesen Regionen, sondern auch empirische Analysen. In einer solchen Region entwickelt sich der gemeinnützige Sektor langsamer, ist allerdings dennoch sehr wichtig, da er eine Alternative zur anwachsenden Passivität bietet.

Im Gegenteil dazu verlassen sich die Bewohner von Regionen mit einem entwickelten Netzwerk gemeinnütziger Organisationen (Südböhmische Region) – das in kleineren Ansiedlungen durch soziale Netzwerke ergänzt wird – und im individualisierteren Prag, in dem neben dem gemeinnützigen Sektor den Befragten zufolge die eigene Aktivität des Individuums eine größere Rolle spielt, am wenigsten auf den Staat. Die gemeinnützigen Organisationen werden hier zu einer natürlichen Ergänzung der traditionellen Beziehungen. Auch weiterhin spielen hier soziale Netzwerke eine große Rolle, und der wichtigste Akteur im gemeinnützigen Sektor sind die Kirche und Kirchenorganisationen mit gemeinnützigem Charakter. Die südböhmische Region erscheint diesbezüglich durchschnittlich – die Bürger verlassen sich hier sowohl auf den Staat als auch auf soziale Netzwerke.

Das hohe Maß, mit dem sich die Bürger auf soziale Netzwerke verlassen, verweist auf eine starke Trennung zwischen privater und öffentlicher Sphäre und kann als Erbe der kommunistischen Schattenwirtschaft angesehen werden. Die Netzwerke von Freunden und Bekannten werden als Teil der Privatsphäre wahrgenommen und sind gegenüber der öffentlichen Mobilisierung resistent. Einigen Autoren zufolge ist jedoch auch diese Aktivität für die Legitimität der Demokratie wichtig – es kommt zu einem Aufbau zwischenmenschlichen Vertrauens, das auch das institutionelle Vertrauen stärkt und das Potential besitzt, die Teilnahme an der öffentlichen Sphäre zu erhöhen.

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Legislatures and Representation in Central and Eastern Europe

Volume 41, Number 3, June 2005

The Sociology of Politics Department at the Institute of Sociology AS CR has been studying and analysing parliaments in general and the Czech parliament in particular since the start of the 1990s. In 2000–2004 the department's researchers set up the *Documentary Centre for Research on Central European Parliaments – Parliamentary DICe* (based on a research project supported by grant no. S7028003 from the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic), the objective of which was to create an information database on the parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe. Towards the conclusion of the project the research team reached the opinion that it was time to summarise and evaluate the fifteen years of research on parliaments conducted at the Institute of Sociology and other academic institutions in CEE countries, and to establish research priorities for the future in the context of EU accession and the changes in the parliamentary agenda. The outcome of this endeavour is this thematic issue on legislatures and representation in Central and Eastern Europe.

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Central European Parliaments: First Decade of Democratic Experience and the Future Prospective

Zdenka Mansfeldová, David M. Olson, Petra Rakušanová (eds.)

The contributions included in this edited volume are based on contributions presented at the international workshop “Central European Parliaments: First Decade of Democratic Experience and the Future Prospective” held in Prague 6 – 8 November 2003 and a concluding paper by D. M. Olson, summarising the ideas and results of the round table titled Possibilities of Cooperation and Co-ordination of Comparative Research.

The main objective of the workshop was to gather scholars engaged in field research, and to go beyond the isolated research studies on national parliaments and their actors that dominated the past decade of research by launching international co-operative investigations in the next decade and to assess priorities in parliamentary research for the forthcoming years. Based on the current trends in the Czech Parliament and on existing research, attendariaments: First Decade of Democratic Experience and the Future Prospective. Prague: Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

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