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Civic Dis-Embeddedness? Explaining Twenty-Five Years of Weak Civil Society in Slovenia

Abstract: Slovenia is often touted as one of the success stories of democratization and market liberalization in post-communist Europe. However, its civil society remains one of the least developed, deviating from the relationship hypothesized by scholars and advocates of democracy. In order to evaluate the sluggish development of Slovenian civil society this article relies on a content analysis of over fifty elite interviews. The findings first uncover perceptions about civil society by the broader public as unnecessary and by the state as its weaker partner. Second, the uneasy financial situation of civil society organizations and their poor management has made the civil sector overly competitive and internally divided. The interviews also demonstrate that 25 years after regime change, civil society in general, and its advocacy sector in particular, point to the possibility of civic dis-embeddedness of the society.

Key words: civil society, embeddedness, Slovenia, democratization, advocacy

Povzetek: **Družbena neumeščenost? Petindvajset let šibke civilne družbe v Sloveniji**

Slovenijo pogosto hvalijo kot uspešno pokomunistično zgodbo o demokratizaciji in reformi trga. Klub temu pa slovenska civilna družba ostaja ena od najmanj razvitih in tako odstopa od razmerja, ki ga teoretizirajo strokovnjaki in zagovorniki demokracije. Ta članek pri oceni počasnega razvoja slovenske civilne družbe izhaja iz vsebinske analize več kakor 50 intervjujev z elitami. Analiza najprej odkrije mnenje širšega prebivalstva o civilni družbi kot nepotrebni družbi, država pa o njej govori kot o svojem šibkejšem partnerju. Drugič, nelahko finančno stanje organizacij civilne družbe in njihovo pomanjkljivo upravljanje sta naredili civilni sektor pretirano tekmovalen in notranje razdeljen. Intervjuji tudi pokažejo, da petindvajset let po spremembi političnega režima civilna družba na splošno, njen zagovorniški del pa bolj specifično kažeta na možnost civilne neumeščenosti same družbe.

Ključne besede: civilna družba, umeščenje, Slovenija, demokratizacija, zagovorništvo

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1. Introduction

Slovenia is often touted as one of the success stories of democratization and market liberalization in post-communist Europe. However, its civil society remains one of the least developed, deviating from the relationship hypothesized by scholars and advocates of democracy, who assign civil society the centrality of democratizing processes. In theory, civil society allows citizens to make informed decisions within a political community of equals. Democratization supposedly reflects a developed civil society (Ekiert and Kubik 2014, 55), while civil society reinforces democratization in a positive feedback loop. To confirm this double relationship, researchers have pointed to examples from post-communist Europe (Beichelt et al. 2014; Moses 2015). However, the case of Slovenia does not square with this hypothesis.

Slovenia democratized quickly in comparison to other post-communist states. It had a consequential civil society around the time of regime transition. In the years during and after the transition to democracy, the country often reached highest levels of gross domestic product *per capita* (GDPPC) and of political development in the region (FH 2012a; FH 2012b). However, twenty-five years after the regime change, Slovenian civil society is one of the least developed in the region. According to the USAID data and its CSO sustainability index, Slovenia has frequently scored last among the ten countries that joined the EU in 2004. In 2008, Slovenia achieved a lower score on the NGO sustainability index than Bulgaria and Romania as well as the countries of the Western Balkans such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Macedonia (USAID 2014).

It is true that the number of its civil society organizations (hereafter CSOs) has been growing. Institutional membership has increased in the country since regime change. Some CSOs are visible, active and successful in their mission. However, Slovenia fares worse than several other countries. Certain dimensions of civil society, such as its embeddedness in the broader society and its advocacy sector, have been particularly weak. Slovenia has implemented crucial democratic reforms in the past twenty-five years but its civil society has improved modestly at best.

While civil society is often seen as weak in East-Central European (Howard 2003; Wallace et al. 2012), the exceptional weakness of Slovenian post-communist civil society leads to a number of questions. What factors explain the comparably outstanding weakness? And, what does the Slovenian case tell us about the relationship between democracy and civil society? As civil society has the power to develop the »civic skills« supportive of a democratic system, its weakness may hamper democratic developments and decrease the institutional representation and popular »leverage« on political process.

This study addresses the sluggish development of Slovenian civil society in its transition to democracy. It explores the evolution of key aspects of CSOs' functioning and confronts it with the original expectations of the anti-communist dissent movement. It then presents data on different civil society sectors, using comprehensive data analysis in order to discuss both the role of civil society in major decision-making processes and the main attitudes of the citizenry towards CSOs.

A multi-level analysis of the embeddedness of advocacy organizations ensues, followed by general oversights and policy recommendations.[2] Since CSOs can be seen as the main bearers of a society's advocacy function, this study focuses in particular on the degree to which structures and actions of advocacy CSOs are able to reflect on societal problems and to be integrated into the society.

2. Concepts, Methods and Data Used

In order to address and examine Slovenia's civil society, the key concepts and research methods are defined first: »embeddedness,« »civil society« and »advocacy«. Embeddedness of CSOs can be defined as: (1) being known, locally and/or nationwide; (2) involving people in passive ways, including donations, signing petitions, etc.; and (3) including people in the CSOs activities, such as campaigns or strategic planning. The embeddedness of a CSO depends on three parameters: the democratic and participatory culture of the environment, the advocacy area of organizational functioning, and management. Upon fulfilling these three parameters, an organization can be declared embedded.[3]

The second key concept is civil society. There exists little consensus on the definition of this term, partly due to the interchangeable use of concepts, such as civil sector, NGO sector, and nonprofit sector. Most agree that civil society represents the arena of voluntary, unforced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values (Merkel and Lauth 1998, 7). It is an arena outside the family, the state and the market created by public oriented actions, organizations and institutions to advance shared interests.[4] This broad understanding includes three

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[2] The scope of this research is restricted into collectively organized advocacy efforts by exploring the level and structure of the advocacy function of civil society and assessing the main obstacles to its proper fulfillment. The reasons for this focus follow the general line of our inquiry. After a series of systemic political changes and the fall of the authoritarian regimes, scholars, policy makers and foreign aid institutions have often considered the advocacy approach of civil society as the key function to stabilize new democracies (Carothers and Barndt 1999; Quigley 1997). Since the collapse of communism, CSOs have been increasing in number. Many of them have been created by Western organizations and have dependent upon Western funds (Howard 2002). Some even observe »an organizational revolution« in Central--Eastern European civil society touched off by communism's fall combined with generous foreign aid (Ekiert and Kubik 2014). With time passing by and reforms being jump-started, donors supposed that civil society can stand and survive without them. Most of support programs founded from abroad were ended and financing ceased to operate. The donors believed that CSOs, and especially advocacy groups, became widely accepted and socially embedded in the region. They also estimated (and over-estimated that fact) that civil society actors became economically self-sustainable (McMahon 2001; Aksartova 2006).

[3] Embeddedness is a concept originally applied to measure the extent to which economic actors are enmeshed in a social network. For example, Granovetter 1985 pointed to ways in which companies do not operate only in the market but are part of a particular social network. Putnam 2000 applied the concept of embeddedness to individuals. I apply the concept of embeddedness to CSOs.

[4] Following Larry Diamond, I define civil society as »the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules ... it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, preferences, and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on the state, to improve the structure and functioning of the state, and to hold state officials accountable.« (Diamond 1999, 221)

conceptual layers. The first is enduring organized actors and the impact of organized interests (CSOs, local community organizations as well as charity, voluntary and other organizations). Second, civil society may also consist of temporary and loosely organized networks/activities (e.g., campaigns, events, social actions). Third, civil society is present on the level of individual engagements, expressed in active citizenship, volunteering and participation.

The third concept is advocacy, split into two functions: »policy advocacy« and »citizens' advocacy.« Policy advocacy encompasses those activities that focus on changing policies or securing collective goods, which are directly addressed to »any institutional elite« (Jenkins 1987, 279). Citizens' advocacy refers to activities that focus on changing policies or securing collective goods, which are addressed to the general public and aim at increasing public awareness about certain issues (e.g., legislative activities, political campaign activities, litigation, etc.). Boycotts and demonstrations can be assigned to both sub-functions.

The methodology of this paper relies on a nested approach, using quantitative and qualitative research techniques (Lieberman 2010). Quantitatively, developments in civil society are measured by the participation in organizations through 800 surveys conducted via telephone interviews, focused groups and elite interviews. The intent of the survey is to find which advocacy areas citizens are most or least involved in. For example, if citizens are »somehow« involved, they are asked how and why are they involved – in order to identify motives, channels and mechanisms of their involvement. These findings are then compared to the interviews with CSOs representatives. The telephone survey helps to map the advocacy issues and sectors people support, or take part in. Based on these findings the extent to which advocacy areas are embedded becomes more apparent. The research section of the project includes four focus groups and 30 interviews. The aim of the qualitative approach is to obtain a picture of embeddedness of advocacy organizations and their campaigns from the side of the collective actors (NGOs and formally non-organized groups) to explore their attitudes towards embeddedness. In order to understand Slovenia's civil society, we must briefly examine its development since 1900.

3. Historical Background

Before 1991. The beginning of the 20th century witnessed an emerging system of co-operative societies. These societies often turned into mass social movements to defend farmers, workers and craftsmen against threats of rising capitalist exploitation. With these »defense« associations came expert and professional associations (Črnak-Meglič 2000, 132, 158) that set the stage for the decades to come. By the interwar period, such developments led to an extensive network of pluralist associations, co-operatives, Church and charity organizations, trade unions, and professional organizations (Bahovec 2010).

The post-WWII communist regime broke with the tradition of a relatively developed pre-war third sector. The functions of the civil sphere were, by and large,

taken over by the public sector. The work of religious organizations was prohibited or restricted to liturgy, while their property and charity works were nationalised (Hvalič et al. 2002). As in other communist countries, associational life under state socialism was politicized, bureaucratized, centralized and comprehensive (Ekiert and Kubik 2014, 47).

The new Constitution and new Societies Act of 1974 marked the beginning of a new era. Civil society groups appeared in areas where specific services were not provided by the state. While these social movements came from the top-down, they increased exponentially, particularly between 1975 and 1985. This helped Slovenia experience democratic changes prior to the fall of the communist regime and the breakup of Yugoslavia. Moreover, an emerging civil society enabled a change in the attitude of the state towards the third sector (Črnak-Meglič 2000, 137).

The peak of civil society activism occurred with the democratization processes from 1987 to 1990. The aspirations of a flourishing democracy and civil society were operationalized as dreams of independence. However, democratization ended up galvanizing statehood more than civil society. The process of regime change and the build-up of civil society depended largely on local factors (Cepin et al. 2014, 31):

- Slovenia had never been an autonomous and independent state;
- The *Kulturkampf* (cultural and civil war accompanied with mass killings) during and immediately after WWII, resulted in the supremacy of the Communist Party;
- The relative well-being and apparent freedom from the 1970s onwards;
- The challenge of the rising Serb nationalism at the end of the 1980s.

The Transitional Period. Despite the opportune political developments and early democratization, regime change did not bring about massive growth in the third sector. The exception are areas such as sports, culture, and social welfare (Hvalič et al. 2002). The rise CSOs in the 1970s and 1980s was considerably greater in Slovenia than in other post-Yugoslav countries. Against expectations, however, their increase in the early 1990s was not much greater than the one in the mid--1970s. The following factors may explain and summarize why Slovenia's CSO were weaker and less embedded in the immediate post-1991 than in other post-communist countries (Cepin et al. 2014, 32):

- International sanctions against different Yugoslav markets during Balkan wars resulted in an economic crisis. Slovenia felt its consequences through 1995. The government was more concerned with salvaging the economy than promoting civil society;
- Due to the relative ease transition, there was less foreign aid given to Slovenia than to other ex-Yugoslav countries;
- Dissident movements during the transition process were relatively weak, and the politics divided mostly into reform and anti-reform-oriented groups (Miheljak and Toš 2005);

- In the 1980s, civil society actors worked mainly on the change of the political system and not on empowering the individual and the society to participate in the democratic system;

- After 1991, the basic responsibility for the provision of social welfare was not transferred from the state to the individual, which could have reduced the overwhelming presence of the public sector and increase the significance of civil society.

4. Post-Transition Years

Despite an increase in organized membership and NGOs over the last 25 years, Slovenian civil society has remained weak in comparison with other post-communist countries. The following numerical data provide further light on the weakness of Slovenia's CSOs.

Civil Society in Numbers. The 1974 legislative provision introduced liberalization in terms of rights to associate. With democratization and independence, the number of associations in particular have continued to rise (Cepin et al. 2014, 35). CSOs other than »associations« are less frequent. The most numerous among those are »trade unions« but their growth stopped in early 2000s. The growth rate of »institutes« has been steady, particularly from 1998 to 2006. »Foundations« also experienced some but limited growth.

Member vs. Non-Member-Based Organizations. Organizations not based on membership have grown faster than member-based organizations, while the former are less numerous. For example, the association growth index from 1995 to 2007 reached 141 %, and the trade union growth index from 1998 to 2006 reached 131 %. Non-member based CSOs such as private institutions grew from 1998 to 2006 by 314 % and institutes by 418 %.

Financial Framework. The share of the GDP allocated to NGOs is significantly lower in Slovenia than in several other countries. In 2008, this share (for Associations, Private Institutes and Foundations together) equalled 1.99 % of GDP (Črnak-Meglič 2009). Unlike associations, the average income of other non-profit organizations has increased by 14 % from 2007 to 2008. Moreover, there are important income differences between associations and institutes. At that time, the average income for a private institute equalled 145,000 EUR, while the average income for associations equalled 21,000 EUR. As private institutes grow in strength, they shift the balance from membership organizations to non-membership-based organizations. Also, many institutes function as businesses (see above) and for their own interests.
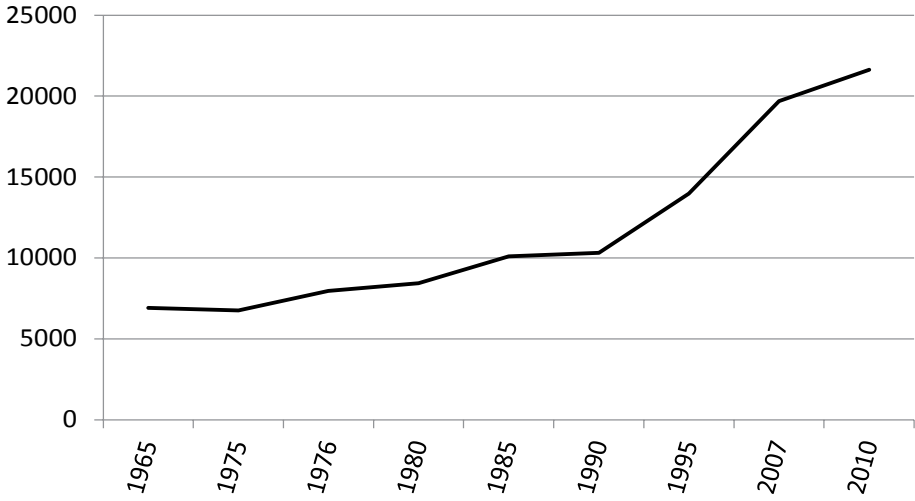
Chart 1: *Registered associations in Slovenia (AJPES 2010; Cepin et al. 2014; Kolarič et al. 2002).*
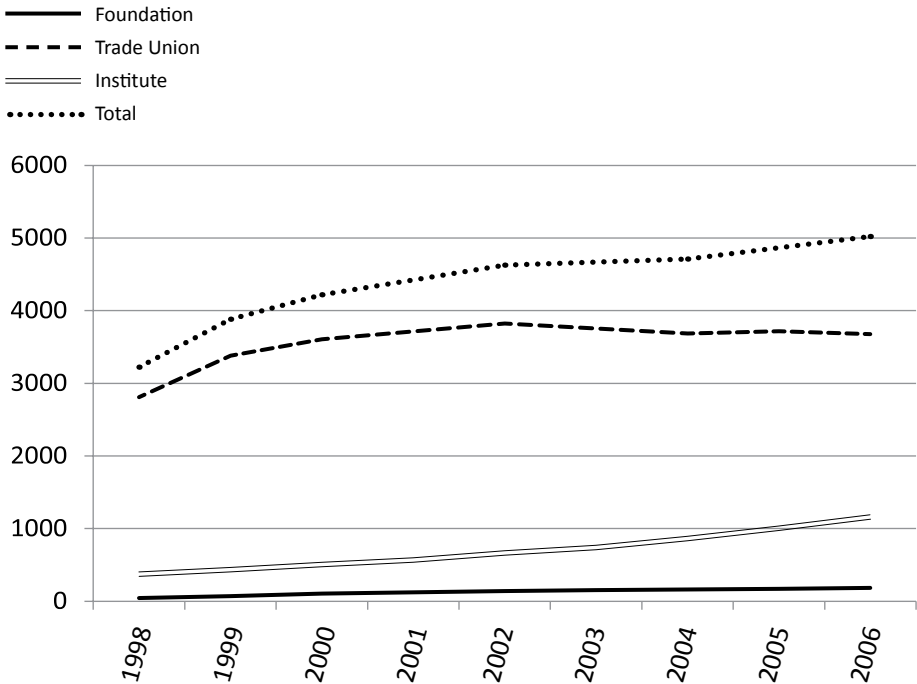

Chart 2: *Number of institutions, trade unions and institutes in Slovenia – SURS 2009 (Cepin et al. 2014).*

	1996	2004	2007
Revenue from services provided (in %)	43,8	44	53
Public grants (in %)	27,3	27	27,34
Private donations (in %)	28,8	29	13,64

Table 1: *Income type structure of NGOs (Kolarič et al. 2002, 124; Črnak-Meglič 2008, 27; AJPES 2010).*

Although NGOs rely on public funds, they claim to be independent from the government and political life. Yet, in order to get public grants, NGOs apply for numerous proposals and comply with the directives related to a proposal. For that reason, they often cannot answer the needs of their beneficiaries (a context not unknown in the post-communist world). Even if they fulfil the mission of a grant proposal, they cannot participate in decision-making processes (Divjak 2006). Since many NGOs face significant financial challenges, a question remains as to how effective NGOs can be in decision-making if much of their energy is spent in grant seeking. These financial challenges often stem from the specificity of Slovenia's tax legislation. For instance, any revenue gained through a bidding process against competitors is taxable income.

Many organizations report problems of maintaining the number of employees needed for proper functioning. In comparison with other EU countries, Slovenia has one of the smallest relative numbers of employees in the sector of civil society. These results in strong competition for public resources and the priorities of grant-givers often completely define the CSOs' advocacy agenda.

Social Participation of Citizens. According to Table 2, about 48 % of the interviewees belonged to a civil society organization and about 26 % were actively involved in civil society. The most popular civil society organizations are related to sports and recreation, trade unions and education, arts, music or cultural activities. There is a significant difference in ratios between active and non-active membership according to different groups: 50 % of the members of sports and recreation organizations are active members, and only 25 % of the members of trade unions are active. The highest ratio of active membership per all members is in the category of the service to the elderly, poor, and disabled (85 %) and the category of environmental protection and animal rights (78 %). The lowest ratio of active membership is found in trade unions (25 %) and political parties or groups (47 %).

	You belong to …? (in %)	Work unpaid for …? (in %)
Social welfare services for elderly, handicapped, etc.	7.7	5.9
Religious or church organisations	9.5	5.4
Education, arts, music or cultural activities	12.5	7.6
Trade unions	13.4	3.4
Political parties or groups	3.9	1.9

Community action: poverty, employment, housing, equality	2.0	1.7
Third world development or human rights	1.9	1.2
Conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights	5.4	4.2
Professional association	7.2	4.0
Youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs etc.)	5.6	4.2
Sports or recreation	20.3	10.2
Women groups	4.0	2.4
Peace movement	1.1	0.7
None	51.6	74.4

Table 2: *Membership and active membership in CSOs in Slovenia (European Values Study, 2008).*

Civil participation goes beyond organized membership and volunteerism. The 2005 Civil Society Survey found that 13.7 % of Slovenians had written a letter to the editor, 35.5 % had signed a petition and 13.4 % had been involved in protests or political demonstrations. 46 % of the respondents have used at least one of the forms just mentioned. Participation in charitable movements and organizations shows the following picture: 66 % of respondents donated money, food, or other goods for charitable purposes in the 12 months preceding the survey. Most of the donors are women, coming from urban areas. The income level does not seem to influence charity contributions.

Interview work provides additional data to numerical assessments. In terms of perceptions of civil society, the citizens in general do not understand the concept of civil society and are often not familiar with CSO activities. What is more, citizens do not use the available opportunities provided by different NGOs equally. Many citizens are familiar with sports clubs, providing sport activities, recreation, and leisure. For example, a particular place is granted to the *Planinska zveza Slovenije* (Mountain League of Slovenia). In addition to its sporting dimension, citizens recognize in this association a national and emotional component. However, when asking for such services, the interviewees usually do not distinguish between the sources of a service (state, civil society, market). What matters is that such a service is available, which diminishes the ability of the government to capitalize on the services.[5]

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5 The government's inability to get involved also demonstrated by Slovenia's recent decision not to join the Open Government Partnership. Publically supporting a transparent government may be useful for a strong civil society. Slovenia is the only country of the former Yugoslavia to not join or seek active membership. One of the main goals of the Open Government Partnership is to get governments to work with CSO's to develop a national action plan. As this cooperation between governments and CSO's is not present in Slovenia, the country's non-membership may show how the Slovenian government has little willingness and ambition to have CSO's have a more prominent role within society. Moreover, the homogeneous socio-economic situation may explain why Slovenians are content with the status quo. The government provides citizens with the many services that could have been provided by CSOs in other countries. The Gini coefficient (of inequality) in Slovenia is substantially lower than Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since the citizens are equal in terms of socio-economic status it may be hard for somebody to complain about their standing compared to someone else.

Among the least recognized functions of civil society is the advocacy dimension. Instead of CSOs, the citizens expect the state to solve their personal as well as political and economic problems, even if the state claims little trust. Half of the interviewees not active in CSOs think that social problems should be solved by »other agents« not the CSO's advocacy services. On the trust chart, the latter are placed after family, friends, police, colleagues, and oneself. This could be due to the fact that most citizens do not form their viewpoints on CSOs by direct contact but mainly through mass media and second hand information. CSOs and successful advocacy stories do not appear in the media often. In fact, the CSOs are too small to be able to visibly influence the democratic and participatory culture. Moreover, most of the youth do not know much about topics, such as social or active participation and responsible citizenship. According to the opinion of the participants in focus groups, the work of, and introduction to, social participation is not done by the family or the formal educational system. A very small number of youth is embedded in the informal forms of education by active citizenship.

5. Advocacy Sector

While associational life in general was limited but growing since 1974, its advocacy function could not be developed under communism. Advocacy NGOs were forbidden. Among the changes in 1991, the most important innovation was a new social program. Its starting point was the re-orientation of the welfare state into a corporatist type. The basic responsibility for the provision of social welfare was to be transferred from the state to the individual, for which the state was to provide appropriate possibilities (Hvalič et al. 2002).

However, the size of the public sector remained unchanged. Between 1991 and 2009, public expenditure never dropped below 40 % of the GDP. The role of the state has not weakened and it rarely ceded its responsibility to the civil sector. Moreover, in the establishment of democratic and participative culture, CSOs are not the most influential because they do not have effective access to the population. Also, there is distrust in CSOs. According to our research, CSOs rank between private structures (enjoying the highest level of trust) and public institutions (lower levels of trust). Trust in specific organizations varies depending on the organization's public image.

Certain advocacy areas are relatively popular and areas that address everyday issues are considered the most embedded. More abstract or global areas stand at the bottom of the charts. Top-ranked areas are related to specific groups (children, handicapped, women), environment, health and social services. The bottom-ranked are areas of a global-political nature and minorities (LGBT rights in ethnic minorities). Interviews and focus groups also show that the leading personnel in the organizations can often sense whether or not their organizations captures the interest of citizens. There are areas where individuals are willing to engage, although they do not consider the area problematic.

The distinction between perceived and personnel involvement in CSO's is another important indicator of the level of advocacy and public awareness a group is able to demonstrate. The main examples of an organization that is perceived stronger than the personnel involvement shows pertains to the issue of LGBT rights, women's rights, citizens security and consumer protection. These issues, which affect the lives of citizens directly, show the important role that advocacy can play in CSOs. The groups that project a strong stance on an issue and get the public's attention are perceived as having a stronger backing than they have in recorded involvement. Other issues such as environment, animal rights, anti-corruption, and work for democratic institutions are perceived to have less citizen involvement than they actually do. The difference in ranking shows how a group that is more focused and vocal in the advocacy sector can project a stronger presence to the citizenry. A stronger advocacy initiative from groups that have a stronger reported activity may be able to create a stronger CSO and have more influence in the political sphere.

	Reported activity (Q7)		Perceived activity (Q2)		Difference in ranks
	mean	ranking	Mean	ranking	
work of democratic institutions	1,17	10	2,96	13	-3
human and citizens' rights and freedoms	1,32	6	3,27	6	0
consumer protection	1,19	9	3,29	4	5
environment	1,50	2	3,22	7	-5
animal rights	1,36	5	3,19	10	-5
anti-corruption	1,12	12	2,74	15	-3
national minority rights	1,16	11	3,20	9	2
LGBT rights	1,07	15	2,97	12	3
women rights	1,26	7	3,37	2	5
rights of children	1,52	1	3,59	1	0
disabled people's rights	1,36	4	3,31	3	1
international and global issues	1,12	13	3,02	11	2
education, health, social policy	1,42	3	3,21	8	-5
economic policy	1,12	13	2,85	14	-1
citizens' security	1,24	8	3,27	5	3

Table 3: *Comparison of real and perceived activity of CSO's in the society (see also Cepin et al. 2014).*

Finally, strategic approach in the planning and pursuit of advocacy activities is lacking. Most organizations, from the most to the least embedded in advocacy, react spontaneously to challenges, pointing to a strong presence of an *ad-hoc* organizational culture. Also, CSOs underestimate their capacity to attract members and supporters. In most organizations, this attitude is related to a lack of personnel and financial sources and success, leading to a vicious circle (due to a lack of personnel we cannot look for new members).

6.   Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no guarantee that a country with a relatively high level of economic and political development will enjoy a flourishing civil society. At the time of democratic transition in the late 1980s, Slovenian civil society proved to be strong in organization and networking. It had a clear vision, was based on democratic values, and enjoyed public credibility. However, over the period of twenty-five years the state has not accepted civil society as a serious and equal partner. Civil society has remained marginalized. Its personnel and financial potential has been under-explored. Civil society is poorly organized, poorly interconnected and poorly trained.

The main weaknesses of Slovenian civil society can be summarized as follows.

– Many of the newly founded NGOs are not functioning or active;

– NGOs enjoy weak institutional or financial support by the state;

– Perceived activity of civil society does not directly correlate to actual reported activity;

– Foreign donors left the country soon after independence and FDI in Slovenian is still relatively low;

– Financial support of the citizenry remains weak, partly due to inefficient legislation;

– Citizens in general do not distinguish among the sources of a service, i.e., the state, civil society, or the market. What matters most is that a service is available;

– NGOs rarely work together on common projects. Regional or project-based CSO networks rarely come into existence;

– CSO networks are often not the result of a bottom-up process but come about as a consequence of state/EU invitation;

– Despite the EU and state initiatives, politics does not treat the NGOs as serious partners. A rare instance of this dialogue came about with the Slovenian accession to the EU in 2004 and Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council in 2008.

This research also shows that organizations of civil society in Slovenia underperform in the area of their advocacy capacity. The main reason for this is a low level of general democratic and participative culture embedded in society. Less than a quarter of the population (23 %) is active in advocacy organizations. Most of the citizens do not know the advocacy concept and do not see their role in CSOs as a possible path to solving the problems they encounter. In the area of advocacy, we summarize the CSOs weakness as (and attribute it to):

– Some advocacy areas that are relatively popular address concrete of daily life. These considered most embedded. Abstract or global areas stand at the bottom of the charts;

– A significant part of the representatives of civil society organizations see advocacy in a limited and often deformed way. They do not fully recognize the mission of the advocacy function of their organizations nor the need for, and opportunities in, advocacy;

– Most of the CSOs do not use all their potential in speaking about the involvement of the citizens in the advocacy activities. Communication to different public sectors, e.g., membership, supporters, experts, targeted public, is not intentional in most organizations. We notice a strong presence of the *ad-hoc* organizational culture;

– CSO's with the most activity do not have a stronger advocacy role. The more vocal and prominent an organization is in the media the more the public will perceive it as influential and important;

– The employees of CSOs are an influential group. They often decide matters which should be, according to the statutes of organizations, decided by other bodies of a CSO;

– CSOs are too small to be able to influence the democratic and participatory culture. The media also does not give CSOs the same respect as government institutions.

In short, 25 years after the regime change, civil society in general, and its advocacy sector in particular, point to the possibility of civic dis-embeddedness in comparison to other post-communist states. Congruent with the above-given definition of embeddedness, Slovenia's CSO share in a (1) democratic environment with minimal but existing participatory culture. Yet, their (2) advocacy area of organizational functioning, and their (3) management are underperforming – and can therefore not be understood as a vibrant part of the country's social network.

In order to strengthen Slovenia's civil society, promote dialogue (Bahovec 2012), improve the advocacy function of the CSOs, and therefore further embed them, the following measures may be suggested:

– Education aimed at responsible societal participation through formal and informal curricula based on the elements of theoretic knowledge, practical skills and values;

– Encourage the media as one of the basic agents of the informal learning to support active participation and strengthen trust in the CSOs. The media is lacking successful advocacy stories and examples of successful and active CSOs;

– Strengthen the training of the CSO's main personnel. Long-term training in the field of advocacy strategies, management, long-term planning, leadership and communication with different focus groups is especially important;

– Establish long-term forms of financing CSOs. These will enable long-term planning and less dependence on yearly fluctuations in income from public resources;

– Transfer a segment of social functions from the state into the sphere of the civil society, while maintaining or increasing the quality of services.

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